

Report to:	Overview Panel
Date:	Tuesday, 26 September 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, comprising of 6 team members, has worked collaboratively with services on small, specific projects to drive change and outcomes through effective project and change management.</p> <p>The establishment of a Project Management Office (PMO) is planned to scale up pace and impact of the team to support the financial sustainability of the organisation longer term with further investment in project management and business improvement capacity in the Improvement Team.</p> <p>This report outlines progress to date since creation of the Improvement Team and sets out the future direction of travel for the service.</p>
Recommendations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) NOTE the impact made by the Improvement Team to date on the current delivery programme. (ii) NOTE the plans for the future development of the Improvement Function including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development a Transformation and Improvement Strategy to provide a robust framework for all Improvement Projects. - Investment in Improvement team capacity. - Development of a centralised Project Management Office. (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 compared to 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
Financial Implications:	The report provides an update on the initiatives supported by the Improvement team to date together with the proposed future programme of work.
(Authorised by the statutory Section 151	

Officer & Chief Finance Officer)

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 team has supported initiatives to date that have delivered improved outcomes, process efficiencies together with cost reductions and cost avoidance, the details of which are subject to validation and will be reported at a later date.

Further investment in team capacity is proposed via the estimated reserve balance of £3.892m to 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)**

The Council has a statutory duty to secure efficient and effective services within an overriding duty to deliver a balanced budget. This work seeks to secure sustainable services.

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:

N/a

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 significant changes to both elected member and senior leadership. Since then the Improvement team, comprising of 6 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 6 team members providing capacity for key skill sets - business improvement, IT system development, change management and programme management support. A number of projects also need improvement support where work streams cross multiple directorates to ensure interdependencies are identified and coordinated.
- 2.2 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 1.












Table 1





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)

The forecast remaining balance of £3.892m is available to fund transformational and improvement activity.

- 2.3 Over the last 12 months 17 Improvement Projects have commenced based on requests from services and approved by senior officer and members. These are summarised below. Of these, 11 are in diagnostic or delivery phase. 5 projects have been completed. 1 is in review.

Project	Outcome	By when	Financial Impact	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.	TBC	TBC	
Supported Accommodation - Foyer	Implement supported accommodation to offer affordable accommodation for young people aged 16-25 who are homeless or in housing need to combine a secure living environment with help	TBC	TBC	

Project	Outcome	By when	Financial Impact	Status
	and support and access to work and learning opportunities.			
Digitisation in Operations and Neighbourhoods	Improving the customer experience across the service, streamline back office processes, rationalise systems where possible, including the use of mobile working.	TBC	TBC	
CRM	Customer Relationship Management system to improve customer journey and experience	TBC	TBC	
Artificial Intelligence	Explore efficiencies generated through the use of artificial intelligence e.g. customer services.	TBC	TBC	
Transition	Clear multi agency in scope transition pathways for young people with effective upstream transition oversight.	TBC	TBC (CH17, AD3)	
Delivery Phase				
Review of financial policies in Children's – SGO	SGO - Compliant up to date financial policies and protocols in place in children's services	Dec 24	TBC (CH14)	
Children's and Adults financial systems	Two new 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.	Oct 24	N/A	
Locality and Land Property Gazetteer (LLPG)	Update and review of LLPG – how it is updated, and managed for the authority.	Mar 24	TBC	
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.	Feb 24	N/A	
Car Parks	Car parking infrastructure that meets the needs of our residents and businesses with modern cashless payment options in place.	Sept 23 Now Oct 23	TBC (PL12)	
Website	A refresh of the website to modernise and improve the customer experience.	July 23 Now Nov 23	N/A	
Completed Projects				
Business Process Improvement – SEND	SEND - Improved operating models and processes to ensure statutory responsibilities can be met, team capacity is increased and customer experience improved.	Complete	TBC	

Project	Outcome	By when	Financial Impact	Status
Business Improvement – Business Link Team, Children’s	Improved systems and processes in Business Link Team	Complete	N/A	
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.	Complete	TBC	
Early Help	Business Improvement, Project Management and system development expertise to support the redesign of the Early help to implement a model of delivery that provides a case management approach to supporting families early, preventing needs and risks escalating, and reducing the need for costly statutory services.	Complete	PM support only	
18+ Care Leaver Placements	18+ Care Leavers in the right placements with the right support and a reduced reliance on semi-independent provision.	Complete	TBC	
Projects in Review				
Leaving Care Review	In Review			

2.4 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 financial and service improvement benefits.

2.5 The team have assisted in delivering increased efficiency and improved outcomes for residents (not exhaustive):

- Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) – performance improved from the worst performing local authority in the country to above national standard.
- Refreshed the Council’s website – refreshed content, a cleaner look and feel and a reduction in pages from 5,000 to 2,950.
- Launched a schools SEND online portal.
- Stabilised and improved systems and processes in 2 children’s teams to increase efficiency of operating models.
- Reduced the number of care leavers over 18 years old in costly semi-independent placements from 56 to 20.
- Launched a new Staying Put Policy in Children’s services.
- Providing recruitment and retention capacity in Children’s services

3 FUTURE OF THE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

3.1 Based on the impact of the Improvement team in the last 12 months, the intention is to scale up the team and its impact. Currently the biggest risk to the delivery of projects in the

programme is capacity.

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.7 Further investment in the Improvement function will be required to ensure that the programme can increase scope, impact and pace and support services in delivering budget reduction initiatives. Centralising and recruiting capacity from within services will reap the benefits of organisational knowledge. 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 required.
- 3.8 A central Project Management Office (PMO) is being proposed to bring rigour to delivery plans and standardise the organisation's approach to project management working alongside the Improvement team.

4 **CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Improvement team have worked closely in partnership with services over the last 12 months.
- 4.2 With a refocus of the Children's Improvement Plan, the intention is to scale up the Improvement team capacity and its impact.
- 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.