

Improvement Plan Risk Register

January 2024



1. Best start in life for children and young people



2. People live well and age well



3. Strong resilient communities





4. Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods





5. A strong and inclusive economy





6. A connected and accessible Sandwell



Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Oct 23)	Current Risk Score (Jan 24)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)
IP1	<p>Improvement Plan objectives and member / officer engagement in those objectives</p> <p>If programme objectives are not clearly defined to ensure they are within scope, deliverable, understood and agreed and/or that there is unclear ownership of actions and workstreams, then the programme will proceed with no clear direction, may become unmanageable (incl. scope creep), and/or missed opportunities resulting in slower progress than planned, failure to meet external review recommendations and a prolonged Government intervention</p>	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	3 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement as part of the development of the Improvement Plan - sharing themes and workstreams with staff and members Communications Plan implemented for governance review, CPC and Statutory Notice Objectives for each Theme within the Improvement Plan identified Regular reporting to Cabinet, ARAC and Scrutiny in place. Council approval of Improvement Plan and reports to SoS. Regular Staff communications on progress of Improvement Plan in place Improvement Plan Actions embedded into Corporate Plan and Business Plans to provide assurance of sustainable improvement Key components of Finance Improvement Plan embedded in IP and Corporate Plan All Improvement Plan actions have an identified Responsible Officer and Cabinet Member Arrangements in place to provide business continuity following SH & GD departure <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Plan delivered including all staff briefings including key messages around Improvement Plan Staff and member engagement through Organisational Culture change programme Ensure Executive Directors are aware of Improvement Plan governance and responsibilities and develop ownership of the plan as part of induction
IP3	<p>Allocation of sufficient resources to project management and project delivery/ maintaining Business as Usual while delivering the Improvement plan</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terms of Reference for internal Improvement Plan Review Meeting updated to reflect government intervention, single Improvement Plan and assurance framework


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	<p>If sufficient resources (capacity and capability) and where necessary additional resources are not allocated to the management and delivery of the improvement plan then this may result in officer fatigue, loss of motivation and the programme will fail to deliver all of its objectives.</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PMO support being provided by existing experienced resources within Service Improvement • Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan have been identified • Council on 07/06/22 approved Use of Improvement & Capacity Reserve and 2021/22 underspend allocated to Improvement Plan actions • Resource issues and risks associated with the Improvement Plan reviewed monthly by Leadership Team and Register maintained • Appointment of interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements, as well as moving forward key transformational activity • Improvement Plan Actions embedded into Corporate Plan and Business Plans to provide assurance of sustainable improvement • Local Partnerships Review of PMO concluded <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LT work on prioritisation to conclude to ensure that the improvement priorities are clear and resources are available to manage risk of officer fatigue and loss of motivation. • Establishment of resourced Corporate PMO • National Graduate Development Scheme - placements to be focused on IP priorities • Ensure Executive Directors are aware of Improvement Plan governance and responsibilities and develop ownership of the plan as part of induction

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IP4	<p>Project and risk governance assurance arrangements If a robust assurance framework is not put in place to in respect of project assurance, including detailing roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders (eg Cabinet, Scrutiny, ARAC, partners, IB, etc) then the council may be unable to effectively monitor and evidence the improvement required.</p>	6 Green	3 Green	3 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of additional capacity to support delivery and implementation of key projects taken place in Asset Management, Finance, Service Improvement and Legal Services • Terms of Reference for Improvement Plan Review Meeting in place • Governance approach included within Council report 07/06/22 • Risk identification has taken place • Agreement for Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA to review progress regularly • Improvement Plan Risk Register in place • Terms of Reference for internal Improvement Plan Review Meeting updated to reflect government intervention, single Improvement Plan and assurance framework including role of Scrutiny and Audit Committees. • Roles of Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit agreed with Chairs • Quarterly reports to Cabinet, Audit and Scrutiny well-established and on forward plan for 2023-24 • Scrutiny consideration of culture theme progress in Dec 22 • Consideration of external review reports by Scrutiny and Audit • Update to Improvement Plan to reflect findings from GT, LGA and CIPFA follow-up reviews • Grant Thornton follow up review 2023 lifted Statutory Recommendations and found "no evidence of any significant weaknesses for ensuring that the Council makes informed decisions and properly manages risk" <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scrutiny regular review on Culture Theme progress • Agreement for ongoing external assurance activity • Consider additional action to address further recommendations from Grant Thornton follow up review Autumn 2023
IP5	<p>Communication Strategy-If a robust communications strategy is not put in place detailing how, when and what information is</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review visits from GT, LGA and CIPFA held Autumn 2022. Reports received from GT and LGA and presented to Cabinet. Review report

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	<p>shared with the various internal and external stakeholders, then not everyone will be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities for delivering the improvement plan and effective service delivery. In addition, the DLUHC may lose confidence in the council's ability to improve resulting in extended/ additional intervention.</p>					<p>from CIPFA received Jan 23 and presented to ARAC. Due to be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny in March</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Approach set out in Improvement Plan approved by Council 07/06/22 • Key messages document for stakeholders in place • Regular PMO/Communications meetings to ensure key messages are embedded within internal and external communications • Communication with stakeholders to share details of transition between KBD and SL. • Communication with stakeholders to share progress update and annual report June 2023. <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with stakeholders to share details of Improvement Plan • Recruitment to vacancy within comms structure • Development of post-intervention communications strategy
IP6	<p>Investment and Financial Resources</p> <p>If sufficient/ additional financial resources are not made available, and the IP is expected to be delivered from existing budgets then the IP may not be delivered within the necessary timescales or to scope.</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular comms with stakeholders taking place as per comms plan including incorporation in all staff briefings • Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan identified • Council on 07/06/22 approved use of Improvement & Capacity Reserve and 2021/22 underspend allocated to Improvement Plan actions • Resource issues and risks associated with the Improvement Plan reviewed monthly by Leadership Team • Appointment of interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements, as well as moving forward key transformational activity • Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place and key milestones are being delivered <p>Further Actions</p>

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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resource allocation to deliver the Improvement Plan and determine if there are any gaps Identify additional resources or reprioritise activity following identification of resource gaps Graduate recruitment to focus on IP priority projects
IP10	<p>Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Data Quality</p> <p>If a robust PMF is not put in place and appropriate quality data captured then the council will be unable to effectively monitor and evidence improvement, delivery of the Improvement Plan and delivery of the Corporate Plan resulting in a failure to achieve the Council's objectives.</p> <p>Closed as programme risk, moved to Service Improvement Risk Register to be managed within Business-as-usual arrangements.</p>	4 (Green)	4 (Green)	4 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Management Framework approved in April 2022 Evidence of success outlined within each of the Improvement Plan themes focusing on outcomes for each theme Improvement Plan Monitoring approach approved by Council and regular monitoring in place Resources approved by Council to address staffing resources required to sustain PMF 2022/23 Quarterly Corporate Performance Report presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny (Q1 Sept/Oct 22, Q2 Dec 22/Jan 23) Residents Survey and Budget Consultation exercise conducted in Summer 2022 to feed into PMF and 2023/24 service and financial planning Process in place for monthly and quarterly monitoring at corporate level Corporate approach to consultation and engagement with residents, including regular residents survey agreed by Leadership Team. Member Officer Survey conducted to provide a temperature check on the relationship Improvement Plan activity embedded in Corporate Plan and Business Plans Refreshed KPIs included in Corporate Plan refresh and streamlined reporting to Leadership Team (from Q1 report) Development of Customer Experience metrics as part of Corporate Plan refresh <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence collation to be produced to support IP Recruitment to additional corporate performance team posts

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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Management System options appraisal and procurement to provide capability for performance management Refresh of Member Officer Survey / alternative mechanism conducted to provide a temperature check on the relationship
IP11	<p>Continued focus and resources allocated to historic issues</p> <p>If the council does not focus on the Improvement plan and corporate plan priorities and continues to focus and allocate resources on historic issues, then this will impact the timely delivery of both the Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan.</p>	4 (Green)	4 (Green)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assurance from LGA CPC Follow up Review around development of PMF Improvement Plan contains activity to be concluded, and lessons learnt embedding from historic issues Cabinet and Leadership Team approach to historic issues Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place Progress on GT recommendations specifically related to the proper functioning of Scrutiny and Audit Committees. Lessons learnt captured in relation to SEND transport Leader has confirmed executive's position in relation to a further review in relation to Wragge/Cox and this was reported to ARAC in June 2023 <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons learnt framework to be introduced as part of continuous improvement plan. Lessons learnt to be collated relating to historic issues and shared across organisation Maintain watching brief of council activity to ensure resources are not diverted to historical issues
IP12	<p>Risk approach and progress monitoring (optimism bias)</p> <p>If the approach taken to risk scoring and/or progress monitoring against the delivery plans is unrealistic (e.g. being overly optimistic around progress and timescales or</p>	6 (Green)	3 (Green)	6 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grant Thornton follow up review of progress against historical issues Corporate risk scoring definitions applied Definition in place for progress monitoring Red/Amber/Green progress monitoring for Improvement Plan Roles of Scrutiny and Audit confirmed

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	likelihood and severity of a risk) then there will be a failure to appropriately manage the programme and a loss of confidence in its delivery.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports to Scrutiny and Audit Committees presented in September 2022 • PMO reviewed use of RAG ratings for consistency and to ensure that progress monitoring is presenting a realistic view and reflecting risk associated with actions as well as progress against plans (September 2022). • Grant Thornton follow up review 2023 lifted Statutory Recommendations and found "no evidence of any significant weaknesses for ensuring that the Council makes informed decisions and properly manages risk" <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reporting to Cabinet, Scrutiny and ARAC and Commissioners' views
IP13	<p>Constitutional Changes</p> <p>If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation and put into practice, then opportunities will be missed, progress will be limited, and there may be non-compliance with council processes.</p>	9 (Amber)	9 (Amber)	6 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT, LGA, and CIPFA follow up reviews provide assurance • Alignment of workstream with organisational culture theme through Officer participation in Culture Working Group • Revised set of guidance and templates in place to support the changes made around key decisions • First round of training delivered to budget holders and procurement card holders in relation to spend thresholds and procurements processes. • New Scrutiny Handbook launched • New EIA guidance issued for decision-making • Sub-delegation schemes developed with Directors • Member Development Plan Refreshed • Decision-making arrangements (forward plan, report sign off etc.) reviewed. • Governance Review Phase 2 project plan in place to embed the constitutional changes (Corporate Governance Development Programme) <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Phase 2 of Mod.Gov

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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a programme of learning for Officers around effective decision making Development of local KPIs to monitor performance in relation to decision-making e.g. timeliness of report submissions, publication of reports, use of exemptions, forward plan notice given on time. MDP Delivery Monitoring of local KPIs (once introduced) 							
IP14 SRR 27a 06/09	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Central Government Funding and Resource Allocation</p> <p>Local Government continues to operate in an uncertain financial environment arising from reducing central government funding, increasing demand for services, and more recently the impact of the high levels of inflation being experienced.</p> <p>If the government does not provide local authorities with clarity over the future plans for health and social care reforms, the Public Health grant, the Better Care Fund, the package of one-off social care grants, business rates reset and retention, and future years funding, and it continues with one year funding settlements then this inhibits local authorities' ability to effectively manage medium term/ three year plans and put in place the necessary processes and</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>23/24</td> <td>24/25</td> <td>25/26</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;">*</td> <td style="background-color: #FFD700;">*</td> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;">*</td> </tr> </table> <p><i>* There are a number of factors that underpin the wider risk score for this risk, and the score will continue to remain fluid throughout each 12-month cycle as the council develops its MTFS, generally in-line with the below pattern. However, overall the council is confident that it has processes in place in order to be able to adequately mitigate these risks, and that it will remain able to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities, including the setting of a balanced</i></p>			23/24	24/25	25/26	*	*	*			<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current and ongoing measures in place to Manage Risk as set out in the Strategic Risk Register The review by CIPFA on the council's financial management and governance arrangements, noted that the council was initially a progressive two-star (out of five) authority. The follow up review subsequently undertaken by CIPFA progressed this to a three-star. The review also looked at financial resilience and concluded that the council is financially stable and in recent years has been able to contribute towards reserves through achieving a balanced budget or an underspend. An underspend was delivered in 2022/23. A fundamental review of the MTFS (in line with the CIPFA recommendations) has been completed, to ensure that the council understands the challenges ahead and to ensure that the MTFP matches the ambitions of the corporate plan and regeneration plans for Sandwell. A balanced budget for 2023/24 was approved by Council on 21st February 2023 and includes savings totalling £21.4m. Monthly monitoring of savings is carried out by Finance Business Partners in year. Savings are RAG rated and reported to Directors monthly through DMT meetings and to LT budget meetings. Budget surgery meetings are held mid-year to review savings rated 'red', with a view to understanding any issues hampering delivery and to unblocking those issues. Budget surgery meetings are attended by the Director of Finance, appropriate Directors and a range of officers from across the organisation. Monitoring of savings includes any savings carried forward from previous years that were not delivered in those years.
23/24	24/25	25/26											
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	<p>actions to manage funding pressures.</p> <p>If the council is unable to plan effectively as a result of funding uncertainty, and is unable to identify sufficient savings and put in place the necessary policies, processes and actions to manage pressures, pay and price inflation and manage its spending plans, then this will impact on the council's financial resilience and its ability to effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities including the setting of a balanced budget for future years. This will impact on the council's ability to deliver sustainable services to the people of Sandwell.</p>	<p><i>budget for future years.</i></p>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star Chambers continue to be used to support budget setting. During August and September 2023, a Star Chamber meeting was held in relation to each Council directorate, focusing on the directorate's financial position, savings delivery within 2023/24, ongoing budget pressures and savings to be delivered in 2024/25. Star Chamber meetings include the Chief Executive and Portfolio Holders as well as the appropriate Director and Finance Business Partners. • Star Chamber meetings are used as the initiation process to generate further savings proposals for the following financial year and to test those proposals with elected members. This is the first step in the process towards balancing the budget for the following year. • Directorate budget pressures and growth are calculated annually by Finance Business Partners, and for Adult Social Care includes a growth model that extrapolates client numbers and average placement costs forward, building in assumed increases in market rates. • A Strategic Finance Manager post has been created, with a view to having a dedicated resource to creating and updating the MTFS model and to ensuring assumptions, eg, pay inflation assumptions, are calculated with consideration and in accordance with wider local authority group assumptions. • LG Futures have been commissioned to provide financial benchmarking data, including assumptions on grant income in future years, • Regular discussions take place with WMCA over the likelihood of when the business rates reset might transpire, and Sandwell's assumptions in this regard are aligned to the rest of the WMCA group of local authorities. • The MTFS position has been reported to Leadership Team on several occasions during the Autumn of 2023, and Directors have been fully engaged in the process of generating savings proposals to balance the budget gap in 2024/25. • The draft MTFS for 24/25 reports a deficit (prior to savings) of £13m. Savings proposals have been developed to balance the budget, supported by a business case document for each saving. The draft MTFS will be presented to Cabinet on 15th November. Cabinet

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						<p>workshops were held on 19th September and 25th October to engage Cabinet in the MTFS process and to ensure that elected members are willing to adopt each of the proposed savings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further iterations of the MTFS will be produced following the provisional and final settlement during Winter 2023/24. <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued implementation of the action plan developed following the CIPFA review (as per the improvement plan timetable). • Cabinet workshops scheduled to continued development of MTFS and consider implications of Autumn Statement (November 2023) and outcome of consultation on savings proposals to inform Budget setting for 2024/25 • Use of benchmarking data to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements. • The council continues to horizon scan and consider the impacts of potential government initiatives and policies on future funding sources and demand for council services.