



SANDWELL COUNCIL IMPROVEMENT PLAN



Foreword

Leader of Sandwell Council - Cllr Kerrie Carmichael

My vision for Sandwell is a borough that is totally focussed on the needs of our residents, where everyone can fulfil their potential and be proud to live here.

The council has been through significant changes and challenges over the past couple of years. I am immensely proud of the way the council, our partners, residents and businesses have worked together to rise to the challenge of the pandemic crisis. Sandwell has been nationally recognised for our community-based response:

- ▶ We pioneered local contact tracing and data to aid the early identification of cases of new COVID variants
- ▶ Our care home COVID response was a finalist in the Royal College of Nursing award for outstanding contribution to infection prevention and control
- ▶ We won the Local Government Chronicle's Public Health Team of 2021 for our work on reducing health inequalities from the pandemic through the COVID Vaccination Champions Project.

- ▶ We supported thousands of our most vulnerable residents to access vital support through our Food Hub and by adapting our services to keep children and adults safe
- ▶ Nearly £60m of grants and hardship payments distributed to businesses and residents when they needed it most
- ▶ We were the lead authority that successfully established, managed and operated a regional mortuary at Birmingham Airport on behalf of seven other councils
- ▶ We developed a £1.1m programme to meet increasing emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of children and young people.

While we were supporting our community through the pandemic, we delivered other key achievements including:

- ▶ Completing the Sandwell Aquatics Centre in time for the 2022 Commonwealth Games

- ▶ Gaining national recognition for drug and alcohol services, and our partnership working around modern day slavery
- ▶ Raising physical activity in children to the highest rate in the region
- ▶ Helping raise £8.7m in welfare benefits
- ▶ Completing external improvements to 3,500 houses
- ▶ Progressing the £30m Birchley Island Transport scheme and £67.5m Towns Fund programme.

The council has been hindered by ongoing governance issues, but we have been making changes. I was pleased that the progress has been recognised in external reviews.

We know there is much for us still to do and we will work very closely with the Government and all our partners to continue to progress and maintain our focus on delivering high-quality services our residents can rely on. I am delighted that Kim Bromley-Derry

will continue to work with us in his role as Managing Director Commissioner. He has been so important in the positive changes we've been making and will provide the continuity we need to carry on with the improvements we have already begun putting in place.

I want to thank the council's staff. They have gone above and beyond and have worked tirelessly for Sandwell's residents, and I am immensely proud to work with such dedicated people on a daily basis.

This Improvement Plan sets out our next steps on our improvement journey and I'm looking forward to continuing to progress and maintain our focus on delivering high-quality services our residents can rely on.

Managing Director Commissioner - Kim Bromley-Derry

I am delighted to stay on at Sandwell as the Managing Director Commissioner. This is a different arrangement to Government intervention in local authorities in other parts of the country, in that the 'Managing Director' part of my role means I am retaining many of the same functions I held as Interim Chief Executive. This is recognition that we have already started to make the required improvements.

The leadership team, together with the support from my Commissioner colleague, Jim Taylor, and staff team are all committed to the council's improvement.

This plan is a clear map of the journey the council needs to take and sets out how we will hold ourselves accountable for delivering what is required.

Whilst our improvement journey is about changing the way we work, and our organisational culture, we will not lose sight of the underlying purpose of all this – to provide high quality services to our residents and businesses.

Section 1 - Introduction

Sandwell, a borough of vibrant towns, great opportunities and significant challenges...

Sandwell is a large metropolitan borough in the heart of the West Midlands. Home to a diverse population, Sandwell is made up of six historic towns and a patchwork of urban villages and localities that developed with industrialisation, each with a distinctive identity. People are very proud of, and very much identify with, their local community and although the borough is well known as an important part of the wider West Midlands region, it is also at the proud heart of the Black Country.

Looking forward, there are a significant number of exciting opportunities in the borough, including the new Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, a 5G pilot, town centre regeneration, the new Sandwell Aquatics Centre - which will host the swimming and

diving events for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, the extension to the Midlands Metro line, and many planned new homes. The council is using these new developments as a platform from which to put Sandwell on the map, shaping a borough where people are proud of their local area, have better paid jobs, increased skills and plenty of opportunities.

We acknowledge that, for a number of years, the Council has experienced ongoing governance issues that have hindered the organisation from both moving forward and seizing opportunities, despite the desire and ambition to do so. Historically, the Council's inconsistent strategic approach and decision-making discipline, along with an unhealthy culture and inappropriate behaviours particularly at senior officer and senior member level, have been central causes of these governance issues. This has been compounded by the turnover of staff at senior management level and political instability at the senior level.

Governance and service issues have been stubborn to resolve, and a significant amount of time has been spent responding to allegations and complaints, distracting the Council from robust forward planning of its business.

At the same time, we have been responding to a global pandemic to provide the fourth emergency service locally. Council staff have been working round the clock to provide vital services, supporting local action and bringing partners together to respond rapidly in the crisis. It is important to acknowledge that throughout both the pandemic and organisational change, we have continued to deliver for our residents and that is something we are immensely proud of.

Our Improvement Journey

Since May 2021, a number of key changes have moved us forward. We have refreshed our strategic framework in the light of the pandemic and our corporate plan reflects the needs of our community and provides a compelling vision for taking the borough forward. The appointment of an interim Chief Executive in August 2021, a new Leader in November 2021, and a new permanent leadership team is now resulting in tangible strides forward and greater stability.

A series of external reviews conducted between August 2021 and February 2022 have helped us prioritise the actions within this Improvement Plan, namely:

- ▶ Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review (December 2021)
- ▶ CIPFA Review of Financial Management and Governance (January 2022)
- ▶ LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (February 2022)



Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review – December 2021

In December 2021, Grant Thornton issued their report following a Value for Money Review of the council's governance arrangements. Within the report, three statutory and five key recommendations were made that relate to the overarching governance of the organisation. The report also identifies 37 further improvement recommendations which relate to the individual key lines of enquiry of the review.

The Grant Thornton report highlighted that there were 'green shoots' of recovery in a number of areas, showing a commitment on the part of the council's leadership to move the organisation forward.

A Governance Improvement Plan has been in place since January 2022 setting out the actions to address all the recommendations made by Grant Thornton. These actions have been incorporated within this Improvement Plan.

CIPFA Review of Financial Management and Governance – January 2022

CIPFA were commissioned by the council to undertake a review of the financial management and governance arrangements using the Financial Management Model. The intention of the review was to contribute to the development of the Council's financial management operation and arrangements. It assesses the Council's financial management capability, its internal processes, and operations. It also examines how the Council plans its future financial management.

The report, received in January 2022 set out that the council at present is financially stable and in recent years has been able to contribute towards reserves through achieving a balanced budget or an underspend, but that the authority has previously lacked ambition and innovation and has a very traditional approach to financial management.

The scoring process generates an overall star rating between one and five, five being the highest. Sandwell achieved an overall rating of two stars and is considered to be a progressive two-star authority with an encouraging direction of travel.

CIPFA made 14 recommendations and the actions to address these are contained within this Improvement Plan.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – February 2022

The council invited the LGA to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge focused around five areas which are recognised as critical to councils' performance and improvement:

- ▶ Local priorities and outcomes
- ▶ Organisational and place leadership
- ▶ Governance and culture
- ▶ Financial planning and management; and
- ▶ Capacity for improvement

The Peer Challenge Team also took an in-depth look at children's services and the place agenda.

The review found that there is much to be excited about in Sandwell. It recognised that our local operational relationships are well developed, and that these have been reinforced and strengthened during our response to the pandemic. The review also emphasised the positive changes that had already been achieved.

The Peer Challenge report included nine recommendations, and raised a series of improvement points for longer term consideration which are addressed within this Improvement Plan.

Statutory Notice – March 2022

In March 2022, Sandwell Council received Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

The Directions set out the requirement of the council to develop, agree and deliver an Improvement Plan that addresses:

- ▶ All the recommendations in the Grant Thornton Review
- ▶ Actions to deliver rapid and sustainable improvements in governance, leadership and culture in the Authority
- ▶ Actions to secure improvement in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny and associated audit functions
- ▶ Actions to secure continuous improvement in all services

As part of the intervention package a Managing Director Commissioner – Kim Bromley-Derry and an Assistant Commissioner – Jim Taylor have been appointed.

While the council was disappointed with the Secretary of State's decision to intervene, the council has welcomed the Department's support for its improvement journey and that Kim Bromley-Derry will be staying on as part of this work providing a continuity of approach.

Structure of Improvement Plan - Phased Approach

Building on the recommendations from all three external reviews, and in line with the Minister's Statutory Direction, the council has built this Improvement Plan around six key themes that prevail throughout all of the reports:

- ▶ Organisational Culture
- ▶ Corporate Oversight
- ▶ Strategic Direction
- ▶ Decision Making
- ▶ Procurement and Commercial
- ▶ Partnership and Relationships

Each theme has a clear set of deliverables and milestones – these will be used to track our progress against expected timescales and achievements.

We recognise that there are elements of activity that require more design before confirming our approach, and that there will be other issues arising that will feed into the Improvement Plan. For example, the council conducted an Employee Engagement Survey in February 2022, the results of which were not due until mid-May. The results of this survey need to be shared with staff to develop a collective approach to addressing the key issues. The local elections in early May has also meant that we have not had time to work

with all members, particularly those newly elected, in the development of this Plan.

Consequently, the council has taken a phased approach to developing this Improvement Plan. This is Phase One – capturing the known actions that can be addressed and delivered at this point. The Phase 2 Plan will identify additional areas for improvement that arise through Phase 1 activity.

Section 2 - Communication and Engagement

Our ambition

As the council continues its improvement journey, we will communicate our progress to our residents, staff, partners, businesses and stakeholders.

The council developed a communications strategy in 2021, and both the Grant Thornton Review, and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Team have recommended that this strategy is implemented. Work is now underway to deliver this, and a restructure has been completed to align the communications team to five areas that will best support the ambitions of the council: news, marketing, digital and creative services, internal communications and corporate affairs.

If we are to cultivate trust and effectively engage our residents, staff and all other stakeholders it is vital that we provide high-quality communication in the right format and at the right time. We want to proactively inform our community about the range of services provided by the council, both to connect people to services they may need, and to build confidence in the council's ability to support residents.

We are also determined to put Sandwell on the map and create new opportunities for our residents and businesses. Sandwell doesn't currently punch its weight – we're the 34th largest authority by population, but the 8th most deprived and only 72nd for gross value added to the economy.

We now have an opportunity to change this. Working with our construction partner, the Sandwell Aquatics Centre has been delivered on time and on budget for the upcoming Commonwealth Games and will then be turned into a state of the art leisure facility for local residents.

New infrastructure developments like the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital in Smethwick and the new Midland Metro line provide potentially massive catalysts for wider regeneration. Building relationships and communicating effectively, both at the local and regional level will be key to making the most of these opportunities.

Our approach

We will regularly report on the progress in delivering our Improvement Plan and will complement this with a communications plan to keep our staff, residents, partners, businesses and stakeholders informed.

Staff and Members

It is vital that we effectively engage our staff and members in our improvement journey to create and drive organisational cultural change. We want to have an open conversation with our staff and members about the values we need to adopt and embed to take the council forward.

The council has more than 4,000 members of staff, many of whom work on the frontline, and our internal communications must support our staff to understand the relevance of our Improvement Plan to their day-to-day work, and the connection it has to our Corporate Plan and priorities for our residents.

We will communicate with staff in a variety of ways, including regular video and email messages, staff Q&A

sessions, manager briefings and staff panels. This will be a two-way conversation with the intelligence gained from staff throughout the organisation used to inform our Improvement Plan.

Residents

We are committed to becoming a listening, responsive council that enables our residents to influence the design of services. We are conducting a residents' survey that will inform our priorities and our future communications with our community, to ensure that we are focussed on the issues our residents care about.

Partners and stakeholders

We are changing the way we work as a council, and in some cases reviewing our partnership arrangements as we continually strive to provide the best possible services. We want to build on the operational relationships with our partners that have been strengthened during the pandemic, and it is crucial that we keep them informed of our progress throughout our improvement journey.

Engagement in Phase 1

In developing this Improvement Plan, we have engaged with staff and members, ahead of a more extensive engagement programme as we develop our plan further. We have held two events with staff (one with our co-production network and one with our staff panel), and a third event with members. We have also discussed the developing plan with Sandwell's MPs.

Organisation culture has been identified as a key theme from engagement sessions and polls. Staff feel the implementation plan needs to be steered in the right direction and that the correct foundations should be created to develop a better organisational culture. Staff want to create a safe place to be heard, to generate a better understanding on what needs to change and the way in which it can be done, taking us away from silo working.

Staff felt there needs to be strong representation with our local partnerships and welcomed the directorate and corporate planning that is in place as a way forward to horizon scan, encouraging directors to share their



plans on what each service area will be working on over the next three years.

Feedback from MP's is that they are happy with the approach and that customer experience should be a key priority.

In relation to the engagement approach for phase two, staff emphasised that they are aware there is a lot of work to be done. However, welcome the opportunity to engage and for their thoughts and ideas to be taken on board, but also be able to share and review ongoing improvement to acknowledge the change Sandwell deserves.

Engagement Approach for Phase 2
Through a series of engagement sessions, Members and staff will help shape the development of the Phase 2 Improvement Plan.

The main strand of engagement will focus on the organisational change programme through wide-ranging engagement to determine the desired culture of the council. We will use a blended approach of face to face and virtual methods, taking the conversations to where staff are.

Our staff panel and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks will play a central role in testing the progress of our improvement journey and guiding the overall engagement approach with staff.

Initial Communication and Engagement Milestones

Staff Survey Results	May 2022
All staff live event	26th May 2022
All Member briefing	26th May 2022
Engagement programme part 1: Starting the Conversation	June – July 2022
Engagement programme part 2: Developing the Desired Organisational Culture	August – December 2022



Section 3 - Governance and Assurance

Effective programme management arrangements and robust monitoring processes will be key to Sandwell’s successful delivery of this Improvement Plan and achievement of sustainable change. This was highlighted as a gap in all three external reviews, and the council has taken steps to develop a corporate and consistent approach to programme management.

For the council to have oversight of the delivery of this Improvement Plan and achievement of the deliverables, we have established the following comprehensive governance arrangements. This will provide elected members and officers the mechanisms to manage the delivery of the plan, as well as ensuring that the desired impacts are being achieved.

Role of the Commissioners

In his Directions to the council, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities appointed two Commissioners with powers to make sure that the council “has made sufficient improvement within the next two years to be able to comply with its best value duty on a sustainable basis”. These roles are:

- ▶ Managing Director Commissioner, whose responsibilities include giving direction and leadership to deliver improvements that the council is required to take; and
- ▶ Assistant Commissioner, one of whose responsibilities is overseeing the cultural change necessary at the council.

The Commissioners will be providing six-monthly reports to the Secretary of State on the council’s progress in addressing the matters highlighted by the external reviews. There are several factors that will inform any decision by the Secretary of State to end the period of government intervention at Sandwell Council, and this decision will be based on reports received from the Commissioners. Some of these factors include:

- ▶ That the council can demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making
- ▶ That a permanent Chief Executive has been successfully appointed
- ▶ The Council has reached a decision on implementing a four-yearly election cycle

Ownership and Accountability

This Improvement Plan has six themes, each with clear objectives, milestones and deliverables. Supporting each theme is a detailed delivery plan setting out activity to achieve the deliverables, identify responsible officer, timescales, and measures of success. The delivery plan also sets out how specific actions address recommendations in the various external reviews, thereby enabling direct reporting for different audiences as required.

It is vitally important to the success of this Improvement Plan to establish collective ownership and responsibility across senior political and officer leadership. This will contribute to the cultural change necessary for sustainable improvement, as set out elsewhere in this document. It is intended to establish a simple matrix mechanism across directors and Cabinet Members that will set out accountability and the ability for peer challenge. Due to the development of this Improvement Plan coinciding with local elections, these arrangements will be agreed at the earliest opportunity following the approval of this Plan.

Reporting Mechanisms

Ensuring that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against this Improvement Plan is integral to the success of Sandwell’s improvement journey.

Progress will be monitored by Leadership Team on a monthly basis. The Managing Director Commissioner will chair this meeting, with the Assistant Commissioner in attendance as an observer. In this way, both Commissioners will have up-to-date insight into the council’s progress in achieving the milestones and deliverables set out in this Plan.

Members will have oversight of progress through monthly informal reporting and formal reporting to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed and government intervention has been lifted. Member-led committees will be used for decision making and to maintain oversight of implementation of the actions within the Improvement Plan. These will include Governance and & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees.





Whilst this Improvement Plan has been developed to address specific recommendations, it is recognised that the Plan will need to evolve over time to address areas of improvement that are yet to be identified. Additions to the Improvement Plan will be monitored through the internal monthly monitoring and approved by Cabinet.

As set out in the Communications Section, we recognise the need to improve how the council communicates progress with its staff, members, partners and residents. Not only does this communication need to be in the right format for the various audiences, it also needs to be at the appropriate time to provide meaningful information. Therefore, we will be sharing progress against the key milestones, deliverables and outcomes in this Improvement Plan on a regular basis.

Corporate Plan 2021-2025

This Improvement Plan sets out what the council must do to improve its governance arrangements and embed that improvement to continue to deliver positive outcomes for residents. It does not cover everything that Sandwell Council is doing to deliver day-to-day services and service transformation required to improve outcomes for people living and working in the borough. Therefore, this Plan must be read in tandem with Sandwell's Corporate Plan 2021-2025. The ultimate test of whether the improvements in how the council functions, as set out in this Improvement Plan, have succeeded will be the delivery of the improved outcomes within the Corporate Plan.

Sandwell Children's Improvement Board

Sandwell Council has in place an existing Statutory Direction from the Department for Education (DfE). This Statutory Direction included the establishment of an independently chaired Improvement Board, the role of which is to ensure sustainable improvements to quality of practice with the aim of improving outcomes for the borough's most vulnerable children and young people. There exists a clear governance structure in place to facilitate reporting up to the DfE, and they will continue to run alongside the council-wide interventions. There will be scheduled updates between Sandwell Children's Trust and the Commissioners through quarterly meetings with the independently appointed Chair of the Trust Improvement Board.

External Assurance

Member-led committees will receive progress reports on the Improvement Plan as part of their normal business. In order to provide the council, the Commissioners, the Secretary of State, and our residents with a further level of assurance on our progress in achieving the objectives of this Improvement Plan, Grant Thornton, CIPFA and the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Team will be invited back to Sandwell Council to monitor our progress on addressing the recommendations of their reviews. These will provide a check point on our improvement journey and provide a steer on future areas of focus.

The first review update is scheduled for Autumn 2022, and further reviews may be arranged at agreed points throughout Sandwell's improvement journey as required. It is noted that as the council's external auditor, Grant Thornton may increase monitoring activity should they identify any concerns through their normal business activity.

Programme Management Approach

A dedicated team has been established to manage the development and delivery of the plan. The programme management office will provide assurance that the Plan is being delivered, identify variances to the agreed deliverables at the earliest opportunity and work with lead officers to ensure mitigating action is designed and implemented as appropriate.

It will pull on key skills and expertise available across the organisation as necessary, such as communications, organisational development, employee engagement, risk management, democratic services, financial management and internal audit. By engaging with and involving staff across the council in the development and delivery of this plan, we will build the necessary skills and experience to ensure improvements are sustainable.



Section 4 - Risk Management

Risk approach

A risk register will be maintained for the duration of the Improvement Plan. This risk register will underpin the entry on the strategic risk register relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22)

An initial risk register has been populated with key risks and an assessment of their impact and severity. This will guide the development of action plans to provide further mitigation, where required.

Risk monitoring

Monthly report of the risk register will be made to the Improvement Review Meeting and quarterly to Cabinet.

Key Risks

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 will be put in place, subject to Council's approval.
- ▶ Organisational Culture – if the organisational culture doesn't change, this will limit the improvements that can be made. A theme within the Improvement Plan focuses on organisational culture. It includes our plans for a comprehensive engagement programme with staff and members to define a collectively owned culture. We will then embed the conditions for this culture to thrive.
- ▶ Communication – our communications approach is set out within this Improvement Plan and a detailed communication plan will be developed to ensure effective and timely communication with stakeholders.
- ▶ Governance Policies and Procedures – Key corporate governance documents are being reviewed and once approved, will provide an important foundation for improvement.
- ▶ Performance Management Framework – to ensure that we can effectively monitor progress and evidence improvement. Each theme includes an outline of how success will be evidenced. Processes for monitoring progress and evaluating evidence of improvement will be developed within the governance arrangements.
- ▶ Historic Issues – if there is continued focus and resource directed to historic issues this will hinder progress on the improvement plan and corporate plan. This Improvement Plan contains actions to bring historic issues to a conclusion and embed lessons learnt.
- ▶ Progress Monitoring and Risk Management approach – if assessment of progress and risk assessment contains optimism-bias this will prevent an accurate and realistic view of progress. Assurance mechanisms will help manage this risk.

Section 5 - Resourcing the Plan

Without directing the right resources to delivering this Improvement Plan, the council will not successfully achieve the necessary changes or embed the improvements made.

In developing the delivery plans for each theme, an assessment has been made on whether existing resources and budgets can be redirected or reshaped to carry out the activity required. In most areas, existing resources have been allocated where available.

The council recognises that in order to ensure rapid and sustainable improvement, investment is required in core areas including; performance management, transformation and organisational development. These areas will enable the council to build on the improvements made over the life of this Improvement Plan and take advantage of opportunities to make the organisation more efficient and effective in the future.

Plans have been developed to address the resource gaps with appropriate levels of funding identified. Following Council approval of the allocation of these resources, these resource plans will be implemented.

Theme 1 – Organisational Culture

Introduction

Effective organisational culture is the collection of values, expectations and practices that guide and enable people to perform well and deliver improved outcomes for residents. The culture of the organisation, from member level through to front-line staff, affects the ability of the council to make the necessary changes across the whole of this Improvement Plan and succeed on its improvement journey.

In their Value for Money Governance Review in Autumn 2021, Grant Thornton identified poor working relationships, lack of trust between officers and members, a culture of silo working and focusing on dealing with historical matters. Grant Thornton highlighted these challenges as central to the governance issues identified in their report and preventing the council from moving forward.

However, the Grant Thornton Review also recognised the ‘green shoots’ of progress made since the appointment of the Interim Chief Executive in August 2021. The permanent appointment of the senior management team has brought stability, skills and experience to tackle key issues. These ‘green shoots’

were further recognised by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge as being clearly visible within the culture of the council and the way it operates. The LGA commented on the tangible strength of leadership being provided by the current Leader and Chief Executive and the importance of maintaining this continuity of style and approach. Enabling the right organisational culture to thrive will be a key part of the recruitment process for the permanent Chief Executive.

The CIPFA Financial Management Review also highlighted the need for clarity on roles and responsibilities in relation to leadership, budget holders and finance specialists to ensure a modern financial management approach was taken.

We recognise that changes to structures and performance management arrangements will not in themselves lead to organisational change without the right culture and individual behaviours in place. The plans we put in place can only succeed when everybody is determined to adopt the behaviours required and to live the new culture. This will require identifying and communicating clear roles and responsibilities and ensuring a consistent use of policies and procedures. To drive this change, we will improve the

way we engage with our staff, members and residents by providing high-quality communications in the right way and in a timely manner.

Embedding this culture change will take time to achieve. We have the opportunity at this point in our improvement journey to pause, reflect and collectively determine what culture and behaviours we want to nurture as a whole organisation. Therefore, we will conduct a comprehensive engagement programme with staff and members to define a collectively owned culture and conditions for the right culture to thrive. This programme will be led from the top, maintaining stability and demonstrating the behaviours we expect to see.

A healthy, inclusive culture underpins the successful delivery of the whole Improvement Plan. The work on embedding a positive culture has informed the sequencing of actions across the other themes of this plan. Without appropriate engagement and relationship building being the first step, there is a risk that the council will fail to successfully embed the necessary changes to policy and process. In turn, this will prevent the council making those improvements sustainable.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this theme are:

- For Senior Leadership (Officers and Members) to work together effectively
- That officers receive appropriate support and direction from Senior Leaders
- For the council’s organisational culture to change, ensuring sustainable improvement through a focus on improving outcomes for residents, empowering staff to make decisions at the right levels, learning lessons and embedding customer focus throughout the organisation.

Workstreams and Aims

- **Establishing Organisational Culture** – to collaboratively develop the desired organisational culture for Sandwell Council and create the right environment for it to thrive
- **Officer and Member Relationship** – to improve the relationship between officers and members, particularly within the council’s senior leadership, enabling increased confidence and appreciation of each other.
- **Officer Learning and Development** – to provide clarity of expectations on officers, particularly leadership and managers, ensuring they have the appropriate skills to perform their roles effectively
- **Member Learning and Development** – to provide clarity of expectations on members, particularly those with roles of special responsibility, ensuring they have the appropriate skills to perform their roles effectively
- **Internal Communication** – setting out a clear vision for and tone of the organisation from the top, and improving internal communication across staff and members
- **Employee Engagement** – to identify actions in response to the findings of the Employee Engagement Survey
- **Chief Executive Recruitment** - To recruit a permanent Chief Executive and provide continuity of approach



Key Milestones:

Budget Holder Role Profile Approved	May 2022
Employee Engagement Survey Report	
New Member Induction	
Employee Engagement Survey Results	
Meeting structures to support regular dialogue between Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) confirmed for new Municipal Year	June 2022
Part 1 Engagement – Starting the Conversation	June-July 2022
Scope of Corporate Governance Training approved	June 2022
Member Development Programme approved	July 2022
Part 2 engagement – determining desired culture	August – December 2022
Corporate Governance Training – Procurement for delivery partner	August 2022
Corporate Governance Training Delivery	Autumn 2022
Approval of document / statement setting out desired organisational culture – ‘Our Values: Our Behaviours’	
Organisational Development Strategy and Plan Approved	End 2022
Recruitment process for Permanent Chief Executive commences	By early 2023
Appointment of Permanent Chief Executive	By September 2023

Key Deliverables:

- ▶ Employee Engagement Survey
- ▶ Member Development Programme
- ▶ Document or statement setting out the desired organisational culture - ‘Our Values: Our Behaviours’
- ▶ Organisational Development Strategy
- ▶ Corporate Governance Training Programme
- ▶ Communications Strategy
- ▶ Permanent Chief Executive in place

Evidence of Success

When we have made progress towards embedding an effective organisational culture, there will be evidence of:

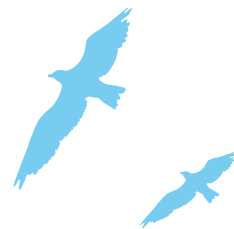
- ▶ Employee engagement results improving
- ▶ Managers demonstrating expected behaviours (via employee engagement survey results)
- ▶ Members demonstrating expected behaviours
- ▶ Officers and Members have confidence in their decisions
- ▶ Healthy and regular dialogue between Senior Leaders (Member and Officer)
- ▶ Numerous examples of Members and Officers working effectively together
- ▶ Improved take-up of Member development programme opportunities
- ▶ Improvements in external review outcomes



Organisational Culture Delivery Plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Organisational culture)	Start Date	Due date
Establishing Organisational Culture	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 3	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Establish the desired organisational culture for Sandwell Council - Phase 1 Engagement: Starting the Conversation - Phase 2 Engagement: Determining Desired Culture - Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture Create the right environment for that organisational culture to thrive - Organisational Development Strategy and Plan Approved - Other actions as a result of engagement phases	May 2022 Jun 2022 Aug 2022 Autumn 2022 TBC	Dec 2022 Jul 2022 Dec 2022 Autumn 2022 End 2022 TBC
Officer Learning and Development	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 3 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 6, 20	Director- Law & Governance Director- Business Strategy & Change	Develop a clear programme of management development - Management Development Programme Designed - Budget Holder Role Profile Approved - Incorporate training on company roles and responsibilities in senior officer development plan - Management Development Programme Delivery	Aug 2022 Aug 2022 2023	Dec 2022 May 2022 Dec 2022 2023
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 15 CIPFA 1.5, 1.6	Director- Law & Governance Director - Finance	Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Officers - Scope of Corporate Governance Training for Officers approved (including comprehensive finance and governance training tailored to those with different levels of financial responsibility) - Revision of Corporate Induction - Effective decision-making training - Procurement of Delivery Partner - Delivery of Corporate Governance Training - Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training	May 2022 Jun 2022 Jul 2022 Jun 2022 Autumn 2022 TBC 2023	Jun 2022 Jul 2022 Sep 2022 Aug 2022 Dec 2022 TBC 2023

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Organisational culture)	Start Date	Due date
Officer and Member Relationship	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 3 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 33	Director- Law & Governance Chief Executive Leader Cabinet Members Leadership Team	Continue regular weekly meetings between Cabinet Members and Leadership Team - Regular meetings of Commissioners, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Chief Whips commence - Meeting structures to support regular dialogue between Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) confirmed for new Municipal Year	May 2022 May 2022	May 2022 Jun 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec1, 5	Director - Finance	Continue to adopt star chamber approach for Cabinet Members and Chief Officers as part of budget setting approach	2021	Summer 2022
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 3 Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 4	Chief Executive	Engage LGA to support Officers and Members to develop the relationship going forward including continuation of LGA Cabinet Member mentoring programme	May 2022	Dec 2022
	Corporate Peer Challenge (pg 24)	Director- Law & Governance Director- Business Strategy & Change	Ward and Casework Management - Process and approach review –completed as part of customer feedback review - Leadership Team conversation to identify mechanisms to embed and sustain the required approach and process forward and case work linked to desired organisational culture	May 2022	Oct 2022



Organisational Culture Delivery Plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Organisational culture)	Start Date	Due date
Member Learning and Development	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 3 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 2, 7, 31, 32	Director- Law & Governance	Deliver Member Development Programme including Finance Training Programme - Service Showcase - New Member Induction - Approval of Member Development Programme - Deliver Member Development Programme	May 2022 Jul 2022 Jul 2022	18 May 2022 Jun 2022 Jul 2022 Mar 2023
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2	Director- Law & Governance Director- Finance	Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Members - Scope of Corporate Governance Training for Members approved - Effective decision-making training - Procurement of delivery partner - Delivery of Corporate Governance Training - Annual Refresher and inclusion in new Member induction	Mar 2022 Jul 2022 Jul 2022 Autumn 2022 Sep 2022	Jun 2022 Sep 2022 Sep 2022 Dec 2022 Oct 2022
	Grant Thornton Key Rec 7	Director – Law & Governance	Continue forward plan for all Member briefings based on themes of work / areas for development - Forward Plan for All Member Briefings in place for new Municipal Year - Leadership Team Review of All Member Briefings to ensure they are meeting needs	May 2022 Mar 2022	Jun 2022 Ongoing
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 29	Director – Law & Governance	Induction training for Leader and Cabinet Members on appropriate processes relating to the employment of Chief Officers, and in particular Statutory Officers	Jun 2022	Jul 2022

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Organisational culture)	Start Date	Due date
Internal Communication	Corporate Peer Challenge 2	Director- Law & Governance Head of Communications	A clear and joint message from Chief Executive and Leader regarding Officer and Elected Member relationship delivered	Dec 2022	Dec 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 11	Director- Business Strategy and Change	Deliver the communications strategy to assist with more effective internal communications	Feb 2022	Ongoing
Employee Engagement	n/a	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Actions to respond to employee survey outcomes to be identified and embedded in improvement plan	May 2022	Aug 2022
Chief Executive Recruitment	Grant Thornton Key Rec 5 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 30	Commissioner	Recruitment of Chief Executive - Decision on the timescale to go out for advert for the permanent Chief Executive - Recruitment process takes place	Dates TBC following Autumn decision	By Sep 2023 Autumn 2022 Dates TBC following Autumn decision



Theme 2 – Corporate Oversight

Introduction

The leadership of the council needs effective corporate oversight of the business to enable it to meet its overall objectives and to encourage a positive culture to thrive. This requires the council to work effectively together to respond to key issues and have the right tools in place to enable this to happen.

The Grant Thornton Review identified a weakness in the council's overall 'corporate grip' on a number of specific service issues. This has resulted in poor practices such as silo working, lack of corporate ownership and accountability, and an absence of intervention and decision making. The review particularly highlighted the lack of a clear performance management framework to provide strategic management and oversight.

All the external reviews have highlighted the lack of a performance management culture being a contributing factor to the council's ability to make effective decisions and moving forward. Having no framework that provides a single version of the truth has led to silo working and a lack of corporate ownership and accountability.

A corporate performance management framework has been approved by Council as the starting point for the culture change required. This framework will now be used to drive collective conversations around performance and accountability at all levels of the organisation.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge highlighted the positive style and approach of the Leader and Chief Executive but also the need for greater joining up across the council, the opportunity for the council to be more

outward looking, to actively learn when things don't go to plan, and the importance of the corporate core in enabling modernisation.

The CIPFA Financial Management Review' also raised considerations to strengthen the corporate core of the organisation, including the delivery of a finance business partner approach and a programme of end to end finance process reviews.

The council is already implementing strategies to address the service issues highlighted by the Grant Thornton Review, with decisions on a number of these already being taken by Cabinet.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this theme are to:

- ▶ Take effective corporate oversight of long-standing service issues and the council's overall improvement journey
- ▶ Embed learning from service issues identified in external reviews
- ▶ Provide a corporate approach to performance management and the delivery of programmes and projects
- ▶ Ensure the role of the corporate core is strengthened to enable front line services and staff to focus on outcomes for residents

Workstreams and Aims

- ▶ **Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning** - To design, implement and monitor delivery of the Improvement Plan and a continuous improvement plan for the council
- ▶ **Performance Management** - To implement the Performance Management Framework and ensure that it is utilised to support the council's improvement journey
- ▶ **Organisational Structure and an Enabling Corporate Core** – to complete Directorate level restructuring, and strengthen the enabling role of the corporate core
- ▶ **ERP** - To implement Oracle Fusion within agreed timescales and budget
- ▶ **Programme and Project Management** - To adopt a Corporate approach to programme and project management that will ensure effective information flow and decision making from Senior Leadership





Key Milestones:

Establish Performance Management Framework	Achieved April 2022
Improvement Plan approved	June 2022
Procure new support provider to deliver Oracle Fusion	July 2022
First Performance Management Report	August 2022
All Directorate-level restructuring completed	December 2022
Oracle Fusion Implemented	April 2023

Key Deliverables

- ▶ Oracle Fusion
- ▶ Performance management framework
- ▶ Performance management reports
- ▶ Single Improvement Plan
- ▶ Continuous Improvement Plan

Evidence of Success

When demonstrating effective corporate oversight, we will see evidence of:

- ▶ Performance information being used by Leadership Team and Members to set strategic direction and respond to issues
- ▶ Improvement in performance measures relating to One Council One Team
- ▶ Improvement in employee engagement score
- ▶ Improvement in views of external reviews





Corporate Oversight Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Corporate Oversight)	Start Date	Due date
ERP	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 28	Director- Finance Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	Implement Oracle Fusion - Cabinet approval for action plan to continue implementation of Oracle Fusion - Terminate implementation partner contract with InoApps - Implement robust project management arrangements - Review operational team to ensure there are appropriate resources in place during implementation phase - Project management training for all of project team, including Project Sponsors - Procure new support provider to deliver Oracle Fusion - Support provider in place and delivery commences	Dec 2021	Apr 2023 Complete Complete Complete Complete Jul 2022 Jul 2022 Apr 2023
				Jul 2022	
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 35 Grant Thornton Key Rec 4, 8 Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 9 CIPFA Rec all	Leadership Team	Single Improvement Plan Phase 1 - Council approval of Improvement Plan - Commissioners Report prepared - Commissioners Report to Secretary of State Single Improvement Plan Phase 2 - Council approval of Improvement Plan Phase 2	Mar 2022 -	Jun 2022 7 Jun 2022 by 22 Jun 2022 Jan 2023
	Statutory Direction SN5	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Continuous Improvement Plan Develop a Continuous Improvement Plan	Autumn 2022	Spring 2023

Corporate Oversight Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Corporate Oversight)	Start Date	Due date
Performance Management	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2,3 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 3, 8, 9, 22, 36 Grant Thornton Key Rec 6 CIPFA Rec 3.3 Rec 4.1	Director- Business Strategy & Change	Performance Management Framework (PMF) - Council approval of PMF - Q1 performance report	Sep 2022	Ongoing Complete Aug 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 36 CIPFA Rec 3.3 Rec 3.1		Budget Monitoring - Report format agreed by Leadership Team - Q1 budget report to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny - Monthly Budget monitoring	Mar 2022	Ongoing Complete Aug 2022 Ongoing



Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Corporate Oversight)	Start Date	Due date
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 8 , 19	Leadership Team	Restructuring Directorate Level restructuring	Dec 2021	Dec 2022
	CIPFA Rec 1.1 Rec 1.3 Rec 1.4 Rec 1.6	Director- Finance	Embedding Finance Business Partner role - Restructure of financial services section to provide a greater focus on business partnering completed - Expectations on financial services section established - Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section - KPIs and standards developed for financial services section	Jan 2022	Aug 2022 Jun 2022 Jun 2022 Sep 2022 Aug 2022
	CIPFA Rec 3.1 Rec 3.4	Director- Finance	Reduction of financial transactional activity - Business process re-engineering resources approved - Review of internal charges - Review of corporate debt recovery processes completed - Programme of end to end process reviews	Jan 2022 May 2022	Mar 2023 Complete Jun 2022 Jul 2022 Mar 2023
	CIPFA Rec 3.2 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 37	Director- Finance	Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts. - External review of 2020/21 Statement of Accounts - New suite of working papers to support the 2021/22 year end process agreed - Additional resources in place for 2021/22 year end process - Training for key members of the Finance Team complete	Jan 2022	May 2022 Complete Complete Complete Complete

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Corporate Oversight)	Start Date	Due date
Programme and Project Management	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 28	Director- Business Strategy & Change	Programme and Project Management - Agree a Corporate approach to Project Management, including requirement of full business cases for major projects - Suite of Programme and Project Documentation Agreed - Corporate Transformation PMO established - Programme and Project Management System Implementation	Dec 2021	Late 2022 Complete May 2022 Late 2022 Late 2022



Theme 3 – Strategic Direction

Introduction

The objective of this theme is to build processes and mechanisms that help the council to stay focused on our longer-term goals and implement principles within the Corporate Plan. This is especially important during this period of rapid organisational change.

The Grant Thornton Review identified the disproportionate amount of time spent in recent years on ‘fire-fighting’ which has limited the space to think clearly about the long-term plans and undertake the strategic thinking required. The Corporate Peer Challenge remarked on the huge potential to be unlocked in the Borough commenting that a key part of this is the regeneration agenda. The Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline received approval in March 2022 setting out how future needs across housing, transport, education and skills will be achieved.

Effective long-term planning across all areas of council business is essential. The refresh of the Corporate Plan

was a significant milestone achieved in 2021 which provides a clear overall set of aims for the council. Central to achieving this is the review of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which will ensure that resources are in place to enable us to meet our priorities, and a set of key strategies which will help to set out the route map to achieve our longer-term goals.

This theme also includes actions to ensure that the budget setting process and our understanding of how we are performing considers the results from public consultation and engagement. The commitment to run a regular Resident Survey will provide a means to maintain ongoing engagement with the community in order to inform key decision making.

Good progress has already been made, with a series of key strategies approved in early 2022 which have now moved into the delivery phase.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this theme are to:

- ▶ Ensure that focus is maintained on longer-term direction through effective strategies being in place to support our Corporate Plan outcomes
- ▶ Ensure that sustainable financial planning is in place that is aligned to our priorities
- ▶ Conduct consultation and use the findings to inform budget setting and our understanding of how the council is performing.

Workstreams and Aims

- ▶ **Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy** – to put in place a sustainable financial plan aligned to priorities
- ▶ **Strategy development and refresh** – to develop or refresh key strategies in response to service issues and opportunities identified by the external reviews
- ▶ **Locality Working** – to develop a model for locality working
- ▶ **Consultation and engagement** – to utilise public consultation outcomes to shape the budget setting process, and inform our intelligence around how the organisation is performing

Key Milestones:

Approval of Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy	Achieved March 2022
Approval of Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline	
Early Help Strategy approved and launched	
Review of Medium Term Financial Plan completed	July 2022
Corporate Procurement Strategy approved	
Commercial Strategy Approved	
Regular Resident Survey in place	
Equalities Policy approved	
Public Consultation to be carried out as part of budget process	Autumn 2022
Approval of Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved	
Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved	September 2022
Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh Approved	
HRA 30 Year Business Plan approved	Spring 2023
Model for Locality Working Approved	Spring 2023



Key Deliverables

- Strategies:
 - Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline
 - Early Help Strategy
 - Corporate Parenting Strategy
 - Corporate Asset Management Strategy
 - HRA 30 Year Business Plan
 - Corporate Procurement Strategy
 - Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy
 - Commercial Strategy
 - Equality Policy
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Medium Term Financial Plan
- Resident’s Survey
- Public Consultation outcomes around budget setting
- Model for locality working

Evidence of Success

When we are maintaining focus on our long-term plans, we will see evidence of:

- Improvements to the Corporate Plan outcome measures
- Sustainable financial planning in place, aligned to priorities
- Consultation and engagement, shaping strategic direction and financial planning
- Examples of Sandwell’s national profile showcasing the good work of the council





Strategic Direction Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Strategic Direction)	Start Date	Due date
Strategy development and refresh	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Regen Pipeline Development and Delivery ▶ Cabinet Approval of Regen Strategy and Pipeline 2022-27 ▶ Pipeline projects monitored on a 6-monthly basis ▶ Internal infrastructure established for delivery - - o Programme and Project Management Structures in place - o Programme Management Software Procurement - o Project Management Software procurement - o Microsite creation for information around priority projects for stakeholders	Autumn 2021 Mar 2022	2027 Complete Ongoing Mar 2023
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 15, 16	Director-Regeneration and Growth	Corporate Asset Management Strategy Development Work Place Vision ▶ Confirmation of funding for remaining Workplace Vision components Transforming Local Services ▶ Cabinet Workshop to provide steer ▶ Options for hub locations identified Asset Review ▶ Procurement of asset database ▶ Implementation of new Asset Database Surplus Assets & commercial estate ▶ Maximising Value out of surplus assets portfolio – Cabinet report ▶ Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved	Autumn 2021 Mar 2022 Jun 2022 May 2022	Sep 2022 Autumn '22 linked to MTFP Complete Sep 2022 Complete Dec 2022 Jul 2022 Sep 2022

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Strategic Direction)	Start Date	Due date
Strategy development and refresh	Grant Thornton Key Rec 5 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 11 Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 21	Director- Business Strategy and Change	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery ▶ Corporate Communications Strategy approved ▶ Communications Team restructure concluded to focus resources on key workstreams of Communications Strategy	Autumn 2021	Ongoing Complete May 2022
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2	Director- Finance	Refresh and embed the Corporate Procurement Strategy ▶ Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules approved ▶ Training developed ▶ Training delivered	Autumn 2021 Autumn 2022	Jul 2022 May 2022 Dec 2022
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2	Director- Finance	Develop and implement the Commercial Strategy ▶ Commercial Strategy Approved ▶ Business Cases Presented for commercial workstreams	Autumn 2021	Jul 2022 Jul 2022 Jun 2022
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2	Director- Housing	HRA 30 year Business Plan ▶ Review of compliance and stock data ▶ HRA Business Plan developed ▶ HRA Business Plan approved (in line with budget approval 2023-24)	Autumn 2021 May 2022	Apr 2023 May 2022 Mar 2023 Apr 2023
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1	Director- Children & Education	Refresh the Early Help Strategy ▶ Launch of Early Help Strategy	Autumn 2021	Mar 2022 Complete
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1	Director- Children & Education	Refresh Corporate Parenting Strategy ▶ Re-focusing of strategic priorities ▶ Corporate Parenting Strategy approved	Jan 2022	Sep 2022 Sep 2022



Strategic Direction Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Strategic Direction)	Start Date	Due date
Equality and Diversity	Corporate Peer Challenge Rec12	Director- Law & Governance	Equality and Diversity - Continue to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff networks - Establish Women’s network and Faith & Belief staff network - Continue to deliver on Equalities Commission Board priorities - Equality Policy reviewed - Equality Policy approved - EDI Workforce action plan review - Approval of EDI Workforce plan - Review approach to Equality Impact Assessments - Review of Council EDI decision making process - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved - Embed equalities, diversity and inclusion within Member and Officer Development Programmes	Autumn 2021 Ongoing Jun 2022 Ongoing May 2022 Jul 2022 Jun 2022 Mar 2023 Summer 2022 Summer 2022 Autumn 2022 Early 2023	Ongoing Ongoing Dec 2022 Ongoing Jun 2022 Jul 2022 Dec 2022 Mar 2023 Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022 Early 2023
Locality Working	Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 18	Director – Housing Director – Business Strategy and Change	Developing a model for locality working - Cabinet Workshop to provide steer on community hubs model - Pilot of Town Co-ordinator role commences - Customer Access Strategy Development Commences - Business Cases for hub locations progressed, as appropriate	Mar 2022 Complete Summer 2022 Sep 2022 Sep 2022	TBC Complete Summer 2022 Sep 2022 Spring 2023

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Strategic Direction)	Start Date	Due date
MTFP & Capital Strategy	CIPFA 4.3	Director- Finance	Fundamental review of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy - Review concluded - Approval of MTFP and Capital Strategy	Jan 2022	Autumn 2022 Jul 2022 Autumn 2022
Consultation and Engagement	CIPFA 4.4	Director- Finance and Director Business Strategy and Change	Public Consultation to be carried out as part of budget process for 2023/24 - Procurement concluded to provide capacity for a regular Resident’s Survey - Public Consultation undertaken - Public Consultation outcomes inform budget setting	Jan 2022 Autumn 2022	Autumn 2022 May 2022 Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022
	Corporate Peer Challenge 5, Grant Thornton Key Rec 6	Director - Business Strategy and Change	Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework - First Resident’s Survey conducted - First report from Resident’s Survey - Survey results embedded within PMF and used to inform insight into how the Council is performing	Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022	May 2023 Autumn 2022 Autumn 2022 May 2023



Theme 4 – Decision Making

Introduction

Effective decision making covers many strands and impacts on every aspect of the council's business. Fundamentally, our structure and how we are governed and managed needs to be transparent and fit for purpose and we must be clear how our communities inform the decisions we take. Delivering improvements to our decision making processes will ensure that the right checks, balances and internal challenge is in place whilst at the same time ensuring that the systems in place do not hinder or stifle progress.

The Grant Thornton Review highlighted a perception of poor progress in resolving service and governance issues, a lack of trust between key individuals charged with governance and of reviews being reopened, such as the reopening of previous standards reviews. The Review stated that these issues had clearly impacted upon the council's ability to focus on service improvement. It went on to suggest that the scheme of delegation and the involvement of senior members

in key decision making had resulted in a lack of empowerment of officers and a lack of agility to enable the council to make prompt decisions when required.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge stated that a review of the Constitution was required and stressed that this must be fundamental in nature, drawing on experienced external input with extensive engagement of managers across the council and elected members. They also recommended that the Scheme of Delegation should be a key component of this review. In addition, the Corporate Peer Challenge identified the valuable contributions to be gained from an effective scrutiny function.

The CIPFA Financial Management Review identified that the budget setting process had historically lacked member engagement and did not focus on key authority objectives within a good governance framework that included an adequate check and challenge process at a political and operational level. They also recommended that financial governance

and decision-making arrangements are reviewed and strengthened from both a political and officer perspective.

Work is already underway to address the issues highlighted by these external reviews. For instance, a Governance Review Project is being delivered which looks to review decision making structures and constitutional arrangements. This includes the review of corporate governance documents policy and procedures to ensure alignment with national best practice and the Council's Corporate Governance Framework. Our approach to this project has been strengthened by taking on board the comments in these external reviews. Recognising the need to develop a good organisational culture, we will engage with members on roles and expectations so that our decision making framework reflects the new culture. We are also exploring moving to a four-yearly election cycle with options due to be considered by Leadership Team in June 2022.

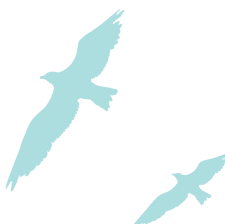
Objectives

The overall objectives of this theme are to:

- ▶ Review and refresh key corporate governance documents laying the foundations for robust decision-making audit and scrutiny and culture change
- ▶ Create a clear and strong role for scrutiny and audit and embed in practice
- ▶ Explore options around a four yearly electoral cycle

Workstreams and Aims

- ▶ **4 yearly election cycle**- Explore options around a four yearly electoral cycle
- ▶ **Constitution and Governance Framework** - Review and revise corporate governance documents
- ▶ **Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit** - Refresh the roles of scrutiny and audit bringing them to the fore of the council's governance assurance, and policy development framework



Key Milestones:

Review of scrutiny arrangements	April 2022
Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)	May 2022
Options Paper to Leadership Team for 4 yearly election cycle	June 2022
Scrutiny work planning event	
Council Decision on options for alternative election cycle	Date TBC following options paper to Leadership Team in June 2022
Revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules agreed	July 2022
Revised Financial Regulations agreed	
Revised Council Procedure Rules	
Revised Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol	August 2022
Implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Transport and Waste	September 2022
Completion of ARAC report and recommendations in relation to governance issues raised (SEND Transport, Waste Contract)	October 2022
Revised scheme of Delegations agreed	

Key Deliverables

- Decision on election cycle
- Updated Key Governance Documents
- Revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules
- Revised Financial Regs
- Revised scheme of Delegations
- Revised Council Procedure Rules
- Revised Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol
- Scrutiny Work Programme

Evidence of Success

When demonstrating clear and effective decision-making, we will see evidence of:

- Decision reports written which set out options and an assessment of their impact on outcomes for residents
- Evidence of effective scrutiny work through robust scrutiny review / input into priority areas
- Audit input driving assurance and improvement
- Commissioners’ role embedded and understood across the Council



Decision Making Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Decision making)	Start Date	Due date
4 yearly election cycle	Statutory Direction	Director- Law Governance	Implement 4-yearly election cycle - Options Paper to Leadership Team - Council Decision to implement	May 2022	Sep 2023 June 2022 TBC
Constitution and Governance Framework	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1, 2. Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 15,19, 21, 27 CIPFA 4.2, Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 6	Director- Law Governance	In-depth review and revision to Corporate Governance Documents - Effective Decision Making Training - Revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules agreed - Revised Financial Regs agreed - Revised Council Procedure Rules - Revised Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol - Revised Scheme of Delegations agreed	Dec 2021 Jul 2022	Oct 2022 Sep 2022 Jul 2022 Jul 2022 Aug 2022 Oct 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 19, 20	Director- Law & Governance	Refresh existing arrangements for arms-length companies - Identify existing arms-length companies, company directors and company administration - Conduct review to ensure appropriate resources are allocated to these organisations - Implement annual reporting arrangements	Jan 2022 Apr 2022 May 2022	Jul 2022 Apr 2022 Jul 2022 Jul 2022



Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Decision making)	Start Date	Due date
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 4, 12, 17, 22	Director- Law Governance	Refresh decision making-arrangements including the role of Scrutiny - Review of scrutiny arrangements - Scrutiny Work Planning event - Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)	Dec 2021	July 2022 Complete Jun 2022 Jul 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 17, 22	Director- Law Governance Director- Children & Education Scrutiny	Implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations relating to key issues - SEND Transport recommendations relating to procurement concluded - Recommendations relating to Waste Contract concluded	Dec 2021 Early 2022	Sep 2022 Sep 2022 Dec 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 34	Chief Executive Director- Law & Governance	Manage position on historic issues through work with ARAC chair	Dec 2021	Ongoing
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 4, 17, 34	Director- Law & Governance	ARAC report and recommendations in relation to SEND Transport Completion of report and recommendations	Dec 2021	Oct 2022 Oct 2022



Theme 5 – Procurement and Commercial

Introduction

Effective procurement, commercial decisions and contract management are important to the council to make sure that value for money is achieved and that our commercial decisions focus on outcomes for residents.

Procurement and commercial decisions have been a factor identified in many of the key issues facing the council - in relation to major contracts (such as Sandwell Leisure Trust, Serco and Sandwell Children's Trust), procurements (including SEND Transport) and property related-issues (including Lion Farm).

The Grant Thornton Review identified common themes around procurements that had been either poorly specified, had insufficient timescales, or decision-makers had not been fully aware of context and detail. In addition, key contracts were found to have been impacted by:

- ▶ A lack of clear contract management responsibility
- ▶ Poorly defined approaches to contract management
- ▶ A lack of appropriate focus on performance indicators, service quality or outcomes.

Immediate steps have been taken following the Grant Thornton Review and decisions have already been made by Cabinet to resolve the specific procurement and contract issues raised. This includes decisions being made around Lion Farm, SEND Transport, Sandwell Leisure Trust and the Oracle Fusion delivery contract.

Actions now need to focus on concluding delivery of some these issues, embedding changes, and conducting effective procurement around systems that will support delivery of the Improvement Plan.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this theme are to:

- ▶ Conclude procurement and commercial matters in relation to key legacy issues
- ▶ Ensure that learning in relation to issues around commercial decisions, procurement and contract management are understood across the council
- ▶ Ensure corporate ownership and effective contract management of major contracts
- ▶ Ensure that major contracts have an effective focus on service quality and outcomes
- ▶ Conduct effective procurement for the new systems that are needed to support the delivery of the council's improvement plan

Workstreams and Aims

- ▶ **Leisure Contract** - to plan for the future delivery of leisure facilities that will enable increased participation in leisure activities
- ▶ **SEND Transport** – to award the contract within timescales to ensure focus on service quality and flexibility of provision meets the needs of children and young people
- ▶ **Lion Farm** – to implement agreed action plan to provide a future for the site
- ▶ **Waste Contract** – to implement effective contract management arrangements that enable improvements in street cleansing and bin collections
- ▶ **Performance Management System** – to assess options and procure, as appropriate, a Performance Management System that supports the council to manage performance effectively
- ▶ **Asset Management System** – to procure and implement a system that delivers the required information to improve asset management and financial reporting

Key Milestones:

Termination notice for SLT contract approved by Cabinet	February 2022
Revised contract governance arrangements in place for Serco contract	March 2022
Asset Management System Procured	
SEND Transport procurement published	May 2022
Waste and Recycling recovery plan – Implementation complete	June 2022
Option appraisal for future leisure management options	Summer 2022
Street Cleansing Recovery Plan: • Approved; and • implemented	July 2022 March 2023
Serco contract performance reporting embedded in PMF	August 2022
Review of Serco contract completed	September 2022
New SEND Transport contract in place	
SEND Transport Contract Monitoring arrangements in place	
Implementation of Asset Management System	Dec 2022
Lion Farm report to Cabinet on determination of position of developer	
Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure services	May 2023
Fleet replacement complete	Mid 2023

Key Deliverables

- Options appraisal for future delivery of Leisure Services
- Contract Governance Arrangements for Serco contract
- Review of Serco Contract
- SEND Transport Contract
- Asset Management System
- Performance Management System
- Lessons learnt around procurement, commercial and contract issues documented

Evidence of Success

When we have robust systems and processes around procurement, commercial matters and contracts, we will see evidence of:

- Key contracts being effectively managed
- Improved outcomes from key contracts and commercial decisions as demonstrated by performance indicators for leisure, and waste
- Lessons learnt documented



Procurement and Commercial Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Procurement and Commercial)	Start Date	Due date
Waste Contract	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1	Director - Borough Economy	Introduction of a more focused framework for contract monitoring - Contract Monitoring Framework agreed - Contract Management framework in place and embedded in PMF reporting – (in line with Q1)	Autumn 2021	Aug 2022 Complete Aug 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 23				
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1	Director - Borough Economy	Review of the contract to refocus our communications and contract monitoring in areas of poor performance and to ensure the council receives the full provisions within the contract from Serco - Procurement of support to review contract - Review of contract completed - Recommendations reviewed - Recommendations adopted, as appropriate - Delivery of recommendations – as appropriate	Autumn 2021	Jan 2023 May 2022 Sep 2022 Oct 2022 Jan 2023 TBC
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 22				
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 22	Director - Borough Economy	Street Cleansing Recovery Plan – completion and implementation - Recovery Plan approved by Waste Management Board - Recovery plan implemented	Autumn 2021	Mar 2023 Jul 2022 Mar 2023
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 24	Director - Borough Economy	Manage the delayed Serco Fleet replacement programme in line with the requirements of the contract - Fleet replacement schedule in place - Fleet replacement complete	Autumn 2021	Mid 2023 Complete Mid 2023

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Procurement and Commercial)	Start Date	Due date
SEND Transport	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 17, 18	Director – Children & Education Director- Finance	Plan in place to ensure new contract commences prior to expiry of current arrangements and appropriate records in place - Cabinet approval - Procurement commenced - Contract Review with DfE - Procurement published for framework - Expiry of current arrangements – end of 2021-22 Academic Year - New contract in place - Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place	Jan 2022	Sep 2022 Complete Complete May 2022 May 2022 Jul 2022 Sep 2022 Sep 2022
	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 17	Director- Law & Governance Scrutiny Director – Children & Education	Implementation of recommendations from Audit and Scrutiny in relation to SEND Transport - Scrutiny Recommendations embedded in plans for new arrangements - Update to Education Scrutiny - Recommendations related to procurement embedded in procurement process - ARAC recommendations implemented	Autumn 2021	Sep 2022 Complete Complete Sept 2022 Oct 2022





Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Procurement and Commercial)	Start Date	Due date
New system procurement	Grant Thornton Key Rec 6	Director- Business Strategy & Change	Explore implementation of a corporate performance management system ► Options Appraisal ► Business Case and Implementation Plan Considered	Jun 2021	Sep 2022 TBC based on selected option
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 2 CIPFA Ref 2.1	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Procurement of new asset management system ► <i>Market Research</i> ► <i>Procurement Concluded</i> ► Implementation	Autumn 2021	Dec 2022 Complete Complete Dec 2022



Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Procurement and Commercial)	Start Date	Due date
Lion Farm	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 25, 26	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Action plan to agree way forward and resolve matter - o <i>Brief Cabinet on options</i> - o <i>Presentation of proposal by developer to Cabinet</i> - o <i>Options appraisal report to Cabinet for approval of way forward</i> ► Implement approved way forward ► Responsibilities of both council and developer clarified within action plan	Dec 2021 Feb 2022	TBC Complete Complete Complete Est. Dec 2022
Leisure Contract	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 14	Director - Borough Economy	Governance arrangements to manage, develop and support the current and future delivery of leisure services across the borough, including the new Aquatic Centre ► <i>Governance arrangements in place</i> ► <i>Termination of existing Contract</i> ► Step-in provider in place ► Option appraisal for future facility management options– Cabinet report ► Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure facilities	Autumn 2021	May 2023 Complete Complete Summer 2022 May 2023



Theme 6 – Partnerships and Relationships

Introduction

The council needs strong effective working relationships with all its partners in Sandwell and the region to deliver the best possible outcomes for residents and the whole borough. This theme is seeking to further develop our connections and strengthen our relationships so that they are sustainable over time and are built on mutual respect and trust.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge praised the council's relationships at a local level stating that these had been consolidated and strengthened during the pandemic. The review also recognised that the council's relationships and related governance arrangements with Sandwell Children's Trust were strong and that the council was working hard with schools and many partners across the Borough to improve early intervention arrangements.

The LGA recommended simplifying the governance and partnership arrangements across both the children's and adults' spheres along with a "clear and creative whole-system plan" to address health inequalities. In regard to the voluntary sector, the LGA suggested that

the authority and the voluntary and community sector undertake a joint project to develop a clear strategic view of the role of that sector going forward and mutual expectations within this.

Sandwell has made good progress on its improvement journey in respect of partnerships and relationships so far. The council has now established joint strategic planning meetings with Sandwell Children's Trust which is strengthening the constructive working relationship. The Sandwell Health and Social Care Partnership (SHCP) has been established for agencies to come together and agree practical approaches to delivering services. There is a clear relationship in place between the SHCP and the Health & Wellbeing Board to ensure that these two partnerships work in tandem to focus on improving outcomes for Sandwell's residents.

In terms of Sandwell's ambitious economic agenda, the Sandwell Aquatics Centre has been delivered on time and on budget for the upcoming Commonwealth Games. New infrastructure developments such as the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital and the new Midland Metro line provide catalysts for wider regeneration.

The LGA stated that the council needed to become much more "visible and engaged at the sub-regional and regional level with partners across the Black Country and the West Midlands" but recognised that the council is becoming more active at this level. The CIPFA Financial Management Review suggested that the council needed to clarify its offer to and ask of partners to be more effective.

The council will re-establish itself as an active partner in key regional and sub regional partnerships such as West Midlands Combined Authority, West Midlands Growth Company and Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership. Sandwell is actively participating in the trailblazer devolution deal with a clear set of 'asks' now in place so that Sandwell can benefit from the devolution of powers, responsibilities and resources from central government especially in relation to achieving net carbon zero.

The council is taking staff, residents, partners and members with it on this improvement journey and this will build trust and confidence in its joint ability to deliver.

Objectives

The overall objectives of this theme are to:

- ▶ Improve Sandwell Council's standing with key partners and professional bodies at national, regional and local level
- ▶ Improve corporate approach to partner relationships
- ▶ Determine the future relationship between Sandwell Council and the VCS and the approach to funding

Workstreams and Aims

- ▶ **Sandwell Children's Trust** – to establish a corporate approach to working with SCT on shared issues and continue with robust governance arrangements ensuring accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.
- ▶ **Regional and Sub-regional presence** – continue to develop relationships with regional and sub regional bodies in order to raise Sandwell Council's profile.
- ▶ **Effective Local Structures** – to review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere' and use a whole-system approach to working on shared issues with partners.
- ▶ **VCS relationship** – to review the relationship with VCS including the funding approach



Key Milestones:

Regular cross-SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings in place	Achieved Feb 2022
City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme approved by CA Board	Achieved March 2022
Sandwell asks of trailblazer devolution deal agreed	
Officer representation agreed to key regional and sub-regional meetings and clear	
VCS Grants review update report to Leadership Team	May 2022
Member representation to key regional and sub-regional meetings agreed	June 2022
Health and Wellbeing Strategy	July 2022
SCT Contract performance reporting embedded within Council PMF	August 2022
Review of SCT Contract concludes	Summer 2022
Quarterly system-wide deep dives conducted for health inequality	March 2023
VCS Strategy formation commences	2023



Key Deliverables

- ▶ Revised KPI suite for SCT contract
- ▶ SCT contract review
- ▶ CRSTS allocation
- ▶ Trailblazer devolution deal
- ▶ Health and Wellbeing strategy
- ▶ VCS Strategy
- ▶ Revised partnership structures in children's area of People's sphere

Evidence of Success

When we have effective partnerships and relationships at all levels, we will see evidence of:

- ▶ Improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell evidenced in KPIs
- ▶ Improved external review outcomes
- ▶ Regular and active presence at regional and sub regional meetings resulting in more opportunities linked to Sandwell's priorities (e.g. Sandwell's financial asks realised)
- ▶ Improved performance in outcomes on the impact of health inequalities on individuals
- ▶ Clear understanding of the relationship between the Council and the VCS that is embedded in practice – evidenced by feedback from VCS





Partnerships and Relationships Delivery plan

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Partnerships and Relationships)	Start Date	Due date
Sandwell Children's Trust	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 13	Director Children & Education	Continue with robust governance arrangements in place ensuring the accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell in line with the contract ▶ Performance reporting embedded within Council PMF ▶ KPI Suite reviewed ▶ Revised KPI suite agreed ▶ Review of Contract concludes	Autumn 2021 Jan 2022 Mar 2022 Summer 2022	Ongoing Aug 2022 and then quarterly Summer 2022 Summer 2022 Summer 2022
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 13	Director Children & Education	Establish and maintain positive relationship between SMBC and SCT at senior officer and member level • Continuation of regular cross- SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings in place (including Chair of Trust Board, Lead Member, CEO of the Trust and DCS) • Confirm Member participation in Governance Arrangements for new Municipal Year	Autumn 2021	Ongoing Ongoing Jun 2022
	Grant Thornton Statutory Rec 1 Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 13	Director Children & Education	Establish corporate approach to working with SCT on shared issues, such as corporate parenting and delivery of Early Help service ▶ Continuation of arrangements for strategic priorities to be shared across the partnership and include a series of joint work. Initial focus areas are corporate parenting and early help. ▶ Assurance that approach to working together is effective through regular programme of performance reports	Autumn 2021	Ongoing Ongoing Aug 2022 and then ongoing

Workstream	Reference	Lead	Actions (Partnerships and Relationships)	Start Date	Due date
Regional and Sub-regional presence	Grant Thornton Improvement Rec 10 Corporate Peer Challenge pg13	Director-Regeneration & Growth Cabinet Chief Executive	Continue to develop the relationship with and actively participate in regional and sub-regional bodies (e.g. WM Combined Authority, Black Country LEP) to maximise opportunities for Sandwell ▶ Officer representation agreed to attend key meetings and a clear agenda set for each forum ▶ Sandwell asks of trailblazer devolution deal agreed ▶ Participation in Investor Conference ▶ CRSTS allocation (transport) approved by CA Board ▶ Member representation to attend key meetings agreed and agenda for each forum shared	Jan 2022	 Complete Complete Complete Complete Jun 2022
	Effective Local Structures	Director – Children and Education Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health	Review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere' ▶ Partnership structures in relation to transition from children's to adults in place ▶ Initial scoping of work with partners around partnership structures in the children's sphere	Mar 2022	 In place Sept 2022
			▶ Develop Health & Wellbeing Strategy that builds on existing whole system approach to addressing health inequalities ▶ Test adequacy of partnerships and integration through Health Outcomes Framework and system-wide thematic deep dives	Apr 2022 Apr 2022	Jul 2022 Jul 2022
VCS relationship	Corporate Peer Challenge Rec 11	Leadership Team	Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector. ▶ Corporate review of grant funding ▶ VCS Strategy formation commences	Mar 2022 Mar 2022 2023	2023 Sep 2022 2023

