

Governance Review Improvement Plan (GRIP)

Executive Summary and Purpose

The accountability and governance arrangements in the Council are established but need to be reset, developed and improved further to manage the increasingly complex and high value projects being undertaken to deliver the challenging MTFS savings targets as approved by Council on the 27th February 2025.

The Governance Review Improvement Plan (**GRIP**) was therefore commissioned and sponsored by Tony Zaman, as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, in early March 2025. It will focus on three (3) workstreams, and be overseen by the Corporate Governance Group, which will take regular reports from the individual workstream leads. It is intended that the use of workstreams will bring focus and rigour to the financial and governance management process.

GRIP Programme and Workstreams

The GRIP will consist of the following three (3) workstreams:

1. Financial Governance - lead by the Council's s151 Officer
2. Directorate (Officer Decision-making) Governance - lead by the Council's Chief Operating Officer, on behalf of the Council's Head of Paid Service
3. Remaining Areas - i.e. Constitutional/ Democratic Governance - lead by the Monitoring Officer

Each Workstream will have two stages:

1. Governance Review Improvement Plan - a review phase, whereby the Council takes stock of recommendations provided by an independent review, or auditor
2. Governance Recommendations Implementation Plan - an implementation phase, where the Council will set out its plan of action and detail for implementing the GRIP recommendations, providing updates on progress

The workstream leads will report on progress with the delivery of their associated actions on the Governance Recommendations Implementation Plan to the Corporate Governance Group. The Corporate Governance Group via the Corporate Business Manager will manage and oversee the delivery of the Governance Recommendations Implementation Plan.

Project Drivers and High-Level Issues

The workstreams will be responsible for delivering the recommendations as referenced in the following reviews that have been undertaken.

- Directorate Governance Int Audit report (Sept 2024)
- LBH Final Audit Results Report (5 February 2025)
- Note - recommendations to follow an Independent Review of Constitutional and Democratic Governance

The workstreams will also link to the Council Strategy Commitments of a well-run, sustainable council with sound financial management, achieving positive outcomes for residents.

By establishing and delivering the outcomes from the three reviews through the creation of the three workstreams will provide a robust oversight that the Council is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Finance Modernisation Programme (FMP) and Engagement with Grant Thornton

Workstream 1 (Finance Governance) actions and improvements will be delivered in conjunction with the work being carried out by the Council via its Finance Modernisation Programme (FMP). The Council has engaged Grant Thornton in order to review areas including Oracle improvement work, and to provide further capacity and capability to enable financial improvements to be delivered at pace. This will be looked at going forward so as to dovetail with this work and also to explore if further assistance from Grant Thornton team may be required in relation to the broader FMP actions.

Governance Review Improvement Plan (Finance Governance)

Theme	Title of Review	Recommendation	Actions	Detailed Delivery Actions	Senior Responsible Officer	Lead	Action Delivery Lead	Start Date	End Date	RAG Status	Quarterly Progress Update (April - June 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (July - September 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (Oct - Dec 2025)
Finance Governance Recommendations and Actions													
1.1 Financial Sustainability	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024 (Statutory recommendations to the Council under Section 24 Schedule 7(2) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014)	The Council to build upon the steps already taken to control its expenditure to identify specific deliverable savings over the short term and medium term (Month 12-24 months) to protect its limited remaining reserves in the context of the forecast levels of funding. (That the Council ensures it has detailed implementation plans supporting all of the planned savings included within its 2025-26 budget and future medium-term financial strategy and identifies and develops implementation plans for further savings which can be pursued should additional budgetary pressures emerge or the Council fails to achieve all of its currently planned savings).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree a savings programme to deliver a balanced budget . 2. Deliver a mechanism for the regular review of savings progress and governance to change/add to savings depending on the levels of reserves. 3. Agree and implement spend control measures. 4. Review of the level of service provision across its services to ensure that the Council is striking an affordable balance between the monies it receives to fund services and the cost of those services. 5. Devise and roll out the updated Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template (see ref: Directorate Governance workstream recommendation 2.1) 	<p>Through CMT and all SMTs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor delivery of agreed savings programmes - M3 & M4. 2. Monitor use of MTFS savings app to ensure tight control - M3 & M4. 3. Enforce spend control measures across the Council. 4. Ensure compliance of Business and Financial Plan Template across Corporate Directors 	Matthew Wallbridge	Andy Goodwin	Matt Davis	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. The Council held a Star Chamber process starting in September 2024, which built on the ZBB exercise earlier that year, with this process setting out the saving proposals that ultimately Cabinet and Council approved, with Service Proposal Forms being completed for many of the savings setting out delivery and calculation methodologies.</p> <p>2. Since the budget went live, the Council has launched a MTFS App to capture the full details of the savings project, with the app feeding into the Council's monthly monitoring process that will be fed back to Cabinet in line with the monitoring timetable.</p> <p>3. Further challenge sessions were held in May and June to deliver additional savings that are currently being developed and reflected in the Month 2 budget monitoring report to Cabinet and refined as proposals are further developed.</p> <p>4. Spend Control Measures have been introduced as part of the Spend Control Process and Governance that has been in place before the start of the financial year. This has been widened out from just recruitment, agency workers, additional hours, and additional responsibilities, to P card (purchasing cards) expenditure, expenses, overtime and procurement.</p> <p>5. The Council has established a Finance Modernisation Programme, this programme includes an Accounting & Control workstream which has been supporting the Council to establish a better understanding of its balance sheet and financial out turn for 2024/25. The workstream has reviewed the accounting treatment and controls across a range of balances, prioritised by the Council, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collection Fund - Housing Revenue Account - Good Received Not Invoiced - Minimum Revenue Provision <p>6. The workstream has also provided best practice guidance for working papers and Audit preparation. Work is ongoing to establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a thorough Balance Sheet Assurance process, ensuring the Council applies good practice processes in assurance of the Balance Sheet as part of routine financial closing. - a robust and effectively governed financial closing process with clearly defined processes and roles and responsibilities in the closing and reporting cycle. </p>	<p>1. Grant Thornton balance sheet review highlighted £14.1m of prior year expenditure that has been accounted for in the 2024/25 Outturn Report. This review has confirmed year end balances (the building blocks for 2025/26) and will be reflected in the 2024/5 Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>2. Work undertaken on 2024/5 Outturn and Month 2 2025/6 Monitoring Report has led to the Council entering the Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) process to ensure it delivers a balanced budget.</p> <p>3. Work has started in August on the 2026/27 budget process taking the above points into consideration. Star Chambers started and throughout the remainder of August and early September to identify savings for the 2026/27 budget as well as quality assuring the savings approach and monitoring.</p> <p>4. Additional spend control measures in place with the introduction of enhanced Contract Purchase Agreement (CPA) controls.</p> <p>5. Internal Audit fieldwork on Directorate Business and Financial Plans Template</p>	
1.2 Service Delivery	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024	The Council to review its service delivery models to ensure that they are efficient, represent value for money and achieve the outcomes required for the resources invested. Where opportunities to improve service delivery models are identified, the Council should develop detailed plans for implementation of service delivery transformation and how the up-front transformation costs will be funded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the level of service provision across its services to ensure that the Council is striking an affordable balance between the monies it receives to fund services and the cost of those services. • Devise and roll out the updated Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template (note ref Directorate Governance workstream - recommendation 2.1) 	<p>The impact of the review of the saving programme for Month 2 along with the initial estimate of these new measures to be included in the Month 2 budget monitoring report to Cabinet and refined as proposals are further developed.</p> <p>In parallel to the M2 monitoring position, the Cabinet to also receive the 2024/25 Outturn position. This will enable the complete Council final position to be reviewed and consolidated in one meeting.</p>	Matthew Wallbridge	Andy Goodwin	Matt Davis	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. This work commenced with the Star Chamber process in September 2024 which built on the ZBB exercise earlier in the year with the proposals for savings/service delivery models that were deemed viable being approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2025. The investment to deliver the savings/service delivery models were part of this process through transformation capitalisation which was also approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2025</p> <p>2. Since the budget went live, CMT have met regularly to discuss cost control measures and the need to identify savings that can contribute towards the TOM saving or can deliver a one-off benefit for the Council to support the delivery of the 2025/26 budget strategy.</p> <p>3. Capital transformation programme review and monitoring set up</p> <p>4. See also the updates on the rollout of the Directorate Business and Financial Plans - (Directorate Governance workstream - recommendation 2.1)</p>	<p>1) Models have been reviewed by Officers as part of the Month 2 2025/6 Monitoring which was discussed by Cabinet in July. Outputs of the report highlight areas where more work is required.</p> <p>2) Models are being reviewed as part of the Month 4 2025/6 Monitoring which will be presented to the Cabinet in September, and part of the current Star Chamber process.</p>	
1.3 Schools Budget	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024	The Council to seek to balance its schools budget to prevent further growth in its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit. In the absence of confirmed alternative arrangements, the Council should also perform scenario planning for how it would manage the impact of the current deficit on its financial position when the current statutory override ends in March 2026.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Council to seek to balance its school's budget to prevent further growth in its Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit. 2. Council to consider performing scenario planning for how it would manage the impact of the current deficit on its financial position when the current statutory override ends in March 2026. 	<p>1. Officers to review existing and likely positions and outcomes.</p> <p>2. Council to continue to monitor the national picture on this issue - Note - This is a known national issue with many councils unable to fully fund their DSG deficits within General Fund reserves and resources.</p>	Andy Goodwin	Andy Goodwin	Andy Goodwin	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. Since this recommendation was written, the Govt have recognised this as a national issue and have confirmed the continuation of the statutory override for another 2 years to March 2028.</p> <p>2. The current DSG modelling suggests an in-year balanced budget by 2027/28, with the Council currently re-negotiating the Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). DfE advisor recommended the council on the evidenced delivery and forward plan</p> <p>3. Based on the Council's current approach, without further DfE and/or Council contributions to the DSG deficit, the Council will continue to have a DSG deficit beyond March 2028.</p>	<p>1. The Council's Treasury advisors are assessing different mechanisms the Council, along with its other Council clients, can use to fund the DSG deficit to reduce the pressure on Council cash flows.</p>	
1.4 Financial Forecasting	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024	The Council review its financial forecasting processes to understand why significant financial pressures, over and above those anticipated and reflected in the Council's annual budget, emerge and ensure future forecasting reflects the lessons learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver detailed finance procedures manual as described in the Constitution. To assist with clearly defining the responsibilities of budget holders and other individuals with finance responsibilities. Will assist in holding individuals to account and to promote the ownership of budgets. 2. Existing Financial Regulations to be updated as part of the Oracle Roll Out (e.g. in regard to setting policies for budget setting, income, journals etc). 3. Current spreadsheet-based systems being used pending full EPM implementation, also need to be fully documented and communicated. 4. Training to be delivered on the financial responsibilities and wider financial regulations to ensure effective governance and organisational financial management. The responsibility of all officers but should be well understood and supported by finance officers and business partners. They have a key role in promoting good practice and identifying areas of weakness and non-compliance, working to support colleagues across the Council to help them discharge their responsibilities. 	<p>1. Progress with the process underway under the banner of the Finance Modernisation Programme (FMP) that the Council is embarking on with partners Grant Thornton.</p> <p>2. The Council to report on the expected financial position for 2025/26 will take place for the first time this year when the Month 2 monitoring cycle is completed and reported to Cabinet on 24 July, and the forecasting processes and underlying assumptions (as well as the 24/25 closure of accounts) will ensure this is a more robust and transparent process than last year.</p> <p>3. Scrutiny finance training for Members to take place in September '25.</p> <p>4. EPM to be refreshed over this period.</p>	Andy Goodwin	Matt Davis	Andy Goodwin	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. All Select committees now receive budget scrutiny reports in 2025/26, on a regular basis, to monitor spend and delivery of savings and to enable them to hold Corporate Directors and (if required) Cabinet Members to account.</p> <p>2. Additionally specialist training is being arranged on financial scrutiny for Select committee members in September 2025, with a view to regular training as part of the Member Training Programme.</p> <p>3. EPM to be improved and used for M2</p> <p>4. The Finance Modernisation Programme includes a Budget and Capital monitoring workstream to implement recognised good practice and support the Council with enabling these processes through its Oracle finance system. The workstream has: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issued best practice budget monitoring guidance documents to finance and budget holders - Performed historic forecasting accuracy analysis to A) understand the accuracy and drivers of variances, and B) advise on development of automated forecasting techniques to support and inform the Council's forecasting processes. <p>5. Workshops on best practice budget monitoring processes and how these can be enabled by Oracle are being run with Budget Holders and senior finance staff. These workshops are informing the Council's new process and the role and responsibilities of all stakeholders, and informing the design of Budgeting and Forecasting functionality with Oracle as part of a refresh of that solution.</p> </p>	<p>1. As part of the closure process, updated processes now in place for assessing Collection Fund Bad Debt and Appeals Provision levels.</p> <p>2. The Council are currently preparing for the next round of finance updates to Select Committees, with reports being written for discussion in those meetings that will cover the 2024/25 Outturn position and 2025/26 Month 2 forecast.</p> <p>3. The workstream looking at how Capital is captured in the Oracle system, including a review of the Projects set up and EPM monitoring tool has taken place, with actions being delivered to start to address the challenges in capital budgets.</p>	
1.5 - Financial Information	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024	<p>1.5.1 The Council perform data quality assessments, using the Government Data Quality Framework or another suitable framework, of its key activities to enable it to better understand what its key data sources are, how it uses such data, the maturity of its data quality processes and any limitations in the data it uses;</p> <p>1.5.2 That having completed the data quality assessments, the Council should develop action plans to address any areas of weakness identified and ensure that implementation of those action plans is monitored and remedial action taken where necessary</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that key data in the organisation that informs decision making are available and accessible to senior managers 2. Prepare Power BI dashboards that relate to the Council's performance and expenditure across all service areas, with a process for assessing data content and data quality in each. 	<p>1. The Finance Modernisation Programme to include workstream to improve processes and controls and improve Oracle functionality to enable modern processes and drive compliance with data standards.</p> <p>The Finance Systems workstream is to support a range of improvement actions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrations - Improving existing integrations with feeder systems and developing additional interfaces to significantly reduce the level of manual intervention in the transfer and validation of data into Oracle. This will support and be informed by the Council's wider initiative to improve the data management. <p>2. The FMP/FS workstream to work on short term actions to improve data validation prior to transfer into Oracle and sustainable processes changes to reduce the high level of changes required to master data and ensure more robust management of cut off procedures to support Oracle maintenance and financial reporting processes.</p> <p>3. End of year performance report to the Cabinet and also select committees.</p> <p>4. End of year performance report to the select committees.</p> <p>5. Performance reports to be taken to SMTs and CMT on a monthly basis to review progress, actions and data quality</p> </p>	Matthew Wallbridge	Daren Pe	Ian Kavanagh/ Darren Everden/ Matt Davis	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. A key action in the FMP is the forensic review of the balance sheet. GT are more than three quarters through this work, elements of which have informed the changes in the council's financial outturn position</p> <p>2. There are now over 100 Power BI dashboards that relate to the Council's performance and expenditure. As part of the process data quality is assessed for each, and plans are put in place to improve the data quality of each dashboard. Detailed data quality work has taken place in areas like SEN with end to end process reviews and management plans to improve critical areas. There is a pipeline of a further 90 Power BI dashboards in this financial year.</p> <p>3. Performance reports taken to SMTs regularly to review progress, actions and data quality</p> <p>4. Performance reports taken to CMT on a monthly basis</p> <p>5. Individual indicators to have action plans to improve data quality</p> <p>6. FMP Finance systems workstream actions all underway with update on completed actions to follow</p>	<p>1. Annual Performance Report to be presented to Select and then full Cabinet in September 2025. These will be subsequently presented to Select Committees</p> <p>2. MTFS BI Dashboard developed to track savings progress, presented to SDB and live access to all Directors, Senior Managers and Cabinet Members.</p>	
1.6 Capacity and Capability	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024	The Council to review the capacity and skill mix within the Council's finance team to ensure that the Council is able to support the production and audit of its financial statements within statutory timeframes, as this is a key enabler for supporting appropriate scrutiny of the Council's financial performance by stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit to a permanent s151 officer role. 2. Commission and fund specialist capacity and capability to extra support to deliver the audit recommendations and the improvements in the CIPFA report. This is to align with the improvements needed in the Oracle programme 3. Restructure the Finance directorate, and review the additional areas within finance 4. Further transition planning activities include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - development of a full competency model for all finance roles - detailed skill assessment across all finance roles 	<p>1. Deliver restructure and recruitment campaign to deliver the right skills and capacity to deliver the outputs from the FMP.</p> <p>2. In the interim bring in extra capacity and capability to deliver the FMP through consultants who have the experience, tools and techniques to accelerate the improvements.</p> <p>3. The Finance Modernisation Programme is to support key actions to improve capacity and capability with the Council's finance team, these include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advice into the designing of senior finance roles including S151 Officer - Design of a new finance operating model, including finance team structure - Mapping of detailed tasks and roles and responsibilities across the new finance structure - Advising on the transition approach to move from the As Is to Be structure aligned to achievement of process and technology based improvements. </p>	Matthew Wallbridge	Andy Goo	Andy Good	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. New Corporate Director of Finance (s151) to commence work at the start of September 2025.</p> <p>2. As part of their engagement Grant Thornton, to add capacity and specific Oracle expertise to help drive the Finance Modernisation Plan forward work delivered to August has included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an updated interface to the existing Oracle EPM forecasting model to allow input of multiple cost centres - a financial review of the balance sheet which identified £14.1m of prior year adjustments that were actioned as part of the 2024/25 Outturn Report advice. - validation of Council data migration totals from the existing R12 Oracle solution to the new Oracle Fusion solution. - review of the existing EPM forecasting solution and associated interfaces which has highlighted efficiencies to be implemented. - System improvements in the ERP system including shortening requisition approval timetables, cost centre setup, and tracking of hierarchy changes. </p>		

Governance Review Improvement Plan (Directorate Governance)

Theme	Title of Review	Recommendation	Actions	Detailed Delivery Actions	Senior Responsible Officer	Lead	Action Delivery Lead	Start Date	End Date	RAG Status	Quarterly Progress Update (April - June 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (July - September 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (Oct - Dec 2025)
Non Finance Recommendations and Actions													
2.1 - Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	<p>1. The Directorate Business and Financial Plan template should be updated to require directorates to set clear objectives aligned to the Council's corporate/strategic objectives.</p> <p>2. These objectives should then be taken into consideration when allocating resources, developing directorate action plans and setting key performance indicators for the 2025/26 year.</p> <p>3. The Directorate Business and Financial Plans should be reviewed and approved through CMT to ensure there are no cross-directorate impacts, and they are consistent with the wider corporate/strategic objectives.</p>	<p>1. Complete a review and update of the business and financial planning requirements, including corporate objectives and business plan template.</p> <p>2. Ensure Directorate Annual Plans are in place for all areas.</p> <p>3. Template to be reviewed Annually and brought to CMT for approval.</p> <p>4. Directorate Business and financial plans to be completed annually by CMT.</p> <p>5. CMT to monitor Directorate Business and financial plans quarterly.</p>	<p>1. Updated Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template to be approved by COO.</p> <p>2. Circulate the Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template to all Corporate Director's to complete with a deadline date. Directorate Business and Financial Plans to be sent to Corporate Business Manager.</p> <p>3. Schedule all Directorate Business and Financial Plans to be approved by CMT.</p> <p>4. Circulate final Directorate Business and Financial Plans to CMT.</p> <p>5. Save all final Directorate Business and Financial Plans in the SMT SharePoint folder.</p> <p>6. Template will be reviewed by CMT on an annual basis.</p> <p>7. Directorate Business and financial plans will be completed annually for approval at CMT.</p> <p>8. CMT will monitor Directorate Business and financial plans quarterly.</p> <p>9. The updated Directorate Business and Financial Plans, once underway and having been in place for a time, will be the subject of an internal audit exercise to consider areas for improvement (what has worked well vs. what has not etc)</p>	Matthew Wallbridge	Darren Persaud	Michelle Smith	31/03/25	30/07/25	A	<p>1. Business and Financial Plan Template draft settled by COO then discussed at CMT and sent to all Corporate Directors</p> <p>2. The Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template has been circulated to all Corporate Director's to complete with a deadline date and a copy sent to the Corporate Business Manager.</p>	<p>1. All scheduled Directorate Business and Financial Plans have been approved by CMT.</p> <p>2. Final Directorate Business and Financial Plans have been circulated to CMT.</p> <p>3. Directorate Business and Financial Plans are to be uploaded into the CMT SharePoint folder.</p> <p>4. The Directorate Business and Financial Plans internal audit exercise (to consider areas for improvement) will commence in Sept with a view to a report being prepared for end of Oct4</p>	
2.2 - SMT Standardisation and Reporting	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	<p>1. CMT to agree a standard agenda template and reporting schedule for all SMT meetings covering the following key areas of governance as a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Workforce 2. Service delivery & performance against set objectives 3. Financial performance 4. Risk management 5. Key Projects <p>2. The SMT reporting schedule should also be aligned to the CMT reporting schedule to ensure any issues identified within the Directorates are appropriately escalated to CMT. System to ensure Directors are held to account for maintaining these SMT meetings in line with the agreed expectations and format.</p>	<p>1. As part of the review of governance and corporate working across the Council, a new standardised meetings structure and agenda for management and governance arrangements to be implemented. Standard Agenda/Minutes template to be produced for CMT & SMT meetings</p> <p>2. Minutes should be recorded for all Directorates, which should be including the topics of discussion, and any decisions or actions agreed. Actions should be followed up at the next meeting to ensure they are completed.</p> <p>3. A formal Corporate Governance Group (CCG) (formerly an informal statutory officers governance group) to be set up and will regularly (and annually) undertake a review of the effectiveness of Directorate Governance arrangements including how actions have been implemented and make recommendations for governance improvements for the ensuing year to be included in the GRIP.</p>	<p>1. Set up the SharePoint folder for CMT's, following a similar design to the CMT SharePoint Folder.</p> <p>2. Email Executive PA's to inform them of the CMT SharePoint folder, and ask them to save all papers in that folder.</p> <p>3. Standard Agenda/Minutes template to be produced for CMT & SMT meetings. Circulate the template agenda for Directorate SMT's, to Corporate Director's and their Executive PA's advising that this is the template to be used for all CMT & SMT meetings going forward.</p> <p>4. Set up a Corporate Governance Group (CCG)</p>	Matthew Wallbridge	Mark Braddock/Lloyd White	Michelle Smith	31/03/25	28/02/26	A	<p>1. Shared folder created for CMT, Internal Groups and SMTs.</p> <p>2. Communications with PAs awaited pending security access.</p> <p>3. New standard agenda and minute templates created and agreed for CMT, SDB, Groups and SMTs. Roll out across all internal bodies ongoing. Templates agreed by CMT on 29 May.</p> <p>4. Additional delivery action to enhance internal governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Corporate Tracker App, aligned with Cabinet Forward Plan now assists CMT/SDB by tracking key executive business through internal bodies before final decision democratic. This will ensure stronger internal governance and accountability, better coordination and robust decision-making. The Cabinet Forward Plan is discussed at CMT monthly, whilst the aligned Corporate Tracker weekly at SBD. </p> <p>5. Corporate Governance Group (CCG) first meeting on 19 March 2025. Further meetings were held monthly - on 25 March, 1 May, 3 June, reviewing the GRIP progress, and governance related issues generally.</p>	<p>1. PAs/Eas and Corporate Directors advised of new templates to use going forward. SDB using new templates, CMT using new templates w/e 16 July 2025. SMT's usage being rolled-out.</p> <p>2. New internal briefing "business proposal" template prepared aligned to new Cabinet/Cabinet report template under review to simplify reporting requirements.</p> <p>3. CCG meeting held 8 July 2025, reviewing the GRIP progress, and governance related issues generally</p>	
2.3 - Review of Governance Arrangements (Senior Management Meetings)	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	<p>1. The scope and frequency of the Senior Management Meetings should be reviewed to ensure it facilitates cross-directorate collaboration and information sharing. CMT should agree formal reporting arrangements to escalate issues and decisions from individual Directorates to ensure the wider impacts on other services can be considered. Where key issues impact on more than one directorate, separate project boards should be established providing a forum for collaboration between the relevant services.</p>	<p>1. Complete a review of the reporting/governance arrangements and implement changes at all management levels, including working with Elected Members, to deliver the Council priorities.</p> <p>2. A review will be carried out on the officer decision-making structure and tiers of management meetings, with a schematic prepared showing key officer groups, their terms of reference and their relationship between SMTs and reporting lines into CMT. This to be agreed at CMT and rolled out with training/briefings for managers.</p>	<p>1. Review the frequency of the SMM, and then agree frequency with the COO.</p> <p>2. Create a forward plan of topics to be covered at SMM meetings.</p> <p>3. Schedule the SMM forward plan at CMT for approval.</p> <p>4. Share forward plan with SMM.</p>	Tony Zaman	Matthew Wallbridge	Angela Laws	31/03/25	28/02/26	A	<p>1. SMM meetings diarised for 25/26. Future agenda items discussed at CMT 3. Draft schedule for SMM</p> <p>2. Completed the review on the officer decision-making structure and tiers of management meetings. Completed schematic showing key officer groups, their terms of reference and their relationship between SMTs and reporting lines into CMT. This has been agreed at CMT and rolled out with training/briefings for managers.</p> <p>3. Since the budget went live, the Council has launched a MTFS App to capture the full details of the savings project, with the app feeding into the Council's monthly monitoring process that will be fed back to Cabinet in line with the monitoring timetable.</p>	<p>1. SMM schedule and plan agreed for 25/26</p> <p>2. Further training provided to managers on the officer decision-making structure and tiers of management meetings, i.e. schematic showing key officer groups, their terms of reference and their relationship between SMTs and reporting lines into CMT. This has been agreed at CMT and rolled out with training/briefings for managers.</p> <p>3. Since the budget went live, the Council has launched a MTFS App to capture the full details of the savings project, with the app feeding into the Council's monthly monitoring process that will be fed back to Cabinet in line with the monitoring timetable.</p>	
2.4 - Corporate Governance Arrangements Training	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	<p>1. Training should be provided to Corporate Directors and Senior Managers on a yearly basis, and during the induction of newly onboarded Directors/Senior Managers.</p> <p>2. The training should cover the core principles of governance, and link to wider sessions on budget monitoring/financial performance, workforce planning, service delivery and risk management. This will provide the Directors with a uniformed approach to the expected levels of governance within the Council.</p> <p>3. CMT should collectively review their governance arrangements on an annual basis and agree actions to address any areas of improvement.</p>	<p>1. Briefings and training on Corporate Governance arrangements will be delivered to all managers. Link to wider sessions on workforce planning, service delivery and risk management. This will provide the Directors with a uniformed approach to the expected levels of governance within the Council.</p> <p>2. Training to be delivered on the financial responsibilities and wider financial regulations to ensure effective governance and organisational financial management. The delivery of financial governance set out in the Constitution is the responsibility of all officers but should be well understood and supported by finance officers and business partners. They have a key role in promoting good practice and identifying areas of weakness and non-compliance, working to support colleagues across the Council to help them discharge their responsibilities.</p> <p>3. Establish and communicate to Directors and Budget Managers, accountability and ownership for their respective roles.</p> <p>4. Division of responsibility between the budget holder and finance business partners needs to be reviewed and clarified. Due to a high degree of reliance being placed on finance business partners in the services to be the custodians of financial data rather than the budget holders themselves.</p>	<p>1. Roll out the annual training programme for leaders/managers</p> <p>2. Democracy / Governance Master Class to made mandatory for new Team Managers and above.</p> <p>3. CMT to review annually its effectiveness and ToR 4. NB: annual review to be undertaken by CMT via the AGS</p>	Matthew Wallbridge	Mark Braddock	Angela Laws	31/03/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. Paper going to CMT 23 July to update mandatory training programmes, which will be open to all staff and include annual, bi-annual and 3 yearly mandatory training programmes. Additional report going to CMT on proposed senior manager training over the coming month.</p> <p>2. The well-established Democracy and Governance Master Class is mandatory for all new Team Managers and above. Additionally, all new Corporate and key Directors receive political and Democratic Governance briefings from the Head of DS or Democratic Services Manager as part of their induction.</p>	<p>1. Governance masterclass session at SMM in July 2025</p> <p>2. Creating a wider "governance toolkit" intranet site, aligned/linked to the Cabinet toolkit intranet site. Cabinet toolkit has been simplified and made clearer for staff in terms of knowing who makes decisions and process for preparing executive reports for decision.</p> <p>3. Key governance areas included in performance appraisals i.e. mandatory training, risk management, budget management</p>	
2.5 - Minute taking and action planning	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	<p>1. Minutes should be recorded for all Directorates, which should be including the topics of discussion, and any decisions or actions agreed.</p> <p>2. Actions should be followed up at the next meeting to ensure they are completed.</p>	<p>1. Minutes of Directorate meetings to be recorded and retained</p> <p>2. Action items lists to be maintained and monitored</p>	<p>1. To ensure minutes / action lists are maintained on shared folders</p> <p>2. This to be reviewed as part of GRIP monitoring by CCG</p>	Matthew Wallbridge	All Corporate Directors	Michelle Smith	31/03/25	31/03/26	G	<p>1. Minutes for CMT, SDB and SMT meetings are kept and recorded and are kept on shared folders</p>	<p>Action trackers being monitored</p>	

Governance Review Improvement Plan (Constitution & Democratic)

Theme	Title of Review	Recommendation	Actions	Detailed Delivery Actions	Senior Responsible Officer	Lead	Action Delivery Lead	Start Date	End Date	Status	Quarterly Progress Update (April - June 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (July - September 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (Oct - Dec 2025)
Non Finance Recommendations and Actions													
Constitutional and Democratic Governance	Constitution	To be delivered											
3.1 - Constitutional and Democratic Governance	Healthcheck', Independent Review of Constitution and related Democratic processes - Lawyers in Local Government (LLG)	<p>As part of the Stage 1 exercise, an external review ('healthcheck') of the Council Constitution will be carried out by LLG with recommendations to be forthcoming from that exercise.</p> <p>Following that, as part of Stage 2, those recommendations will be reported to Members for consideration and populated into this section of the GRIP document. An action plan will be prepared for implementation of those changes agreed by Members.</p>	<p>1. LLG to be engaged as external expert consultants to review key areas of Council constitution to ensure it provides modern, efficient, effective and lawful governance for the Council.</p> <p>Key areas to be reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member and Co-opted Member Code of Conduct • Scheme of Delegation to Officers • Procurement Standard Orders • Exempt Information Protocols. • A review of Member / officer roles and relations - in particular with reference to financial governance. 	To be populated from the outcome of the LLG review	Lloyd White (as MO)	Daniel Toohey	Mark Braddock	01/06/25	01/11/25	G	LLG contacted and a brief has been prepared and costed. Under consideration.	LLG have been appointed and have commenced the review.	Note - Report and recommendations to be updated into GRIP document for Audit Committee 18 November 2025