

Bedford Borough Council

Improvement Plan Framework 2025-2030

Purpose

The work of local government is of vital importance. Councils are the primary provider of numerous essential services, and these have a significant positive impact on the community. The financial outlook for local authorities across the country continues, however, to be challenging given the demand-led pressures both nationally and locally and the impact of national Government funding reductions on local authorities over a sustained period. Bedford Borough Council is no different and is facing considerable financial pressures due to demand and cost pressures in its core services.

It is important that Bedford Borough Council is proactive in addressing what have become systemic, continued pressures and has a clear plan to address the funding gap and the underlying resilience of services. Our improvement plan represents an overarching framework that will transform the operation of the Council with a continued emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness, and a cost-conscious organisation, focused on meeting the needs of the Borough effectively, whilst living within our means.

The plan is structured around four clear aims:

1. A Council with a clear vision, direction and positive culture focussed on best meeting the needs of our community.
2. A Council fit for the future with an engaged and focussed workforce delivering services that are efficient and focused on effective transformation to achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. A Council which is financially sustainable and resilient with good practices embedded.
4. A Council focussed on transforming through implementing the Improvement Plan, building on success and achievements, ensuring that the Council is well run and that Members and officers understand their respective roles.

The delivery of the plan is underpinned by the extensive analytical and diagnostic work undertaken to date, as well as robust governance arrangements to ensure progress is maintained and any difficulties or challenges can be resolved.

Context

Bedford Borough Council is committed to supporting the needs of our citizens and stimulating economic growth. The Council is, however, facing considerable financial challenges that have arisen from the significant demand and cost pressures in temporary accommodation, adult social care and children's services, as well as the necessity of having to rely on agency staff to meet these increased workload demands. Government funding has not kept pace with these demands. Many of these pressures have, to date, been met through cost savings, but the pressure has continued to build and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) identifies a significant gap of £59 million over the lifetime of the Improvement Plan. Drawing on the reserves of money set aside for unexpected events has been inevitable, but it is recognised that this is not sustainable – our forecast income and expenditure over the next few years show that such pressures will continue to grow unless positive action is taken.

In April 2025, the Executive agreed a Stability Plan that outlined how these underlying issues could be addressed to deliver the financial stability that is critical to the future direction and operation of the Council. The Plan has enabled the Council to examine the underlying causes of the financial pressures faced. In addition, the Council commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to review our financial resilience, and we have drawn on the support of the Local Government Association and external advisors to provide further guidance and support.

This Improvement Plan consolidates these different actions and initiatives into a single clear plan that will enable the Council to transform the way it operates in future. Our improvement needs to be about both immediate recovery and developing a new way of working that is resilient to the pressures faced and able to respond to future challenges, ambitions and priorities. We are committed to working together collaboratively and constructively in order to build a Council fit for the future.

Our plan is aligned with the budget setting for 2026/2027 with a focus on the delivery of savings and the financial strategy and transformation for future years. The Council is setting aside sufficient resources to enable this plan to be implemented cost effectively, and the plan identifies and incorporates the anticipated financial savings it will then deliver. It is important to recognise, however, that the Improvement Plan will need to be regularly reviewed and refreshed. The organisation needs to be agile to respond to the inevitable changing circumstances. To that end it is crucial that the Council is transparent in showing the progress made, and that there are robust governance arrangements in place to oversee any changes in priorities or requirements.

Governance Arrangements

In accordance with best practice specified by Government's functional standard, the Council is putting in place robust governance arrangements (see figure 1):

- Each of the four key aims will be overseen by one of our Executive Directors. They will be responsible for overseeing the different work packages assigned to them and will be ultimately accountable for ensuring that the associated outcomes are met. Although the Executive Directors will delegate much of the delivery to named individuals, they will retain close oversight of progress as well as maintaining close and timely engagement with key stakeholders, including elected Members.
- Each of the Executive Directors will be supported by a Programme Management and Co-ordination team who will actively monitor and track the progress of each work package, maintain a risk register, and provide challenge where there is a risk of slippage or outcomes not being achieved.
- The Chief Executive, as Senior Responsible Owner¹ (SRO), will chair regular meetings of the Improvement Leadership Team. Membership will comprise the Corporate Leadership team with Programme Management support. The objectives of this officer-led Team are:
 - To define and develop a single, consolidated improvement programme that brings together the different actions for change within the Council.
 - To build a business case underpinning each work programme for consideration and approval of the Executive sub-committee, comprising the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Finance Portfolio Holder.
 - To oversee the direction and resourcing of the plan to ensure outcomes are secured cost effectively.
 - To monitor progress and oversee the management and delivery of each work package within the programme.
- The SRO will be supported by the Programme Management and Co-ordination team.

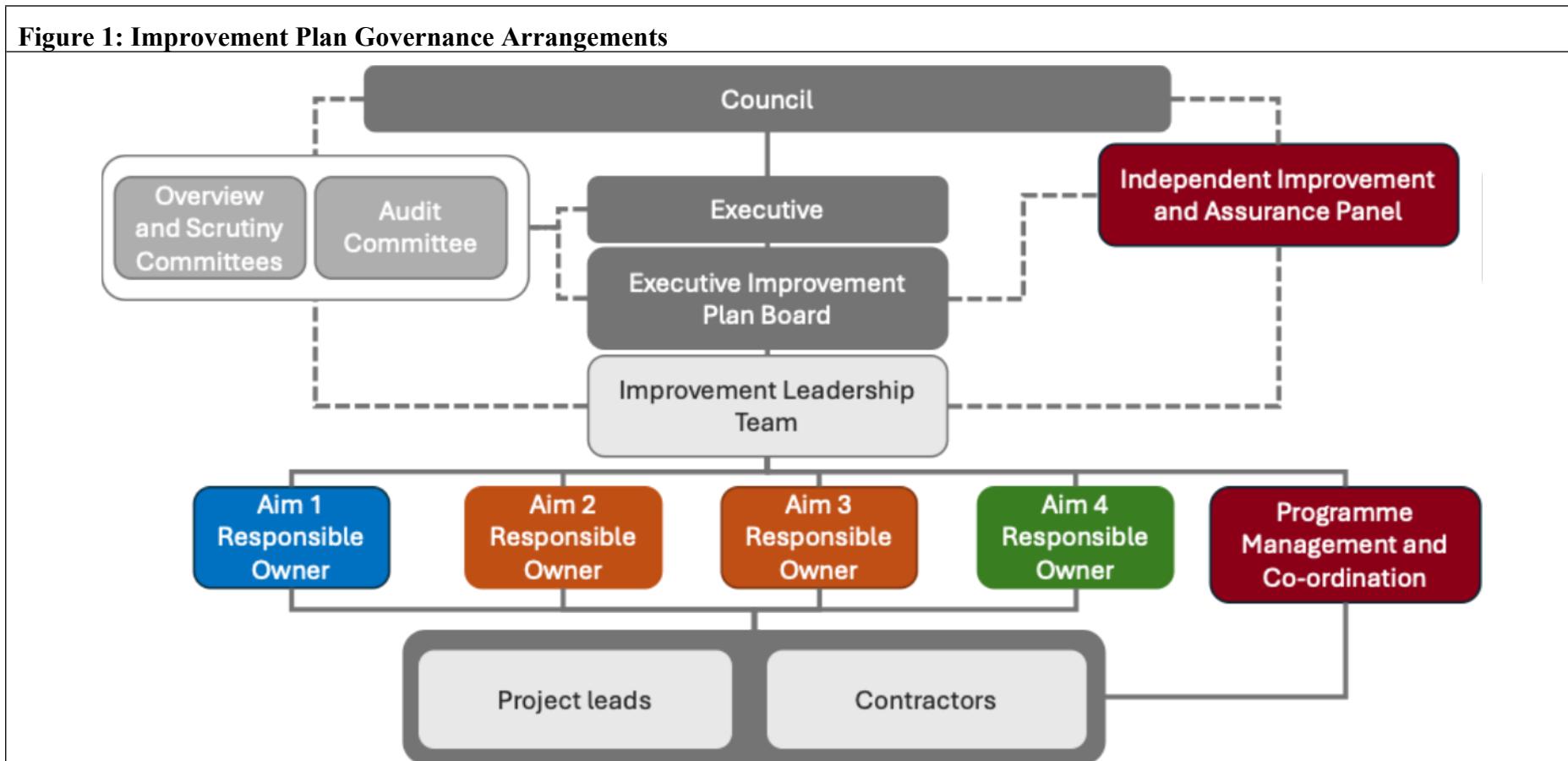
¹ The senior responsible owner is accountable to the Executive for the overall programme meeting its objectives, delivering the projected outcomes and realising the required benefits.

- The Council will be supported by an Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel. This Panel comprises external experts whose role is:
 - To provide external advice, challenge and expertise to Bedford Borough Council in driving forward the development and delivery of the Improvement Plan.
 - To provide assurance to key stakeholders, including but not limited to Full Council, Executive, External Auditors, Audit Committee, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), regarding progress in delivering necessary savings and sustainable improvements.
 - To provide regular progress reports to the Council and MHCLG on the delivery of the Improvement Plan.
 - Seek assurance that key decisions are made cognisant of the financial implications and impact on in-year budgets and the MTFS.
- Whilst the Executive set the overall direction, resource requirements and anticipated benefits for the Improvement Plan, a sub-committee will be invited to undertake more detailed oversight of progress and performance. Chaired by a Member of the Executive, this proposed sub-committee, termed the Executive Improvement Plan Board, will be invited to:
 - Scrutinise progress reports by the SRO and the responsible owners for the Improvement Plan.
 - Determine the prioritisation of activities within the resource envelope available.
 - Make recommendations to the Executive on the direction and resourcing of the Improvement Plan.
 - Ensure stakeholder engagement is being managed effectively.

It will be important that all Members receive information on the delivery of the Improvement Plan, and this will be achieved through:

- Regular Member Briefings, including from the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel.
- Reports to relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- Assurance from Audit Committee on Governance and Internal Controls.

Figure 1 identifies the Improvement Plan Governance Arrangements and the relationship between the different Boards, Panels and Committees which will be focused on delivery of the Improvement Plan. The Governance reflects the accountability of delivery of the plan to the Executive and officers in a Mayoral Authority.



Delivery

The Improvement Plan Framework provides the overarching structure and detailed action plan for the improvement journey that the Council needs to take to be financially sustainable and to transform the organisation. Each programme and action will have a more detailed business case and delivery plan, using the template at **Annex 1**, which will provide detail of:

- The change and outcomes planned
- Specific performance measures
- Risks
- Dependencies and outcomes
- Roles and responsibilities
- Actions and timescales
- Financial costs and benefits

Once approved, business cases will become delivery plans which can be monitored. This will also allow for tracking to ensure that any necessary action can be taken to maintain progress.

The Council Leadership Team is committed to delivering the improvements set out in the plan and the governance arrangements in place will enable Bedford Borough Council to remain agile to any change in circumstances and focused on the outcomes specified.

Improvement Plan 2025-2030

Aims and Work Packages

Details of high-level work packages underpinning each of the four aims are set out in the next section together with the early actions needed to start the work to deliver the financial sustainability and transformation of the organisation.

Aim	Improvement Packages of Work
1. A Council with a clear vision, direction and positive culture focussed on best meeting the needs of our community.	1. Future Council: Vision, Purpose and Approach
2. A Council fit for the future with an engaged and focussed workforce delivering services that are efficient and focused on focussed transformation to achieve the best possible outcomes.	2. Engaged and focused workforce 3. Effective service review and transformation 4. Improve enabling processes and systems
3. A Council which is financially sustainable and resilient with good practices embedded.	5. Continuous financial sustainability 6. Strengthen financial management 7. Corporate landlord and asset sales
4. A Council focussed on transforming through implementing the Improvement Plan, building on success and achievements, ensuring that the Council is well run and that Members and officers understand their respective roles.	8. Manage and Monitor Delivery 9. Improve Governance

Key Aim 1: A Council with a clear vision, direction and positive culture focussed on effective transformation to best meeting the needs of our community.

1. Future Council: Vision, Purpose and Approach

Programme Description	<p>This programme will develop a shared vision for the future role and purpose of the Council. The strategic vision will take into account the needs of local communities, and the role of partner organisations in the delivery of strategic priorities and positive outcomes. This programme is to ensure the Council has a clear direction for its further organisational development, transformation and future delivery and policy priorities and, importantly, support the drive for an ambitious, well-structured organisation that can operate in a financially sustainable way.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Establishing a clear vision and positive culture leads to several key organisational outcomes, primarily enhancing strategic alignment, employee engagement, collaborative working and overall performance. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Definition of the Future Organisation and Culture: The setting a local government culture involves strong, collaborative leadership championing shared values, clear strategy, and community focus, supported by empowering staff through training, inclusive policies, and performance frameworks that link daily work to broader goals. The Improvement Plan will install the framework for an ambitious organisation with a positive “can-do” culture, motivated towards high-performing, value for money, and innovative ways of working that enable transformation.• Clear Priorities: A vision statement helps define what the Council's priorities are, providing a consistent framework for effective decision-making across all departments and services.• Enhanced Strategic Alignment: A plan with a clear vision helps ensure that the Council operates within the resources available. A clear vision ensures that all employees are working towards the same overarching goals; this alignment helps prioritise initiatives, focus resources and ensure every action supports the Council's long-term direction.• Efficient and Effective Planning: Strategic alignment and a clear vision provides the foundation for developing specific strategies, plans and policies (such as those for housing, economy, or the environment) all geared toward achieving the desired future outcomes.• Increased Productivity and Performance: A strengthened performance framework will exist with real-time data dashboard and information which supports strategic decision making.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Working: The plan will provide a framework for more collaborative working arrangements amongst officers and Members. It provides the basis for transparent dialogue and debate between Councillors and residents about goals and planned achievements, making the Council more accessible and accountable. • Performance Management: The vision and positive “can-do” approach enables valuable, timely information against which performance and progress can be measured and evaluated on an on-going basis, demonstrating accountability to residents, auditors and government departments. • Better Resource Allocation: A focussed alignment of revenue and capital resources to meet the Council’s corporate objectives.
Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Cross party engagement in the development of the principles from across the Council. - Clear suite of plans supported by finance and performance information for Directorates. - Performance Management Data updated in real time for key service areas. <p>Separate service specific dashboards will identify specific targets and performance measures, aimed at sustainable improvement, enabling effective tracking and monitoring of performance consistent with the expected high performance, benchmarked service delivery. These measurements of success are critical to sustainable recovery and continuous improvement. An effective monitoring regime will be established to ensure improvements across all indicators.</p>
Resources	<p>Additional resource will be required to deliver the Future Council activity through the Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO). This is being built into the Improvement Plan programme.</p> <p>Investment will be required in the Council’s data and analytic IT capacity. A business case is in development, and this has an anticipated cost of £300,000.</p>
Financial Impact	Activities undertaken by the Council are aligned to the Council’s financial envelope.
Interdependencies	Programmes 2,3, and 4, People Strategy and the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy.

Action Plan

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
1.1	Strategic statement of intent: Develop and present a clear statement of intent that summarises key priorities for the future Council and how the organisation needs to change, including a greater commissioning and procurement role and culture focussed on success, and informs a new Strategic Council Plan.	Deputy Chief Executive	December 2025	March 2026
1.2	<p>Define a set of 'Future Council' operating principles that underpin the way the Council will work and guide improvement and transformation, informed by engagement with Members and senior officers and other stakeholders – including:</p> <p>Phase 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key stakeholder groups (for example ensuring cross party involvement (supported by LGA peer mentors); Corporate Leadership, team Service Directors/Heads of Service; key members of improvement panel); and key partner organisations Setting up stakeholder workshops for January 2026. The aim of the workshops is to find a common set of principles, invite ideas and thoughts that will inform the councils vision, purpose & develop a common approach. Mobilise resources to deliver aim and objectives <p>Phase 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Run workshops mid-January 2026. <p>Phase 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collate feedback and share outcomes with workshops participants <p>Phase 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report and seek approval of that vision through Executive and Full Council 	Deputy Chief Executive	January 2026 January 2026 January 2026 January 2026	March 2026 January 2026 January 2026 March 2026

1.3	<p>Align directorate plans, strategies and programmes to the underpinning principles of the Future Council and refresh the Strategic Council Plan through:</p> <p>(a) The development of a refreshed Council performance framework – including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hierarchy of strategic plans so there is a 'golden thread' between the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan, Transformation Programme and the Medium-Term Financial Plan. • A set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to the Council priorities covering service delivery, improvement and organisational health (benchmarked and including cost of service information where possible) and supported by 'real-time' data where relevant and available. • Procurement of revised data and performance system to allow for dashboards with "Realtime" data dashboards for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human Resources. - Children's Services – prevention, CIN, CPP, LAC and Care Leavers with costs; caseloads. - Adults Services – prevention, safeguarding, service delivery. - Temporary Accommodation – tenure, length of tenure, prevention, owed duty and cost. <p>(b) Delivery of a training programme to support officers to use data visibility to drive performance.</p>	<p>Corporate Leadership Team</p> <p>Manager for Performance, Analytics and Data Protection & Chief Digital, Data and Technology Officer</p> <p>Manager for Performance, Analytics and Data Protection & Relevant Heads of Service</p>	<p>December 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p>	<p>March 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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	<p>(c) The development of specific objectives for the delivery of the Council's "Purpose and Intent" that guides business/service planning across the Council to ensure proportionate ambitions within available resources.</p> <p>(d) The development of a clear and concise reporting cycle and products for performance monitoring, enabling CLT, Executive and Scrutiny to review performance against objectives and others, to identify areas of underperformance, risk (reputational, compliance and financial) and opportunities for improvement.</p> <p>(e) The development and implementation of a standard approach to Directorate performance informed by consistent Directorate performance dashboards and supported by Directorate Business and Performance Managers.</p> <p>(f) To embed the vision, operating principles and Future Council framework into service planning guidance.</p>	<p>Cabinet and CLT</p> <p>Executive, Scrutiny and Audit Chairs</p> <p>Executive Director of Resources and the Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>December 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p>	<p>January 2026</p> <p>February 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>May 2026</p>
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Key Aim 2: A Council fit for the future with an engaged and focussed workforce delivering services that are efficient and focused on effective transformation to achieve the best possible outcomes.

2. Engaged and focused Workforce

Programme Description	<p>This programme will deliver the Council's People Strategy and leadership development to ensure resources are deployed where they are needed and that the performance of employees and temporary workers is actively managed.</p> <p>The Council's workforce is its greatest asset when delivering services, but it represents a significant share of the Council's budget. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that the financial challenge cannot be met without a careful review and planned reduction in the overall staff and agency complement. Resources must be lean and productive.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The programme aims to improve the officer structure, workforce culture and the management of performance to deliver the Council's priorities in an efficient and effective way. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic Alignment: The workforce and overarching organisational structure is positively aligned to meet the needs of the Council with a clear vision that ensures that all employees are working towards the Council's key objectives and agreed long-term direction.• Enhanced Culture and Morale The workforce is empowered to embrace change and improvement. A positive work environment, where employees feel a sense of belonging and trust their leaders, strengthens the overall organisational culture and boosts morale. Engaged employees often act as ambassadors for the Council, recommending their workplace to others and making recruitment easier and more effective.• Increased Performance and Productivity: The workforce fully understands what is expected, whereby good performance is encouraged, and any under-performance is addressed. Performance management arrangements effectively monitor progress and ensure a high challenge culture of accountability to deliver the Council's goals, using evidence and feedback to support performance reviews. An engaged and focused workforce drives significant positive outcomes, with higher productivity, leading to higher output, quality, and efficiency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development and Growth: The process helps identify skill gaps and provides targeted training, coaching, and career pathing opportunities, which supports continuous learning and career advancement. • Improved Customer Satisfaction: Engaged, well trained, employees are able to provide better customer service because they have a deeper service knowledge and take greater ownership of customer issues, leading to higher customer ratings. • Improved Retention and Turnover: Employees who feel valued and see a positive future within the Council are less likely to leave, which significantly reduces recruitment and training costs. • Greater Adaptability and Resilience: When change occurs, an engaged workforce tends to be more resilient and adapts faster to new processes or organisational changes.
Evidence and measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Delivery against the People Strategy Action Plan. - Human Resources dashboard with KPIs and performance data updated in real time. - Reduction in headcount delivering revenue savings. - Decreased use of agency resource. - Reduced sickness absence. - Sustained Level of investment in training and development. - Improved employee satisfaction. - Improved vacancy rates and turnover rates. - Personal Progress Discussion (PPD) completed. - Improved customer satisfaction.
Resources	<p>People: Adequate capacity exists within the existing HR and OD resources, but additional resources will be required for significant restructures and changes to the size of the organisation.</p> <p>Analytics resource to enable full engagement, pulse surveys and systematic process of data examination to identify meaningful trends and insights to drive efficiency and effectiveness.</p> <p>Commitment from the corporate training budget.</p>

Financial Impact	Resourcing of the Council will be aligned to the Council's financial envelope. The careful review and planned reduction in the overall staff and agency complement has been incorporated into savings targets, necessitating a lean and productive workforce, with the right skills and knowledge.
Interdependencies	Data, Digital and Technology Strategy

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
2.1	<p>Deliver the People Strategy Action Plan which focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attracting and developing future focused talent - Fostering an inclusive and engaging culture - Strengthened workforce agility and planning - Cultivate a resilient, emotionally well, high performing workplace - Policies to empower the workforce to be effective with a can-do culture 	Head of HR and Organisational Development	December 2025	June 2026
2.2	<p>Re-assess and map organisation culture: To monitor progress and promote behaviour change and continuous improvement in relation to leadership, accountability, delivery and performance:</p> <p>(a) Undertake and analyse survey including pulse surveys a full engagement survey to determine current behaviours and attitudes.</p> <p>(b) Develop and agree suitable actions to drive the organisational culture change, with a focus on greater ambition, outputs and outcomes.</p> <p>(c) This will involve the co-production of action plans with service areas to address areas for improvement and approval by the Improvement Leadership Team.</p> <p>(d) Implement actions, monitor progress and review corporate, directorate and service level employee engagement (through pulse surveys and personal progress discussions) to ensure a consistent approach is embedded.</p> <p>(e) Undertake a follow up engagement survey to evaluate progress made.</p>	Head of HR and Organisational Development	<p>March 2026</p> <p>May 2026</p> <p>August 2026</p> <p>October 2027</p> <p>January 2028</p>	<p>May 2026</p> <p>July 2026</p> <p>September 2027</p> <p>December 2027</p> <p>January 2028</p>

2.3	<p>Implement a leadership development programme with a focus on professional, financial and management literacy, innovation, commercial awareness and accountability. This will involve:</p> <p>(a) Specifying the standards of leadership required for a high performing organisation and to support positive behaviour and ensure an improvement led culture.</p> <p>(b) Provision of guidance, learning and other support as required to enable leaders to reach, achieve and maintain these standards</p> <p>(c) Integrate these standards into personal progress discussions and continuing professional development discussions to monitor performance and address any instances of underperformance.</p>	Head of HR and Organisational Development	December 2025	March 2026	
2.4	New Organisational Structure Design aligned to the Future Council vision, purpose and future operating model. This will involve:	Head of HR and Organisational Development	January 2026		
	<p>(a) A focus on high priority areas (adult and children's services and corporate activities):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strategic assessment of workforce requirements including an assessment of spans and layers in consultation with the Head of Strategic Programmes. • The application of principles to rationalise structures, drive efficiencies and cost reductions (including a full review of FTE staff allocations by discrete service area, aligned to upper quartile benchmark indicators). <p>(b) A wider roll-out of the above approach to the other areas of the organisation and activities of the Council to respond to gaps in key service areas, introduce new capabilities, and ensure resources are aligned to ensure delivery.</p>		Commenced		
			December 2025	July 2026	
			April 2026	July 2026	
			April 2026	July 2026	

	<p>(c) Monitoring of compliance with the Council's Agency Staff Policy, including a full review of agency staff deployment, with clear directorate targets to minimise the use of agency and ensuring that, in future, no agency employee will work on the same assignment for a period exceeding 12 weeks to avoid compromising the "12-week minimum qualifying period" under the law. The establishment of a new model for agency work that is locally based and owned will be encouraged.</p> <p>(d) Effectively implementing the phase 1 strategic downsizing of the organisation in line with the revised resource envelope, focussed on strategic service priorities and streamlined back-office capacity. This will enable the annual savings target of £4.2 million from 1 April 2026 to be fully realised.</p>		Commenced	July 2026
2.5	<p>Strengthen Employee Performance Management across the Council as set out in the People Strategy, by:</p> <p>(a) Ensuring key objectives identified by the Council's leadership are cascaded into evidenced-based Personal Progress Discussion (PPD) Objectives of Executive Directors to drive improvement.</p> <p>(b) Ensuring that Executive Directors set evidence-based objectives to their direct reports that are cascaded throughout the organisation</p> <p>(c) Ensuring alignment to the Future Council Vision, helping to embed consistent standards and approaches in service leadership, management and delivery.</p> <p>(d) Focussing on outcome and outputs to drive quality services and continuous improvement, including continuous productivity assessments.</p>	Head of HR and Organisational Development	<p>April 2026</p> <p>May 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>April 2026</p> <p>September 2026</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

2.6	<p>Review hybrid working policy: To reflect the needs of the business focused around 3 workstyles – fixed, flexible and community based – and the effective operation of these new workstyles across the organisation. This will involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The development and implementation of the proposed plan/policy across the organisation, in line with the expectations of the People Strategy that recognises the workforce as a key asset and that seeks to implement strong leadership of the organisation towards high quality outcomes. (b) The introduction of the workforce policy requirement and new workstyles (referenced above), with the carefully planned and phased return to work of staff to the normal workplace in line with the agreed policy requirement. (c) Effective arrangements to monitor and review progress. 	Head of HR and Organisational Development	Commenced	December 2025
			April 2026	July 2026
			Ongoing	Ongoing

3. Effective Service Review and Transformation

Programme Description	<p>This programme will build on the work by Newton to deliver services that are customer focused to meets the needs of our community. This will also focus on the balance of costs and quality.</p>
Outcomes	<p>The delivery of a programme of workstreams to clearly demonstrates that all services are designed around what can best be achieved within the resources available. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence-Based Service Delivery: The delivery of a programme of workstreams to clearly demonstrate that all services are designed around what can best be achieved within the resources available for each service area. Service reviews provide a full diagnostic picture, including national benchmarking data, to help identify where issues are and make informed decisions about service provision, including potential alternative delivery methods (such as partnership arrangements).• Financial Efficiency and Value for Money: Services can demonstrate the best balance for outcomes taking account of cost, quality and customer satisfaction. Cost savings and value for money can be tracked.• Improved Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction: Redesigning services around user needs results in a more seamless, responsive, and consistent experience. Key outcomes include higher customer satisfaction with service quality, timeliness, and communication.• Enhanced Accountability and Transparency: Improved decision-making processes allow Members and the public to hold the Council accountable for its performance and outcomes.• Innovation and Modernisation: Encouraging the use of digital tools and new technologies to modernise public services, accelerate progress, and provide residents with more choice and convenience in how they access services.• Best Practice Embraced: To continue the transition from a more inward-looking perspective to a model of embracing best practice from across the local government sector and private sectors. Examples of good transformation and best practice are embraced in a holistic and wholesale rather than piecemeal manner.

Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Implementation of the Newton implementation plan for Adult Services and Children's Services. - Compliance with the Children's Services OFSTED action plan with significantly improved service outcomes and financial performance. - Delivery of the service-based savings proposals to agreed timescales, milestones and full realisation of the financial benefits. - Performance Management Data updated in real time for key service areas. <p>Separate service specific dashboards will identify specific targets and performance measures, aimed at sustainable improvement, enabling effective tracking and monitoring of performance consistent with the expected high performance, benchmarked service delivery. These measurements of success are critical to sustainable recovery and continuous improvement. An effective monitoring regime will be established to ensure improvements across all indicators.</p>
Resources	External contract support from Newton Consultancy and further resources would need to be identified to support delivery.
Financial Impacts	The financial benefits for Adults Services have been identified. However, the diagnostic for wider Corporate Services has not yet been completed but will be by the end of January 2026.
Interdependencies	Data, Digital and Technology Strategy

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
3.1	<p>Fully support the drive for efficient and effective service delivery, focussed on statutory duties and corporate plan priorities. This will necessitate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Determining, where possible, minimum levels of service and the consideration of the future level of service to be offered. (b) Benchmarking support service capacity to ensure optimum levels. (c) The identification and detailed examination of all service areas and costs and planned rationalisation to reduce costs. (d) The identification of alternative service delivery models or joint working where there is a mature market. 	CLT	January 2026 March 2026 March 2026 Ongoing	March 2026 April 2026 April 2026 Ongoing
3.2	<p>Transform the delivery of demand led adult social care services to address growth and cost pressures delivering the best service possible. This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) A diagnostic assessment of existing working practices to identify opportunities for improvement. (b) The development of an implementation plan and the procurement/mobilisation of resources to enable the work to begin. (c) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the changes in collaboration with HR and Finance. 	Service Director for Adult Social Care and the Head of Strategic Programmes	Complete January 2026 April 2026	Complete March 2026 March 2030

3.3	<p>Transform the delivery of demand led children's services to address growth and cost pressures whilst maintaining appropriate levels of service. This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) A diagnostic assessment of existing working practices to identify opportunities for improvement. (b) The development of implementation plans and procurement/mobilisation of resources to enable the work to begin. (c) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the changes in collaboration with HR and Finance 	Service Director for Children's Services and the Head of Strategic Programmes	<p>In progress</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p>	<p>February 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p> <p>March 2030</p>
3.4	<p>Transform the delivery of environment and corporate services to address growth and cost pressures whilst maintaining appropriate levels of service. This involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) A diagnostic assessment of existing working practices to identify opportunities for improvement. (b) The development of implementation plans and procurement/mobilisation of resources to enable the work to begin. (c) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the changes in collaboration with HR and Finance 	Service Directors (to be determined) and the Head of Strategic Programmes	<p>In progress</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p>	<p>February 2026</p> <p>June 2026</p> <p>March 2030</p>
3.5	Assess the cost-effectiveness of a wider roll out of the lessons learned from actions 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 to any other council services and responsibilities in collaboration with HR and Finance.	Head of Strategic Programmes	January 2027	March 2027
3.6	Build on the strengths of the area and the drive for ambition, with growth, inward investment and innovation, central to increased economic activity and financial resilience. This will necessitate the review and refresh of the Council's Economic Growth Strategy and Strategic Sites for Inward Investment, with the emphasis on improving the overall economic activity and prosperity of the area and business rates growth.	Head of Regeneration, Property and Local Economy	January 2026	June 2026

Improve Enabling Processes and Systems

Programme Description	<p>This programme builds on the Council's digital transformation journey and will undertake a whole Council review of key enabling services to identify opportunities to improve and increase efficiency, clarity and purposefulness. It will help to ensure that processes and systems are designed with and for the customer, are fit for purpose and embrace a 'digital first' approach.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Improved Council processes and systems result in significant efficiency gains, enhanced service delivery, better decision-making, and increased customer satisfaction and engagement. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Scalable Infrastructure: A clear digital strategy and investment plan will allow the Council to optimise the use of technology to support service delivery. An agile strategy allows the Council to quickly take advantage of new technologies (like Artificial Intelligence (AI)).• Operational Efficiency and Productivity: Routine tasks such as data entry, form processing, and permit applications can be automated, freeing up staff for more complex work.• Streamlined, Faster, Accessible Services: Designing services around user needs ensures a consistent and seamless experience for residents and employees. This includes the use of self-service portals and online payment facilities for more convenient access to services.• Reduced Errors: Digital systems and mobile working solutions speed up data capture, reduce manual transcription errors, and significantly lessen reliance on paper-based systems.• Better Frontline Support: Frontline staff equipped with mobile technology can spend more time with clients/customers/applicants/users in the community, with faster access to client information and decision-making capabilities.• Cost Savings and Value for Money: Efficiencies in time and financial savings are tracked, helping the Council achieve a balanced budget and demonstrate value for money to taxpayers.• Informed Decision-Making: Access to quality, real-time, and accurate data allows the Council to identify trends, spot potential risks, and make strategic, evidence-based decisions.• Improved Data Governance and Security: Updated data strategies ensure data is managed securely and effectively, mitigating risks related to personal data processing and cyber threats.

Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Delivery of agreed IT Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan. - Improved customer satisfaction. - Improved timeliness of reports
Resources	Investment in IT infrastructure will be a significant investment area and will need to be built into the Improvement Plan.
Financial Impact	Financial Impact will need to be quantified within business cases for investment.
Interdependencies	People Strategy

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
4.1	<p>Establish the current baseline position and potential for technology-driven transformation improvement through:</p> <p>(a) Development of a Digital, Data and Technology Strategy outlining how the Council can utilise technology more effectively to deliver its services and that aligns with MHCLG's Local Digital Declaration framework.</p> <p>(b) Engagement with Directorates to ascertain key service priorities and to enable a diagnostic of the current position in key service areas through meetings or workshops designed to identify the barriers/blockers to effective processes and systems and identify 'bottlenecks', taking into account the principles of the Digital, Data and Technology Strategy.</p> <p>(c) Development of an overarching Delivery Plan, together with service specific delivery plans, outlining how changes in ICT infrastructure will be implemented, how the potential and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other initiatives will be exploited and how the Council's digital capability will be fully developed across all service areas.</p> <p>(d) Reviewing ICT infrastructure and departmental systems on an ongoing basis to ensure that benefits are fully exploited and that systems are both resource-efficient and procedurally effective.</p>	Chief Officer for Digital Data and Technology	Commenced Commenced January 2026 Ongoing	January 2026 May 2026 Development of plans – July 2026 Delivery of plans – Ongoing Ongoing
4.2	The implementation of the overarching Delivery Plan and service level delivery plans (arising from action 4.1(c) above) that are prioritised and appropriately project managed, with a clear communication of progress, milestones and ongoing continuous improvement.	Chief Officer for Digital Data and Technology with support from relevant Service Directors	February 2026	Ongoing

4.3	Development of a proposal for how the training, guidance and other support available to staff using our revised systems and processes can be deployed.	Chief Officer for Digital Data and Technology, Head of HR and Organisational Development and relevant Service Directors	April 2026	Ongoing
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Key Aim 3: A Council which is financially sustainable and resilient with good practices embedded.

4. Continuous Financial Sustainability

Programme Description	<p>This programme aims to ensure that the finance team and the wider organisation have the skills and capacity to manage the finances effectively. It will focus on actions needed to remove the structural gap and to help enable the Council to live within its means over the longer term.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Key outcomes of improved financial sustainability include enhanced long-term resilience, reduced risk and increased ability to invest in service delivery, innovation and growth. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater Focus: It provides focus on the delivery of budget savings in 2026/2027 and the development of further credible and approved budget savings proposals to be delivered over the period of the approved Medium Term Financial Plan. There is, therefore, a clear route out of current budget position with reassurance to MHCLG and stakeholders.• Greater resilience: Financial sustainability builds resilience against shocks and fluctuations in funding and enables the Council to be able to operate within the funding available.• Innovation and growth: A stable financial position allows for investment in new projects, technologies, and opportunities.• Public and stakeholder trust: Strong financial management and transparent governance can build trust with the public and external stakeholders.• Efficient resource allocation: Financial sustainability enables better and more selective capital allocation for projects that align with long-term goals. The Council has a finance function that provides reliable and timely data to enable effective decision-making.

Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - All savings proposals are all delivered to time and in a sustainable manner. - Effective budget monitoring arrangements installed. - Full budget compliance, with carefully managed deviations. - Significantly improved debt collection, with historic aged debt recovered. - Financial Management records updated in real time for key service areas. <p>Separate service specific dashboards will identify specific targets and performance measures, aimed at sustainable improvement, enabling effective tracking and monitoring of performance consistent with the expected high performance, benchmarked service delivery. These measurements of success are critical to sustainable recovery and continuous improvement. An effective monitoring regime will be established to ensure improvements across all indicators.</p>
Resources	Additional capacity in the finance team is being built into the MTFS to support this work.
Financial Impact	Balanced budget across all years.
Interdependencies	Savings and investment in the budget when approved.

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
5.1	<p>The development of a revised budget setting process for 2027/2028 which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Publication of budget assumptions, including draft budget, ahead of the final Budget Report in January each year. (b) Introducing a more structured approach to developing savings plans with greater engagement and oversight during development of savings proposals and a “check and challenge” of savings/efficiency proposals with business cases. (c) A ‘star chamber’ process involving political challenge for new investment. (d) A streamlined approach to the development and agreement of the capital programme. <p>Circulate and notify stakeholders on the revised arrangements</p>	Executive Director of Resources / Service Director for Finance	December 2025	May 2026
5.2	Implement a revised programme of monthly robust monitoring and reporting of the savings plan with timescales and including effective tracking and reporting on delivery to ensure early identification of delivery and budget risks.	Head of Strategic Programmes	February 2026	February 2026
5.3	<p>Challenge the delivery of the cashable benefits from the delivery of the programme of works identified through the Newton diagnostics phase (see work programme 3) in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Adult Social Services. (b) Children Services. 	Executive Director of Resources	January 2026	2028/2029

	<p>(c) Temporary Accommodation.</p> <p>(d) Wider Corporate Services</p> <p>Accelerate the full delivery of outcomes identified through the Newton diagnostic phase with continued emphasis on managing demand to achieve better outcomes for clients and service users.</p>			
5.4	Further develop a sound understanding of cost benchmarks and comparators across the Council, with scope to create a stronger basis to challenge service costs. [benchmark challenge].	Service Director for Finance	July 2026	September 2026
5.5	<p>Develop a clear and council-wide income and debt strategy, including corporate-wide debt management and recovery arrangements (in line with Council's Fairer Debt Policy), revised concessions policy and fees and charges policies. This includes:</p> <p>(a) Review the timeliness of recovery and write-off processes to clear down the debt and maximum recovery.</p> <p>(b) Assess the extent to which third party support and intervention could accelerate a positive financial impact on the outstanding debt portfolio</p> <p>(c) Undertake a feasibility study of options to implement a pay in advance services to reduce debt levels and improve cashflow.</p> <p>(d) Explore further opportunities for charging in line with benchmarking of near neighbours and comparable authorities and providers.</p>	Service Director for Finance Service Director for Finance Service Director for Finance Service Director for Finance	February 2026 November 2025 November 2025 April 2026 November 2025	March 2026 November 2025 March 2026 March 2027 June 2026

5.6	To maximise grants and subsidies, including the commissioning of an external review to test compliance of the Housing Benefit Subsidy claim.	Service Director for Finance	November 2025	January 2026
5.7	To commission a thorough examination of Value Added Tax (VAT) records, procedure and policies, to ensure that current practices are optimised for VAT recovery and compliance. This will involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Securing the services of a specialist to review existing policies and procedures. (b) Developing a plan for the change to be made. (c) Implementation and approval of the revised approach. 	Service Director for Finance	November 2025	February 2026
5.8	Undertake a comprehensive review of the reserves position (focused on committed service and unspent grant reserves) to ensure that the reserves are aligned with the Council's strategic risk register and, as part of this, establish arrangements to urgently replenish the General Reserve to within the risk-assessed level.	Service Director for Finance	November 2025	December 2025
5.9	Develop a more sophisticated approach to trading and charging for services that the Council is efficient and effective at delivering, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Explore the appetite and capacity for the Council to deliver traded and charging services (b) Assess the efficiency, value for money, and long-term sustainability of existing traded services. Consider opportunities for optimisation and strategic realignment to ensure they continue to serve the best interests of the Council and the community and are set at full cost recovery. 	Head of Strategic Programmes Service Director for Finance	April 2026 July 2026	July 2026 September 2026

	(c) Reviewing alternative income generation opportunities including those arising from Universal Destinations and Experiences, and exploit sponsorship opportunities.	Service Director for Finance	October 2026	March 2028
5.10	<p>Delivery of an effective Procurement Improvement Programme, comprising a comprehensive review of procurement, contract management support and fundamental challenge of all supply contracts across the Council, targeting savings across Directorates. This should include:</p> <p>(a) The review of the scope to enhance contract management capabilities.</p> <p>(b) The implementation of training, with ongoing planned refresher training. This should include the consideration of data and transparency, systems, overall operating model, Standing Orders and financial regulations.</p>	Head of Commissioning and Procurement	Commenced	April 2026

5. Strengthen Financial Management

Programme Description	<p>This programme will strengthen financial management across the organisation to ensure that budget holders understand their role and are accountable for their performance and that the systems and processes provide the data needed to make informed decisions.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Strengthened financial management leads to key outcomes including improved fiscal discipline, better resource allocation, enhanced operational efficiency, greater transparency and accountability, and increased financial resilience. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fiscal Discipline and Stability: Ensuring that spending aligns with available resources “Every penny counts” is embedded as part of the culture of the Council.• Enhanced Operational Efficiency: Improved processes, often enabled by better data and technology, lead to more streamlined operations, timely decision-making, and the optimal use of resources, freeing up staff for more strategic tasks.• Improved Transparency and Accountability: Clear financial reporting, documented procedures, and regular scrutiny enhance transparency of funding allocations.• Better forward planning: This is facilitated through the use of data resources to identify trends and pathways into services and to plan accordingly (for example, the transition of children/families through to adults and homelessness).• Proactive Risk Management: to better quantify, evaluate and manage risks when taking strategic decisions.• Informed Decision Making: With accurate, up-to-date financial information and data-driven insights, Members, project leaders and managers can make more informed, timely, and sustainable decisions that support long-term goals.

Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Full budget compliance, with no overspends or, alternatively, overspends have clear mitigation plans to manage spend.
Resources	Officer time and additional investment in the assessment tool and training providers.
Financial Impact	Strengthened financial management across the organisation.
Interdependencies	People Strategy

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
6.1	<p>Embedding stronger financial management practices through:</p> <p>(a) Bi-monthly Mandatory Budget Holder training and awareness sessions to communicate and engage with all budget holders to align behaviours, culture and practices to a new way of working in relation to ongoing financial sustainability.</p> <p>(b) A culture change project in financial management which embeds the principle “every penny counts” across the organisation.</p> <p>(c) Building on the Financial System upgrade to improve processes and practice.</p> <p>(d) Internal Audit undertaking the regular examination of compliance and adherence to key financial management processes, including the use of Procurement Cards.</p> <p>(e) The production of regular reports on the performance of budget holders in complying with key financial responsibilities to embed effective management and monitoring of budgets and allow the Corporate Leadership Team to take early action to manage in-year budget pressures.</p>	<p>Executive Director of Resources / Service Director for Finance</p> <p>Executive Director of Resources / Service Director for Finance</p> <p>Executive Director of Resources / Service Director for Finance</p> <p>Service Director for Finance / Head of Internal Audit, Insurance and Risk</p> <p>Service Director for Finance</p>	<p>November 2025</p> <p>April 2026</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
6.2	Review of Corporate Services capacity and capability to ensure that it is able to meet the needs of the organisation.	Executive Director of Resources	December 2025	June 2026

6.3	<p>Improve support for Budget Holders to improve financial ownership and management of budgets across the organisation. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Developing and delivering a refreshed programme of financial management training and guidance for officers to ensure all have the required skills aligned to the forecasting tools to assist budget holders in the management of their budgets, particularly those with volatile budgets (see work programme 2). (b) Regularly communicate and engage with all budget holders to align behaviours, culture and practices to a new way of working in relation to ongoing financial sustainability. (c) Publishing guidance on when business cases should be created and approval processes with clear support to be provided by the Finance team to develop a programme focused on improving the commercial culture. Business cases to include full modelling and sensitivity analysis to ensure they are fit for purpose. 	<p>Service Director for Finance</p>	February 2026	Ongoing
6.4	Member Training and Development: To develop and deliver a refreshed programme of financial management training and guidance for Members to ensure all have the required skills	<p>Service Director for Finance</p>	February 2026	Ongoing
6.5	<p>Update the monthly budget monitoring and reporting including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Reviewing budget monitoring requirements and determine reporting needs. (b) Regularising Capital Expenditure monitoring and reporting, including funding streams (capital receipts, s106, CIL and commuted sums), together with a regular MRP update. (c) Providing regular updates to Members on the Financial position of the Council. 	<p>Service Director for Finance</p>	February 2026	April 2026
	<p>Service Director for Finance</p>	<p>Executive Director of Resources</p>	February 2026	April 2026
			September 2025	Ongoing

6. Corporate Landlord and Asset Sales

Programme Description	This programme will provide better oversight of which assets are required for which service and there is a clear plan of what can be disposed of to generate capital receipts to fund transformation and the wider capital programme ensuring that disposal receipts are effectively deployed to build financial stability.
Outcomes	<p>Key outcomes of improved asset management include reduced costs through more efficient maintenance and resource use, enhanced asset performance and longevity via proactive upkeep, and better decision-making supported by data and performance monitoring. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased operational efficiency: The programme will ensure greater emphasis on the Council's property assets as the catalyst for growth with a full review of development opportunities on council-owned land. • Cost reduction: Proactive and preventative maintenance reduces costly reactive repairs, and better resource management minimises the need for new assets. This also involves a whole-life costing approach to maintenance, ensuring a more cost-effective regime. • Improved productivity: Assets are more available and better utilised through proactive maintenance, which prevents breakdowns and downtime. It will ensure that assets are managed effectively to maximise usage and prolong life expectancy. • Enhanced asset performance: Proactive maintenance prolongs asset life, and performance monitoring helps ensure assets are meeting their intended purpose. Effective deployment and use of assets would enable disposal of surplus assets and thus release funds to reduce external financing debt and fund essential transformational activities required. • Improved compliance: A systematic approach helps ensure assets meet all legal, regulatory, and safety obligations. • Greater transparency and accountability: A structured approach to asset management allows for clear communication and provides evidence to justify decisions for funding and schemes.

Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key Measurements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic and planned Asset Disposal Programme delivered to time in line with budget profile. • Reduced vacancy rates and improved void rates in the property portfolio. • Disposals meet financial forecasts in year (subject to no obstacles). • Ensuring the Council's property estate meets current and future needs. • Reduced debt. • Improved usage of Council operational estate. <p>A specific property and asset management dashboard will identify targets and performance measures, enabling effective tracking and monitoring of performance consistent with the expected high performance, benchmarked service delivery. These measurements of success are critical to effective asset management and continuous improvement. An effective monitoring regime will be established to ensure improvements across all indicators.</p>
Resources	In place within the establishment or funded from capital programme, potential costs to update Concerto
Financial Impact	To support delivery of the capital programme and Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) spend
Interdependencies	Corporate Assessment Management Plan

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
7.1	Embed the Corporate Landlord structure and operating model with improved void management and streamlining processes. Embedding Corporate Landlord as part of Strategic Asset Group	Manager for Estates	Commenced	June 2026
7.2	Ensure that the Concerto property system is up to date and includes all property information.	Manager for Estates	Commenced	June 2026
7.3	Review and rationalise the operational portfolio in line with revised service operating models, identifying opportunities for estate optimisation and disposals.	Head of Regeneration, Property and Economic Growth	Commenced	Ongoing
7.4	Establish timely and efficient asset disposal and governance processes in line with legislative requirements.	Head of Regeneration, Property and Economic Growth	Commenced	Ongoing
7.5	Develop timed disposal plans for the Council's agreed surplus land and property assets, to maximise capital receipts, churn the property estate to improve overall competitiveness, or achieve beneficial service improvements.	Head of Regeneration, Property and Economic Growth	Commenced	June 2026 (but will be an annual programme)
7.6	Execute the Asset Disposal Programme, with a positive commitment to prioritise property deals order to deliver capital receipts to support investment and to reduce the overall external borrowing requirement. This will also ensure that Exceptional Financial Support (if required) can be funded in full, avoiding any additional revenue budget pressure where possible.	Head of Regeneration, Property and Economic Growth	Commenced	June 2026
7.7	Explore the opportunity to improve commercial awareness through the development of a category management approach to procurement and contract management. This will involve: (a) Commercial Continuous Improvement Assessment Framework (CCIAF) self-assessment and peer review.	Head of Strategic Commissioning and Procurement	December 2025	February 2026

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) Developing a commercial improvement plan. (c) Delivery of the changes required in conjunction of the whole council diagnostic options being developed by Newton. (d) Re-evaluation through self-assessment 	February 2026	March 2026
		April 2026	April 2027
		April 2027	June 2027

Key Aim 4: A Council focussed on transforming through implementing the Improvement Plan, building on success and achievements, ensuring that the Council is well run and that Members and officers understand their respective roles.

7. Manage and Monitor Delivery (Programme and Performance Management)

Programme Description	This programme will ensure that Members, Officers and the Improvement Panel will be able to effectively monitor the delivery of the Improvement Plan.
Outcomes	<p>Improved programme and performance management leads to a wide range of positive outcomes for both the organisation and its employees, primarily by ensuring that all efforts are strategically aligned with overarching business goals. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement of Strategic Objectives: All stakeholders have clear oversight of the delivery of the Improvement Plan. By aligning individual, team and departmental goals with the Council's mission and overall strategy, all efforts work in concert toward shared success. • Clear Goals and Expectations: It results in a plan with a clearer vision of how the Council will operate within the resources that are available to the Council. Employees gain a clear understanding of their roles, what is expected of them, and how their work contributes to the Council's success, providing a strong sense of purpose. • Performance Management: A strengthened performance framework will exist with real-time data dashboards. All programmes have clear and measurable timelines and outcomes • Increased Productivity and Efficiency: Clear direction and continuous feedback help employees stay focused, work smarter, and improve processes. • Enhanced Organisational Agility: A performance-focused workforce is more adaptable, with the skills and knowledge to respond effectively to evolving market conditions and changing organisational needs. • Stronger Accountability and Transparency: The process fosters a culture where expectations are clear, roles and responsibilities are defined, and progress is openly tracked, creating a greater sense of ownership among employees.

Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Cross party engagement in the development of the Mission and Objectives of the Council. - Clear suite of plans to deliver the organisation change required, with effective monitoring in place. - Progress reports against the plan; evaluations built into each activity.
Resources	Additional capacity and support for an Improvement Plan PMO will be required
Financial Impact	This will support the overall financial resilience of the Council.
Interdependencies	Savings and investment

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
8.1	<p>Further embed the arrangements for oversight of transformation, improvement and change – including:</p> <p>(a) Implementation of a new Monitoring Framework with quality assurance by the Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO) and reports to the Improvement Plan Board.</p> <p>(b) Automate monitoring and integrate into dashboards for all transformation, change and savings.</p> <p>(c) Implement a rolling programme of reviews to identify areas for improvement in the next planning cycle.</p>	Improvement Plan Board	December 2025	Ongoing
8.2	Further strengthen the CPMO and review ongoing CPMO activity in light of Improvement Plan and agree future resourcing model beyond March 2026.	Chief Executive	December 2025	December 2025
8.3	<p>Complete recruitment to key leadership roles and ensure relevant interim capacity/arrangements in place to deliver and effectively monitor transformation across the Council – including appointments of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Improvement • Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO). 	Chief Executive	December 2025	March 2027

8. Improved Governance

Programme Description	<p>This programme will lead to clearer accountability and improved and more transparent decision making. It focusses on:</p> <p>The Constitution: ensuring we continue to have a fit for purpose, modern, constitution including an updated scheme of delegation.</p> <p>Formal and informal decisions: effective and timely informal processes that support our formal decision-making.</p> <p>Effective working relationships: activities to improve understanding, trust and respect between Members and officers, strengthening our culture of collaboration and teamwork.</p> <p>Development and support to Members and officers: to ensure they can confidently fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities including leadership, decision-making, scrutiny, audit, regulatory roles, partnerships and engaging with local communities.</p>
Outcomes	<p>Improved public sector governance leads to better service delivery, increased public trust, greater accountability, and enhanced efficiency and transparency, which can improve people's lives and benefit the wider economy. Key outcomes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborative Working: A more clearly defined, effective and collaborative working relationship amongst Members and Officers. A committee structure that demonstrates proper scrutiny and decision-making through the application of the Nolan principles.• Improved service quality: Services become more effective, efficient, and responsive to resident needs through compliance, modernisation, innovation, and data-driven approaches. Members and officers are focused on delivering the Improvement Plan with progress regularly monitored so that any slippage or other issues can be readily addressed. The evaluation of outcomes demonstrates a clear improvement in the performance of the Council.• Increased public trust: Greater transparency, accountability, and public participation build confidence in the Council.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to services: Governance reforms, such as decentralisation and digital transformation, aim to make public services more accessible and equitable. • Better economic outcomes: More efficient public services and fiscal management can lead to wider economic benefits and growth. The more effective use of public funds will culminate in more responsive and inclusive Council services that are more widely accessible. • Greater accountability: A more clearly defined, effective and collaborative working relationship amongst Members and Officers. Clear objectives and processes hold public officials responsible for their actions and decisions. A committee structure that demonstrates proper scrutiny and decision-making through the application of the Nolan principles • Enhanced transparency: Openness in operations and decision-making builds trust and helps prevent corruption and misuse of power. • Stronger democratic framework: Accountability and responsiveness to residents strengthens the foundation of democratic systems. Improved governance ensures that laws and rules are respected and applied fairly, while corruption is dealt with effectively.
Evidence and Measurement	<p>Key evidence of the outcomes will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Delivery of the actions to the timescales set out in the Improvement Plan. - Cross party engagement and acceptance of governance arrangements. - Clear, well defined, governance arrangements. - Performance Management Data updated in real time for key service areas.
Resources	<p>Externally facilitated training from a recognised provider within the sector, such as the Local Government Association or Association of Democratic Services Officers. Anticipated cost up to £4,000 for numerous sessions with Members and Officers.</p>
Interdependencies	<p>Governance is important to ensure that the Council acts in the right way and in a timely, open and honest manner. A key requirement of good governance is an up-to-date constitution. The Council will continue to ensure that reports provide appropriate levels of information for decision-making and scrutiny.</p>

ACTIONS:		LEAD MEMBER/OFFICER	START DATE	END DATE
9.1	<p>A refresh of the Constitution and associated procedure rules or protocols to clarify roles and responsibilities, to align with best practice, to avoid duplication and ensure legal compliance. Actions to deliver this have been identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Meeting of the Constitution Working Group to receive update on current review of the Constitution and draft revisions to Council Procedure Rules and Executive Procedure Rules. (b) Revision of Officer Scheme of Delegation (Officers) for sign-off by the Elected Mayor, ensuring that all Members and officers understand and are accountable for their delegations. (c) Revision of all Procedure Rules for submission to Constitution Working Group (excluding Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules). (d) Revision of Full Council and Regulatory Schemes of Delegation for submission to the Constitution Working Group. (e) Revision of Terms of Reference for Committees and Responsibility for Functions for submission to the Constitution Working Group. (f) Revision of Articles of the Constitution and other Protocols for submission to the Constitution Working Group. (g) Recommendation of sections to be removed from the Constitution for submission to the Constitution Working Group. 	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	Commenced	

	<p>(h) Consideration of revisions by the General Purposes Committee.</p> <p>(i) Full Council approval of changes to the Constitution – January at relevant stages throughout the review process between</p>			January 2026 - April 2026
9.2	Review of feedback from CIPFA and the Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel on the Constitution to ensure that it is reflective of the Council wide transformation approach.	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	June 2026	May 2027
9.3	<p>Improved decision-making. Actions to deliver this have been identified as follows:</p> <p>(a) Establishment of a Member Development Group.</p> <p>(b) Development of an Executive/Scrutiny Protocol, explaining the respective roles and responsibilities and how the relationship between the two functions works.</p> <p>(c) Review of the corporate report template.</p> <p>(d) Agreement via political group leaders to adopt a revised report template if any amendments are identified.</p> <p>(e) Delivery of training for all Senior Officers and main report writers on the Council's decision-making structure, protocols associated public meetings, the report template and the quality of reports and supporting documents (including business case preparation).</p> <p>(f) Development of a Member Development Strategy.</p> <p>(g) Approval of the Member Development Strategy by the Executive.</p>	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	<p>December 2025</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>January 2026/February 2026</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (h) Review and refinement of the Member Development Programme via the Member Development Group for implementation after the Annual General Meeting. (i) Evaluation of training sessions via the Member Development Group and regular review of the Member Development Programme 			May 2026
9.4	<p>Improved Officer/Member relations. Actions to deliver this have been identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Review the Member/Officer Protocol, to ensure this includes clarity over the respective roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers, and recommend any changes to the Constitution Working Group as part of 9.1 above. (b) Implement the mandated Member Code of Conduct (c) Review the Employee Code of Conduct and recommend any changes to the Constitution Working Group as part of 9.1 above. (d) Consideration of any revisions to the above documents by the General Purposes Committee. (e) Full Council approval of any changes. (f) Delivery of training for all Members and Senior Officers, including training in governance arrangements, report presentation and preparation, and the monitoring of resolutions and compliance. 	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	<p>December 2025</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>March 2026</p> <p>April 2026</p> <p>May 2026</p> <p>June/July 2026</p>	

9.5	<p>Improve decision-making processes and guidance. Actions to deliver this have been identified as follows:</p> <p>(a) Production and circulation/publication of guidance on the Council's decision-making structures following approval of changes to the Constitution.</p> <p>(b) Delivery of training for all Members and Senior Officers on key changes to the Constitution by the Monitoring Officer</p>	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	December 2025	May/June 2026
9.6	<p>Review and improve committee and decision processes:</p> <p>(a) Review committees and meetings that support informed decision-making to identify efficiency and effectiveness improvements.</p> <p>(b) Evaluate formal decision-making processes and report formats and propose improvements.</p> <p>(c) Agree process and expectations for Member briefings and engagement.</p>	Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer	February 2026	May/June 2026
			February 2026	May/June 2026
			Ongoing	Ongoing

Implementation Planning:

- (1) The Improvement Packages of Work set out some of the immediate work and actions that have been prioritised to support the Improvement Plan. Each work package will require a more detailed delivery plan with key milestones.
- (2) Service specific dashboards are referred to in the Action Plan and need to be developed for all service areas to identify specific targets and performance measures, aimed at sustainable improvement, enabling effective tracking and monitoring of performance consistent with the expected high performance, benchmarked service delivery. These measurements of success are critical to sustainable recovery and continuous improvement.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN BUSINESS CASE TEMPLATE

Improvement Plan Action			
Directorate		Service area	
Project Sponsor		Project Manager	
Start date		End date	

1. Summary of Improvement Plan action**1.1 Improvement Plan Action**

Detail the proposed action, approach to delivery and timelines.

1.2 What impact is the Improvement Plan action seeking to achieve?

Explain the outcomes and financial benefits expected if the Improvement Plan action is successful based upon the principles outlined in (a) to (d) below:

Please explain the following for each of (a) to (d) that are relevant:

- *What changes are expected to be made?*
- *When and how will these happen?*
- *How will outcomes be measured and what performance indicators will you put in place?*
- *Can any of the benefits be monetised?*

(a) Effectiveness

Is the project aimed at improving the quality of service or the increase volume of service?

(b) Equity

Is the project seeking to improve the distribution of what the Council provides?

(c) Efficiency

Is the project seeking to use less resources for the same level of service?

(d) Economy

Is the project aimed at reducing the Council's costs and increase its income?

1.3 Options considered

Provide details of the options considered and reason/s for preferred option.

1.4 Key risks

List the key risks that could prevent outcome and/or benefits realisation. State any mitigating actions.

1.5 Key dependencies, impacts and outcomes

Describe the key dependencies and impacts, including additional resource requirements and any unintended consequences.

Key dependencies

Key impacts

Key outcomes and performance indicators

1.6 Resources required

List who is needed to deliver the Improvement Plan action, with expected time commitments (inc. support services) based on the stages of Diagnostics, Planning, Delivery and Progress Monitoring/Evaluation

Role/service	Project role and key responsibilities	Est. time (days or FTE) (if known)

1.7 Improvement Plan action activity and timescales

List a schedule of high-level activities that will need to complete based on the stages of Diagnostic, Planning, Delivery and progress Monitoring/Evaluation

2. Financial overview

Item	Funding source	Financial year (£k)					
		2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30+	TOTAL
B. External investment							
B1. Capital: One-off		0	0	0	0	0	0
B2. Revenue: One-off		0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (External investment)		0	0	0	0	0	0

C. Expected financial benefits							
C1. Revenue: Ongoing		0	0	0	0	0	0
Budgeted Saving							
C2. Revenue: One-off		0	0	0	0	0	0
Budgeted Saving							
C3. Cost Avoidance: Ongoing		0	0	0	0	0	0
C4. Cost Avoidance: One-off		0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL (Financial benefits)		0	0	0	0	0	0