

Appendix 1 - AGS 2022-23 Action Plan Progress Update

No.	Governance Issue	Action	Accountable	Responsible	Status Update from 2022/23	Assessment of Impact / Outcomes Achieved
1	Financial management	Implement the External Auditors Section 24 statutory recommendations that are still outstanding. Implement the External Auditors Interim Report for the financial year 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 recommendations	Corporate Director of Finance Resources	Allister Bannin, Director of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)	<p>External Auditors Section 24 statutory recommendations:</p> <p>"Finalise the root and branch review of financial management in all service departments and in respect of corporate decisions as part of the Opening the Books exercise". An update on progress against the 76 recommendations from the Opening the Books external review was taken to Audit and Governance Committee on 30/11/23 through the "Revenue and Capital Monitoring Improvements" report. This showed 40 recommendations as being complete, 9 as underway and 27 to be progressed. A further update to A&G Committee is planned for April 2024.</p> <p>"Resolve the accounting arrangements in respect of Croydon Affordable Homes". This has been completed and agreed with the auditors for the 2019-20 final accounts which are planned to be taken to A&G Committee in February 2024.</p> <p>"Invest significant extra resource (when possible) in finance capacity, internal audit and risk management to ensure robust processes are brought into place to monitor progress and meet statutory financial obligations". The Director of Finance (Deputy S151) completed the restructure consultation for the Strategic Finance service area in October 2023. A growth bid of £0.5m is being considered as part of the Council's 2024-25 budget setting process to improve capacity and skills levels in the Strategic Finance structure. Capacity in Internal Audit and Risk Management was increased in 2022-23.</p> <p>"Demonstrate clearly to Council tax payers how the additional Council tax for 2023/24 has been properly controlled and demonstrates improvements in value for money arrangements". It was agreed with Grant Thornton to detail this in a report by June 2024. The monthly financial performance reports include the list of transformation projects and their budget allocations.</p> <p>"Develop an action plan to clear the three outstanding years of accounts and audit by June 2024". The 2019-20 interim audit findings report was taken to A&G Committee on 30/11/23. The final 2019-20 accounts are planned to be taken to A&G Committee on 1/2/24. The expected completion for 2020-21 is April 2024 and for 2021-22 is September 2024.</p> <p>"Develop and enhance governance process for all key investment decisions and develop a Panel to address the accounting implication of all capital investments". This recommendation is aligned to the Capital Framework Improvement Plan from PwC. An update on progress against the 9 recommendations from this plan was taken to A&G Committee on 30/11/23 which showed 7 as underway and 2 to be progressed. A further update to A&G Committee is planned for April 2024.</p> <p>"Enhance existing officer control activities by ensuring the Scrutiny and Governance Committee robustly challenges the monthly budgets report from officers from a governance and control perspective". Implemented. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee receives and challenges the monthly financial performance reports and uses its subcommittees to deep dive into financial performance of service directorates.</p> <p>"Ensure that the lessons learned from the former CEO's termination payments, as set out to Full Council in 2022 and set out in detail below, are applied to all future Chief Officer severance payments". Implemented. The requirement of Statutory Guidance on Special Severance Payment is being adhered to. There have been changes made to the Pay Policy Statement to make it clear that Special Severance Payments and severance packages of £100,000 and above should be approved by a vote of full Council. However, if the proposals are being made in the context of litigation and the making of the decision is urgent, General Purposes Committee (GPC) can approve such payments in accordance with the Council's constitution. Decisions will only be referred to the GPC for approval in limited and exceptional cases, where a decision is required urgently in the context of litigation. A robust written business case setting out the considerations for making a Special Severance Payment, along with appropriate written professional legal and financial advice, must be provided where approval for a Special Severance Payment is sought. In line with Statutory Guidance any settlement agreement between £20,000 and up to £100,000 has to be approved by the Executive Mayor and Chief Executive, with a full written business case demonstrating good value to the taxpayer, A settlement below £20,000 has the same requirements, approved by the Chief People Officer.</p> <p>"That proper records are kept of any conversations, discussions, or meetings of any potential settlement agreements with an employee." Implemented. Records are kept within the written business case to demonstrate the legal and financial best value case. Where members are involved in the decision-making process, a full written note will be taken and retained by Democratic Services.</p> <p>"That reasonable enquiries are made to establish all the facts, events, and circumstances that give rise to any proposed settlement agreement, including any wrongdoing by the parties involved". Implemented. Appropriate legal and financial advice is taken and recorded to ensure all facts and events are considered as part of the best value written business case.</p> <p>"That legal advice is sought on merits and chances of success of any potential claim against the Council and quantum of damages awarded. This should inform the decision on any potential settlement payment". Implemented. As above, legal advice is sought and captured in the written business case to ensure best value for the taxpayer is satisfied.</p> <p>"There is compliance with the governance arrangements relating to the decision-making on settlement payments". Implemented. Addressed through the Pay Policy statement 2023/4 which sets out clearly the governance arrangements and compliance with the Statutory Guidance for Special Severance Payments.</p> <p>"That officers and members who are the subject of the dispute are not involved in the decision-making relating to the proposed settlement agreement". Implemented. Addressed in the Pay Policy Statement 2023/4.</p> <p>"That Democratic Services attend both the open and exempt part of any committee meeting for approval of settlement payments. That proper minutes of the meeting are taken so that there is an understanding of the reasons for the decision and the deliberation by the committee". Implemented. Addressed in the Pay Policy Statement and in all meeting practice.</p> <p>External Auditors Interim Report for the financial year 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 recommendations:</p> <p>"With three Section 114 notices having been issued in two years, and the Council having made it clear that extraordinary government support is required to return to financial sustainability, it will be important that the Council maintains discipline over its own savings and transformation plans. For savings plans, Internal Audit recommendations for improvement in Star Chamber processes should be implemented as a matter of priority. Plans that are realistic should be approved. For transformation projects, arrangements should be put in place for tracking and challenging outcomes before any</p>	<p>Improvements in financial management are demonstrated through the monthly financial performance reports to Cabinet. At 2023-24 Period 7, the overall General Fund revenue forecast is breakeven (after the capitalisation direction of £63m) with all service directorates at forecast breakeven or underspend except for Children, Young People and Education (owing to high cost placements to meet individual needs).</p> <p>Improved capital governance through the Capital Internal Control Board is in place.</p>
2	Capital Projects and Programmes	To continue to improve on arrangements for the management of major capital projects and programmes.	Corporate Directors	Allister Bannin, Director of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)	<p>An update on progress against the 9 recommendations from the PwC Capital Framework Improvement Plan was taken to A&G Committee on 30/11/23 which showed 7 as underway and 2 to be progressed. A further update to A&G Committee is planned for April 2024.</p> <p>The Capital Internal Control Board (CICB) continues to further improve the governance of the capital programme taking on board what best practice can be incorporated within the resource constraints given the Council's financial position. This includes overseeing the development of business case templates in line with the Five Case Model and associated training and governance approval routes, which will be taken forward after the recruitment of capital accounting officers into the new Strategic Finance structure.</p> <p>The capital programme is reviewed by the CICB on a monthly basis, providing robust challenge to project managers on project delivery. Capital delivery is reported on a monthly basis to Cabinet through the Financial Performance Report. Verto 365 project management software has been rolled out across the Council and this is supporting the CICB to oversee the delivery of the Capital Programme in a more consistent and informed way.</p> <p>For 2023-24, as part of the budget setting process, a new best practice Capital Strategy was prepared and approved by Full Council. This set out the overall capital strategy and capital programme plans. It also set out clearly the governance of the capital programme including, roles and responsibilities, funding and financing, decision making process, risk management and escalation approach, and management and monitoring processes. This has been further developed through the draft Capital Programme and Capital Strategy 2023-29 report presented to Cabinet on 6/12/23 and the final report is underway for Cabinet 14/2/24 and Full Council 28/2/24.</p>	<p>Improved oversight, monitoring and reporting of the capital strategy and programme.</p> <p>Earlier detection of risks to delivery and remedial action.</p>

3	Ongoing improvement in awareness and practice in finance management	Implement CIPFA maturity model. Finance training for non-finance managers	Corporate Director of Resources	Allister Bannin, Director of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer)	<p>CIPFA carried out a Financial Management (FM) Review to improve alignment with best practice of the CIPFA FM Model. The review commenced in October 2022, workshops with senior finance officers concluded in April 2023 and draft recommendations have been provided to the council.</p> <p>Issues and draft recommendations raised from the review highlighted the main areas of processes/systems, budget holder accountability/skills, monitoring of revenue savings & capital delivery, and the skills/knowledge/ways of working of finance staff (and the risk from the high level of interim finance staff).</p> <p>Processes/systems: The Oracle Improvement Project is underway with three workstreams (finance, procurement and human resources) to identify quick wins to improve workflows and surrounding processes, review current and potential modules and identify longer term improvements which will be reported to Cabinet in the coming months. This will include a request for revenue/capital growth that could be required above the current allocation of transformation funding. The new Strategic Finance structure creates a new Finance Manager post (reporting to the Chief Accountant) to lead on ongoing systems development, production of guidance notes and delivery of training.</p> <p>Budget holder accountability/skills: The Council commissioned CIPFA to provide training to over 300 budget holders in 2022 and to provide Housing Revenue Account (HRA) ringfence and recharge training to officers and Councillors in June 2023. Once new business case templates and governance routes are agreed for capital, then capital training will be provided for capital leads. The extra capacity built into the new Strategic Finance structure for systems (one Finance Manager and two Accountant posts) will allow monthly reporting on the submission of forecasts by budget holders to improve accountability and identify training needs to provide support as required.</p> <p>Monitoring of revenue savings & capital delivery: The Council brought in a savings tracker at the beginning of 2023-24 which allows monthly monitoring of savings delivery and the RAG rated performance of individual savings is reported monthly to Directorate Management Teams (DMTs), the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Mayor's Advisory Board. A summary of savings performance at directorate level is reported to Cabinet monthly through the financial performance reports. Monitoring of capital delivery was improved through the creation of the Capital Internal Control Board (CICB) in 2022 and further improved during 2023-24 through the Council-wide implementation of the Verto project management software system. The Verto project delivery and risk information, together with financial reports, are reviewed by the CICB on a monthly basis and deep dives into specific projects are undertaken by the CICB on a risk-based approach. Capital monitoring has also been harmonised with revenue budget monitoring, to ensure consistent timelines and consolidation of information for both revenue and capital to be taken to DMTs (for consideration at the same meeting) for integration into the monthly financial performance reports.</p> <p>Skills/knowledge/ways of working of finance staff (and the risk from the high level of interim finance staff): The Strategic Finance restructure reviewed the capacity and skill levels required in the accountancy function and identified required growth of £0.5m in the revenue staffing budget which has been requested through the proposed 2024-25 budget currently under consideration. The Council has recruited a permanent Director of Finance (Deputy s151) and is currently recruiting six permanent Head of Strategic Finance posts which are currently filled by acting up, agency or fixed term contract arrangements. Recruitment will then continue down the levels of post throughout the structure. Once appointments are made, a skills audit will be undertaken to identify the training needs of staff including external CIPFA and AAT professional studies. The new Finance Manager (Systems) post will lead on updating guidance and procedure notes and providing internal training to both finance and non-finance staff.</p>	<p>Improved monitoring and reporting of revenue, savings & capital.</p> <p>Timely identification of risks and remedial actions.</p> <p>Enhanced financial skills and awareness of officers and Members.</p> <p>Accurate treatment of expenditure and income for the Council's annual accounts.</p>
4	Housing Improvement	To continue to improve the housing function and housing standards for residents through the Housing Transformation Programme	Corporate Director of Housing	Susmita Sen	<p>The Housing Transformation programme continues to deliver against the milestones set out within the Voluntary Undertaking agreed with the Regulator for Social Housing and the overall Improvement programme agreed with the Housing Improvement Board. This includes:</p> <p>Repairs contact centre insourced in August 2023. Recruitment underway for permanent staffing. Tenancy checks in all housing stock as part of a rolling programme - increasing understanding of customers and their profiling needs to target services better. In the process of co-designing a new tenant engagement framework using TPAS (tenant engagement specialists). Customer Care training programme procured and in design stage.</p> <p>Contract management hub in place for the three main repairs contractors. Governance being developed through appropriate clienting meetings.</p> <p>Good leadership and direction: New Housing strategy passed at Full Council. New Homelessness Prevention strategy and Rough Sleeping Action Plan in final stages of consultation. New interim director of Assets and Repairs joined in January 2024. Permanent appointment to Director of Housing Management and Director of Homelessness Prevention and Accommodation.</p> <p>New homeless prevention model implemented in September 2023. Customers assessed within timeframes - average wait time for appointments significantly reduced - some embedding and managing of change still required.</p> <p>HouseMark Photobook implemented on estates to raise standards of grounds cleanliness and enable residents to feedback.</p> <p>+G23 New SLAs being developed with Legal services. SLAs now in place with Violence Reduction Network, Parks and Grounds, and corporate anti-fraud.</p> <p>Architect and main consultant partner appointed on the Regina Road regeneration programme.</p> <p>New lettable standards in place and currently monitored through new homes survey - feedback given to contractors to ensure continuous improvement. Void turnaround times showing significant improvement from 107 days (Aug 2023) to 83.6 days (Nov 2023).</p> <p>Oversight of the above is through Housing Improvement Board and Regulator of Social Housing.</p>	<p>Closer relationship with customer through insourcing of contact centre</p> <p>More effective contract management of repairs contracts through contract management hub</p> <p>More visible improvements to estates through estate walkabout programme</p> <p>78% new tenancies satisfied with our services Impact of prevention model due to be assessed for Housing Needs – reduction anticipated in wait times for appointments.</p> <p>Specific internal service level agreements detailing services provided against HRA recharging.</p> <p>DPS will ensure compliance of temporary accommodation providers.</p> <p>New homes to be provided on the Regina Road estate following successful ballot.</p> <p>Improvements to Voids properties and new tenancies following establishment of lettable standards.</p>

5	<p>Review and improve arrangements for health and safety</p>	<p>Review of effectiveness of health and safety arrangements</p>	<p>Corporate Director of SCRER</p>	<p>Nick Hibberd</p>	<p>Corporate Health & Safety Board continues to meet every 6-8 weeks. A corporate health & safety strategy and policy has been developed by the corporate health & safety team. A central digital location has been set up to save service level risk assessments so that a clearer picture of the robustness of risk assessments can be obtained. The fire & building safety working group has been re-convened and is chaired by the Director of Assets & Commercial Investment. Work is continuing on improving the consistency and quality of method statements and risk assessments with particular focus being given the various operational teams across the Council. This also includes Improving the timeliness and consistency of responding to actions identified following health and safety audits. <i>Note: The Corporate Health & Safety Manager retired at the end of 2023. A new Interim Health & Safety Manager has been recruited by the Property Team team. This post will continue to undertake a review of corporate health & safety policies, procedures and assurance across the Council reporting findings to the Corporate Health & Safety Board and where necessary escalating matters to CMT</i></p>	<p>Better awareness of health and safety requirements and arrangements.</p>
6	<p>Strengthen governance framework</p>	<p>Ensure directorate schemes of management (i.e., delegation) are reviewed and updated.</p> <p>Ongoing review and updates to the Constitution</p>	<p>Corporate Directors & Monitoring Officer</p>	<p>Corporate Directors & Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense</p>	<p>The purpose of the Directorate schemes of delegation is to set out the detailed arrangements for each Directorate as regards which officers are given delegated authority by the Corporate Director to discharge which functions. Most of the current schemes are several years old, and pre-date the Council's change to a mayor and cabinet Executive model. The schemes also need to be updated to take account of changes in responsibilities between Directorates, Directorate re-structures, changes in legislation etc. The review of the delegation schemes is progressing. For most Directorates, the majority of the work in reviewing their schemes has been completed. The next stage is to finalise the draft new scheme of delegation and take to the Corporate Management Team for approval. This planned for February/March 2024. There is ongoing work by the Constitutional Working Group (CWG) to review and strengthen the Council's governance arrangement via the Constitution. There has been a review of and update to the Council's Pensions Committee, Pension Board, and Local Pension Board Rules in the Constitution. This was approved at Full Council meeting in December 2023. There is Work Programme for CWG on potential changes to the Constitution. This includes updating changes to the Financial Regulations, Tender and Contracts Regulations and the Terms of Reference of the Health and Wellbeing Board. At the meeting of CWG in November 2023, a paper on the development of Contract Standing Order to replace the current Tender and Contracts Regulations was discussed. The aims are to ensure: a) an efficient and effective governance process; b) compliance with procurement regulations; c) a planned approach to a procurement pipeline; d) alignment with the financial scheme of delegation; e) best value for the Council and the residents of Croydon; and f) a strategic deployment of procurement resource.</p>	<p>Better awareness and transparency of decision makers in Directorates. Also, of potential changes to the Constitution.</p>

<p>Information management</p>	<p>Provide assurance that the Council is operating in accordance with best practice and relevant legislation to include Publication Schemes, Open Data, Data Storage Security, Subject Access Request and Freedom of Information.</p> <p>Fully implement the Action Plan arising from the June 2023 Enforcement Notice by the Information Commissioners Office.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive</p>	<p>Paul Golland</p>	<p>Publication Scheme The Council continues to review and update our processes in line with responsibilities set out in the Information Commissioner's Office Model Publication Scheme. This is ensuring that all information required to be in the public domain is published. Croydon remains compliant. We continue to proactively publish key information including: •Who we are and what we do •What we spend and how we spend it •What our priorities are and how we are doing •How we make decisions •Our policies and procedures •Lists and registers •The services we offer.</p> <p>Subject Access Requests (SAR) A detailed SAR improvement plan was developed and shared with the ICO. This has led to significant progress in the Council's performance, a reduced backlog of requests and a big improvement in our compliance rate. The Council is no longer required to attend quarterly compliance meetings or share our monthly statistics with the ICO.</p> <p>Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests Croydon was subject to an Enforcement Notice issued by the ICO in June 2023. This was due to a backlog of overdue FOI requests and the notice required that we improve our compliance rate and close all requests in our backlog, as of June 2023. Working closely with the ICO, a detailed FOI improvement plan was developed and significant changes to our processes followed. With the continued support of the Corporate Management Team the Council has seen great improvement in FOI response timeframes. We are now hitting the 90% compliance rate, which means responding to the request within 20 working days. The backlog now consists of 4 and we expect these to be closed soon. The ICO will review the Enforcement Notice in the second week of February, and we expect to no longer be subject to it. We continue to publish our previous FOI responses in a disclosure log on the Council's public-facing website.</p> <p>Resources As part of the improvement plans for both SAR and FOI, additional human resources have been deployed. Within the Central Information Management Team three roles have been appointed: •A dedicated full-time Data Protection Officer •An additional full-time SAR / FOI Officer •A full-time Admin Support Officer Within the Children, Young People & Education Directorate •One secondment of a full-time SAR Officer •A full-time Admin Support Officer Within Housing Directorate •An additional full-time shared resource, coordinating responses.</p> <p>Data Protection, GDPR Training There is a mandatory e-Learning training module for all Council staff to complete online. This training is for all new staff starting with the Council and all staff are required to do yearly refresher training. This training has been refreshed as of January 2024. The Croydon learning team are now able to capture statistics and send out reminders to staff. A more in-depth face-to-face training sessions, held virtually on MS Teams, are available via Croydon learning for up to 40 attendees. These are held monthly and advertised on the intranet and via the Chief Executive's news bulletins. In line with the ICO's recommendation, these sessions are an opportunity for staff to engage with the team and for staff to ask for more service specific guidance. This training is continually being revised to include examples of previous Data Breaches, remedies and changes to processes as required. Going forward, there is a plan to make it mandatory for staff, and their line-manager, who have been involved in a Data Breach, to complete the e-Learning training again and a recommendation to attend the in-depth face-to-face session.</p> <p>Freedom of Information Training The FOI improvement plan led to the team creating new FOI & EIR training. This training details the background to the legislation, key obligations of the Council and all relevant exemptions & exceptions. It has been delivered to all key stakeholders and has been added to Croydon's e-Learning portal. Going forward, we will recommend that e-Learning training be made mandatory for all Team Managers and other key staff.</p> <p>Reporting Weekly SAR / FOI reports sent to the whole organisation highlighting all open and overdue cases per directorate. Colleagues can view the report and advise on any closures or responses due. Regular updates on FOI, SARs and Data Breaches are reported to the Corporate Management Team and the Information Management Internal Control Board.</p> <p>Governance The Data Protection Officer and Chief Digital Officer are both members of the Council's Statutory Officers' Meeting, chaired the Chief Executive. This meeting gives us the opportunity to raise and address key concerns. There is a monthly Information Management Internal Control Board meeting to discuss the Council's Information Governance arrangements, chaired by the Council's Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. This meeting allows the Information Management Team to raise and discuss on-going issues and improvements with key stakeholders. From this meeting serious risks can be escalated to the Corporate Management Team.</p> <p>Policies/procedures A new freedom of information policy has now been published on the Council's public facing website. We are currently involved in reviewing all the Council's Information Security and Information Management Policies. These policies will be ratified at the Information Management Internal Control Board. For more details on added or amended procedures please refer to the FOI/SAR improvement plans, linked above.</p>	<p>There is still significant work required to improve on information management arrangement. Recent action plan is intended to deliver on this.</p>
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8	Officer Induction Programme	Establish and maintain an officer induction and performance management programme.	Assistant Chief Executive	Dean Shoesmith	<p>The online corporate induction programme has been relaunched to provide an overview of the operation and governance of the council, providing (i) essential information about the organisational structure, committees and decision-making processes (ii) mandatory training for new staff including GDPR/information governance, health and safety, and equality, diversity and inclusion. (iii) online managers' induction checklist to ensure completion and compliance for each new starter. Work is currently on-going to supplement the basic online induction essentials with an in-person induction experience to address the correct cultural orientation to the council. The People and Cultural Transformation Plan action plan has been co-created engaging 250 staff, including front line employees, trade union representatives and staff network representatives. The action plan has been reviewed by Scrutiny and Cabinet and agreed at the end of September 2023. Work is ongoing to implement the actions associated with the four-year strategy against each of the seven strategic objectives, referred to as pillars. A strategic partner has been commissioned to support the council with the design and delivery of leadership and management development which will be rolled out across the council in the coming year. The council has launched two new specialist diversity talent development programmes, Black on Board and Raising the Bar, to ensure targeted positive action for improving talent management for global majority and female staff, where there are issues of underrepresentation. ACAS is currently delivering training to managers on employment relations skills, to ensure improved management of discipline, grievance, sickness and poor performance. The council's employee relations policies framework have been reviewed, agreed with the trade unions and sign-off by CMT, seeking to make practical implementation easier and seeking to improve procedural compliance.</p>	<p>Improved induction of all new starters and ensuring the completion of mandatory training, as well as good knowledge of how the council operates</p> <p>Co-creation of the PCTS strategy and actions has supported a positive culture change across the workforce as demonstrated to Cabinet and Scrutiny in reviewing and approving the action plan</p> <p>The ACAS skills training will aim to ensure improved procedural compliance and reduce risk and costs associated with employment litigation</p>
9	Procurement and contract management.	Address areas for improvement in procurement and contracting identified by Internal Audit.	Corporate Director of Resources	Huw Rhys-Lewis	<p>Procurement Improvement Plan/Benchmarking - We have further developed our procurement improvement plan to allow us to monitor our progress against well regarded benchmarks. The plan now includes a set of activities to enable us to reach a 'mature' standard when measured against the LGA National Procurement Strategy (NPS) and the equivalent Cabinet Office, Commercial Continuous Improvement Framework (CCIAF) 'good' standard, by March 25. In August 23, we baselined our current performance against this standard to inform the actions we need to take.</p> <p>From the benchmarking exercise, the resulting procurement improvement plan focuses on 5 key areas:</p> <p>1. A revised operating model for the procurement function. The new operating model has been informed by extensive consultation with other local authorities (October 23). It will see procurement playing a more strategic role in future, with early engagement to provide commercial expertise to our most critical procurements and to provide support to the management of our contracts, helping to ensure that business case objectives are delivered.</p> <p>2. Developing procurement skills, stronger market engagement & appropriate, clear governance & processes. Discovery work has been done with Directorates since April 23 to improve the planning for future procurements. As a consequence, an updated forward plan will be published in January 24 to provide the market with visibility of upcoming opportunities. Revised Contract Standing Orders are also in the process of being reviewed, for approval by Cabinet and Full Council in April 24. These will include reduced thresholds requiring involvement by the Procurement function to enable an increased commercial focus on more strategic projects; more streamlined governance and the establishment of fixed procurement gateway delegations instead of requesting through the APP. Business case & other procurement gateway templates have also been developed to further streamline the procurement and contract approval process and remove unnecessary duplication. These will be piloted in February 24. A savings/benefits methodology is being developed to allow procurement savings to be tracked in a consistent manner from April 24. Apprenticeship levy funding has been identified to support the training of more junior members of staff in the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) qualification A competency framework for procurement staff will be developed by March 24.</p> <p>3. Improving the standard of contract management across the council. Alongside forward planning, work has also been underway since April 23 to improve the completeness of the council's contract register (and to manage instances where contracts have expired). In addition, an up to date register of contract managers will be in place by January 24. Following a pilot (October 23), a baselining exercise to assess current contract management performance across the council's key contracts (categorised as Platinum and Gold) will be conducted in January-February 24. This will inform a set of recommendations to be produced for the end of February 24 to improve contract management practice with an objective that all key contracts are operating at a CCIAF 'Good' standard as a minimum by March 25.</p> <p>4. Using our procurements to drive social value. The forward plan mentioned above will also be shared with local suppliers so they can identify suitable opportunities. A cross-functional team has been formed to develop a new social value policy, a draft to be completed in March 24 and final version approved by Jun 24 (in the longer term this will extend to facilitating meetings with main contractors so they can identify opportunities within the supply chain on larger procurements).</p> <p>5. Further developing and integrating our P2P, e-tendering, pipeline & contract management systems, alongside improved reporting capability to aid compliance. A review of Oracle Fusion's ability to support pipeline management, e-tendering and contract management requirements versus alternatives has been undertaken (October 23) and our future strategy for commercial systems agreed by the Oracle Steering Group (Nov 23) as part of a wider systems business case. This also include a series of recommendations to improve the purchase to pay process alongside implementation plans. For 23/24, these include the development of improved reporting to identify areas of non-compliance, analysing the root causes and starting to address these. An interim resource is being recruited to support this.</p>	<p>The ongoing Procurement Improvement plan is intended to deliver the following outcomes:</p> <p>Improved commercial skills across the council</p> <p>Increased expert procurement input throughout the contract lifecycle, so improving value for money delivered through our contracts</p> <p>Improved supplier relationships through early engagement and robust contract management practices</p> <p>More informed decision making & improved compliance to processes through development of our systems and management information</p> <p>Ensuring our decision making is subject to appropriate the controls whilst maintaining an efficient process</p>

10	Recommendations arising from the Report in the Public Interest relating to the refurbishment of Fairfield Hall.	To continue to implement the action plan in response to the recommendations. Also, to ensure learning arising continues to be embedded across the organisation.	Corporate Director of Resources	Stephen Lawrence-Orumwense	The Council has made significant progress in completing the actions arising from the recommendations. The Council will now be taking steps to further reassure itself that the learning arising from the recommendations are now fully embedded. The following actions are planned from January to March 2024: a) A stakeholder group of officers' from Finance, Legal, Property, Procurement, Democratic Services and Capital Programme are to hold a lessons learnt session that includes an insight into current practice and any further changes required; and b) Presentation on lessons learnt and changes in practice to be taking to Capital Internal Control Board, Housing Transformation Board, CMT, Directors and Heads of Service Meeting; and Statutory Officers Group. This is to ensure wider dissemination of expectations in managing major capital projects.	Better officer reports and executive decision making in respect of capital projects. Better awareness and analysis of risk and compliance requirements. Better awareness of the financial reporting requirements in respect of capital projects.
11	Secretary of State Directions to comply with Best Value Duty	To implement the Action Plan (i.e., Exit Strategy) to secure compliance with the Secretary of State Directions	Chief Executive and Corporate Directors	Katherine Kerswell	<p>The Exit Strategy Action covers the following themes: Governance, Culture and Leadership, Financial Strategy, Service Performance: CYPE; ASCH; and Housing , and Capability & Capacity to Improve.</p> <p>A delivery tracker has been developed to monitor progress against all 177 actions in the Exit Strategy.</p> <p>Progress is reviewed regularly by DMT's and at CMT on a bi-monthly basis.</p> <p>The majority of actions due March 2024 are complete or on track to be completed.</p> <p>Progress will continue to be monitored overtime and reported on at the following intervals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •March 2024- Progress report on the Exit Strategy submitted to IAP to inform April 2024 letter to SOS •July 2024- Interim progress report on the Exit Strategy submitted to IAP •September 2024- Progress report on the Exit Strategy submitted to IAP to inform October 2024 letter to SOS •January 2025- Interim progress report on the Exit Strategy submitted to IAP •March 2025- Progress report on the Exit Strategy submitted to IAP to inform April 2025 letter to SOS <p>The objectives of the Exit Strategy will also be embedded into service plans for 24/25.</p>	