

Report to Cabinet

17 July 2024

Subject:	Performance Management Framework – 2023/24 Quarter 4 and Annual Monitoring
Cabinet Member:	Leader, Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
Director:	Chief Executive – Shokat Lal Assistant Chief Executive – James McLaughlin
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Kayleigh Walker – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead: Service Improvement

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the 2023/24 Quarter 4 and Annual monitoring reports.

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Council approved a Corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) on 12 April 2022, to address the recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton and as a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 Since then, the corporate PMF has been further refined and built into business processes. In June 2023, Cabinet approved a revised Corporate Plan with a revised set of Corporate Performance Indicators. This report sets out the Council's performance against the Corporate Performance Indicators for Q4 of 2023/24 and the annual position for



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

2.4 Performance of key contracts is included in the quarterly performance reports to provide oversight of the performance of these services and assurance that contract management mechanisms continue to be in place and effective (see paragraph 14).

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

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

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

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



4. Quarter 4 and Annual Performance Report – key messages

Corporate Performance Report

4.1 In Q4, the number of Quarterly PIs given a RAG status was 74. In total, the percentage of ‘red’ PIs has increased, and the number of ‘amber’ and ‘green’ PIs has decreased, as can be seen below.

4.2 Of the 74 indicators given a RAG status this quarter:

- 25 (33.8%) are RAG rated ‘red’ (compared to 21 (27.6%) in Q3)
- 11 (14.9%) are rated ‘amber’ (compared to 12 (15.8% in Q3)
- 38 (51.4%) are rated ‘green’ (compared to 43 (56.6%) in Q3)

31 do not have a RAG rating as a target is not applicable and the PI is for information only. For 10 PIs no data is available this quarter.

Q4 Performance Summary

Area	Total	Red	Amber	Green	RAG NA	Data not available	Annual Only
Best Start	39	8	6	4	0	1	20
Live well Age Well	33	0	0	10	4	1	18
Strong Resilient Communities	24	2	0	5	3	0	14
Quality Homes	21	5	2	5	1	1	7
Strong Inclusive Economy	15	0	0	3	5	1	6
Connected and Accessible	11	0	0	1	0	0	10
One Team One Council	59	10	3	10	18	6	12
Total	202	25	11	38	31	10	87

4.3 For 2023/24 (annual performance), 136 indicators given a RAG status. The breakdown is as follows

- 42 (30.8%) are RAG rated ‘red’



- 18 (13.2%) are rated 'amber'
- 76 (55.9%) are rated 'green'

41 do not have a RAG rating as a target is not applicable and the PI is for information only. For 25 PIs no data is available.

Annual Performance Summary

Area	Total	Red	Amber	Green	RAG NA	Data not available
Best Start	39	13	5	17	2	2
Live well Age Well	33	5	3	13	6	6
Strong Resilient Communities	24	2	1	12	3	6
Quality Homes	21	6	4	7	1	3
Strong Inclusive Economy	15	1	1	7	5	1
Connected and Accessible	11	1	0	9	0	1
One Team One Council	59	14	4	11	24	6
Total	202	42	18	76	41	25

Corporate Plan

4.4 In total in Q4, 241 Business Plan actions were given an update, compared to 243 in Q3. In total, the number of 'red' and 'green' issues has slightly decreased, and the number of 'amber' issues has increased.

4.5 Of the 241 Business Plan actions given a RAG Status this quarter:

- 3 (1.2%) are rated as 'red' (significant issues) (compared to 4 (1.6% in Q3)
- 46 (19.1% are rated as 'amber' (medium issues) (compared to 42 (17.3) in Q3)



- 192 (79.7%) are rated as 'green' (on track) (compared to 197 (81.1%) in Q3)

There were 14 actions with no update available.

	Best Start	Live Well & Age Well	Strong Resilient Communities	Quality Homes	Strong Inclusive Economy	Connected & Accessible	One Council One Team	Total
No of Corporate Plan 'we wills'	12	21	20	17	11	8	18	107
No of Directorate Business Plan Actions	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255
On Track	15 (14)	67 (66)	30 (32)	14 (16)	16 (15)	16 (16)	34 (37)	192 (197)
Medium Issues	3 (7)	18 (11)	7 (4)	3 (6)	2(1)	1 (1)	12 (12)	46 (42)
Significant Issues	1(1)	0 (2)	1 (0)	-	-	-	1 (1)	3(4)
No Update available	4 (1)	0 (6)	0 (1)	6 (1)	0 (2)	0 (0)	4 (1)	14 (12)
Totals	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255

5. Our achievements in Q4

- 5.1 The success of the Council campaign "School Attendance is Everybody's Business" as part of the wider transformation of support to schools to improve attendance is evident in the improvement of performance figures (93.4% Primary and 91% Secondary). The new campaign "Miss School Miss Out" will launch this year and will target persistent absence.
- 5.2 The outturn for Educational Attainment CIC – KS4 attainment of English and maths at Grade 4 or above is 32% against a target of 20% (National 2023 20%, West Midlands 2023 20%).



- 5.3 The Healthy Aging App and the Better Mental Health Programme have been shortlisted for the Public Health Award at the LGC Awards. Liann Brookes Smith has been shortlisted for the Outstanding contribution award and Emily Jane Morgan has been shortlisted for the Rising Star Award.
- 5.4 For Personal Education Plans for Children in Care there is a 97% completion rate (Sep – Dec). Sandwell Children in Care are performing 1/2 grade per subject better than All Children in Care Nationally.
- 5.5 The 2023 National Highways and Transportation (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey concluded that Sandwell are the 3rd best nationally when it comes to the condition of highways. Sandwell is the best performer when it comes to dealing with potholes and damaged roads out of all the West Midlands Highways Alliance partners and the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 5.6 The Neighbourhood Working review is now complete and the report and recommendations to be presented to Cabinet in June 2024.
- 5.7 Tammy Stokes, Assistant Director Spatial Planning & Growth has been recognised by The Planner Magazine as one of the 2024 Women of Influence in the Public Sector category.
- 5.8 The Income and Money Advice Team have been shortlisted for the Team of the Year Award at the Inside Housing Awards.
- 5.9 The 12-week pathway in ASC launched on 18th March 2024 and has been successful. The service for adults with learning disabilities and autism, aims to enable individuals to gain confidence and independence, whilst becoming active citizens within our communities.
- 5.10 The average number of working days to respond to a Councillor regarding casework has reduced from 10.9 days in Q1 to 7.2 days in Q4. Some of the factors that have contributed to this improvement are:



- Significant reduction in Officer handling times to redirect cases, with time reducing from an average of 4 days in Q1 to 1 day in Q4.
- Committed resources in Borough Economy monitoring performance in high volume areas.
- A reduction in 'Raise a New Case' casework (500 less cases than the previous financial year) and Increased use of 'Report-It' services (Up 100 on the previous year).

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

Performance Monitoring

6.1 Whilst attendance at primary and secondary schools is better than target, persistent absence and severe absence for both primary and secondary is below target. This is recognised as a priority for the service and there are a range of measures in place to improve performance as part of a wider transformation of support to schools to improve attendance. These include:

- vulnerable children being cross matched with partners to ensure families get the right support at the right time
- working with School Improvement Advisors to tackle unauthorised and persistent absence,
- encouraging the use of a self-assessment tool to support schools to identify areas for improvement and ensure staff are better informed
- guidance produced with School Health Nursing and Public Health to manage absence through illness

6.2 School-based attendance staff report feeling well supported, are well informed and feel confident to tackle difficult situations. Working with our DfE advisor we have benchmarked our approach and its effectiveness, and the feedback has been that “we have a robust service and plan in



place”. The measures taken should see an improvement in performance over the next 12 months.

- 6.3 Performance for ‘Key Stage 4: Attainment 8 - Reduce the Points gap between the LA Disadvantaged and Non-Disadvantaged pupils nationally’ is above target, however, the national gap measure was larger than in Sandwell at -15.3, with West Midlands slightly smaller at -14.8
- 6.4 Performance for Educational Attainment CIC - attainment at the expected level or above in reading, writing and maths at KS2 is below target (32% against a target of 38%) and is also below national and regional performance.
- 6.5 % of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by OFSTED for Primary, Secondary and Special and Alternative Provision are below target, with Special and Alternative Provision RAG rated 'red' (71% against a target of 86%). This data includes academies. Schools / settings not rated Good / Outstanding by Ofsted are receiving additional support from the School Improvement Team to address identified action points and priorities.
- 6.6 The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan has decreased from Q3 but is still above target at 55.1 per 10,000 CYP population against a target of 45 and remains above statistical neighbour (48.6) and England Averages (43.2). The director of operations has undertaken discussions between operations and the safeguarding unit to consider some of the wider issues which may be impacting on CP numbers, namely timely step down from CP following intervention, effectiveness of CIN planning and the impact of the intervention hub, furthermore a full analysis of our Children on Child Protection Plans has been completed. These measures have had a direct impact on reducing the number of Children on CP Plans over the last quarter.
- 6.7 Performance for ‘% Care leavers that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (aged 19-21)’ is above target at 56.7%. The annual



figure is 55.1%. A Corporate Parenting Board has been set up and has an action plan, which includes how to improve performance for this indicator and the Corporate Parenting Strategy has been co-produced with young people and partners. There are various actions taking place to improve performance including:

- Connexions have been working closely with the Employment and Skills team to early identify those due to leave care who do not have a current destination. These young people are then 'dual supported' to look at their options of further education, Higher Education, apprenticeships or employment opportunities.
- Officers from Employment and Skills continue to attend the METSEC building for weekly workshops to showcase job opportunities and support applications.
- An employer experience day was held at a social value employer's premises which gave CEYP an insight to how a business works.
- Corporate Parenting week due to take place between 10th-14th June and there will be an employability session which will be attended by young people and employers
- Links have been made with staff at Coventry Council, who have developed bespoke approaches to help young people, including residential trips to develop confidence, and effective use of their Post 16 Advisor in their Virtual School.

Work continues to understand the multiple barriers to education and employment faced by children in care and care experienced young people. This includes mental health, which requires intensive support prior to referral to Skills and Employment Services. SCT are currently addressing this barrier with the launch of the emotional wellbeing hub delivered by Barnardo's which has funding until March 25 'Bridging the Gap'.

6.8 The % of 16s and 17s not in employment, education or training (NEET) is above target – 1.9% against a target of 1.75%. The annual figure is 2.1%. However, Sandwell as the 12th best performance in England for this indicator and the increase reflects the trend observed nation-wide of increasing numbers of young people not engaging/motivated in school



due to mental health, attendance and other issues and the resultant lower attainment leading to increased number of NEET young people.

- 6.9 At the end of Q3 Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) are projecting a year end deficit of £4,254k deficit against the Contract Sum. This is due to pressure from placement demand and costs, and also pressure from transport costs. The Council is working with the CIPFA Advisory Council to look at how we collectively agree MTFs savings with SCT and how we can manage the overspend.
- 6.10 'Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months' is above target at 84%, with an annual figure of 80% (target is below 70%). The Council is doing lots of work with partners to look at how risks can be shared, as well as respond to national policy changes that mean many practice changes and the strengthening of governance. We are also working on developing a Partnership Practice Model. Early Help - Number of Step Downs to Multi-Agency Early Help that do not return to Social Care within 12 months is also below target (bigger than 80%) in Q4 at 74.8%.
- 6.11 The number of Children who receive travel assistance (that is not transport to school) is below the target of 201. As of 31/04/2024, there were 984.5 children using Transport and 187 receiving travel assistance (made up of 87 claiming parent mileage, 92 claiming a PTB and 8 with a travel pass). This compares to 848 on transport and 175 (made up of 63 claiming parent mileage, 108 claiming a personal transport budget and 4 with a travel pass) receiving travel assistance at the end of Q1. We continue to encourage parents wherever possible to not use transport but to claim mileage, a personal travel budget or travel pass to reduce overall costs. Increases in pupils using transport will inevitably impact on the budget, however, the SEND Travel Assistance Transformation Plan includes a range of mitigations, with monthly updates to Leadership Team and Leaders Meeting. Newton Europe have also been appointed to provide additional support to focus on a review of the Travel Assistance Policy and Post 16 Statement and Offer.



Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 6.12 There remain issues with delivery of the School Nursing contract due to staffing levels being below the acceptable threshold. A remediation action notice has been served, and as result we will not be extending the contract and have started procurement for 2025 onwards.

7 Areas for improvement - People Live Well and Age Well

Performance Monitoring

- 7.1 Annual outturns for 'Overall satisfaction of carers with social services (for them and for the person they care for)', 'The proportion of carers who reported that they have been involved in discussions about the person they care for' and 'The proportion of people and carers who use services who have found it easy to find information about services and/or support' are below target.
- 7.2 As a Council we are committed to improving the support to valued informal carers in Sandwell and this year we have refreshed our Carers Strategy, working in co-production with carers. Our future plans include the development of a carers hub which will be the single point of contact for carers to gain information, advice and support. Along with colleagues across the Black Country we are exploring opportunities for a carers app to support easy access for carers to advice, information and support services. We are also recommissioning our Community Offer to ensure strong and effective support is available to carers within their own communities. Our Dementia Strategy places a clear focus on support for carers and it is continuing to drive improvements to access and support for both people with dementia but also their carers. These measures should see an improvement in performance next year.
- 7.3 Performance for vaccine take up for childhood vaccines, flu vaccine and COVID boosters is below target at the end of 2023/24. However, there has been a focused effort in pushing vaccinations over recent months and vaccine take up has increased as a result. This will be reflected in the figures in 2024/25.
- 7.4 Smoking cessation uptake (smokers that have successfully quit at 4 weeks - rate per 100,000 smokers aged 16+) is below target. Sandwell's



rate of quitters remains above the regional rate of 890 but below the national rate of 1620 per 100,000 pop (2022/23). This reflects the shift in nature of the health inequalities focus of the current service model ensuring our most entrenched priority populations of smokers who require more intensive interventions are supported to quit. Refreshed smoking prevalence estimates show an increase in levels of smoking to well above national levels (21% versus 12.7% nationally). This requires concerted Partner wide efforts to reduce towards 2030 smokefree status ambitions.

8. Areas for improvement - Strong Resilient Communities

Performance Monitoring

- 8.1 The number of visits to Forge Mill Farm is below the annual target of 8800 at 8254. Individuals engaged with include school children, community groups and low-income families. Each quarter showed significant growth on the previous quarter proving the programme is capable of meeting its targets in the final two quarters and into the next financial year. As with any new programme we expected an implementation period in which targets were difficult to meet in the first two quarters, due to the nature of school bookings needing to be made many months in advance.
- 8.2 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Flyposting) is measured 3 times per year through SERCO. The latest return showed that All targets missed due to issues with mechanical sweeper availability. Transects identified as below standard on inspections were rectified.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 8.3 The report to Cabinet for the Enforcement of Moving Traffic Contraventions which sought approval has been delayed.



9. Areas for improvement - Quality homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

Performance Monitoring

- 9.1 The 'Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)' is below target (35.30% against a target of 65%). This is because of the challenging housing market and the volume of cases that are presenting very late in the process. The housing market is at its most challenging for securing longer term alternative accommodation for our clients. The turnover of council properties has seen a 30% reduction over the last 12 months (meaning there are less properties becoming available) and the accessibility and affordability of private rented properties is at its lowest point in years. This is in part due to affordability issues and also due to the very buoyant market. The service works very hard in securing properties for our clients and has one of the best offers in the country as recognised by the National Resident Landlord Association (NRLA). The increase to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in April 2024 will help bridge this gap but the market will remain very challenging for a number of years to come. In Q4, whilst there were some improvements in January, February and March saw further increases in demand and an increase in cases approaching at the point of crisis.
- 9.2 The proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out (Fire Safety Checks) is below target (56.26% against a target of 100%). After an independent review of the data and review of the previous reporting has highlighted that data was reported against a plan to recover to 100% over three years (currently year 2 of 3). The measure should report on actual performance of Fire Risk Assessments completed within timescales. This will be corrected moving forward and a plan is in place to bring the service to 100% compliant by March 2025. Our policy states that reviews should be carried out after one year for high risk and three years for low risk, so moving forwards we will be measuring performance against our policy commitments.
- 9.3 Whilst the proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out (Asbestos Safety Checks) is not available, an independent review of data has been carried out and identified no annual re-inspection surveys were completed as management surveys became more than a year old. This



is likely to highlight areas of non-compliance. There is work undergoing to validate the data from the management surveys as to how many blocks did not require a re-inspection survey which will provide an accurate figure.

- 9.4 The number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights is below target (10,434 against a target of 11,000), although Monetary gains were £21,341,12, £2,341,125 above target of £19,000,000. The level of support our residents now need for holistic advice and guidance has increased as well as support with benefit claims. Officers are exploring customer circumstances and situations to improve their financial capability and quality of life. Whilst this takes more time, it has a long-term impact for the resident. The team are working additional hours to manage the backlog of customers needing support and benefit advice. Welfare Rights are the only provider that completes appeal and challenges unfair decisions around benefits awards to residents. As well as supporting customers through this process, they also represent them in court which takes a significant length of time.
- 9.5 Two projects delivering the 15 new homes, as part of the Council house new build programme, have been delivered on target. The four new homes as part of the high-rise programme have been delayed which has meant we are below the annual target of 19.

10. Areas for improvement - A Strong Inclusive Economy

Performance Monitoring

- 10.1 The number of Regeneration Pipeline projects On-Site is below target – 14 against a target of 22. However, this is because many are ahead of projection and moved through to project completion (13 against a target of 5). There are also projects in the delivery stage that are awaiting award of contract to move forward to the 'on site' stage. In total there are 61 projects in the Regeneration Pipeline against a forecast of 56.



11. Areas for improvement - A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

Performance Monitoring

- 11.1 The number of on-street residential EV charging points installed has an annual outturn of 0 against a target of 74. The Council is part of a Black Country wide project installing around 250 chargers. Installation rests with the commercial operator that won the contract and we don't have their installation programme yet. All 74 could get installed in 1 month as it is only 37 sites, or these could equally be spread over several months. The reason for the delay is that there was a problem with the contract (Black Country-wide) which wasn't resolved in time to deliver during 2023/24. The Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) have granted us an extension on our grant funding till the end of this financial year. We now have until March 2025 to deliver these chargers. Construction on the first sites in Sandwell will begin in May, with the rest to follow. We are expecting the final sites to be completed in the Autumn 2024.

12. Areas for improvement - One Council One Team

Performance Monitoring

- 12.1 The annual outturn is 0% for the reduction in sites from surplus property/management of Land Register. The council's appointed agents, Avison Young, are now moving into Phase II of the Surplus Assets Review; 57 small sites and 4 larger sites have been identified for disposal, A cabinet report will be presented in June 2024 seeking authority to dispose on the open market. Upon attaining approval the disposals will be progressed.
- 12.2 In Q4 an average of 11.35 working days were lost per employee due to sickness compared to 10.81 working days during the same period last year. The top 3 causes of sickness are stress, depression and mental health, other, and muscular skeletal problems. Just under 30% of the working days lost due to sickness were short term and 70% long term (4 weeks or more). The cost of sickness in 2023-24 was £5.602m compared to £4.890m in 2022-23, this is an increase of £712k. The



increase was most significant for Housing, Assistant Chief Executives and Borough Economy.

- 12.3 The number of new formal grievance cases was 27 a target of 16. However, this is fewer than the year-end total for 2022/23 which was 32.
- 12.4 Performance for the average waiting time was above target for the Corporate Contact Centre in Q4 (3 minutes 53 seconds against a target of 3 minutes 30 seconds). Performance for 2023/24 was also above target (4 minutes 6 seconds). Performance for the abandonment rate was 10.86% and 10.96% for Q4 and 2023/24 respectively, above the target of 8%. Performance be attributed to several factors including vacancies, sickness, and assisting the One Stop Shop (OSS), Community Hubs and Elections face to face service. Current vacancies are 7.73%, of which 5.46% are currently on hold until further notice.
- 12.5 The average waiting time in the Adults Contact Centre is 41 seconds for Q4 and 1 minute 11 seconds for 2023/24, above the target of 30 seconds. However, performance has improved since Q3 (1 minute 14 seconds). The Abandonment rate in the Adults Contact Centre was 6% which is the target, and the annual figure was 4% (both RAG rated 'green').
- 12.6 The Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre Average Wait was 1 minute 53 seconds, against a target of 3 minutes 30 seconds. This is a big improvement son Q3 which was 4 minutes 40 seconds. The annual figure was 4 minutes, 35 seconds. Q4 Performance is particularly good considering Council Tax bills were delivered around the 16th March, which results in an increased number of calls. Performance for the abandonment rate was 3% against a target of 8%. The annual figure was 6.6%.
- 12.7 Performance for 'SARs compliance with timescales' is below target at 85.71% (against a target of 95%). Performance for 2023/24 is 72.12%. However, performance has improved since last year (65.84%) despite



there being an increase in the number of SARs requests this year. The Council is working to increase the compliance rate to bring it in line with the improvements seen with our FOI requests and achieve the 95% target.

- 12.8 FOI compliance with timescales in 84% for Q4 and 85% for 2023/24, against a target of 95%. Performance in Q4 has dipped compared to Q3 when it was 92%. The reason for this dip has been the result of a change in the approval process from February 2024 onwards whereby all FOI responses are now required to be approved by the Assistant Director for Legal and Assurance. Further to this an additional level of approval has also been added to those FOI's considered to be corporate requests with these now also requiring the review and approval of the Senior Leadership Team. This can be seen in the statistics whereby for January 2024 the council achieved a compliance rate of 90% with February 2024 at 79% and March 2024 at 76 %. As this new approval process to ensure quality FOI responses is embedded, timescales should improve.
- 12.9 With regards to '% of stage 1 complaints responded to in 10 working days (excl. ASC)', Q4 Performance is below target at 79.81%, although there has been an improvement since Q3 (73%). Annual performance is 68.57% (not comparable with last year because of the change in definition). Borough Economy and Housing account for many complaints. Borough Economy have made significant progress in improving the response rate for Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days for Quarter 4, achieving a 12% increase. In Housing, the Resolution team have been in post since February and have been working on closing our oldest complaints – the completion of this has affected performance in Q4 and will also have an impact on Q1 performance this year. Some complaints should also be classified as service requests, so the team are looking into this. In Children and Education, whilst there are fewer complaints, the % responded to in 10 working days was 46.97%. Many complaints are related to SEND and in particular, EHCP assessments. There is a new Tribunals Officer and a Complaints Officer starting soon which will improve performance from



Q2 onwards. Complaints will also be overseen by the Directorate Management Team so that performance can be monitored.

- 12.10 The average satisfaction rating from members using the Councillor portal is below the target of 4.5/5 at 4.08/5 although performance has got better since Q3 (3.93/5). The annual figure is better at 4.19/5. The annual return based is on 111 Councillor ratings. Over the year, there were 12 one-star ratings and 3 2 star ratings. Of these, 8 were because of the quality of the overall response and 5 were because of Officer management of the case. Performance has improved since last year.
- 12.11 Performance is below the 50% target for 'Members to undertake a minimum of 10 hours of development annually' at 47.20%. This is because of a variety of reasons including some clashes with other meetings and some late cancellations. Member development is a priority for 2024/25 with a wide range of support and development being planned for Members. Performance in this area should therefore improve significantly in 2024/25.

Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 12.12 Collective income targets were not met for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm, Lightwoods House and Park (Visitor Services). A review of income has resulted in a revised budget being set for 2024/25. The Sandwell Valley Masterplan has been developed for Sandwell Valley which considered the long-term sustainability of the site and services.

13. Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan

- 13.1 A specialist Housing IT Consultancy (ITICA) has been working with Housing teams in the first phase of the Housing Transformation Programme to develop and define a technical specifications and functional requirements document for Housing systems. This document, alongside a systems Options Appraisal, will be completed by



end of May 2024. Once this has been reviewed and signed-off by the Council, the procurement process will commence. In addition to the wider systems specification, the urgent requirement for a Compliance Management system is also being progressed by ITICA. The first draft of the Compliance system specification requirements has been submitted, ensuring that this is compatible with the wider systems approach. This specification will be finalised and signed off by the end of May 2024, with procurement to follow as a priority, to meet the Council's commitment to the Housing Regulator.

- 13.2 A series of additional directorate and service level performance dashboards and monitoring plans are in development as part of a wider Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan. This will take account of existing internal and external improvement plans to ensure better governance, service delivery and improve the management of resources across the Housing Directorate. A lead for this work is in place and a team has been put together. Fortnightly meetings are being held to progress this work, reviewing performance and improvements made. The Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan will form part of the wider Corporate Transformation programme. The Housing Directorate will work with the Corporate Team to identify what information needs to be included in the Corporate Performance Report moving forwards to ensure corporate oversight.

14. Contract Governance

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

Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT)

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



- Fostering
- Targeted Early Help

- 14.3 In terms of governance, there remains a Non-Executive Director vacancy, this vacancy is to be filled by a Council Officer as nominated by the Chief Executive. This will be done on the completion of the senior management restructure.
- 14.4 The contract sum negotiation process commenced in Sept 2023. The Contract sum for 2024/25 was agreed by Cabinet and Full Council February 2024 as part of the Council's formal budget setting process.
- 14.5 Following a lengthy negotiation process, which included the DfE appointed Improvement Board chair, a new set of contractual key performance indicators (KPI) have been agreed. The Trust will commence reporting against the new KPI's from the April 2024 reporting period onward.
- 14.6 In terms of performance, the total number of children in care, as of March 2024, is 808. This is a decrease since last quarter but still an overall increase of 5 children since the beginning of the financial year, some of this increase is due to an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in Sandwell, who now make up just over 5% of the Children in care population in 2023/24 compared to 1.75% in 2022/23.
- 14.7 The rate per 10,000 of children in care in March is 94.1. This is a marginally better position than March 2023, when the rate per 10,000 was 94.5. While there are 5 more children in care the overall population of children is estimated to have increased since March 2023 by 957
- 14.8 The number of children on a child protection plan has decreased since last quarter with 473 children on a plan in March 2024 compared to 501 in Dec 2023. This translates to a rate per 10,000 of 55.1 in March 2024.
- 14.9 In terms of finance, the draft year-end position is an overspend of £4,996k compared to the annual budget for the Trust and deficit of £4,254k if compared to the contract sum (as set out in para 7.9). The overspend has reduced by £98k since last month. The increase in the



number of residential placements and the costs of these placements is a key factor in driving the overspend.

14.10 In July 2023 Cabinet agreed a package of financial incentives to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, this is collectively known as the Sandwell Deal. Since going live, the total number of team manager and social workers vacancies has fallen from 75.67fte to 33.23fte. At the same time the number of agency workers, compared to permanent, has fallen. Agency workers now account for under 20% of the total social worker cohort

Serco

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

14.12 The contract has a set of regular meetings in place with standard agendas relating to the contractual requirements from key outcome targets (KOTs) to operational issues. These meetings are supported by regular cross channel communications between the SMB and Serco teams. Leadership Team also receive regular contract reports that provide oversight and issues are raised as appropriate.

14.13 The contract contains the requirement for the provision of regular data from the contractor to be provided, there is also an associated requirement for SMBC to provide information to Serco, relating to Council priorities annually and fleet maintenance through a set of KPIs. In addition, there is an integration with the Council's My Sandwell reporting tool.

14.14 The timeliness and accuracy of Serco's performance reporting has been substantially improved in Q4 following challenges in Q2 and Q3. Q4 Performance is available, but at the time of writing the report had not been fully audited.

14.15 Overall service performance in Q4 was good and there has been a noticeable improvement in KOT performance in Q4.



Places Leisure

- 14.16 The Council has a 25-year contract with Places Leisure to operate West Bromwich Leisure centre. The contract is a Design, Build, Operate and Maintain contract which ensured value for money by reducing design and build costs as well as ongoing maintenance liabilities.
- 14.17 Monthly operational reports are provided to update on performance, – operational and technical. Quarterly contract management meetings are held to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the contract and performance. These cover Operational Performance, Health and Wellbeing outputs and Customer Feedback.
- 14.18 In terms of Q4 participation, levels are continuing to rise, although they are not yet at pre-pandemic levels as the table below illustrates. However, Memberships for 2023/24 (2,689) are significantly above 2019/20 (2,088).

Current Year to Date Participation vs FY23 and FY20			
	FY24	FY23	FY20
Total	417,749	401,317	445,800

- 14.19 Based upon projected operational, and therefore financial performance, a business plan was agreed for the duration of the contract. The business plan results in an annual management fee payment to the Council of circa £25K.
- 14.20 There is also a utility benchmarking arrangement included in the contract, whereby PL own the risk on consumption and the Council are liable for the risk on tariff. Pre-pandemic operations resulted in a net gain for the Council – Management Fee minus Utility Benchmarking Payment. This is calculated and paid at the end of each financial year. In 2022/23 the utility benchmark resulted in a payment from the Council to PL of £239k. Modelling for 2023/24 indicated that the utility benchmarking will require a payment from the Council to PL of £202k, however a recent estimate is circa. £136k.



Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT)

14.21 Work continues between Council Officers, Bevan Brittan solicitors and SLT's solicitor to finalise the Deed of Variation (DoV) to the Management and Funding Agreement (MFA). This DoV will extend the termination and subsequent period of operation to 31 March 2027 and refine the partnership as agreed and signed on 13 July 2023. This position was confirmed by Cabinet on 18 October 2023.

14.22 In Q4, Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) managed the following leisure centres in Sandwell:

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

14.23 With regards to operational performance, the headline figures are below. However, these are not directly comparable because of the swimming pools at Haden Hill Leisure Centre being closed for 2023/24 and the Langley and Smethwick swimming centres closing and Sandwell Aquatics centre opening over the summer (the offer was different for 2022/23). Also, as with effect from Q3, concessionary memberships are no longer included due to their subsidy.

14.24 Headline figures for Q4 include:

- 594,061 attendances January – March 2024. **11.26%** up on Q4 FY23 (533,906)
- From March 2023 to March 2024, total memberships decreased by **6.6%** but will be skewed in comparison to previous years due the change in reporting (see 15.23)
- 5,506 enrolled on Learn to Swim (children) – **8%** up from Q4 FY23 (5,095)

14.25 At the time of drafting this report, SLT are in the process of finalising their 23/24 outturn. They have indicated that they will outturn to budget.



15. Strategic Risk Register

- 15.1 Effective risk management is a key element of good corporate governance, as noted in the council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#), and is essential to the overall performance of the council in meeting its corporate plan objectives. Good risk management will ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively, and that assets and resources are protected against risk in the most efficient way.
- 15.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) receive the Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) on a regular basis for review and comment. The role of the ARAC is to provide assurance to the Council that it has a system of governance, risk management and internal control in place and that the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements continue to inform decision making.
- 15.3 The SRR does not include all of the risks faced by the Council. Other risks are captured within directorate, programme and project risk registers in line with the Council's risk management framework. The latest SRR was presented to ARAC in January 2024 and is attached as **Appendix 3**. This is being refreshed and will be presented to ARAC in September 2024.

16. Implications

Resources:	There are no direct financial implications to this report.
Legal and Governance:	A corporate performance management framework was identified as a key gap in the council's governance arrangements by Grant Thornton in 2021. The establishment of the corporate performance management framework was a key action in the council's Improvement Plan agreed by Council in January 2022 and updated in June 2022. The PMF will enable officer and political leadership to improve oversight and corporate grip of the council's performance.
Risk:	Should the council not implement a robust performance management framework, then it will not have the



	<p>corporate oversight and intelligence to inform decision making and effectively manage risks to achieving service delivery and the strategic objectives identified in the Corporate Plan. These risks and the associated mitigations are noted in the SRR.</p> <p>The corporate performance management framework is a key mechanism to report progress and performance to the Government appointed Commissioners.</p>
Equality:	Equality measures are included in the PMF, including the Organisational Health workforce indicators and the progress of the Corporate Plan.
Health and Wellbeing:	The measures to track progress of the Corporate Plan include a series of health and wellbeing indicators. This enables the council's leadership to see at a high level the direction of travel of the borough's health and wellbeing and seek to continue good practice or identify mitigating actions to address issues.
Social Value	Measures in the PMF include looking at percentage of spend in the local area.
Climate Change	There are measures in the PMF that look at air quality and passenger journeys on public transport and 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan on renewable energy measures in the build of new homes.
Corporate Parenting	There are measures in the PMF that look at children in care related to education, placements moves, health assessments and NEET figures.

17. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – CPR Q4 and Annual
- Appendix 2 – Corporate Plan Updates
- Appendix 3 – Strategic Risk Register (December 2023)



18. Background papers

Performance Management Framework – Q3 Monitoring - The report is available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s20737/Performance%20Management%20Framework%20202324%20Quarter%203%20Monitoring.pdf>

The appendices to this report are available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=6660&Ver=4>

Report to Council 21 April 2022:

- Performance Management Framework for the Council

