

# Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP) Best Value Notice Action Plan

## August 2023 – August 2024



### Introduction

BCP Council welcomed an [external assurance review](#) in March 2023 and subsequent [Best Value Notice](#) issued on the 3 August 2023, underpinning the Council's commitments towards continuous improvement. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), now known as the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local government (MHCLG), recognised the findings corresponded to the Council's own understanding of the challenges faced, and steps already taken to act on the recommendations.

This action plan provides a progress update on the recommendations from DLUHC's external assurance review, including aspects of the report felt to be of similar standing to the formal recommendations, as well as recommendations from the Council's own [internal assurance review](#), conducted prior to the external assurance review and updated in June 2023 following the election of a new local administration.

### Guidance note

This action plan is categorised into 4 main areas:

- Council Meetings and Decision Making
- Cabinet and Leadership
- Councillor Behaviours
- Further issues to address

There are **42** actions in total. The source of the action, whether from the internal or external assurance review, is indicated within the number column using the reference DLUHC (external) or BCP CEx (internal). Where actions are duplicated, the update is given against the DLUHC action.

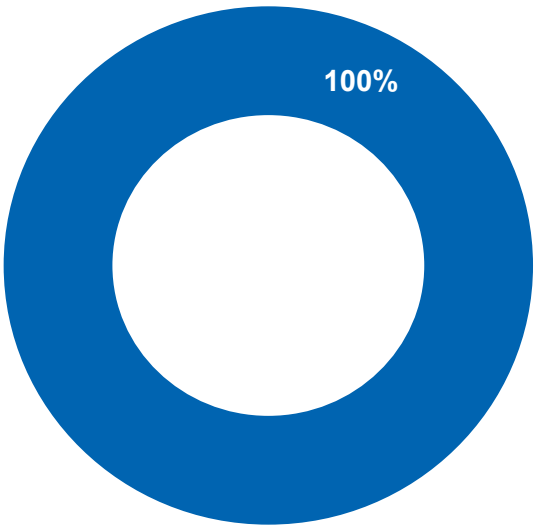
Please note the action numbers do not correspond directly to the recommendations in the internal assurance review, as they have been integrated with those from the external assurance review.

A RAG rating is used in the number column, as explained in the key below, to show progress against the actions. Where an action is completed, the next steps column highlights whether the work is ongoing, requires monitoring or no further action is to be taken. Completed actions are defined as those where the activities have been completed, however outcomes may be realised over the long-term.

### Progress Summary as of August 2024

As of July 2024, 100% of the 42 actions have been completed. We have made significant strides in improving our operations and governance and have completed all of the actions collectively identified. We continue to work on the longer-term financial challenge around the funding of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), an issue facing many local authorities. We have done all we can on this issue relating to the 'Best Value Notice' recommendation and further action relies on continued negotiations with government, through MHCLG and DfE, which are ongoing. The only way to move forward with this agenda is with a change in legislation, and a financial solution from government, but that is beyond the scope of this action plan.

Key: Progress with actions	
Completed	<div></div>
Progressing well	<div></div>
Started	<div></div>
No movement	<div></div>



More information on the completed actions and any relevant next steps are detailed on the following pages.

## Actions completed as of August 2024

Council Meetings and Decision Making						
No.	Action	Outcome	Target date	Progress to date	Next steps	Action owner
1 BCP CEx	Elect a Chair from outside the administration, to each Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee	Appropriate scrutiny in a No Overall Control Council, holding the Executive to account.	June 2023	<p>Prior to elections in May 2023, opposition councillors were given a majority of positions on the principal Overview and Scrutiny committees as a result of changes in the political balance calculations. Opposition councillors appeared content to keep Conservative councillors as Chairs for the Committees where they were already in place, for the remainder of that Council term.</p> <p>Since May 2023 all O&amp;S Committees have appointed a Chair, and in most cases, a Vice-Chair, from outside of the Administration.</p>	No further action required, but monitor longer-term	Chief Executive and Leader
2 BCP CEx	Encourage Overview and Scrutiny committees to take evidence and contributions from officers as well as portfolio holders	A more informed basis for O&S recommendations.	December 2023	<p>There is still a reluctance amongst the broader overview and scrutiny committees to ask questions directly of officers and there have been comments that leading councillors do not give clear answers to questions, but other councillors do not seek that clarity from officers, which they could.</p> <p>Since June there has been a noticeable shift in emphasis within the Council, with officers being invited to contribute on specific issues in Cabinet and this need needs to be extended to O&amp;S committees.</p> <p>A full Member induction programme was developed for the post-election period from May 2023 which included a session on Overview &amp; Scrutiny as part of the essential training. The session covered a number of things including the purpose of scrutiny, the role of councillors and how to be a critical friend. There is also an ongoing programme of training for O&amp;S.</p> <p>The range of inquiry from councillors and the presentation of information by officers in Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee is much improved and could benefit from additional encouragement and awareness by councillors in asking questions and examining issues.</p> <p>The Council has reviewed the arrangements for O&amp;S and Council approved changes at the meeting held on 12 September 2023. The review introduced changes to remit, frequency and names of the committees. The same Council meeting received the O&amp;S Annual Report which included a comprehensive action plan incorporating and aligned to this action plan.</p>	<p>Continue to encourage full participation and clarity of answers in all meetings and incorporate into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members.</p> <p>Health &amp; Adult Social Care O&amp;S continues to have officers present reports and answer questions from Members.</p> <p>Place O&amp;S, since May 2023, has requested deep dive reports into specific issues presented by officers with questions to officers and the Cabinet Member.</p> <p>Corporate &amp; Communities O&amp;S has demonstrated this change in focus and there is every sign that the incorporation of officers and indeed external experts (where appropriate) will be a normal function of O&amp;S going forward.</p>	Director of Law & Governance to keep under review

<b>3</b> <b>DLUHC</b>	Develop the scrutiny role to have a broader focus than pre-Cabinet scrutiny, such as on policy development	More O&S focus on policy development and engagement rather than pre-Cabinet scrutiny.	July 2024	<p>Prior to the election there was little movement in the focus of the two new Overview and Scrutiny committees (Place and Corporate &amp; Community) that have replaced the Corporate O&amp;S Board, with an ongoing focus on pre-Cabinet scrutiny.</p> <p>Since the elections in May 2023, the administration sought to restructure Overview and Scrutiny, to establish a closer link to the Cabinet cycle for one O&amp;S Committee but keeping the other 3 committees removed from the Cabinet cycle. This was implemented in September 2023.</p> <p>The policy development role for O&amp;S was incorporated into training for Overview and Scrutiny committee members, to foster a wider role for Overview and Scrutiny committees, underpinned by officer encouragement. O&amp;S forward plans now show a more balanced mix of work, an example of this is a recent O&amp;S investigation into blue badge waiting times with a view to establishing necessary policy changes.</p> <p>Officers should encourage, raise awareness and provide training on an ongoing basis to ensure that the O&amp;S function focuses on a balance of work including policy development. CMB has agreed to regularly receive O&amp;S work plans to provide opportunity to encourage policy development, and the Scrutiny Officer encourages regular communication with O&amp;S chairs to assist in identifying these opportunities.</p> <p>The changes to the O&amp;S structure introduced ability for the Environment and Place O&amp;S Committee to appoint two independent members establishing an opportunity to scrutinise from a fresh perspective.</p> <p>To give a wider set of input the O&amp;S Board has also taken evidence from other organisations, including two representatives of the private development industry when considering the draft Local Plan in December.</p> <p>Three workshops were held with Centre for Governance and Scrutiny support to develop work programming approaches to include more proactive scrutiny work. The Environment &amp; Place O&amp;S Committee and O&amp;S Board have developed a framework for how they will approach and include a balance of pre-decision, proactive and reactive scrutiny into their work plans.</p>	No further action required.	Director of Law & Governance to keep under review
<b>3</b> <b>BCP CEx</b>	Continue to increase the focus of Overview and Scrutiny committees on policy development and engagement	See action 3 DLUHC above				

4 BCP CEx	More focus of Overview and Scrutiny committees into corporate performance reporting and challenging the executive	Improvement plans have an impact and improve the services that are missing their targets.	July 2024	<p>There is an opportunity to strengthen the focus of O&amp;S committees on performance management, enhanced by the introduction of a new Corporate Strategy, which has been formally adopted as of 9 January 2024. This will be followed by an updated performance management framework, which sets out how the Council will effectively manage performance, using performance measures to compare outcomes and outputs with targets, goals and objectives to understand and manage service delivery and identify emerging business risks. The Corporate Strategy represents the strategic objectives that the Council has set out to achieve and is a vital framework for the Council's performance management.</p> <p>On 8 January O&amp;S considered the Quarter 2 Corporate Performance report and conversations were had on how O&amp;S would monitor performance moving forward with the new Corporate Strategy. The Corporate Strategy and indicators will be available for O&amp;S members to receive on a regular basis as part of their ongoing horizon scanning role.</p> <p>O&amp;S work planning workshops have been supported throughout 2023. These include horizon scanning based on a range of performance, resident and financial data. This will assist O&amp;S to target work plans effectively.</p> <p>Health &amp; ASC O&amp;S Committee has established a working group to consider how the committee will incorporate performance data into its workload. Children's Services O&amp;S regularly receive information outside of the meeting for monitoring purposes, including performance data.</p> <p>An all councillor session is being planned for early 2024 to consider the ongoing councillor training offer. This will include consideration of training around performance management information for O&amp;S members.</p> <p>Q2 Performance Report was considered at the O&amp;S Committee meeting in January 2024.</p>	No further action required.	Director of Law & Governance to keep under review
5 BCP CEx	Ensure the party whip is not applied to O&S functions	Reputable O&S functions.	September 2024	The message was reinforced and the CEx has had written confirmation from every Group Leader that the party whip or similar, will not be applied around the Overview and Scrutiny functions.	This will continue to be monitored.	Director of Law & Governance to keep under review
6 BCP CEx	Leader to formally delegate to a Deputy whenever they are not available on leave	No hold-ups/delays to decision-making/Council responses when the Leader is on leave.	July 2023	Clarity needs to be given as to when the Deputy Leader can exercise the functions of the Leader in their absence on leave. This has been established with the new Leader, who has given clear instructions about delegated authority whenever she takes leave.	No further action required.	Chief Executive
7 BCP CEx	All reports to be published on the statutory date, with portfolio holders available to meet those timescales - exceptions to be limited to emergency situations only	Timely and coordinated decision-making processes.	July 2023	Very few late reports have been published recently and timescales for publication have been adhered to more strongly. Historically this has been an issue, but Democratic Services now understand their role in refusing to issue late reports without the express permission of the Chief Executive or Director of Law & Governance in his absence.	No further action required. The specific approval of the Chief Executive (or Director of Law & Governance in his absence) is required to publish any late items.	Chief Executive



<b>8 BCP CEx</b>	Review how many recommendations need to go to Council for decision and how they are managed and debated	Efficient and effective Council meetings and decision-making processes.	July 2024	<p>The next review of the Constitution should include a review of delegation limits and methods for simplifying the decision-making process for recommendations from Cabinet to the Council.</p> <p>The Constitution Review Working Group considered the work programme at its meeting on 10 October 2023. The working group resolved to schedule these activities for consideration in 2024.</p> <p>The Director of Law and Governance observed two Council meetings and has concluded arrangements are appropriate at the moment and in line with the scheme of delegation.</p>	No further action required.	Director of Law & Governance
<b>Cabinet and Leadership</b>						
<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Progress to date</b>	<b>Next steps</b>	<b>Action owner</b>
<b>9 BCP CEx</b>	Establish one or two separate portfolios for finance and transformation to be held by someone other than the Leader	Finance and transformation are priorities for the administration and the Leader is freed up to concentrate on overall strategy and direction.	July 2023	The new Leader has established separate portfolios for finance and transformation, separating those functions from the Leader's portfolio.	No further action required.	Leader
<b>10 BCP CEx</b>	Reinstate regular informal Cabinet and Corporate Management Board (CMB) meetings to agree strategic priorities and key issues	Better coordinated leadership of the Council.	July 2023	Regular meetings were reinstated for budget planning purposes during late 2022. Regular meetings are now taking place to discuss ongoing policy issues and budget preparation. The recent strategy week was a good example of collective policy planning. Fortnightly Cabinet Member briefings are in place with Directors and Portfolio Holders.	Continue to engage CMB and Cabinet in joint policy discussions.	Leader and Chief Executive
<b>11 BCP CEx</b>	The Leader, or in their absence the Deputy Leader, to attend all regular Group Leaders meetings	Representation of the administration at Group Leader meetings.	July 2023	The new Leader has committed to attending Group Leader's meetings and has already demonstrated a willingness to work across the party groups in discussing the amendments to the core budget and other key issues.	Monitor to ensure regular attendance at all Group Leader meetings by all political groups.	Chief Executive and group leaders
<b>12 BCP CEx</b>	Hold regular CMB and Shadow Cabinet briefings	Better coordinated leadership of the Council.	December 2023	<p>Regular briefings were held monthly leading up to the local election in May, although the agenda was dominated by short-term immediate issues and the budget challenges. During March and April, the meetings focussed on pre-election preparations and potential new policies post-election, with both the shadow Cabinet and the Cabinet.</p> <p>Since the election no meetings have been held with the Shadow Cabinet. This has been discussed with the Opposition Leader who has proposed portfolios. CMB are contacting those shadow portfolio holders, and the Chief Executive is discussing arrangements for regular CMB and Shadow Cabinet meetings with the Leader of the Opposition.</p> <p>Leader of the Opposition has not requested regular meetings to be set up and is content with the current briefing arrangements. The Chief Executive has regular meetings with the Leader of the Opposition.</p>	Discuss options and requirements with the Leader of the Opposition to establish arrangements for the new Council term.	Chief Executive and Leader of the Opposition.

<b>13 BCP CEx</b>	Seek clarity regarding the ownership of Cabinet reports and who is responsible for the content, between portfolio holders and officers	Clarity of ownership and responsibility on the content of Cabinet reports.	July 2023	<p>This recommendation has been recently resolved as the Monitoring Officer has confirmed that it is the responsibility of officers to prepare an adequate report to support decision-making, which contains all the required and relevant information.</p> <p>Portfolio holders can suggest amendments but the final decision regarding content lies with the officer drafting the report.</p> <p>Training has been provided to officers.</p>	No further action required.	Director of Law & Governance
<b>14 BCP CEx</b>	Members ambitions to be clearly articulated and brought alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)	A re-established direct link between Member ambitions, the budget and key priorities.	February 2024	<p>There was a disconnect between the stated ambitions of the administration and the budget discussions, mainly due to gaps in articulation of the political priorities and what is not a priority, within the context of the budget discussions. This was intended to be addressed post-election with the bringing together of the Big Plan and Corporate Strategy into a new single vision and objectives document.</p> <p>A new corporate vision has been adopted as of January 2024 and this has ensured that the MTFP and vision are brought in line, with a clearer statement of priorities and non-priority areas.</p> <p>Regular budget workshops have taken place, with officers and Members showing a commitment to balance the budget by not shying away from difficult decisions. Delivery plans underpinning the Council's new corporate vision will be developed in line with the budget.</p> <p>Budget papers complete this work.</p>	No further action required.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>15 DLUHC</b>	Agree a Corporate Strategy and a clear set of priorities	A single vision and plan for the BCP area.	<p>Original target July 2023</p> <p>Extended to February 2024 to go alongside the budget process</p>	<p>Since May 2023 the new administration and CMB have been working together to develop a new corporate vision for the place and for the Council, that will clarify the key priorities for the Council and will guide the preparation of future budgets as set out in action 14 BCP CEx above.</p> <p>A new Corporate Vision was formally adopted by Council on 9 January 2024.</p> <p>Work has taken place with Cabinet Members, Directors and senior officers across the Council to develop a supporting delivery plan, setting out key deliverables and performance measures.</p>	Corporate strategy delivery plan to be recommended to Council for sign-off.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>15 BCP CEx</b>	Bring the Big Plan and Corporate Strategy together into a single vision statement of the key priorities for the BCP area and how the Council will work to deliver to those priorities	See action 15 DLUHC above				

<b>16 DLUHC</b>	Set up effective mechanisms for Member oversight and monitoring of the delivery of the Transformation Programme	Stronger cross-party ownership of the Transformation Programme.	June 2023	<p>A cross-party working group is now being established. There is insufficient knowledge of the Transformation Programme across the wider body of councillors and the outcomes that are being pursued.</p> <p>The new Leader has also established stronger arrangements to provide Cabinet leadership for the Transformation Programme, with a dedicated portfolio.</p> <p>A more moderated approach to transformation savings has been agreed within the Budget for 2024/25 and the MTFP, with no unidentified savings included.</p> <p>Delivery of key elements of the programme, such as Dynamics F&amp;O has enabled access to budgets, which is changing the internal dialogue and the relationship between finance and the services. Those high-profile examples will help to exemplify the benefits of the transformation programme.</p>	Ensure that the cross-party working group is properly constituted and meets regularly and determine how best to keep a wider cross-section of councillors updated as the programme progresses.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>16 BCP CEx</b>	Set up a regular cross-party working group to oversee the Transformation Programme	See action 16 DLUHC above				
<b>17 BCP CEx</b>	Leader to write briefings on key information as appropriate	Better informed councillors.	July 2023	<p>Prior to March there was little regular communication from the Leader to backbench councillors and a weekly email was proposed to fill some of the gaps in communications and increase trust. The new Leader has reintroduced the regular update for all councillors and is considering other options to improve communications across the Council.</p> <p>Group Leader meetings can be convened to communicate key issues, and this was the case since the receipt of the BV notice from DLUHC in August 2023.</p>	Continue to circulate key information to all councillors and engage in group leader meetings for specific issues.	Leader
<b>18 DLUHC</b>	Put in place a comprehensive Member induction programme	Effective leadership and scrutiny.	June 2023	<p>A full Member induction programme was developed for the post-election period from May 2023. This provides a comprehensive programme for both existing and new councillors covering all introductions to service areas, key information regarding decision-making, code of conduct and behavioural expectations, and specialist committee training. A Virtual Councillors Resource Room has also been established with useful resources.</p> <p>We are now arranging a follow-up session, particularly for new councillors to pick up any issues they might have missed or misunderstood and to gauge reactions to their first 6 months in office.</p>	This is ongoing and being amended and adjusted to suit emerging needs and requests from Members.	Director of Law & Governance
<b>19 DLUHC</b>	Put in place an ongoing programme of Member training to include their role in overview and scrutiny	Effective leadership and scrutiny.	July 2023	As 18 DLUHC above	<p>Ongoing, and needs to be monitored as needs evolve.</p> <p>Also see action 3 DLUHC above.</p>	Director of Law & Governance

20 DLUHC	Work with the LGA to provide mentoring and support to Members	Better development support for Cabinet members.	July 2023	<p>All members of Cabinet have been enrolled on relevant Leadership Essentials courses with the LGA and have been offered a mentor via the Group Offices. Chairs of other committees have also been offered professional courses from the LGA and other relevant organisations. The majority of courses are due to take place in Q3 of 2023/24 due to LGA capacity issues and mentoring will continue through 2023/24.</p> <p>All Members have been through a comprehensive induction programme, as detailed in action 18 DLUHC above, as well as being given a programme of e-training, with the completion of this being followed-up with Members.</p> <p>Chief Executive continues to work closely with the LGA SW regional team to ensure appropriate support is provided and mentors have been assigned to Cabinet members as shown in the table below.</p> <p>All councillors to be invited to attend a 6-month review meeting to discuss how the Council works and any training or awareness needs they still have.</p> <table><tr><th>BCP Cabinet Member</th><th>Local gov. Mentor</th></tr><tr><td>Vikki Slade – Leader</td><td>Ruth Dombey - LB Sutton</td></tr><tr><td>Richard Burton – Children and Young People</td><td>Lucy Nethsingha – Cambridgeshire County Council</td></tr><tr><td>Millie Earl – Deputy leader and Connected Communities</td><td>Darryl Smalley – City of York Council</td></tr><tr><td>Mike Cox – Finance and Commercial operations</td><td>Tony Dale – Cotswold District Council</td></tr><tr><td>Kieron Wilson – PH Housing and Community Safety</td><td>Wayne Davies – Redcar &amp; Cleveland Council</td></tr><tr><td>Andy Martin – PH Customer, Culture and Comms</td><td>Ian Stephens – Isle of Wight Council</td></tr><tr><td>Andy Hadley – PH for Climate and Environment</td><td>Adam Paynter – Cornwall Council</td></tr></table>	BCP Cabinet Member	Local gov. Mentor	Vikki Slade – Leader	Ruth Dombey - LB Sutton	Richard Burton – Children and Young People	Lucy Nethsingha – Cambridgeshire County Council	Millie Earl – Deputy leader and Connected Communities	Darryl Smalley – City of York Council	Mike Cox – Finance and Commercial operations	Tony Dale – Cotswold District Council	Kieron Wilson – PH Housing and Community Safety	Wayne Davies – Redcar & Cleveland Council	Andy Martin – PH Customer, Culture and Comms	Ian Stephens – Isle of Wight Council	Andy Hadley – PH for Climate and Environment	Adam Paynter – Cornwall Council	<p>Continue the programme of mentoring and support for Members with the LGA.</p> <p>Continue supporting Members with their completion of the e-training.</p>	Director of Law & Governance
BCP Cabinet Member	Local gov. Mentor																					
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20 BCP CEx	All Cabinet members, including the Leader and Deputy Leader to have formal coaches or mentors, who are experienced local government leaders	See action 20 DLUHC above																				



<b>21 BCP CEx</b>	Review the Senior Leadership Team to increase corporate capacity to work alongside the new health structures and provide additional capacity for dealing with complex local politics	More strategic Senior Leadership team.	January 2024	<p>The Chief Executive has completed a review of the corporate structure, and this was agreed by the Council on 21 February. Interim appointments have been made to the vacant posts, with permanent recruitment to the new structure underway for completion during September.</p> <p>A Corporate Director of Wellbeing has been permanently recruited and has taken up her appointment. A Director of Planning and Destination has also been permanently recruited as a new starter in December 2023. Recruitment to the Director of Law &amp; Governance (and Monitoring Officer) has been completed with the successful applicant starting December 2023.</p>	Recruitment to key posts completed. Recruitment to other senior posts to continue as appropriate.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>22 DLUHC</b>	Recruit permanently to the vacant senior leadership posts	Effective and established corporate leadership team.	November 2023	As action 21 BCP CEx above	As action 21 BCP CEx above	Chief Executive and Director of People & Culture
<b>23 DLUHC</b>	Put in place an externally facilitated development programme for the senior leadership team with individual and team programmes	Effective and strategic corporate leadership team.	December 2023	<p>Directors undertook a Leadership Development programme in 2019 but there have been a number of staffing changes since this date, together with new members joining CMB following the Chief Executive's Leadership restructure in February 2023. The Council has acknowledged the need to enhance the development offer for senior leaders, with progress on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relevant assessment tools to identify strengths in the leadership team</li> <li>• development of a central shared leadership learning platform</li> <li>• identification of individual and team skills requiring development, following a new Leadership Competency framework</li> <li>• 360 feedback</li> <li>• individual on-going executive coaching</li> <li>• reverse mentoring</li> <li>• a review of options into further externally run team leadership development programmes.</li> </ul> <p>Proposals of a development programme were agreed by Corporate Management Board.</p> <p>The development plan, including external facilitation, is now in place and being delivered</p>	A programme of tools to enhance our leadership development offer has been agreed and is in place.	Director of People & Culture

Councillor Behaviours						
No.	Action	Outcome	Target date	Progress to date	Next steps	Action owner
24 BCP CEx	Where isolated cases exist, for councillors to accept and uphold the findings and remedies of the Standards Committee	Findings and remedies of the Standards Committee upheld, creating better working relations.	September 2023	<p>All outstanding cases from Standards Committee were attempted to be resolved before the elections in May to ensure trust in the system is not eroded.</p> <p>Discussions have been held between the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer and the Chair and Vice Chair of Standards Committee about ways to instil the Seven Principles of Public Life and the value of upholding these.</p> <p>The Standards Committee is currently dealing with the last of the series of Code of Conduct matters where Councillors declined to comply with determinations by the Chair (in consultation) to resolve matters through informal resolution. These matters will be brought before formal Standards Committee on 3 October 2023.</p> <p>The final complaints of non-compliance were reported to Council on 7 November 2023.</p>	<p>All longstanding cases have been resolved. There is at least one final outcome still to be achieved, but Standards Committee will monitor compliance.</p> <p>Further awareness-raising and training for councillor and officers, as well as possible amendments to the Constitution regarding the management of complaints under the Code of Conduct.</p>	Director of Law & Governance
25 BCP CEx	Look at ways to reduce the number of councillor complaints about other councillors	Fewer councillor complaints about other councillors.	January 2024	<p>Fewer complaints have been made recently and there is evidence of councillors seeking advice and guidance on the merits of submitting complaints about other councillors.</p> <p>Few complaints have been made about individual councillors since the election in May.</p> <p>There was an increase in reported complaints about councillors in the period leading up to the election of the PCC in May 2024 and more recently in the lead up to the General Election in July 2024, but this is expected to reduce with the new political dynamic. The political environment remains complex but stable, and Council meetings have become less adversarial, and less aggressive in tone.</p>	Continue to monitor the number of complaints received and report these to the Standards Committee.	Director of Law & Governance
26 BCP CEx	Look at councillor use of social media and engagement in online debates	Considered use of social media by councillors.	July 2023	<p>This is an ongoing national issue which needs further development and co-operation from Group Leaders. This issue was considered likely to intensify in the run up to the local elections in May and all councillors were asked to exercise great care in their use of social media.</p> <p>Since the elections in May there have been occasional complaints about the posts of councillors and ex councillors, but it appears to have subsided.</p> <p>Specific training on appropriate use of social media has been given as part of the councillor induction programme.</p> <p>Bespoke 1-2-1 social media training has been given following specific incidents as needed.</p>	<p>Continue to monitor.</p> <p>Additional bespoke training to be delivered in response to any specific incidents.</p>	Director of Communications, Marketing & Policy

<b>27</b> <b>BCP CEx</b>	<p>Leading councillors to only meet with external companies or private sector representatives with an officer present, with all discussions noted</p>	<p>Better transparency and accountability of councillor engagement with external companies or private sector representatives.</p>	<p>January 2024</p>	<p>This has not been adopted as explicit policy and it is understood that prior to the local elections some meetings may have been held with external parties, without a formal record being kept, which represents poor practice. All meetings with private sector parties should be attended by an officer who will keep a formal record of the meeting.</p> <p>The new leadership have adopted this principle and are clear that they will not meet with private sector representatives without having an officer present, and they have been complying with this advice.</p> <p>Regular discussions are held with senior officers before any meetings take place and they generally involve senior officers attending such meetings.</p> <p>A revised Protocol for councillor/officer relations has been drafted and will be shared more widely, before being added to the workplan for the Constitutional Review Working Group. The draft revised protocol addresses engagement by councillors with external companies that are seeking to do business with the Council, as well as advocacy by councillors on behalf of residents during legal proceeding.</p>	<p>Incorporate this requirement into the Constitution.</p>	<p>Director of Law &amp; Governance</p>
<b>28</b> <b>BCP CEx</b>	<p>All correspondence with external parties that sets up meetings, creates obligations or gives instructions on behalf of the Council is sent out in the name of an officer, not from a councillor</p>	<p>All councillor correspondence with external parties is compliant with policy.</p>	<p>July 2023</p>	<p>The Constitution and Members: Officer protocol contains clear guidance that all external correspondence should be sent from the officers and not by councillors other than under specific circumstances.</p> <p>The new Leader is clear about this constitutional requirement.</p>	<p>No further action required.</p>	<p>Chief Executive and Leader</p>
<b>29</b> <b>DLUHC</b>	<p>Work with group leaders to reset the Member/ Member and Member/ officer culture and relationships</p>	<p>Improved governance, scrutiny and behaviour based on the Nolan principles.</p>	<p>July 2023</p>	<p>As of March 2023, the Council has adopted the LGA 'Debate Not Hate' campaign promoting civility in public life. The 'Debate Not Hate' branding is being promoted in Council democracy publications (e.g. agenda for meetings) and as part of the induction and training relating to decision-making and code of conduct.</p> <p>Since May the new Council has been very clear about the need to respect and consider officer advice, and the need for professional relationships to be maintained between councillors and officers. Group leaders have undertaken to work more closely with officers and consider their advice, in line with the Council's values and behaviours. This includes treating everyone with respect, taking pride in what we do, and demonstrating integrity.</p>	<p>Continue working in line with the Council's values and behaviours.</p>	<p>Chief Executive and group leaders</p>

Further issues to address						
No.	Action	Outcome	Target date	Progress to date	Next steps	Action owner
<b>30 BCP CEx</b>	Accelerate the governance review of BCP FuturePlaces Ltd and commence the alternative Shareholder briefings, including opposition councillors	Governance of BCP FuturePlaces reflects good practice and the relationship with the Council is redefined.	January 2024	<p>The decision to close down FuturePlaces Limited was taken by Cabinet on 27 September 2023. The development and investment activities of the company are being brought in-house, with the TUPE transfer of staff taking place on 1 November 2023.</p> <p>The TUPE transfer to be completed and staff inducted into new structure 1 November 2023.</p> <p>Transfer of company assets to the Council to be concluded following valuation.</p>	Planned closedown of company by 31 March 2024.	Chief Operations Officer
<b>31 BCP CEx</b>	Review the funding regime of BCP FuturePlaces Ltd, considering a mixed model of funding	Reduced risk in the funding regime of BCP FuturePlaces for them and the Council.	January 2024	<p>The Council recognises that the current funding model is likely not to be sustainable and so other options are being considered. A full review of the future operations of BCP FuturePlaces will be taken to Cabinet in September 2023.</p> <p>The recommendation to bring FuturePlaces in house removes the Loan model of funding and brings development and regeneration funding into revenue and where eligible capital local authority funding.</p>	See action 30 BCP CEx above.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>32 DLUHC</b>	Agree a business plan for BCP FuturePlaces Ltd setting out a clear portfolio of priority projects with timescales for delivery	Clear purpose for BCP FuturePlaces with a portfolio of priority projects, non-core schemes programmed and timescales for delivery, balancing the projected workload and pipeline.	September 2023	<p>The former Chair of the non-execs, Lord Kerslake, was working on a governance and workload review prior to his passing. This work has now been concluded by the remaining non-exec directors and will be presented to Cabinet in September 2023.</p> <p>The 27 September Cabinet report presents the outcome of a review of all FuturePlaces work and recommends a reprioritised focused development programme, with three clear priority sites, Holes Bay, Dolphin Leisure Centre and BIC/Winter Gardens.</p>	See action 30 BCP CEx above.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>32 BCP CEx</b>	The Council and BCP FuturePlaces Ltd to jointly consider the scope of regeneration projects being pursued	See 32 DLUHC above				



<b>33</b> <b>BCP CEx</b>	Carry out a Governance review of all subsidiary companies	Boards of all subsidiary companies to have either officer or councillor representation, not both.	March 2024	<p>A report concerning shareholder governance arrangements was considered with extensive debate and agreed by Overview &amp; Scrutiny, Cabinet and Audit and Governance committee, setting out recommendations that will apply to the shareholder governance of all council companies.</p> <p>The report set out a methodology for reviewing council companies and a timetable for completing these reviews, drawing on lessons learned from BCP FuturePlaces Ltd and on best practice sources. The company reviews include consideration of board membership, core functions, and the annual process for commissioning and approving business plans.</p> <p>A review of all subsidiary companies has been undertaken and reported to Audit and Governance Committee. We are operating the procedures in terms of the operational review of shareholder companies, the final step is to integrate the procedures into the constitution. By the end of the year we will have taken the procedures to Council for inclusion in the constitution.</p>	Take the procedures to Council for inclusion in the constitution.	Director of law and Governance
<b>34</b> <b>DLUHC</b>	Put in place a regular cycle for business plans, mid-year reviews and year-end reviews of all Council companies as part of scrutiny/decision-making processes	Good scrutiny and decision-making practices in place for all Council companies.	June 2024	<p>This recommendation is an integral part of the governance review detailed in action 33 BCP CEx above.</p> <p>In July 2023 the Local Partnerships guidance was updated, placing greater emphasis on the importance to the Council of ensuring that the strategic fit, risks, benefits, structures, financial and governance arrangements for any proposed new entity is subject to rigorous consideration prior to approval, supported by a robust, comprehensive and credible business case.</p> <p>Likewise there is stronger focus on the need for the Council to review these arrangements on a regular ongoing basis and to ensure that the entities continue to deliver in accordance with the initial business case and subsequent annual business plans. Emphasis is also placed on the need to ensure that the entity's objectives and operations remain consistent with the Council's Corporate Strategy and that they are appropriately taken account of within the Council's oversight, audit, risk management, scrutiny and decision-making arrangements with suitable, sufficient and timely reporting and escalation of risks and issues.</p> <p>Accordingly revised checklists have been produced with additional supporting guidance notes where appropriate and should be used for any future review or assurance work.</p> <p>A report to Cabinet in January 2024 concerning shareholder governance set out how the Council will conduct reviews of its companies and decision-making concerning these companies in future.</p>	No further action required.	Director of Law & Governance

<b>35 BCP CEx</b>	Define more clearly and explicitly what is meant by a "Member-led council"	Clear expectations of officers and councillors.	October 2023	<p>A draft paper setting out the key principles was presented to the former Leader in September 2022 but has not yet been formally taken forward. This issue was deferred for discussion with the Leader following the May 2023 elections. The final paper will be published and circulated from the end of December, once the new Director of Law and Governance has had an opportunity to review the content.</p> <p>Report has now been finalised, published and circulated amongst all the senior managers.</p>	No further action required.	Chief Executive and Leader
<b>36 DLUHC</b>	Draft proposals for a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and three-year budget	A sound budget-setting process, with the budget and MTFP working within existing rules and frameworks.	September 2023	<p>The budget for 2023/24 is entirely based on traditional methods of local government financing, but carries significant risk, which has been articulated in the budget covering report. This approach received cross-party support and was the basis for all options considered by the Council on 21 February 2023.</p> <p>Any suggestions for alternative funding routes, based on regeneration proposals will be used to fund regeneration and those specific schemes, and not considered as possible means to support the mainstream revenue budget.</p>	No further action on this specific point, but the MTFP is challenging, and councillors and officers have worked together to balance the budget for 2024/25.	Director of Finance
<b>36 BCP CEx</b>	Create a budget and MTFP based on traditional methods of local government finance	See 36 DLUHC above				
<b>37 DLUHC</b>	Commission an external financial resilience review to inform the MTFP and budget setting	An informed budget setting process.	<p>October 2023</p> <p>Deferred due to CIPFA availability</p>	<p>CIPFA have completed their independent financial resilience review. Delivery of their report had been delayed due to higher priorities requiring their limited resources to be refocussed.</p> <p>Following receipt of the CIPFA report, an action plan has been drawn up around the recommendations. Progress will be reported to Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee.</p>	Consider the outcomes of the review.	Director of Finance

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<b>38 DLUHC</b>	Draw up plans on how to fund the DSG deficit and manage this beyond 2026/27, as part of the DfE Delivering Better Value in SEND programme	Improved short-term and long-term impacts on the Council budget.	July 2024	<p>Councillors and officers need to consider the options for DSG provision and determine the most appropriate strategy, with DfE.</p> <p>DfE invited the Council to participate in the Safety Valve intervention programme. The Council considered the merits and risks of taking this up. The aim of the programme is to agree a package of reform to improve the performance of the Council's high needs system and ensure it is delivered in a sustainable way, for the benefit of children and young people, whilst bringing the dedicated school grant (DSG) deficit under control.</p> <p>A 15-year plan to manage the deficit was submitted to the DfE Safety Valve programme which challenged the DfE's criteria and as anticipated, the Council and DfE have not yet been able to reach an agreement on a Safety Valve solution, although the proposed Plan has not been challenged. Discussions continue with the DfE as part of their Safety Valve programme.</p> <p>Detailed discussions have also taken place via the Schools Forum to increase awareness of the cause of the overspend.</p> <p>The 15-year plan is effectively being implemented and will be overseen by cabinet and by the SEND Improvement Board chaired by the DfE advisor. BCP Council will continue to lobby for a solution to be found, by government, to the funding shortfall and the cashflow impact.</p>	<p>Consider the outcomes of discussions under the Safety Valve programme.</p> <p>An internal Safety Valve Board has been set up to monitor and manage the programme.</p> <p>Continue discussions with DfE.</p> <p>Ongoing actions to be monitored by the SEND Board.</p>	Director of Finance and Corporate Director of Children's Services
<b>38 BCP CEx</b>	Consider how best to manage the future risks and current costs associated with the issue of continued and growing DSG overspend	See 38 DLUHC above				
<b>39 BCP CEx</b>	Re-instate a set of standalone Budget & Policy Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution	Enhanced financial provisions, as set out in the Financial Regulations.	April 2024	<p>The Constitution Review Working Group reviewed the requirements for standalone Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules within the Constitution. The Working Group acknowledged the additional safeguards that such procedure rules would provide.</p> <p>A set of procedure rules were drafted and taken to the Audit and Governance (A&amp;G) committee and then proposed to Council.</p> <p>The Budget and Policy Procedure Rules have now been completed and integrated within the updated constitution.</p>	No further action required.	Director of Law & Governance

<b>40 BCP CEx</b>	Improve budget management with a greater emphasis on the skills being held by service managers	Provision of accurate budget monitoring information to services.	March 2024	<p>As part of the Council's Transformation Programme, the Council is investing in a new comprehensive Microsoft based Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to give a more comprehensive and intuitive system which brings together finance and HR and allows a greater degree of self-service by budget holders.</p> <p>The system has now been implemented (August 2023) including managers being given on-line access to their budgets. This will change the internal relationships between budget managers and the Finance function. The new system has enabled a change in culture, with service directors being held much more accountable for their individual budgets.</p> <p>All managers now using the new system proactively and financial awareness has increased.</p>	Consider what training needs the shift of accountability generates and ensure that appropriate training continues to be provided for budget managers.	Director of Finance
<b>41 DLUHC</b>	Review the Transformation Programme to agree a realistic and deliverable programme	Established foundations for a sustainable future for the Council.	<p>October 2023</p> <p>To be incorporated into the MTFP and 2024-25 budget in the February budget report</p>	<p>A review has been completed, looking at the Transformation Programme vision and the validation of work taking place, to understand what a realistic savings plan looks like and when that can be achieved. A progress report was taken to Cabinet on the 25 October 2023.</p> <p>A cross-party working group has been established and a progress update was taken to the 9 October O&amp;S.</p> <p>Outcomes will be built into the MTFP and budget for February 2024 decisions re 2024/25 budget.</p> <p>2024/25 budget includes more realistic assumptions regarding transformation savings and no unidentified transformation savings have been included in the budget or MTFP.</p> <p>This progress update also cross-references with action 16 DLUHC.</p>	No further action required.	Chief Executive, Leader and portfolio holder

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<p><b>42</b> <b>DLUHC</b></p>	<p>Continue providing targeted support to the Children's Services improvement journey, as a priority, with adequate resources</p>	<p>Children's Services improvement is a clear priority for Cabinet and the Executive leadership team, with the whole Council playing a role.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Changes have been made to the way that commissioning services are managed for Children's Services. Commissioning moved back to Children's Services as of 1 October 2023.</p> <p>Other central services have been asked to identify how they have amended their services specifically to support the improvement journey within Children's Services.</p> <p>Service Charters are being developed to enable the corporate central services to deliver a level of service required by Children's Services.</p> <p>Mosaic issues are now being addressed through a cross-departmental working group with clear allocation of responsibilities.</p> <p>The interim Corporate Director of Resources has carried out a review of corporate support for the Children's Services Improvement Board that sets out how some of the corporate support is being targeted to the specific needs of Children's Services.</p> <p>There are a complex range of issues being addressed in this action, most of which have started and some of which have progressed well however impact of this work on the improvement plans for children is yet to be evidenced consistently.</p> <p>A report went to Cabinet in December proposing a business case for the full implementation of a new children's services delivery model by 1 October 2024 to meet strategic and operational requirements of the service and the Council, as well as achieving financial efficiencies and savings. The business case for a new service delivery model sets out an achievable plan to reshape Children's Services to continue on the improvement journey and deliver better services to children and young people at reduced cost. This is an established model based on research and best practice from high performing authorities. It will enable the service to respond to the changing children's services agenda and be flexible enough to deal with unpredicted changes, thereby building in system resilience. It will also support the delivery of an early intervention culture, assisting children's needs to be identified and met at early stages of concern to reduce the demands on statutory social care services.</p> <p>Ongoing actions will be monitored through the Children's Improvement Board, which is chaired by the DfE advisor, and through the Corporate Delivery Plan which is monitored through Cabinet.</p>	<p>Develop the service charters to be able to monitor how the central services have supported the improvement programme within Children's Services.</p> <p>The work in this space will be reviewed both by CMB and also through the DfE chaired improvement Boards for CSC and SEND. Improvement in this area will also be evidenced through the Ofsted inspection processes.</p>	<p>Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services</p>
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