

Report to Cabinet

13 September 2023

Subject:	Improvement Plan Progress
Cabinet Member:	Leader of the Council Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
Director:	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Strategic Lead – Service Improvement Kate Ashley Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk Senior Lead Officer – Service Improvement Rebecca Jenkins Rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk Lead Officer – Service Improvement Dawn Webster Dawn_webster@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That progress against the Improvement Plan up to 3 August 2023 be received
- 1.2. That Cabinet receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register
- 1.3. That Cabinet receive changes to the Improvement Plan



- 1.4. That Cabinet note that Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee will consider the Improvement Plan Progress report on 14 and 21 September respectively, and that any recommendations or comments made in relation to the Improvement Plan progress will be reported to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1. This report provides a quarterly update on progress against the Improvement Plan agreed by Council on 7 June 2022. The Improvement Plan incorporates all recommendations from the original Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, as well as the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 2.2. As part of the council's assurance framework for the Improvement Plan, the LGA, Grant Thornton and CIPFA conducted follow-up reviews in Autumn 2022 to evaluate the council's progress on implementing the specific recommendations from those individual reviews. The responses to the findings from the follow-up visits were reported to Cabinet in March and June 2023.
- 2.3. The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes. Changes to the Improvement Plan are tracked through the established change control process to form a refresh of the Improvement Plan.
- 2.4. Risk management is embedded within the council's programme management of the Improvement Plan. A risk register is in place which underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). Cabinet is asked to receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively and to provide contextual information for future decision making.
- 2.5. As part of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Improvement Plan, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board review progress of the Improvement Plan and utilise the plan for work programming purposes.



Both Committees are due to consider progress at their meetings in September and any recommendations or comments will be presented for Cabinet's consideration at a future meeting.

2.6. Under the Statutory Directions, the council is required to report progress against the Improvement Plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities every six months. Reports have been submitted in December 2022 and June 2023 with the next report due December 2023.

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

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

4.1. Background

4.1.1. A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 to address recommendations from a Grant Thornton Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements, a CIPFA financial management review, an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, and Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The single Improvement Plan replaced the Governance Review Improvement Plan which was approved in January 2022.



- 4.1.2. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against the Improvement Plan, Council approved that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual.
- 4.1.3. This report is the fifth update to Cabinet on progress of the Improvement Plan.

5. Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress

- 5.1. Over the three months to 3 August 2023, significant progress has continued to be made to deliver the actions within the Improvement Plan. This includes the handover of Sandwell Aquatics Centre to Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) in July 2023 and the agreement for future delivery of leisure services, the launch of the One Team Framework (values and behaviours), and the conclusion of historic matters through a report to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.
- 5.2. A comprehensive monitoring tool has been developed which includes a progress status rating for all actions. The monitoring tool provides quick reference around which actions are on track for delivery, as well as highlighting areas that may require remedial action or additional levels of assurance. The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool is included at Appendix 1.
- 5.3. Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is contained within Appendix 2. This includes a description of workstream progress including progress against milestones and achievements, and any progress issues. A summary by theme is provided below.

5.4. Organisational Culture Theme

- 5.4.1. Achievements this quarter:
- Values and Behaviours Launch and Share events with 419 people managers carried out.



- Approach agreed for Corporate Governance training and development with preparations being made for a series of scenario-based learning events.
- Member Development Plan in place for 2023-24 Municipal Year and Member Handbook created.

5.4.2. Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member Relationship**
 - In relation to the Member-Officer Relationship, there are ongoing mechanisms in place for insight and assurance around the Officer Member Relationship include views from external reviews, standards cases, feedback from Directors, Group Leaders and Chief Whips. The external reviews in late 2022 acknowledged the significant strides in improving the relationship
 - A Member-Officer relationship survey was launched in April to gain further insight into the relationship and provide a source of insight to aid continuous improvement activity.
 - The reason for the exception report is that the survey received a lower response rate from Officers and Members than was expected. As a result, new plans have been formed for additional insight-gathering to take place in Autumn 2023. The insight will be used in sessions focusing on the Member-Officer Relationship led by the LGA. The approach takes into account feedback from Officers and Members around the response rate and style of engagement.
 - Following the Autumn insight-gathering, consideration will be given to whether an ongoing mechanism is needed and to embed this within our continuous improvement approach.

5.5. Corporate Oversight Theme

5.5.1. Achievements this quarter

- SEND 2 Transport procurement project lessons learnt shared with Wider Leadership Team. Actions embedded into plans for SEND 3 procurement
- Refreshed Corporate Plan agreed, and Directorate business plans finalised
- Improvement Plan Annual Report and Report to Secretary of State on the Improvement Plan progress submitted



- Local Partnerships Review to inform Corporate Programme Management Office complete
- Member engagement held to inform Customer Journey Programme

5.6. Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Oracle Transformation Programme**
 - The Oracle Transformation Programme is currently in its modelling phase.
 - The reason for the exception report is that there have been delays to some workstreams within the modelling phase of the programme. A revised plan has been created and approved by the Oracle Programme Board. The programme is still on track for its planned Go Live date of April 2024.
- **Integration of Performance Reporting on revenue, capital and performance information**
 - Quarterly performance reports are made to Cabinet and Leadership Team across the Performance Management Framework. This includes separate financial reports and performance management reports.
 - The intention is to bring the reporting together to improve collective insight into performance.
 - The reason for the exception report is that work to commence on this has been revised to commence from March 2024. This will allow the work to be informed by the reporting ability of Oracle Fusion once implemented.
- **Directorate level restructuring and review of Spans and Layers**
 - An appointment has been made to the Assistant Chief Executive position and they are due to commence in post in September
 - The reason for the exception report is that the Directorate-level structure is under discussion, and the spans and layers review is being considered in line with the workforce strategy implementation.
 - Actions are currently placed on hold within the Plan, however work to map existing spans and layers has been completed.

5.7. Strategic Direction Theme

5.7.1. Achievements this quarter



- Cabinet approval to new Terms of Reference for the Equalities Commission Board
- Cabinet approval to appointment of Strategic Delivery Partner for the Regeneration Pipeline
- Appointment of Contractor for housing stock condition surveys
- Budget Consultation launched

5.7.2. Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **HRA Business Plan: Stock condition surveys**
 - The HRA Business Plan was agreed by Cabinet in February.
 - A range of factors need to be taken into account in reviewing and amending the plan in future years including the results of stock condition surveys.
 - The reason for the exception report is that problems were encountered with the initial procurement resulting in a revised approach and a new procurement activity being conducted.
 - A contract has now been awarded and the contractor is due to commence work in September.
- **Commercial Strategy – Business Cases and Resourcing**
 - The Commercial Strategy was agreed in March 2023. A set of project outlines were agreed, and work has commenced to develop these to full business case stage and monthly highlight reporting is in place.
 - The reason for the exception report is that there is slippage against the action plans for developing the full business cases. This continues to be monitored by the Corporate Transformation Board. There has also been difficulty in recruiting a Commercial Project Officer. Other options are being considered for the recruitment.
- **Customer Journey Strategy**
 - Work is progressing on the Customer Journey Programme with governance arrangements and a plan in place.
 - The reason for the exception report is that engagement sessions with residents were put on hold due to planned sessions coinciding with Serco strike action.
 - Engagement with Members has been conducted focusing on ward and casework management and these have been positively received.



- New plans have been formed for the resident engagement sessions and the date for the approval of the strategy adjusted to March 2024.

5.8. Decision Making Theme

5.8.1. Achievements this quarter

- Position of historic issue report received by ARAC June 2023 and matter concluded.

5.8.2. Decision Making Progress Issues

- No issues in this theme

5.9. Procurement and Commercial Theme

5.9.1. Achievements this quarter

- Handover of Sandwell Aquatics Centre to SLT
- Agreement reached with SLT to extend SLT's operation of leisure centres
- Contract Management Guidance and Templates live on Council's intranet
- Street Cleansing Recovery plan incorporated into the annual service delivery plan provided by Serco.
- Completion of Phase 2 Tech Forge Asset Management System (transfer of data into the system)

5.9.2. Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Completion of Fleet Replacement**
 - The waste service fleet replacement continues to be overseen through contract management arrangements with Serco.
 - The reason for the exception report is that there has been a delay to the final order of 16 Refuse Collection Vehicles linked to supplier issues for build slots and discussions around the waste management strategy. The final order is now in place with delivery of vehicles expected by end 2023.
- **Performance Management System: Options Appraisal**
 - A performance management system is being explored to support business intelligence across the council and facilitate reporting within the performance management framework.



- The reason for the exception report is that the original timescales to bring forward an options appraisal have been pushed back due to supplier availability for system demos. The final system demo is being held in August.
- The options appraisal is due to be completed by October 2023.

5.10.Partnerships and Relationships Theme

5.10.1. Achievements this quarter

- Continuation of effective governance arrangements and joint work with Sandwell Children's Trust including launch of Family Hubs programme with partners.
- Commencement of modelling of currently processes relating to the transition from children's to adults' services
- Engagement with key regional and sub-regional groups continues to bring benefits for Sandwell including forthcoming Devolution Deal (due to be reported to Cabinet in September), securing funding for 2-3 sites under the OPE programme, submission of a substantial bid for affordable homes to the WM Growth Company, and ongoing engagement in relation to the Commonwealth Games Underspend (having already secured £2m to fund increased utility costs at the Sandwell Aquatic Centre).

5.10.2. Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy**
 - An annual report on grants with the VCS is being prepared for Cabinet in Autumn with the next steps for delivering the strategy.
 - The reason for the exception report is that the strategy is being developed over a longer period to enable a more fundamental look at the relationship with the VCS to take place.
- **Preparing for Adulthood Project**
 - Work on this project has commenced and modelling of current processes is taking place.
 - The reason for the exception report is due to resources as there have been difficulties recruiting to a project manager position. The project is being supported by the Corporate Transformation Office

6. Statutory Recommendations



- 6.1. The Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review 2021 included three statutory recommendations that the council has a legal obligation to respond to. These recommendations are incorporated into the single Improvement Plan and are embedded across each of the six themes.
- 6.2. In their follow up review 2022, Grant Thornton recognised progress against all three statutory recommendations.
- 6.3. To provide an overview of progress against these three specific recommendations, Appendix 3 extracts the key actions that respond to each of the recommendations, and they are summarised below.
- 6.4. **Statutory Recommendation 1** - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council.
- Progress update:
 - Continuing to implement strategies to address the service issues highlighted in the Grant Thornton report.
 - Sandwell Leisure Trust – agreement reached to extend SLT’s operation of leisure centres to March 2027.
 - Handover of Sandwell Aquatic Centre to SLT
 - Sandwell Children’s Trust – Governance arrangements remain in place. Joint work in place with SCT in relation to corporate parenting and early help. Revised contract commenced April 2023
 - Waste Contract – Contract Monitoring framework progressing well and embedded in PMF reporting. Review of the Contract is complete.
 - ERP (Oracle Fusion) – support provider in place and implementation commenced. Project Management and Governance arrangements are in place.
 - Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. First monitoring provided to Cabinet in November.
- 6.5. **Statutory Recommendation 2** - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.



- Progress Update
 - The first phase of the Governance Review has completed with the Constitution refresh.
 - Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules. Next phase of Corporate Governance Development is being rolled out during 2023-2024.
 - Commercial Strategy approved in March 2023.
 - Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2023.
 - SEND Transport lessons learnt completed and shared with Wider Leadership Team

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

- Progress Update
 - Member Development – New Member induction arrangements are in place. Member Development Programme is being regularly reviewed by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. Member Handbook created for Municipal Year 2023-24.
 - Officer Development – A consolidated programme of fundamental training for managers on Corporate Governance matters has commenced. A broader Management Development Programme will be rolled out in 2023 following the approval of the Workforce Strategy.
 - Organisational Culture – Extensive engagement held to inform the One Team Framework (Values and Behaviours) which was approved in March 2023. Values and behaviours launched.
 - Meeting structures to facilitate Cabinet Member and Leadership Team cross-working in place and meeting needs.



7. Reporting Framework, Governance and Assurance

- 7.1. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery, Council approved the reporting mechanism for the Improvement Plan in June 2022. This set out that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual. The diagram included at Appendix 4 sets out the governance framework.
- 7.2. This report forms the fifth quarterly update to Cabinet on the Improvement Plan. Leadership Team have reviewed progress against the plan every month.
- 7.3. The Government Directions require reporting on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals to the Secretary of State from the council and the Commissioners. The last report was made in June 2023. The next report is due December 2023
- 7.4. Member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, are used for providing a steer and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.
- 7.5. The Governance & Constitution Review Committee and cross-party Working Group have been integral to the development and review of the governance documents, ahead of decisions taken by Council last year.
- 7.6. Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register. They received the last quarterly update in June 2023 and are due to consider this quarterly progress update in September 2023.
- 7.7. Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as regular reports on overall progress. This has included a 'deep dive' focus on the work under the Organisational Culture theme and engagement with the workforce, as well as Customer Journey. The Board will receive this quarterly update in September 2023.
- 7.8. Following consideration of the progress report to Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, those members will identify areas for further exploration and reporting. Any



recommendations or comments from these committees for Cabinet's consideration will be presented to Cabinet at a future meeting.

8. External Reviews

- 8.1. External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations made through external reviews. Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA conducted follow up reviews in late 2022 with all reviews acknowledging the positive progress made.
- 8.2. Reports from Sandwell's Commissioners have been submitted to the Secretary of State on a six-monthly basis. In their June 2023 report, Commissioners noted the considerable progress made over the first fifteen months of the intervention towards addressing the significant challenges facing the authority. In their third report, the Commissioners outlined that their focus over the coming months will be in the following areas:
- Developing the strategic capacity of the organisation
 - Implementation and embedding of the council's values and behaviours (One Team Framework)
 - Establishing a comprehensive transformation programme linked to the delivery of the medium-term financial strategy
 - Approval of the 2020/21 accounts by the external auditors and a clear timetable for approval of the 2021/22 accounts
- 8.3. Planning is underway for a return follow-up visit by Grant Thornton in Autumn 2023.

9. Resources

- 9.1. In the development of the Improvement Plan, a review of the resources available to deliver the plan was carried out. Resources to deliver the Improvement Plan have been allocated from within existing commitments in the majority of cases. Council approved funding of approximately £1.768m for one-off funding to progress improvement plan actions. A summary of the quarterly position is provided within the council's quarterly budget monitoring report.



- 9.2. The fund has enabled recruitment to key positions including corporate transformation capacity, work on organisational culture and resources to support the implementation of finance improvements and the Governance review. Where longer-term staffing capacity has been required, this has been built into base budgets to ensure sustainability.
- 9.3. To provide additional capacity across improvement activities, the Improvement Reserve is being used to fund graduate placements within the National Graduate Development Programme which will commence from October 2023. These placements will not only provide capacity to council's current improvement journey but will also develop skills in the workforce of the future that will support sustainability.

10. Risk Management

- 10.1. The Improvement Plan Risk Register underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22) and is currently rated as an overall Amber risk. The risk register is reported monthly to Leadership Team and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.
- 10.2. The current risk register is attached as Appendix 5. The main risks are associated with:
- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the corporate programme management office. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June. To provide additional capacity across improvement activities, the Improvement Reserve is being used to fund graduate placements within the National Graduate Development Programme which will commence from September 2023.
 - **Communication** – to ensure everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Communication is taking place through a range of methods including briefings, live events, and regular messages.
 - **Investment and Financial Resources** – to ensure financial resources are made available resource gaps/ pressures associated with the Improvement Plan have been identified
 - **Constitutional Changes**- If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation then opportunities will be missed. First round of training has been delivered along with revised templates and guidance. Phase 2 of the Corporate



Governance Review is underway, and this will focus on embedding the constitutional changes

- 10.3. Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risk has reduced:
- IP10 Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Data Quality- Amber to Green

- 10.4. Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risks have been closed:
- IP2 Programme Management Arrangements - target score reached

11. Changes to the Improvement Plan – Phase 3 Refresh

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

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

11.3. The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 6. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour.

11.4. The changes made are summarised below.

- 3 new sub-actions have been added
- 14 changes have been made to action delivery timescales, and milestones (6 of which are of more than 3 months)
- 2 changes have been made to descriptions of actions
- 3 Main actions have been closed as the activity is complete (this includes 1 main action that also closing results in a Workstream closure)
- 2 Assurance actions have been closed.

12. Alternative Options

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



12.2. The Directions issued by the Secretary of State are a statutory requirement and the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately. Failure to do so would likely result in further intervention measures.

12.3. Reviewing progress against the Improvement Plan enables senior officers and members to have oversight of delivery, and take corrective action, as necessary. Alternative methods of monitoring progress could be adopted. The current monitoring method is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides Leadership Team with the oversight they require.

13. Implications

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



<p>Risk:</p>	<p>If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the government Direction, or the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the council risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the 1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>A risk register is in place and will be maintained for the duration of the Improvement Plan which will underpin the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). This will be reported monthly to Leadership Team, quarterly to Cabinet and will be regularly reported to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>The successful delivery of this Improvement Plan will require the development and review of many of the council's policies and procedures. These changes will build in consideration of the impact on equalities throughout the development and will include an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.</p>
<p>Health and Wellbeing:</p>	<p>The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and tackling health inequalities in a multi-faceted way. Therefore, improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to deliver services that will improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell.</p>
<p>Social Value</p>	<p>Within the Improvement Plan, the council is committed to developing the Social Value Policy in conjunction with the refresh of the Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules. Through strengthening our asks of contractors through this Social Value Policy and linking them to the Corporate Plan objectives, the</p>



	council will be able to maximise its social value return.
Climate Change	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Green in everything we do is one of the Fairer Sandwell principles running throughout the Corporate Plan. Any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to embed this principle and further the climate change agenda.
Corporate Parenting:	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities include being a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care and supporting young people once they leave care. Therefore, any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to be a good Corporate Parent.

14. Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool July 2023
2. Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary July 2023
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting July 2023
4. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram
5. Improvement Plan Risk Register July 2023
6. Changes to the Improvement Plan July 2023

15. Background Papers

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Approval of Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)
- Reports to the Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing and Communities:
 - June 2022 Reports
 - [Sandwell Council Report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, June 2022](#)



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



- [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report 2022](#)
- [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report February 2022](#)
- [CIPFA Financial Management Report January 2022](#)

