

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 it 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 (Oct - Dec 2025)	Quarterly Progress Update (Jan - Mar 2026)
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 - Recommendation 1)	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 (next 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).	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)	Through CMT and all SMTs: 1. Monitor delivery of agreed savings programmes - M2 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	Steve Muldoon	Andy Goodwin	Matt Davis	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	1. Additional spend control measures are being introduced to ensure that all new spend through PO's/invoices undergoes a review and sign off process that the spend is essential. 2. An updated savings template has been issued and training workshops held on these to ensure that there is sufficient detail captured on savings and proposals to ensure that they can be assessed as sufficiently robust to sign off. This will also capture the prospective cost of implementing the savings. More detailed plans will be requested in respect of specific proposals identified as being at higher risk of slippage or non-delivery. This is being undertaken for prospective 2026/27 savings rather than as part of the 2025/26 budget which has already been set. 3. A review of the deliverability of all 25/26 savings has been undertaken as part of the M5 forecast process and savings are being reviewed closely each month with Corporate Directors. This has flushed out any optimism bias in the previous reporting and so a firmer position is now reported. This will feed into the MTFS 26/27 - 28/29 cycle. 4. All 25/26 savings which have been downgraded and no longer forecast to deliver in year will undergo a separate review to assess whether they are completely undeliverable, or if the value and timing of future delivery needs reprofiling and can be achieved in 2026/27. 5. P-cards being reviewed in light of contract extension to reduce the number of cards in use and enforce tighter use on essential spend. 6. An application to MHCLG for Exceptional Financial Support has been made with subsequent substantive discussions, which will address the reduction in reserves in recent years by re-establishing a base level of reserves, address the projected deficit in 25/26 and project the support required over subsequent years.	1. Spend control boards now embedded with the organisation. This includes requests for new P-cards and spend over £500. Anecdotal evidence that unnecessary spend is being captured/stopped at Head of Service/Director level or not being put forward. 2. 2025/26 Growth and Savings schedules re-reviewed as part of the initial 2026/27 Budget Report presented to Cabinet on the 23rd December 2025. Delivery plans requested in respect of those 2026/27 proposals considered more challenging to deliver. 3. Savings assessed as undeliverable or at risk in the 2025/26 position have been reviewed to assess the impact on 2026/27 with adjustments as necessary in the 2026/27 base budget setting. Amber savings at this stage also being assessed more closely as the outcome on these should now be getting clearer. 4. The Council has submitted its EFS application and had the initial review undertaken by CIPFA in January. Final submission due end of January to MHCLG and discussions being held with MHCLG on this. This will necessarily include some rebuilding of reserves which are now depleted. Some rephrasing likely. Now awaiting final in-principle decision on approval of EFS and the agreed value, expected in February. 5. A list of further potential opportunities to investigate for further savings in the next iteration of the MTFS is being compiled which will be discussed with the ruling administration post May elections.
1.2 Service Delivery	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 - Recommendation 2)	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.	• 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)	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. 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.	Steve Muldoon	Andy Goodwin	Matt Davis	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	1. Officers are currently updating and reviewing demand modelling for key areas of service provision to understand the key drivers of demand and cost, and hence where focus on efficiency needs to be undertaken. A significant number of KPIs and dashboards have been prepared to support the analysis, and benchmarking is being reviewed to understand the key areas where the council is high/average/low cost and where opportunities for further efficiencies should be explored further. 2. Approval was given at October Cabinet to progress disposal of the council car park at Cricket Field Road (the "Lobster Pot") in order that an increase in local adult social care provision can be provided, helping offset the increasingly expensive external provision the council currently faces. 3. The Capital Programme has been reviewed with a view to accelerating the acquisition of property through the HRA to be used to help mitigate the high cost of and increasing demand for temporary accommodation. 4. A review of the use of capital receipts for transformation funding has been undertaken to clarify what capital receipts will be available for use and qualify under the regulations, and what expenditure will be able to be offset against these receipts. 5. A review of the personnel hierarchy structures in Oracle has been undertaken to ensure these are reflective of understanding, correct errors therein, and correct any vacant posts or supernumerary positions that can be removed to mitigate the in-year position. 6. The Corporate Management Team meet on a weekly basis and as part of the agenda the Service Delivery Board reviews options, projects and changes to service provision in light of the council's financial position. 7. The Council are reviewing the Medium Term Financial Strategy which includes service provision and options for consideration as part of budget setting	1. A number of rounds of meeting (at all levels, Officer and Member) have taken place to review service demand models and base budget requirements as part of the 2026/27 Budget Process. 2. Areas which will require more in-depth delivery model reviews in 2026 are being formulated and built into the MTFS from 26/27. 3. The cost implementing changes and savings in 2026/27 is being identified to ensure that this is captured as part of the MTFS and delivery plans are being requested where transformational or complex savings proposals have been put forward. Anticipated to be funded from flexible capital receipts. 4. Hierarchy structures in Oracle are being reviewed and updated to ensure that these better align with how directorates want to view their services 5. Meetings have resulted in updated base budgets as part of the initial 2026/27 Budget Report presented to Cabinet on the 23rd December 2025. This includes significant adjustments (growth) to savings and pressures that are implicit in the £36m Period 7 2025/26 overspend position. The mitigation/intervention target set of £2m in 26/27 is being reduced as improvements in the Directorate forecasts are coming through. 6. Interface between the HR system (Zellis) and Oracle to ensure all establishment changes are managed in a more effective manner. Expected implementation of this daily interface is expected late in Quarter 4 2025/16.
1.3 Schools Budget	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 - Recommendation 3)	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 2028.	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 2028.	1. Officers to review existing and likely positions and outcomes. 2. The 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.	Steve Muldoon	Andy Goodwin	Andy Goodwin	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	A letter has been received from DiE commending the Council on "the significant progress that has been achieved in Hillingdon and your rigorous approach to providing a high quality, financially efficient SEND service". The Government intends to set out plans for reforming the SEND system in the coming months. Average EHCP costs, EHCP numbers, number of EHCP cases in mainstream settings, placements in independent settings and a revised banding framework. A projection of the DSG deficit up to March 2028, when the statutory override ends, indicates that the council's cumulative DSG deficit will reach £90.8m without any further safety valve contributions from DiE or LBH. The one known scenario that can be modelled for as a potential solution at present would be for this to be capitalised (using EFS) which would lead to an annual MRP charge to the council's revenue budget of £2.6-2.8m/yr. At that point, from 2028/29, the annual in-year position is anticipated to be break-even. However this is a scenario that affects councils up and down the country and so we await further guidance from Government on how this multi-Ebn national issue will be addressed. A number of indicators being tracked demonstrate that significant progress is being made in reducing the cost burden on the DSG deficit which will help to bring this down over time: Average EHCP costs, EHCP numbers, EHCPs in mainstream settings, numbers in independent settings and a revised banding framework.	The white paper on SEND reform is anticipated to come through very soon, although not as soon as the local government funding settlement arrives. All councils eagerly await clarity from government on how the DSG deficit balances as at 31/3/2028 will be treated from that point onwards. The annual cost to the council in the form of interest is approaching £4m/year to fund the cash cost of the deficit. The council's in-year deficit was budgeted at £12.5m, down from the actual deficit in 2024/25 of £15m. The P7 forecast was a reduction of £1.9m at £10.6m and early indications from P9 workings are that this will reduce further to below £10m, a significant reduction on the prior year. The number of EHCP requests has dramatically increased recently in response to the imminent announcements and so may slow this down but the council is still projecting to bring the annual deficit down further over the next two years. Meetings on SEND Reform have commenced with DiE officers and advisors ahead of the announcements.
1.4 Financial Forecasting	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 - Recommendation 4)	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.	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.	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. 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 24th 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. 3. Scrutiny finance training for Members to take place in September '25. 4. EPM to be refreshed over this period.	Steve Muldoon	Matt Davis	Andy Goodwin	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	The forecast outturn during the course of 2025/26 has flagged up that a £30m+ deficit is likely, meaning that the budget setting process is flawed, rather than the forecasting process. Drivers of this are considered to be heavily influenced by the following: - Savings need to be more robustly developed and challenged at the time of submitting proposals. This will be improved upon through more detailed templates and challenge sessions. - Growth has outstripped expectations but also the understanding of the level of demand in the current year is weak. Growth and demand models and in-year tracking need to be better developed. - Optimism bias needs to be removed. Cross-cutting savings need to be tightly owned and managed or they do not move forward at pace. RAG ratings of savings need better definition and savings need challenge through the year. - Dependency on capital receipts to fund revenue spend creates a risk of overspend if these do not materialise to plan. This approach will be removed from future budgets. - A significant movement in 2024/25 came from balance sheet corrections as the balance sheet review process progressed. This exercise needs concluding to ensure there are no further hidden surprises. Reconciliations need to be maintained more frequently and reviewed by others. - There needs to be an exercise after each year end to review changes from the final forecast to the outturn to understand which variances are ongoing and have not been fully built into the new year's budget. Many of the above issues arise due to a lack of clarity in the current year position as the budget setting process for the following year begins, and a weak challenge of new proposals which undermines deliverability of savings through the following year. Growth modelling needs improvement and the budget setting process tightening. This needs to begin earlier in the year than has been the case in recent years as the process becomes rushed and insufficient time remains to perform a thorough process. While these issues will be addressed during the current MTFS cycle, the fact that the council is having to address so many issues at once and has limited time available for turnaround does present a risk that these will not be fully resolved. A contingency will be required to mitigate any such unforeseen/unidentified issues.	1. The P6 forecast outturn indicated a £36m deficit which has stayed steady in P7 and is expected to remain steady in the P9 forecast also. As part of the budget process, as set out in 1.1 and 1.2 above initial 2026/27 Budget Report presented to Cabinet on the 23rd December 2025 includes significant adjustments (growth) to savings and pressures that are implicit in the £36m forecast. The variances contained in this demonstrate that it is the budget setting process that has been flawed, rather than the forecasting process. Drivers of this, that have been scrutinised to deliver the 23rd December initial 2026/27 Budget Report include: - Savings achievability is key - for 26/27 these have been more robustly developed and challenged and delivery plans are now being worked up. - Growth, demand and inflation have been understated previously - models and in-year tracking have been developed to understand the underlying trends. - Variances carried forward from the previous year not properly addressed - budget rebasing forms a significant part of the growth in 26/27 MTFS modelling. - Optimism bias (e.g. growth and savings) - this has been removed and cross-cutting savings minimised as these lack clear ownership - Dependency on capital receipts to fund revenue spend has been removed from future budgets and will only be used for one-off savings implementation costs. - Contingency has been rebuilt 2. There will be an exercise at each year end to review changes from the final forecast to the outturn to understand which variances are ongoing and may not be fully built into the new year's budget. 3. Given time pressure experienced in this year's budget process, the process will need to begin earlier in the year to perform a thorough, unrushed process. While many of the above issues will be addressed during the current MTFS cycle, the fact that the council is having to address so many issues at once and has limited time available for turnaround does present a risk that these will not be fully resolved. A contingency has been rebuilt to mitigate unforeseen/unidentified issues.
1.5 - Financial Information	London Borough of Hillingdon Final Audit Results Report Year ended 31 March 2024	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; 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	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.	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 process and data standards. The Finance Systems workstream is to support a range of improvement actions including: - 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 work will support and be informed by the Council's wider initiative to improve the data management. 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. 3. End of year performance report to the Cabinet and also select committees. 4. End of year performance report to the select committees. 5. Performance reports to be taken to SMTs and CMT on a monthly basis to review progress, actions and data quality	Matthew Wallbridge	Ian Kavar	Darren Persaud/ Darren Everden/ Matt Davis	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	1. Annual Performance Report being presented to Select Committees 2. MTFS Dashboard to track savings progress presented to SDB on a monthly basis 3. Over 100 Power BI dashboards are available across the organisation with finance, performance and benchmarking data to support Corporate Directors and senior managers to help inform decision making 4. Power BI dashboard has been produced to make the data from Oracle clearer to budget managers, heads of service and corporate directors. This will drive greater understanding or challenge of the veracity of the data, hence continuous improvement in the quality of data.	1. In line with a more recent recommendation, closer attention will be paid to reconciliations for core balance sheet control accounts and balances. 2. The Oracle programme will be a key contributor in ensuring that budget managers take ownership of their data and forecasts. Training has already been rolled out to both budget holders and senior managers to clarify expectations of them in their forecasts and underlying financial information.

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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit to a permanent s151 officer role. 2. Commission and fund specialist capacity and capability to inject 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 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver restructure and recruitment campaign to deliver the right skills and capacity to deliver the outputs from the FMP. 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. 3. The Finance Moderation 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. 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 	Steve Muldoon	Andy Goddard	Andy Good	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>1. Grant Thorton have come to an end of phase 1 of their work on the Finance Modernisation Programme, with phase 2 to begin shortly. Additional resource is being seconded in to support capacity and capability on the annual accounts process and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>2. Specialist support from GT to drive the Finance Modernisation Plan forward in respect of Oracle and the annual accounts has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementation of an updated Oracle monitoring template for users that has simplified the monitoring process for budget managers with one return for all budget managers' budgets (was one return for each cost centre). This has now been running for 2 periods. - work with the HR team to define and specify an interface that will work daily to transfer establishment data from the HR system to Oracle, meaning the establishment position on Oracle will be continuously updated. Now awaiting an upgrade on the HR system to move forward. - Technical support in reviewing key working papers such as IFRS16 to identify possible issues and ensure compliance to new auditing standards, and to provide support and quality assurance of the 2024/25 audit process. - Work with the capital team to establish and define the issues being encountered in the use of projects to enable resolution. - with new processes in place to manage hierarchial changes, work with the Council in reviewing Oracle access and authorisation setups, taking into account External Audit recommendations supplied in October following the audit of the Oracle R12 to Fusion transition. 	<p>1. Key roles in the Finance team have been or are being recruited to on a permanent basis with appointments to two Head of Finance positions and recruitment to a lead capital position underway.</p> <p>2. Joint work with Grant Thorton has now moved into a shorter, sharper, phase 2 work package on the Finance Modernisation Programme.</p> <p>3. Specialist support in Phase 2 from GT to drive the Finance Modernisation Plan forward in respect of Oracle and the annual accounts includes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. implementation of Oracle items as set out in 1.8 below – workshops and design work are already under way. b. finalisation of the work on the interface that will undertake daily transfer of establishment data from the HR system to Oracle. c. work with the capital team to establish and define the issues being encountered in the use of projects to enable resolution. d. Reviewing the Governance and processes linked to the Council financial reporting processes e. Reviewing the transaction processes & recharging models for efficiency across the Council – starting with procurement processes f. Working with the DOP on a new structure and financial skills of the Finance department and the Council. This may include some bolstering of resource in key areas to increase in-house capacity and capability and reduce future dependency on external resource from consultants.
1.7 A clear financial position	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 - Recommendation 5)	We recommend that the Council urgently establishes a clear understanding of its current financial position, including the extent to which that position has diverged from the assumptions underpinning the 2025/26 budget and may require immediate action to prevent further depletion of reserves during 2025/26.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and update the reported forecast position to reflect all known issues, avoiding optimism bias, so the extent of the challenge facing the council is properly understood and can be firmly addressed. 2. Assess the impact on EFS request to MHCLG and update accordingly; engage further with MHCLG to progress this. 3. Assess the closing level of reserves as at 31/3/25 and how this compares to what the council set itself as a minimum level and the average position across London Boroughs. 4. Derive the impact on the MTFS for the council over the next 3 years and how this will need to be addressed through savings and EFS. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess and challenge all current year savings to assess deliverability, keeping these under regular review each month. 2. Identify other key risks to the forecast and financial position, assess reliability of forecasting in these areas, how these can be improved and any further potential financial impact. 3. Implement further spend controls, communicate these to staff. 4. Engage productively with MHCLG to press for early decision on EFS if possible, clarify the process and timetable. 5. Benchmark reserves to determine how LBH compares to peers and inform the EFS application. 6. Progress the MTFS process to understand the gap and the level of EFS that may be required over the next 2-3 years 7. Assess the asset base for potential disposals to contribute capital receipts towards offsetting the EFS required. 	Steve Muldoon	Andy Goddard	Andy Good	01/04/25	31/03/26	A	<p>This theme has been added this quarter to ensure completeness of S24 recommendations in the GRIP.</p> <p>1. The recent P5 and P6 reports demonstrate that the Council has been reviewing the current financial position closely with regard to the deliverability of the savings target, removing optimism bias from the forecast. The seriousness of the position has been communicated to and acknowledged by senior management and Cabinet members, with further spend control measures now being introduced. Further financial risks have been identified and clarified in the report as these may further impact the outturn, and are in the process of being scrutinised further.</p> <p>2. Growth modelling is being reviewed and improved to ensure that there is a stronger understanding of the key cost indicators in temporary accommodation and social care, both to inform the forecast and the MTFS.</p> <p>3. Reserves have been compared to those held by other London boroughs at 31/3/25. Some of those are of course inflated by the EFS they have already received and so adjusting for this, LB Hillingdon was 5th lowest for General Fund reserves at that date. Reserves are being sought to be bolstered through the EFS application, to bring these back above the minimum level recommended in the February S25 report.</p> <p>4. Cash flow modelling has been scrutinised to understand the impact this will have on the council's ability to borrow to cover expenditure through the remainder of the year, including how much headroom it still has.</p> <p>5. Capital projects are being reviewed to identify any which show signs of likely slippage, or can be reduced or deferred. This action will assist the forecast cash position and reduce the eventual impact on the general fund.</p>	<p>1. The P6 forecast deficit of £36m has stayed steady through to P9 which indicates that many of the issues inherent in the budget as set have been flushed out, in respect of savings, growth and other budgeting issues. This has enabled the MTFS to be built on a more confident and stable base, reducing the risk of avoidable issues arising in 2026/27 budget setting.</p> <p>2. The position has been clearly communicated to, discussed with, and acknowledged by senior management and Cabinet members and reflected in the 2026/27 initial Budget Report. Enhanced spend control measures are now embedded.</p> <p>3. Reserves are being sought to be bolstered through the EFS application, to bring these back to an acceptable level.</p> <p>4. Cash flow continues to be modelled and scrutinised to understand the impact this will have on the council's ability to borrow to cover expenditure through the remainder of the year, including how much headroom it still has. The council will be able to manage any short-term pressures to avoid any critical cashflow issues.</p> <p>5. Existing capital projects have been reviewed as part of the 2026/27 MTFP process to identify any which show signs of likely slippage or can be reduced or deferred. This action will assist the forecast cash position and reduce the eventual impact on the general fund.</p>
1.8 Oracle EPM	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 - Recommendation 6)	We recommend that the Council urgently addresses the issues it has encountered with implementation of Oracle EPM to ensure that, at both individual budget holder and overall Council level, decision makers are able to access accurate and complete budgetary information to inform decision-making.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stabilise Oracle EPM environment and resolve outstanding Implementation issues. 2. Strengthen governance and control processes around system access and configuration. 3. Ensure accurate and reliable reporting against budget for all budget holders and decision makers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a retrospective review of all risks and issues logged during implementation to confirm closure or mitigation. 2. Complete a user access review for Fusion and EPM, ensuring appropriate authorisation and removal of conflicting permissions. 3. Ensure month end close processes run efficiently and effectively and data has integrity. 4. Update system security policies to enforce password controls, login attempt limits, and account lockout protocols. 5. Implement a data quality assessment for EPM outputs to validate completeness and accuracy for decision-making. 6. Develop and roll out training sessions for budget holders on using EPM, dashboards and interpreting financial data. 	Matthew Wallbridge	Pete Carr	Martin Brown	01/04/25	31/3/26	A	<p>This theme has been added this quarter to ensure completeness of S24 recommendations in the GRIP.</p> <p>1. Oracle Programme Manager appointed in October.</p> <p>2. Worked with External Auditors to undertake an implementation audit of the transition from Oracle R12 to Oracle Fusion. The review highlighted a number of access and authorisation improvements which are being integrated into the improvement programme.</p> <p>3. Implementation of an updated Oracle EPM monitoring template for users that has simplified the monitoring process for budget managers with one return for all budget managers' budgets (was one return for each cost centre). This has now been running for 2 periods.</p> <p>4. Workshop review sessions run on period end closing in mid October, taking on board learning points from the first 2 months of the updated EPM monitoring solution, to ensure the month end process for October is run more efficiently.</p> <p>5. Updated governance processes being implemented by new programme manager to ensure Oracle updates are properly designed, owned and understood by the business, and rolled out with the appropriate levels of testing and training.</p> <p>6. Workshops run through October to document and provide a solution for the issues being encountered with projects.</p> <p>7. Contracted for Phase 2 of the Oracle element of the FMP</p> <p>8. Presentation to the Audit Committee on Oracle (with progress updates in more detail and the future plan)</p>	<p>The 2024/25 draft Auditor's Report has highlighted a number of Oracle improvements that are set out in Appendix C of that report. These are being actively implemented by:</p> <p>1. A clear prioritised deliverable plan now being in place setting out the required work over the upcoming period.</p> <p>2. Improving the updated EPM monitoring template using more of the Oracle Fusion technology for implementation as part of the Month 2 2026/27 monitoring.</p> <p>3. Updating of the Council's access and authorisation arrangements to simplify its use and maximise the how the Council utilises its Oracle licences - due for implementation at the end of the quarter, with joint workshops already taking place.</p> <p>4. Implementation of updated procurement processes, including additional punchout access to Amazon for users within the quarter and building of resilience to ensure quicker punchout implementation for additional suppliers.</p>
1.9 Issues highlighted by external reviews	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 - Recommendation 7)	We recommend that the Council continues at pace with the development and implementation of its FMP, as well as the wider GRIP, and ensures that the scope of these programmes addresses all of the weaknesses in current arrangements highlighted by the various internal and external reviews the Council has received.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Progress the FMP and GRIP as already laid out. 2. Review all other documents which highlight weaknesses and make recommendations for improvement and implementation, and capture relevant actions in the GRIP/FMP plans 3. Review feedback from EY on the issues they have raised in the past year and capture these to ensure they get addressed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the Internal Audit reports for 2024/25 to pull out relevant actions not yet addressed or completed. 2. Review the CIPFA review report for issues and actions to address 	Steve Muldoon	Pete Carr	Pete Carper	01/08/25	27/02/26	A	<p>This theme has been added this quarter to ensure completeness of S24 recommendations in the GRIP.</p> <p>1. Recommendations from the 2023/24 External Audit Report are included in this document as are the additional recommendations in the S24 Report. These are reviewed on an ongoing basis internally and reported quarterly to Audit Committee.</p> <p>2. The External Auditors have undertaken a transaction audit for the move from Oracle R12 to Fusion. A number of recommendations linked to access rights were made in October and these have been included in the access and authorisation review mentioned in 1.6 above.</p> <p>3. Work continues with the External Auditors on the Audit of the 2024/25 Accounts and there is an update on this work reported to the Audit Committee.</p>	<p>1. Draft 2024/25 Auditor's Report has 3 sets of recommendations (previous year, 2024/25, and Oracle) in its appendices which are picked up in this statement.</p> <p>2. Final 2024/25 Auditor's Report and associated updated recommendations are part of the February 2026 Audit Committee agenda.</p> <p>3. Oracle Recommendations set out in item 1.8 Oracle EPM.</p> <p>4. Preparation for 2025/26 Accounts has started – including implementation of a full balance sheet review (and correction) as at Quarter 3 to speed up processes and ensure with greater probability that the draft accounts are delivered by the 30 June 2026 deadline. This builds on initial work undertaken for Quarter 2 of 25/26.</p> <p>5. The GRIP and FMP are being reported on at each Audit Committee to update on the progress being made, with new recommendations being added as they arise.</p>
1.10 Robustness of the Budget 2025/26	London Borough of Hillingdon Draft Auditor's Annual Report Year ended 31 March 2025 VFM Recommendation	We recommend that the Council reassesses whether the assumptions and forecasts underpinning its 2025/26 budget were sufficiently robust to support the conclusion that the Council has set a balanced budget for the 2025/26 financial year. If the Council is unable to conclude that it has a balanced budget, it should consider what further actions it may be required to take to comply with its statutory responsibilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the S25 Statement and Budget report published in February 2025 re the 2025/26 financial year. 2. Review and assess the assumptions and forecasting underpinning the budget for 2025/26. 3. Review and assess intervention actions taken by the Council and the S151 Officers throughout the course of the 2025/26 year to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitoring Officer team to lead on preparing a review and assessment. 2. MO team to interview statutory and other officers as required. 3. MO team to meet with external auditor to discuss their concerns. 	Dan Toohey	Dan Toohey	Brendan Molloy	27/11/25	27/2/26 in draft form	A	<p>The Monitoring Officer team has commenced a review exercise and has had initial discussions with the S151 Officer and Head of Paid Service.</p>	<p>The review exercise will culminate in a draft report with conclusions and/or recommendations aiming for end of February 2026. The draft will then be circulated for comment from the External Auditor, S151 Officer and Head of Paid Service, with a view to it being concluded by the end of March 2026</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	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. 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. 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.	1. Complete a review and update of the business and financial planning requirements, including corporate objectives and business plan template. 2. Ensure Directorate Annual Plans are in place for all areas. 3. Template to be reviewed Annually and brought to CMT for approval. 4. Directorate Business and financial plans to be completed annually by CMT. 5. CMT to monitor Directorate Business and financial plans quarterly.	1. Updated Directorate Business and Financial Plan Template to be approved by COO. 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. 3. Schedule all Directorate Business and Financial Plans to be approved by CMT. 4. Circulate final Directorate Business and Financial Plans to CMT. 5. Save all final Directorate Business and Financial Plans in the SMT SharePoint folder. 6. Template will be reviewed by CMT on an annual basis. 7. Directorate Business and financial plans will be completed annually for approval at CMT. 8. CMT will monitor Directorate Business and financial plans quarterly. 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)	Matthew Wallbridge	Darren Persaud	Michelle Smith	31/03/25	30/07/25	A	1. Business and Financial Plan Template draft settled by COO then discussed at CMT and sent to all Corporate Directors 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.	1. All scheduled Directorate Business and Financial Plans have been approved by CMT. 2. Final Directorate Business and Financial Plans have been circulated to CMT. 3. Directorate Business and Financial Plans are to be uploaded into the CMT SharePoint folder.	1- The Directorate Business and Financial Plans internal audit exercise (to consider areas for improvement) will report by end of Oct'
2.2 - SMT Standardisation and Reporting	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	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: 1.Workforce 2.Service delivery & performance against set objectives 3.Financial performance 4.Risk management 5.Key Projects 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.	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 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. 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.	1. Set up the SharePoint folder for CMT's, following a similar design to the CMT SharePoint Folder. 2. Email Executive PA's to inform them of the CMT SharePoint folder, and ask them to save all papers in that folder. 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. 4. Set up a Corporate Governance Group (CCG)	Matthew Wallbridge	Mark Braddock/ Lloyd White	Michelle Smith	31/03/25	28/02/26	G	1. Shared folder created for CMT, Internal Groups and SMTs. 2. Communications with PAs awaited pending security access. 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. 4. Additional delivery action to enhance internal governance:- 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. 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.	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. 2. New internal briefing "business proposal" template prepared aligned to new Cabinet/Cabinet report template under review to simplify reporting requirements. 3. CCG meeting held 8 July 2025, reviewing the GRIP progress, and governance related issues generally	1. Final briefing / training session to be given to Senior Managers Meeting 2. CCG continuing to meet and monitor prgress with GRIP 3. Corporate Tracker in place internally for CMT and key stakeholders to track key council business aligned with internal governance groups and processes, prior to democratic decision-making.
2.3 - Review of Governance Arrangements (Senior Management Meetings)	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	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.	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. 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.	1. Review the frequency of the SMM, and then agree frequency with the COO. 2. Create a forward plan of topics to be covered at SMM meetings. 3. Schedule the SMM forward plan at CMT for approval. 4. Share forward plan with SMM.	Tony Zaman	Matthew Wallbridge	Angela Laws	31/03/25	28/02/26	G	1. SMM meetings diarised for 25/26 2. Future agenda items discussed at CMT 3. Draft schedule for SMM 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. 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.	1. SMM schedule and plan agreed for 25/26 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. NB follow-up training provided at SMM on 17 July 2025.	1. New internal governance arrangements at officer level in place to shape, review, and support proposals before they reach the democratic and Member domain for decision. 2. All officer groups established with ToR and governance arrangements. To be published on intranet to ensure wider knowledge amongst staff about arrenagements. 3. SMTs have been briefed. 4. Officer delegations reviewed to reflect updated Management Structure and Directorates in place. Additionally, general management delegations under review to reflect internal controls and broader spans of management control.
2.4 - Corporate Governance Arrangements Training	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	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. 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. 3. CMT should collectively review their governance arrangements on an annual basis and agree actions to address any areas of improvement.	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. 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. 3. Establish and communicate to Directors and Budget Managers, accountability and ownership for their respective roles. 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.	1.Roll out the annual training programme for leaders/managers 2.Democracy / Governance Master Class to made mandatory for new Team Managers and above. 3.CMT to review annually its effectiveness and ToR 4. NB: annual review to be undertaken by CMT via the AGS	Matthew Wallbridge	Mark Braddock	Angela Laws	31/03/25	31/03/26	G	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 overing coming month. 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.	1. Governance masterclass session at SMM in July 2025 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. 3. Key governance areas included in performance appraisals i.e. mandatory training, risk management, budget management	1. Governance training being rolled out. 2. Wider corporate "governance toolkit" intranet site devised.
2.5 - Minute taking and action planning	Internal Audit Report on Governance September 2024	1. Minutes should be recorded for all Directorates, which should be including the topics of discussion, and any decisions or actions agreed. 2. Actions should be followed up at the next meeting to ensure they are completed.	1. Minutes of Directorate meetings to be recorded and retained 2. Action items lists to be maintained and monitored	1.To ensure minutes / action lists are maintained on shared folders 2. This to be reviewed as part of GRIP monitoring by CCG	Matthew Wallbridge	All Corporate Directors	Michelle Smith	31/03/25	31/03/26	B	1. Minutes for CMT, SDB and SMT meetings are kept and recorded and are kept on shared folders	Action trackers being monitored	Impemented

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 - Nov' 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)	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. 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.		To be populated from the outcome of the LLG review	Daniel Toohey (as MO)	Daniel Toohey	Mark Braddock	01/06/25	01/11/25	G	LLG contacted and a brief has been prepared, costed and approved.	LLG have undertaken the review. Final report with consolidated recommendations - aim be delivered by mid October 2025	Report and recommendations to be updated into GRIP document for Action once received and approved