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OVERVIEW PANEL

Day: Tuesday
Date: 21 November 2023
Time: 4.00 pm
Place: Committee Room 1 - Tameside One

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for the meeting from Members of the Panel.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest from Members of the Panel.	
3.	MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting of the Overview Panel held on 26 September 2023 to be signed by the Chair as a correct record.	1 - 4
4.	SCRUTINY UPDATE To receive a report of the Chief Executive.	5 - 12
5.	SCRUTINY MID-YEAR BUDGET UPDATE To consider the attached report of the Chair of Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel / Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel / Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Panel / Chief Executive.	13 - 20
6.	IMPROVEMENT TEAM UPDATE To consider the attached report of the Assistant Director (People and Workforce Development).	21 - 30
7.	URGENT ITEMS To consider any additional items the Chair is of the opinion shall be dealt with as a matter of urgency.	
8.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING To note that the Joint Meeting of the Overview Panel & Executive Cabinet is scheduled to take place on 14 February 2024.	

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Natasha Matthews, Senior Democratic Services Officer, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

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OVERVIEW PANEL

26 September 2022

Commenced:
15:30

Terminated:16:25

Present: Councillors Naylor (Chair), Smith, Cooney, North, Fitzpatrick Fairfoull, Reid, N Sharif and Roderick

In Attendance:

Sandra Stewart	Chief Executive
Ashley Hughes	Director of Resources
Julie Speakman	Head of Executive Support
Simon Brunet	Head of Policy, Performance, Communications & Scrutiny
Tracy Brennand	Assistant Director, People & Workforce Development
Gemma McNamara	Interim Assistant Director of Finance
Emily Drake	Head of Payments, Systems and Registrars

**Apologies for
Absence:** Councillors Kitchen and Billington

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

9. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview Panel meeting on the 1 August 2023 were approved as a correct record.

10. SCRUTINY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive that provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Council's Scrutiny Panels for July 2023 to September 2023.

It was reported that on the 27 July 2023, the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel met with the Executive Member for Climate Emergency & Environmental Services / Assistant Executive Member (Armed Forces & Enforcement) / Director of Place / Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods / Head of Operations and Greenspace / Regulatory Services Manager / Partnership Manager and received an overview of neighbourhood enforcement. Members also received the Scrutiny Annual Work Programmes for 2023/24. On the 12 September 2023, the Panel met with the Executive Member (Towns & Communities) / Director of Place / Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods / Superintendent, Greater Manchester Police and received an update on the implementation and effectiveness of the GMP neighbourhoods model and received a forward plan of activity for the Community Safety Partnership. The Panel also received Executive Responses to LGSCO focus reports, "Out of Order – learning lessons from complaints about antisocial behaviour" and "Not in my back yard – Local people and the planning process".

Members were advised that on the 26 July 2023 the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel met with the Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families) / Director of Children's Services / Assistant Director of Children's Services / Head of Service and received an introduction and overview of the care leavers services to inform a review into the effectiveness of services and support received to care leavers in Tameside. The Panel also received the Children's Services performance scorecard specific to Early Help and Social Care and the Scrutiny Annual Work Programmes for 2023/24. Future training was also discussed, in particular with a greater focus on corporate parenting. On the

13 September 2023, the Panel also met with the Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families) / Director of Children's Services to receive an update on Children's Social Care.

On the 27 July 2023, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel met with the Executive Member for Population Health and Wellbeing / Director of Population Health / Strategic Domestic Abuse Manager and received an update and overview regarding Domestic Abuse in Tameside. The Panel also received the Scrutiny Annual Work Programmes for 2023/24. On the 14 September 2023, the Panel met with the Executive Member (Adult Social Care, Homelessness & Inclusivity) / Director of Adult Social Care where the Panel received an update on Adult Social Care Reforms. The Panel continued to be focussed on access to GP surgeries and health inequalities within Tameside.

The report explained that the Scrutiny Panels continued to review all decisions and focus reports published by the Ombudsman to ensure that learning opportunities were identified and shared with the Executive and services in a timely manner and where necessary, a formal response and/or position statement would be returned to an appropriate Scrutiny Panel within agreed timescales. Members were advised that a report from Administrative Justice Council on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND): Improving Local Authority Decision Making, was shared with the Executive Member for Education & Achievement on 14 August 2023, for information and awareness. This had been an area of focus for the LGSCO, including a focus report of 2019 regarding Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). SEND improvement remained a priority area for the Council and the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel received an update report on this at a meeting on 8 March 2023.

Members were advised that the independence of scrutiny enabled Members to seek assurance on the Council's financial position during 2023/24 and looked forward to budget planning, process and priorities for 2024/25. The mid-year budget update sessions for all Scrutiny members, was scheduled to take place later this year. The Executive continued to receive a formal response of the Scrutiny Chairs and it was explained that this captured a range of themes and highlighted any concerns and specific areas for consideration in supporting the Council's ongoing work in this area.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report and summary of scrutiny activity be noted.

11. STRATEGIC DELIVERY & PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK.

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive / Executive Leader that summarised the proposed implementation of a strategic delivery and performance framework which was appended to the report at Appendix 1.

The Head of Performance, Intelligence and Scrutiny Service explained that the council should have a clearly understood and effectively implemented strategic delivery and performance framework. It was explained that a codified, clearly understood and effectively implemented strategic delivery and performance framework contributed to good governance and the achievement of better outcomes. Following the establishment of the Office for Local Government, the consultation on new Best Value statutory guidance and the need for continuous improvement, it was therefore appropriate and timely to review and refresh the Council's approach.

Discussion ensued with regard to the importance of having the framework summarised within a written document that was accessible to all staff and members as part of the council's wider arrangements around good governance. Members recognised that updating the strategic and delivery framework was a key element for effective management and delivery of the council's performance in order to drive continued improvement.

RESOLVED

To note the framework at Appendix 1 to the report and to support its implementation and delivery subject to agreement by the Executive Cabinet on 27 September 2023.

13. UNDERSTANDING OUR CUSTOMER CONTACTS AND LEARNING FROM OUR COMPLAINTS

Consideration was given to a report of the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation)/Chief Executive / Head of Executive Support that provided an update and strategic overview in relation to dealing with and responding to customer contacts. The report also provided a summary of complaints received by the organisation, those that had escalated to a statutory panel and or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. In addition, the report provided a summary of how the review and management of these contacts could help drive system improvement.

With regards to complaints and customer care, for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, the organisation had received and processed a total of 1,324 complaints of which 1074 were Stage 1 and 250 were Stage 2. This was compared with a total of 1,188 for 1 April 21 to 31 March 2022 (increase of 206), of which 946 were Stage 1 (increase of 128) and 242 Stage 2 (decrease of 8). The report detailed a breakdown of the complaints received at Stage 1 and Stage 2, together with the volume received per service directorate and whether they were fully responded to within the 20 working day timescale.

From the total complaints received during the reporting period, 85% of cases were responded to within the prescribed timescale compared with 78% from the previous reportable year for Stage 1 complaints. It was important to note that although there was 15% outside of the prescribed timescales there were many reasons for this however active dialogue with customers would have taken place to keep them update on progress of when they would be receive their response. For Stage 2, 68% were responded to within the prescribed timescale which was a slight improvement on last year's response rate of 62%.

A summary of complaints received during the period of April 2022 – March 2023 was shown in Appendix A to the report, which identified at the top level the type and root cause of the complaint. In relation to the top 4 issues/root causes, it was explained that there were common themes prominent across the organisation. Members were advised that for this reportable period, the main themes were: -

- Quality of service - Failure to do something and not to the standard expected.
- Communication – Lack of contact & no response to calls or messages. New top theme for 22/23
- Staff conduct – Inappropriate behaviour & staff attitude.
- Payment or disputed charges – Disagrees with charges.

It was explained that by the nature of the service provided, some Service Areas received higher volumes of complaints. The data that was held within the system was used to identify the specific issues which helped to inform service improvement and where additional staff training would be required across specific areas.

Members of the Panel were advised that the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) was the final stage for complaints about Councils and some other authorities and organisations, including education admissions appeal panels and adult social care providers (such as care homes and home care providers). Each July the Ombudsman published information on the complaints and enquiries received by individual local authorities and the decisions made during that financial year as part of an Annual Letter, a copy was attached to the report at Appendix B to the report.

It was reported that this information would be valuable in helping local authorities assess their performance in handling complaints. Intrinsic to the learning from this process the annual report was reported to Overview/Scrutiny which informed learning of systems and processes for improved outcomes for service delivery and customer experience from these.

The Annual Letter for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 provided an update on the current performance and how this compared with other local authorities in relation to number of cases, type

and learning. For the reportable period, the LGSCO received a total of 63 compared with 74 complaints for the previous year across the directorate service themes.

It was reported that the LGSCO would uphold complaints if they found fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before they investigated. There was an upheld rate of 79% (based on 15 of 19 cases) detailed investigations compared with 81% (17 of 21 cases) the previous year. This compared to the average uphold rate of similar authorities of 77%.

In addition for some cases where the LGSCO upheld the complaint the service area would have been asked to remedy the situation and of the 63 cases received there were 11 of the 15 upheld cases which required further action (compared with 74 cases last year with 12 requiring action).

Members were advised that it was important to record Compliments and Suggestions received from internal customers, residents and services users. For the reporting period April 2022 – March 2023, there were 98 compliments and 17 suggestions received. During July 2023, onsite surveillance had taken place, and it was pleasing to report that the organisation continued to meet the standard with 100% compliance with a continued 15 areas of compliance plus sustained.

It was reported that during the reporting period, Customer Care and Complaints Handling Training had been delivered to 59 members of staff across the organisation. Attendees of the training included Assistant Directors and Team Managers, as well as front-line staff, including staff from the very front-facing Call Centre. Feedback across all the sessions had been very positive, and further sessions were scheduled for the remainder of this calendar year.

It was further explained that work was underway in the development of a quarterly performance data for all services in the form of Dashboard Reports, with the plan for these to be delivered during the last quarter of the calendar year. Members were advised that an initial draft had been developed with Children's Services. These reports would include key performance data, as well as reporting on improvements made to services as a result of the identified learning. This work was in addition to and complementary to the weekly reports that were already published to services.

Wide ranging discussion ensued with regard to the use of data to highlight systematic trends and reoccurring themes from contact and complaints which would aid further learning and improvements within directorates.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the content of the update and strategic overview of complaint system/process be noted.**
- (ii) That the refreshed training offer being promoted across the organisation be supported.**

14. IMPROVEMENT TEAM UPDATE

Members agreed that this item should be deferred to a future meeting of the Panel

RESOLVED:

That an updated Improvement Team Update be submitted to a future meeting of the Overview Panel.

15. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items for consideration.

CHAIR

Agenda Item 4.

Report To:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	21 November 2023
Reporting Officer:	Sandra Stewart – Chief Executive
Subject:	SCRUTINY UPDATE
Report Summary:	To receive for information, a summary of the work undertaken by the Council's Scrutiny Panels for September to November 2023
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel is asked to note the content of the report and summary of scrutiny activity. All related documents can be viewed within the appendices.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Scrutiny work programmes are linked to the Council's corporate priorities. Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision making and priorities across Tameside.
Policy Implications:	The work programmes comprise activity that seeks to check the effective implementation of policy and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regard to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any changes to policy or service delivery arising from recommendations made through the Overview Panel will be subject to separate reports.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The functions of the Overview Panel are set out in Article 8 of the Constitution. The report provides an update on Council activities in order that the panel may perform its function of providing a constant rolling review of such activities as re the constitution.
Risk Management:	Regular updates to Overview Panel provide assurance that scrutiny is progressing with an effective work programme, supporting good decision making and service improvement.
Access to Information:	The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:  Telephone: 0161 342 2199  e-mail: paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Update provides a platform for appropriate insight, activity, outcomes and proposals to be relayed. This method of reporting supports the improved responsiveness of scrutiny work and also prevents any delay in the communication of key messages.
- 1.2 The report, by nature, aims to provide members with a general summary of scrutiny activity and proposals. It remains that all reports produced by Scrutiny as a result of in-depth review will be tabled separately at the earliest opportunity.

2. SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

- 2.1 Scrutiny in practice remains mindful of the suitability and appropriateness of timings with regard to the impact and value of planned activity. This includes the selection and order of topics and updates to be received during the year, with annual work programmes and priorities agreed at the June meetings. The tables below provide a summary and chronology of recent scrutiny activity.

Figure 1: Breakdown of activity at the formal Scrutiny Panel meetings

PLACE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS SCRUTINY PANEL	
12 September 2023	7 November 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Panel met Councillor Vimal Choksi, Executive Member (Towns & Communities); Julian Jackson, Director of Place; Emma Varnam, Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods; and Mike Walsh, Superintendent, Greater Manchester Police, to receive an update on implementation and effectiveness of the GMP neighbourhood model; and forward plan of activity for the Community Safety Partnership.• Received the Executive Response to the LGSCO focus report: Out of Order – learning lessons from complaints about antisocial behaviour, published August 2023.• Received Executive Response to the LGSCO focus report: Not in my back yard – Local people and the planning process, published August 2023.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Panel met Councillor Jack Naylor, Executive Member (Inclusive Growth, Business & Employment); Nicola Elsworth, Assistant Director; and Sarah Jamieson, Head of Economy, Employment & Skills; to receive an update on strategic priorities, work streams, local delivery and support for business and employment.• Received the formal response submitted to the Executive Member (Towns & Communities) on the draft Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL	
13 September 2023 & 4 October 2023	8 November 2023
<p>13 September 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel met Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families); and Allison Parkinson, Director of Children's Services, to receive an update on Children's Social Care. Received the Children's Services performance scorecard specific to Early Help and Social Care. <p>4 October 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel met Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children & Families); Sandra Stewart, Chief Executive; and Allison Parkinson, Director of Children's Services, to receive an update specific to the safety of children in Tameside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel met Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children & Families); Allison Parkinson, Director of Children's Services; Alison Montgomery, Assistant Director; Melanie Field, Interim Head of Quality Assurance; and James Smith, Performance, Intelligence and Scrutiny Manager, to review the Children's Social Care and Early Help Scorecard and to receive a summary of findings and learning from recent quality assurance work and audits, with a focus on practice improvement. The Panel met Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children & Families); Allison Parkinson, Director of Children's Services, to receive the updated Children's Social Care Improvement Plan.

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE SCRUTINY PANEL	
14 September 2023	9 November 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel met Councillor John Taylor, Executive Member (Adult Social Care, Homelessness & Inclusivity); and Stephanie Butterworth, Director of Adult Services, to receive an update on Adult Social Care Reforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Panel met Simon Sandhu, Medical Director, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust; Trish Cavanagh, Deputy Place Based Lead; and Lynzi Shepherd, Head of Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism (Tameside), to receive an update on mental health priorities for Tameside and an overview of services and support delivered by Pennine Care.

Scrutiny activity and working groups

2.2 Scrutiny is progressing review activity in the following areas.

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

- Community Safety – working group meeting held on 1 November 2023.
- The review to consider the effectiveness of local partnership arrangements in the development and delivery of community safety priorities. Aspects specific to the strategic and operational partnership between the local authority, Police and partners within the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

- Care Leavers – working group meeting held on 2 November 2023.
- The review to consider the effectiveness of services and support for care leavers in Tameside. Priorities for the working group will focus on the services and partners specific to the local offer for care leavers; accommodation (sufficiency, quality, future planning); support available regarding education, employment and training; and to meet with and listen to the experiences of care leavers on the services they receive.

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

- Domestic Abuse – working group meeting held on 31 October 2023.
- The review to consider services aimed at supporting and improving outcomes for the perpetrators of domestic abuse, access to safe accommodation for victims and the importance of prevention work in this area and measures to protect and safeguard people in their own homes.

Response to mid-year budget update

- 2.3 Mid-year budget update sessions for all Scrutiny members took place on 6 November 2023. The update was provided by Councillor Jacqueline North, First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation); and Ashley Hughes, Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer).
- 2.4 The Executive has now received a formal response of the Scrutiny Chairs, capturing a range of points and highlighting any concerns and specific areas for consideration in supporting the Council's ongoing work in this area . The response letter is tabled in a separate report to Overview Panel on 21 November 2023.

Consultation and Engagement

- 2.5 Where appropriate Scrutiny Panels will undertake consultation and engagement outside of the formal meetings with Council services and external partners. Following a meeting on 12 September 2023, members of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel received a draft version of the Council's Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Policy, for review and comment.
- 2.6 A formal and collective response of the Scrutiny Panel was submitted to Councillor Vimal Choksi, Executive Member (Towns & Communities), on 10 October 2023, (**APPENDIX 1**).
- 2.7 At a meeting of the Community Safety working group on 1 November 2023, members received an updated version of the ASB Policy where the comments of Scrutiny had been given full consideration and informed the document.

Training and Development

- 2.8 There is an ongoing commitment to ensure scrutiny members receive a suitable level of training and guidance. In addition to online resources, it is important that new and existing members have access to external provision based on scrutiny principles, national guidance and expectations.
- 2.9 All members of the Children's Services Scrutiny are invited to attend a training session delivered by the Local Government Association (LGA) on 28 November 2023. The session will focus on the effective scrutiny of Children's Services, explore what good scrutiny looks like and identifying current strengths and areas for development centred on a thematic self-assessment tool. An elected member peer has been identified by the LGA and will attend the session.
- 2.10 In preparation for the training on 28 November 2023, all members of the Children's Services Scrutiny have received e-learning modules from the LGA that cover Children's Services and Corporate Parenting.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As set out on the front of the report.

Councillor Vimal Choksi
Executive Member
Towns & Communities

Julian Jackson
Director of Place

Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Claire Reid

Tameside One
Market Place
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 6BH

Email: claire.reid@tameside.gov.uk
Phone: 0161 342 2199
Ask for Paul Radcliffe
Date: 10 October 2023

Dear Councillor Choksi,

Draft ASB Policy

I write on behalf of the Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. Following a meeting on 12 September 2023, members received a draft version of the Council's Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Policy. Thank you for sharing the paper with us and I can confirm that members have taken time to review the content and provide feedback that will hopefully help to inform and support the final document.

Anti-social behaviour impacts the lives of residents and communities across the borough and therefore must remain in place as a key priority for the Council and our Community Safety Partnership (CSP). For local residents and businesses, behaviour and offences related to ASB can have devastating and long-standing impacts. Scrutiny therefore welcomes the development of a local policy and the intention to remain focused on reducing the cumulative impact that ASB can have on victims.

The Scrutiny Panel wishes to submit a collective response in support of the Council's ASB Policy. This letter therefore aims to provide a summary of collective points and I would be extremely grateful if you can take the appropriate action to record the responses and take forward any points you consider will strengthen the policy.

I have listed some of the main points below, which are to be viewed as individual responses from members, under the collective of the Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel.

- Tameside Council and the Community Safety Partnership are taking positive steps that affirm ASB as a priority issue. The ASB Policy not only highlights the importance and seriousness of related behaviour and offences, but is also underpinned by a commitment to reduce the incidence and impacts of ASB in Tameside.
- Anti-social behaviour is a significant contributing factor as to why people may not feel safe in their local area and therefore related issues must be treated with vigour and urgency they deserve.

- Within the section titled 'Policy Statement and Commitment', this could provide an opportunity to open with a pledge or aspiration for the borough e.g, In Tameside everyone has the right to live without fear of facing anti-social behaviour.
- Within the same section and in addition to the Corporate Plan reference, it feels important that a specific line is also added regarding the ASB commitments detailed within Priority 3 of our Community Safety Strategy. To also add greater emphasis that this requires a comprehensive and committed partnership approach in order to succeed.
- To consider whether the policy is clear in its understanding and methods to address the local issues that drive ASB. That while discouraging and deterring ASB, further opportunities can be explored to consider a range of proactive and preventative measures, informed by intelligence.
- That the ASB Policy and related projects remain focused on the ability to work with and for our residents and businesses to tackle related issues. Notwithstanding, the need to acknowledge and consider the broader/unwritten roles and responsibilities placed upon the conduct and behaviour of local citizens.
- The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 seeks to place victims at the heart of local responses to ASB and this is something that Scrutiny members want to ensure is working as effectively as possible in Tameside. Empowering victims, the awareness of rights and the swift action taken against perpetrators. Through ASB case reviews (Community Triggers), victims of ASB be offered the opportunity to review responses where problems continue, to ensure the Council and partners have done all they can to intervene and take further action where needed.
- Within the section titled 'Our approach and responsibilities', to avoid any possible doubt can the responsible authorities be named for the purpose of a local policy? Namely:
 - Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
 - Greater Manchester Police (Tameside Division)
 - Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
 - National Probation Service
 - Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (Tameside Provider Partnership) – no longer CCG.
- For the purpose of clarity, under section 2 of the policy, to clearly present the tools and powers available to the Council and CSP in their leading roles in tackling ASB. While some detail on this is provided within the title of 'Actions we can take', there is a possible benefit to separate actual powers from the actions/options available. To incorporate the following tools and a brief summary:
 - Community Trigger
 - Community Remedy
 - Injunction
 - Criminal Behaviour Order
 - Police Dispersal
 - Community Protection Notice
 - Public Spaces Protection Order
 - Closure Power
- In addition to the sound monitoring equipment are there additional options for evidence to be gathered and reported with the use of visual monitoring? - e.g, cameras, CCTV, pictures, video.
- To consider whether appropriate to add or make reference to examples of ASB that may be closely or directly connected to issues of equality and/or protected characteristics – such issues will/may be considered and acted upon as a hate crime and referred to the responsible authority e.g, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation etc.

- Detail on how ASB reporting and responses are to be measured and the impact or outcomes from this work – governance arrangements e.g monitored closely by CSP or a sub-group of. How we will learn from resolution and complaints.
- To incorporate a further statement or commitment regarding the ongoing education and awareness of ASB. Raising awareness of the harms caused by ASB, roles of education and youth provision/services to deter and deflect known behaviour within certain areas or age profiles.
- While the policy does mention social landlords and other departments like environmental health, are there any direct actionable links with private landlords?

I am keen to ensure the Scrutiny Panel remains suitably updated on key developments related to ASB and wider community safety initiatives.

If further clarity is needed on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Claire Reid

Chair – Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

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Agenda Item 5.

Report To:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	21 November 2023
Scrutiny Chair / Reporting Officer:	Councillor Claire Reid – Chair of Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel Councillor Naila Sharif – Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel Councillor Hugh Roderick – Chair of Children’s Services Scrutiny Panel Sandra Stewart – Chief Executive
Subject:	SCRUTINY MID-YEAR BUDGET UPDATE
Report Summary:	To receive a summary and feedback based on recent scrutiny engagement on the mid-year budget position for 2023/24 and future planning.
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel is asked to note the content of the report and appendices.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Scrutiny work programmes are linked to the Council’s corporate priorities. Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision-making and priorities across Tameside.
Policy Implications:	The work programmes comprise activity that seeks to check the effective implementation of council policies and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regards to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. Appendix 1 provides the formal response from the Overview Panel Chair and Scrutiny Chairs to the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation) and Director of Resources to recent engagement on the Council budget. The response includes a number of further questions that require consideration, the details of which will be reported to Members within subsequent Council budget updates.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	Legislation is clear that every councillor is responsible for the financial control and decision making at their council. The Local Government Act 1972 (Sec 151) states that “ <i>every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs...</i> ” and the Local Government Act 2000 requires Full Council to approve the council’s budget and council tax demand. Every council requires money to finance the resources it needs to provide local public services. Therefore, every councillor is required to take an interest in the way their council is funded and the financial decisions that the council takes. A sound budget is essential to ensure effective financial control in any organisation and the preparation of the annual budget is a key activity at every council. The central financial issue at most councils is that there are limits and constraints on most of the sources of funding open to local councils. This makes finance the key constraint on the council’s ability to provide more and better services.

Every council must have a balanced and robust budget for the forthcoming financial year and also a 'medium term financial strategy (MTFS)' which is also known as a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This projects forward likely income and expenditure over at least three years. The MTFS ought to be consistent with the council's work plans and strategies, particularly the corporate plan. Due to income constraints and the pressure on service expenditure through increased demand and inflation, many councils find that their MTFS estimates that projected expenditure will be higher than projected income. This is known as a budget gap.

Whilst such budget gaps are common in years two-three of the MTFS, the requirement to approve a balanced and robust budget for the immediate forthcoming year means that efforts need to be made to ensure that any such budget gap is closed. This is achieved by making attempts to reduce expenditure and/or increase income. Clearly councillors will be concerned with any potential effect that these financial decisions have on service delivery.

Since 2010 – Government has sought to make the local government funding system more locally based, phasing out general government grant altogether. Therefore, the policy objectives and decision making of the local council plays a far more significant role in the council's ability to raise income than before.

The councillor's role put simply, it is to consider the council's finance and funding as a central part of all decision making and to ensure that the council provides value for money, or best value, in all of its services and make difficult decisions when there is insufficient.

There is unlikely to be sufficient money to do everything the council would wish to provide due to its budget gap. Therefore, councillors need to consider their priorities and objectives and ensure that these drive the budget process. In addition, it is essential that councils consider how efficient it is in providing services and obtaining the appropriate service outcome for all its services.

A budget is a financial plan and like all plans it can go wrong. Councils therefore need to consider the financial impact of risk and they also need to think about their future needs. This was the purpose of the mid year review. Accounting rules and regulations require all organisations to act prudently in setting aside funding where there is an expectation of the need to spend in the future. However, every council will also wish to ensure that it has a 'working balance' to act as a final contingency for unanticipated fluctuations in their spending and income. In times of austerity, it is tempting for a council to run down its reserves to maintain day-to-day spending. However, this is, at best, short sighted and, at worst, disastrous! Reserves can only be spent once and so can never be the answer to long-term funding problems. However, reserves can be used to buy the council time to consider how best to make efficiency savings and can also be used to 'smooth' any uneven pattern in the need to make savings.

Risk Management: Regular updates to Overview Panel provide assurance that scrutiny is progressing with an effective work programme, supporting good decision-making and service improvement.

Access to Information: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:

 Telephone:0161 342 2199

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is required by law to set a balanced budget for the upcoming financial year. It is important to base proposals on a range of sound and sustainable assumptions about income and expenditure. There is an additional need to assess, project and monitor a range of known and unknown external pressures.
- 1.2 The authority also has a statutory duty to consult with businesses and other representatives of non-domestic ratepayers on its annual spending proposals. The Council instructs and delivers a timetable of engagement activity in order to seek and understand the priorities of individual services, residents, patients, service users and businesses alike.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 It is a requirement that Scrutiny Panels be consulted as part of planned budget conversations and engagement. Such arrangements have been in place in Tameside since Scrutiny Panels were established in 2000. The independence of scrutiny enables members to seek assurances on budget planning, process and priorities.
- 2.2 All scrutiny members are cordially invited to attend an annual budget consultation session in January each year, at which final budget proposals are presented in detail. The session provides a suitable opportunity for scrutiny members to provide feedback, raise questions and concerns. Scrutiny Chairs provide timely feedback to the Executive Member with responsibility for Finance. Discussion points and findings are summarised in a formal letter, in support of the final budget report.
- 2.3 More recently, 2019 onwards, Scrutiny Panels have received a mid-year budget update. This provides a further level of engagement to inform proposals and can be used to support the development of future work priorities for each panel.
- 2.4 All Scrutiny Panel members were provided with an opportunity to attend one of two mid-year budget update sessions delivered on 6 November 2023. The meeting invitation included all non-executive members of Overview Panel. The sessions enable members to seek assurance on the Council's approach to managing and mitigating budget pressures, known risks and future uncertainty. A response letter of the Overview Panel Chair and Scrutiny Chairs to the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation) and Director of Resources, can be viewed in **Appendix 1**.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As set out on the front of the report.

Chair of Overview Panel

Chairs of Scrutiny Panels

Councillor Jacqueline North
First Deputy
Finance, Resources & Transformation

Ashley Hughes
Director of Resources
Section 151 Officer

Tameside One
Market Place
Ashton-under-Lyne
OL6 6BH

email: paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk
Ask for Paul Radcliffe
Direct Line 0161 342 2199
Date 9 November 2023

Dear Councillor North,

Scrutiny mid-year budget update 2023/24

We write in response to the mid-year budget update presented on 6 November 2023. Thank you for the time taken to provide all scrutiny members with the opportunity to receive a comprehensive appraisal, which included an overview of key financial assumptions, the current budget position and a forward view regarding risks and pressures.

Budget monitoring information continues to inform work priorities for the Scrutiny Panels and regular updates enable members to seek assurance on the Council's approach to managing and mitigating budget pressures, known risks and future uncertainty. The demand on statutory services and the sustainability of budgets beyond the short-term remains a concern for members, along with growing social and economic pressures associated with the rise in living costs, inflationary pressures and the need to support individuals and families in Tameside.

Scrutiny forms part of the Council's governance and decision-making process, underpinned by principles that aim to provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge, to amplify the voice and concerns of residents, and to drive improvement in public services. Scrutiny activity remains aligned with priorities set within the Council's Corporate Plan and relies on insight of the Council's budget and financial plan.

This letter provides an account of discussions captured from the meetings and subsequent feedback received. It is hoped that the collective points can assist with planning for the remainder of 2023/24 and beyond. Please pass our thanks to the Director of Resources and the Interim Assistant Director of Finance for attending the sessions. The Council's Overview Panel will receive a summary of this activity at the next meeting on 21 November 2023.

The Council continues to demonstrate a firm commitment to meet all financial challenges and budget reductions. The current position does appear somewhat precarious when considering that in order to close the budget gap a significant amount of in-year savings need to be delivered. This comes at a time when statutory services are experiencing high levels of demand and a lack of certainty that pressures will subside any time soon.

The Director of Resources reported that all previously identified savings for 2023/24 will be delivered in full, which equates to £15.979m for the financial year. With the successful redirection of £5.425m, this leaves budget reductions of £10.554m to address. Members were presented with a Month 5 performance table that was RAG rated and showed £2.523m in Red and £3.046m in Amber, which account for more than 50% of the target required.

It was confirmed that those currently in Red are not expected to be delivered in the financial year and challenges remain in order to deliver those currently in Amber. To date £1.702m has been achieved with £3.283 identified in green as achievable and on track.

In addition to the current budget reductions and savings requirements, revenue monitoring information highlighted a significant in-year overspend across directorates. With £13.021m predominantly attributed to Adults, Children's Social Care and Place. Members were advised that current variances are to be addressed by officers and through management actions to balance the budget. Should difficulties be encountered then alternatives will need to be put forward.

This does appear somewhat ambitious and challenging given the persistence of demand and external pressures. Vigour and intensity is needed within budget monitoring arrangements to support this and members remain cautious of accounting measures that may be needed should actions or revised plans not be achieved.

Reference was made to the role of the Star Chamber process and members highlighted a requirement of the Executive to fully oversee and challenge key areas relating to budget reductions and in-year variances within their portfolios. A question that remains for Scrutiny is clarity on the existing financial planning model and processes by which directorates identify achievable savings. Further points include learning from previous years and members are keen to ensure future decisions are robustly costed and achievable, without jeopardising service quality or requiring late or unplanned financial adjustments.

A question was asked on the Capital Programme and how this is financed. A total figure of just over £15m was shown against a funding source of receipts and reserves. Upon enquiry members heard that a significant amount of the expected receipts are yet to be achieved, with concerns that they may not be fully delivered in this financial year.

Members shared concerns on the challenges and uncertainty associated with short-term funding settlements and ambitions of the Council to set a more robust medium term financial plan. It is accepted that a greater level of confidence can be achieved should longer funding arrangements be granted to local authorities beyond the next financial year.

Recent activity of the Scrutiny Panels has highlighted a need for the Council to address growing local challenges around accommodation and placements, which too have a significant reactionary impact on the Council's budget when taking account of statutory requirements in relation to Homelessness, Adults and Children's Social Care. Scrutiny members would fully support and endorse a borough-wide accommodation sufficiency strategy. It is not felt that this is something that each decision maker and directorate can do in isolation, but requires a collective and partnership approach with key stakeholders in housing.

Trends in current spend appear increasingly reactionary in parts and building resilience, evidence and business cases can allow the Council to plan for the future and make positive investment decisions. This will ultimately aim to improve outcomes for individuals while also benefitting parts of the budget.

Improving outcomes for children and vulnerable residents remains in place as a budget pressure, with talks of associated costs with regard to external children's placements and the need to achieve greater permanence within parts of the workforce and exposure to external markets.

Effective budget monitoring must take precedence, with the aim to promote a transparent and honest culture for the reporting of in-year budget and savings difficulty. Reducing delay and ensuring issues are flagged at the earliest opportunity is now key to overall success. It is also felt that the role of financial oversight and expertise may need to extend further in a more coherent and partnership role with services.

A number of questions that may require further consideration include:

- The savings most at risk of not being met and actions required.
- Challenges and viability of non-statutory and discretionary services going forward. Reviewing for best value.
 - A specific and pertinent point was raised on future budget commitments for the upkeep, cleanliness and appearance, 'look and feel', of the borough. Any changes would be detriment to the borough's future success and prosperity.
- The financial position the Council now finds itself in regarding the previously pooled budget arrangement and separation/detachment from the CCG (now ICB).
- Options to alleviate significant placement costs and building greater capacity in Tameside.
 - The Council making the best use of its powers relating to homes, accommodation and placement needs for vulnerable residents and allocations for care leavers.
- Issues and challenges specific to workforce and external markets. Examples were provided regarding Educational Psychology and Social Workers.
- Facilities Management arrangements and making the best use of Tameside's buildings and venues across all towns - income generation, current pricing and advertising.
- Pivotal role of the Council's asset management and disposal plans.
- Access to health funding and contributions - can more be done to support costs associated to specific Children's Social Care interventions and placements.
- Continuing to grow our tax base – meeting our housing targets, inward investment and business growth.
- Demand projections and a need for greater mechanisms of prevention and early intervention – overarching plan, population growth, future pressures / dependency.
- A relentless and uncompromising focus on achieving outcomes and making best use of the money available for the residents and businesses we serve.
- Improving customer interactions and ability of the Council to respond through enhancements in digital solutions and website navigation.

We are pleased to say that the Council's leadership and Executive remain fully engaged with all aspects of Scrutiny activity and options will be explored to incorporate greater and more frequent oversight of budget and financial information within planned activity and in-depth reviews.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Michael Smith – Interim Chair of Overview Panel

Councillor Claire Reid – Chair of Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Hugh Roderick – Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Naila Sharif - Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

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Agenda Item 6.

Report to:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	21 November 2023
Reporting Officer:	Tracy Brennand, Assistant Director, People and Workforce Development
Subject:	IMPROVEMENT TEAM UPDATE
Report Summary:	<p>The Improvement Team was established in March 2022, in response to the Council's challenging financial climate.</p> <p>A jointly agreed programme of work commenced in October 2022 following significant changes to both elected member and senior leadership. Since then the Improvement Team, comprised currently of 6.5 team members, has worked collaboratively with services on small, specific projects to drive change and outcomes through effective project and change management.</p> <p>To date the team has contributed to bringing in £1.3m of grant monies, a reduction in overspend in children's services and achieved cost avoidance by creating more efficient operating models over the duration of the programme to date.</p> <p>Going forward, to support services further in planning and delivery of transformational projects, agreement has been given to develop the team further to enable broader support for improvement, transformation and project/programme management as an enhancement to the existing Improvement Team to scale up pace and impact of the team.</p> <p>This report outlines progress to date since creation of the Improvement Team and sets out the future plans for the service.</p>
Recommendations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) NOTE the impact made by the Improvement Team to date on the delivery of the programme.(ii) NOTE the plans for the future development of the Improvement Function including –<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Development of a Transformation and Improvement Strategy to provide the necessary framework and focus against which all improvement projects will be delivered.b. Development of broader support for transformation and project management(iii) NOTE the prioritisation of future projects will focus on supporting the delivery of budget reductions, supporting children's services improvement journey and improving outcomes, prioritised using an impact versus complexity analysis.
Corporate Plan:	The Transformation Programme underpins all aspects of the Corporate Plan, with strong links in particular with Starting and Living Well. The programme will also provide capacity around enablers identified as key to delivering the vision, aims and priorities of the Corporate Plan.
Policy Implications:	There are no direct policy implications associated with this report. Any policy implications associated with any projects outlined in this report have / will be addressed through appropriate governance as

part of each individual project the details of which are subject to validation and will be reported at a later date

Financial Implications:
**(Authorised by the
statutory Section 151
Officer & Chief Finance
Officer)**

The report provides an update on the initiatives supported by the Improvement team to date together with the proposed future programme of work.

On 23 March 2022, the Executive Cabinet approved a budget allocation of £5.000m via Council reserves to support the related costs of the Improvement team and investment required for associated initiatives.

Table 1 (section 2.2) of the report provides a summary of the estimated cost of the team since commencement and forecast to 31 March 2025, an estimate of £ 1.108m that will be financed via the reserve. The cost of the team is forecast to this date to align to the estimated delivery dates of the improvement projects detailed in table 2 (section 2.3).

The team has supported initiatives to date that have delivered improved outcomes, process efficiencies together with cost reductions and cost avoidance.

The remaining reserve balance of £3.892m will ensure that the improvement programme can increase scope, impact and pace and support services in delivering existing and future budget reduction initiatives.

The ongoing and future work programme will prioritise initiatives that support the Childrens Services Improvement Plan and budget reduction projects aligned to the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Further updates will be reported to future Panel meetings that will include the improved efficiencies and outcomes delivered both on a recurrent and non-recurrent basis.

Legal Implications:
**(Authorised by the
Borough Solicitor)**

There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Risk Management:

Effective project management helps drive improvement change in the organisation. Exception reporting aids escalation and management of issues and risks to ensure improvement activity continues to deliver at pace thus reducing the risk of project failure.

Access to Information:

Not confidential

Background Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Emily Drake, Head of Payments, Systems and Registrars



Telephone: 0161 342 3158



e-mail: emily.drake@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On the 23 March 2022, the Executive Cabinet, approved the establishment of an Improvement Team in response to the Council’s challenging financial climate.
- 1.2 A jointly agreed programme of work commenced in October 2022 following changes to both elected member and senior leadership. Since then the Improvement team, comprising of 6.5 team members, has worked collaboratively with services on small, specific projects to drive change and outcomes through effective project and change management.
- 1.3 This report outlines progress and impact to date since creation of the Improvement team and sets out the future direction of travel for the service.

2. CURRENT PROGRAMME OF WORK AND IMPACT

- 2.1 The current programme of work focusses on small measurable projects, with the team providing capacity for key skill sets:
- Procurement – capacity to complete procurement paperwork and product specifications.
 - Business improvement – reviewing operating processes e.g. process mapping, time and motion studies.
 - IT system development – developing improvements in IT systems e.g. launching new functionality, procuring or rationalising system, or maximising the use of systems already in place.
 - Change management supporting the planning and implementation of new ways of working.
 - Programme management support – project management capacity to ensure projects keep to scope, time and budget.
 - A number of projects also need improvement support where work streams cross multiple directorates to ensure interdependencies are identified and coordinated.
- 2.2 The current team structure is outlined in table 1 below:

Table 1

Role	Purpose	FTE
Head of Service	Strategic oversight and business improvement activity	1
Business Improvement Managers	Business improvement, change management and project management.	3
Business Improvement Officer	Business improvement activity support	1
HR Assistant	Priority processing of recruitment and retention in Children’s Services	1
Procurement Lead	Procurement support	0.5

- 2.3 The team is funded via a £5m Transformational Fund Council reserve. The current actual and estimated cost of the team to 31 March 2025 is provided in table 2. The cost of the team is forecast to this date to align to the estimated delivery dates of the improvement projects detailed in table 2.

Table 2

Financial Year	£'m
2022/23 – Actual	0.300
2023/24 – Forecast	0.388
2024/25 – Forecast	0.420
Total	1.108
Reserve	(5.000)
Balance – Forecast	(3.892)

- 2.4 The forecast remaining balance of £3.892m is available to fund transformational and improvement activity.
- 2.5 Over the last 12 -18 months, 18 Improvement Projects have commenced based on requests from services and approved by senior officer and members. These are summarised below. Of these, 4 are in diagnostic phase and 6 in delivery phase. 5 projects have been completed. 3, namely Transitions to Adulthood, Leaving Care and Supported Accommodation have been subsumed into the Children’s Improvement Plan and will be progressed under the Children’s Improvement governance arrangements.
- 2.6 Projects in diagnostic phase are proposed concepts that are being explored to ascertain if there is a viable project to progress. It usually concludes with a business case being developed or the project no longer being progressed due to viability or return on investment.
- 2.7 Project management methodology is used to provide quarterly updates to members and officers. They provide a high level overview of each project, measures, risks and progress against key milestones. This is a key project management tool to ensure delivery of the Improvement Programme and associated benefits.

Project	Project Outcome	Activity Update	Status
Diagnostic Phase			
Payments and Income	Modernised consistent ways of making payments (Apple, Card Payments etc.), with improved reconciliation and shifts around charging policy to ensure that we are maximising income whilst being fair and consistent in recovery practices.	The organisation has identified a solution to modernised payment taking online (Apple Pay and G-Pay are available in person via PDQ). The solution provides improvements in reconciliation. Support provided to the MTFS is in place to maximise income and deliver digitised, consistent recovery whilst being supportive to financial vulnerability. This will likely be progressed through with the AD’s for Digital Tameside and Exchequer.	Amber – on hold. 
Digitisation in Operations and Neighbourhoods (was mobile working pilot)	Improving the customer experience across the service, streamline back office processes, rationalise systems where possible, including the use of mobile working.	The Council is exploring procuring a new IT system in the service. Systems are being demonstrated and a business case in development for an invest to save project. Amber rating due to capacity affecting progress.	Amber – capacity impacting progress 

Project	Project Outcome	Activity Update	Status
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Customer Relationship Management system to improve customer journey and experience	A business case is currently in development to pilot a CRM in Operations and Neighbourhoods.	Green – on track 
Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Explore efficiencies generated through the use of artificial intelligence e.g. customer services.	Linked to the CRM system use of AI in the form of automated chat bots is being explored in Customer Services.	Green – on track 

Project	Project Outcome	Update	By when	Planned Impact	Status
Delivery Phase					
Review of financial policies in Children's – SGO	Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) - Compliant up to date financial policy and protocols in place in children's services	Delayed due to Children's Improvement work.	Dec 24	Compliance with SGO statute with clear operating protocols and robust financial oversight.	Amber – on hold 
Children's and Adults financial systems	Digital solutions in place to enable Children's and Adults in their response to key regulatory and legislative drivers - OFSTED areas for priority action and the People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform White Paper. The 2 financial IT systems will interface directly with the case management systems to generate adults and children's payments.	Adults system implementation due March 24. Children's scoping commenced in line with October 24 go live.	Mar 24 Oct 24	More robust financial oversight and more efficient operating systems. Staff time inputting will be reduced and data will be timely and provide greater clarity.	Green – on target 
Locality and Land Property Gazetteer (LLPG)	Update and review of LLPG – how it is updated, and managed for the authority.	LLPG has been brought in line with required national standard and business as usual model established. Work is now focussing on using this data set as a 'single version' of address data in our IT systems.	Mar 24	Grant income of £0.012m National LLPG standard achieved. IT systems using LLPG data to improve data intelligence around addresses in the borough. This will enable services to work more affectively and join up data sources. This will generate future financial benefits.	Green – on target 
Customer Experience Improvement in Waste Services	Improvement of waste services operating systems and processes to improve the customer experience, increase efficiency and reduce failure demand.	On hold due to children's improvement work	Feb 24	Reduction in complaints in waste services. Reduction in contacts to customer services. Software developed to improve efficiency	Amber – on hold 

Project	Project Outcome	Update	By when	Planned Impact	Status
				of operating model.	
Car Parks	Car parking infrastructure that meets the needs of our residents and businesses with modern cashless payment options in place.	Digital payment methods now in place in for 17 car parking machines in the borough.	Was Sept 23. Delivered Oct 23	Collection of car parking fees in month one (October) has increased by 32% compared to the same period in the last year.	Green – on target 
Website	A refresh of the website to modernise and improve the customer experience.	A new refreshed look and feel of the website has been implemented. Page reduction of 40% has been achieved and content refreshed. Further reductions of content and pages will continue as business as usual.	July 23 Now Nov 23	Improved look and feel of the website to improve customer experience.	Green – on target 
Children's Improvement	Development of the Children's and SEND Improvement plans and self-evaluation frameworks. Programme management oversight to drive change, maintain pace and ensure delivery against improvement plans.	Children's social care improvement plan and self evaluation framework are complete and a delivery plan developed to drive improvements outlined in the plan. Self evaluation framework for SEND also underway.	To be reviewed 31 Mar 24	Improvements in children's service. Improved OFSTED outcome. Improved outcomes for children and families.	Green – on target 

Project	Project outline	Impact	Status
Completed Projects			
Business Process Improvement – SEND	Children's Services SEND –the improvement team have helped the SEND to service to move to using their case management system Capita One. This has enabled more streamlined processes and better data provision for the service.	- Increase of KPI for initial Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs) within 20 weeks from 32% in Dec 21 to 60.3% above national average in April 23. - Process notes and training across team. - Cessation of inefficient practises. - All data now recorded in the Capita ONE case management system (prior to intervention data and performance information was absent which affected management oversight and the ability to plan).	

		<p>- Proactive planning of EHCP reviews for schools.</p> <p>- Launch of the SEND portal - an online portal for schools to communicate and share information in an efficient way.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that KPI outcomes require further work. There continue to be challenges with review EHCPs; a service review is being implemented to address this.</p>	
Business Improvement – Business Link Team, Children’s	A review of systems and processes in the Business Link Team	Improved systems and processes, team stabilised, efficiencies generated preventing the need for additional capacity to be added to the team. Cost avoidance of the equivalent of 2 grade C admin positions.	
Housing Benefit in Children’s	Ensuring young people who are eligible to have their support paid for through housing benefit or universal credit housing element claim their full entitlement and that this is offset by the Council for any costs currently incurred.	New staying put policy in place on 1 Feb 23 that improves the offer for carers and young people and enables care leavers to claim universal credit housing element to cover their rent where eligible. The amount payable to carers has increased from £177 per week to £260 per week. An proportion of this additional cost is, where applicable, funded via universal credit.	
Early Help	Project Management expertise to support the redesign of Early help.	Performance management support of the Early help Transformation programme delivered in 22/23.	
18+ Care Leaver Placements	18+ Care Leavers in the right placements with the right support and a reduced reliance on semi-independent provision.	In this project the number of young people over 18 years old in semi independent provision was reduced from 56-20. As at November 2023 this has reduced further to 11. Over 18yr old semi independent placements on average cost £1067 per week. The reduction equates to a gross cost reduction of over £1.8 million over 2 years. As the Council still maintains a duty of care to young people to the age of 25, there will be other costs to support these young people dependent on their needs.	

2.8 Since September 2023, the team’s capacity has been focussed on supporting the Children’s Improvement journey. The Head of Service is Children’s Improvement lead and, with the Business Improvement Managers, providing capacity and support to the development and delivery of the Children’s Improvement Plan and SEND Improvement Plan. It is acknowledged that the shift in focus has impacted on the delivery of other elements of the programme but is considered an essential change considering the necessary pace required in Children’s Services.

2.9 The team have also assisted in delivering ad hoc pieces of work outside of the programme, relating to but not exhaustive:

- Wrote a new Joint Care Leaver Housing Protocol in Children’s services.
- Supported in writing a successful bid for £1.3m funding (Staying Close Bid)
- Providing recruitment and retention capacity in Children’s services to support priority recruitment of hard to fill posts. This includes undertaking employment checks and

completing recruitment paperwork and processes to free children's staff capacity to focus on frontline work.

3 FUTURE OF THE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

- 3.1 A Transformation and Improvement Strategy will be developed following engagement with elected members and officers. The strategy will provide the necessary framework and focus against which all improvement projects will be delivered.
- 3.2 Going forward, to support services further in planning and delivery of transformation and improvement projects, agreement has been given to develop the team further to enable more focused support on improvement, transformation and project/programme management to be in place and to enable the scale up pace and impact of the team.
- 3.3 The programme of work will continue to align to the Corporate Plan and directorate business plans, with projects that focus on Children's Services being prioritised in light of the current OFSTED Improvement work. Key projects that support the delivery of Council budget reduction initiatives will also feature heavily in the programme.
- 3.4 Not all projects will bring direct financial benefit. Improvements to basic operating models may feature to enable stabilisation of services and provide a sound foundation for future service transformation work.
- 3.5 Identification and prioritisation of new projects will be based on an impact compared to complexity analysis with resources aligned to each specific project in recognition of the variety of skills and knowledge required.
- 3.6 Digital transformation, organisational development and finance underpins multiple projects so working closely with these enabling functions is imperative to ensure a consistent approach is applied to project/programme management.
- 3.7 Further investment in the Improvement function will be required to ensure that the programme can increase scope, impact, pace and support services in delivering budget reduction initiatives. Centralising and recruiting existing capacity from within services will reap the benefits of organisational knowledge. The capacity requirements required in the team are currently being developed. The team will have a central core of staff with resources flexing and changing as projects are on and off boarded and different skills sets are required.
- 3.8 A central Project/Programme management approach will also bring rigour to delivery plans and standardise the organisation's approach to project management working alongside services.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Improvement team have worked closely in partnership with services over the last 12 -18 months.
- 4.2 With a refocus of the Children's Improvement Plan, Improvement team capacity and its impact will be scaled up.
- 4.3 The development of a Transformation and Improvement Strategy following engagement with elected members and officers will be prioritised. This will provide the necessary framework and focus against which all improvement projects will be delivered.
- 4.4 The programme of work will continue to align to the Corporate Plan and directorate business plans, with projects that focus on Children's Services being prioritised in light of the current OFSTED Improvement work. Key projects that support delivery of budget reduction initiatives will also feature heavily in the programme although some projects will focus on improved outcomes, without a direct financial impact.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As set out at the front of the report.

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