

Report of:	Mayor and Chief Executive
Submitted to:	Council
Date:	30 November 2022
Title:	Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and progress update
Report for:	Information
Status:	Public
Strategic priority:	All
Key decision:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable
Urgent:	Not applicable
Why:	Not applicable

Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to present the work of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board which was given the mandate to develop and agree a detailed improvement plan to drive the Council's response to the issues identified by Council's external auditors, EY and further investigated by CIPFA.
This report also provides the first progress update on this subject.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to present the work of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board which was given the mandate to develop and agree a detailed improvement plan to drive the Council's response to the issues identified by the Council's external auditors EY and further investigated by CIPFA.
2. This report is also the first in a series of reports to this meeting which will provide a summary of progress made since the last meeting.

Background and relevant information

3. At the Council meeting on 189 October, a report was submitted which set out in detail the reasons why significant weaknesses had been identified as existing in the Council's arrangements in relation to Member and senior officer relationships and the adverse impacts the Council's governance processes.
4. it also set out the progress in addressing them to that point which had included seeking external expertise from CIPFA and the LGA to support improvement and the findings of diagnostic work undertaken by CIPFA.
5. At that meeting members were advised that the Mayor and Chief Executive fully accepted all the findings in that diagnostic work and Members also unanimously agreed to accept all the findings within the report. There was also unanimous support for the proposals to create an Improvement Board with supporting working groups. That Board, with representation from all political groups and senior officers was tasked with agreeing a detailed improvement plan.
6. The detailed improvement is appended to this report at Appendix 1 for members information. While it is being submitted for information rather than decision, the Board would welcome member debate, comment and suggestion on the plan in the spirit of inclusivity.

Progress since October 2022

7. The CIPFA report was presented to Members at a meeting of full Council on 19 October 2022. The following progress has since been made:
 - the final improvement plan has been finalised with input from the supporting working groups
 - full membership is now in place for the working groups, which are politically balanced following the decision of the Conservative group to decline the offer of additional places.
 - regular meetings of the Chief Executive and Mayor are in diarised and taking place.
 - The Governance Improvement Board has met twice, on 2 November and 17 November 2022. As well as the Improvement plan, it has agreed terms of reference for its operation, terms of reference for working groups and a communications plan.
 - All Task and Finish working group membership is now at full capacity, initial meetings have taken place and contributions have been made to the detail of the improvement plan.
 - The Task and Finish working groups have established sub-groups in order to ensure detail is understood and initiative at pace.
 - Mayor and group leader meetings have been scheduled on a monthly basis.

- Ward walk-arounds have been re-established to support Members in identifying / reporting environmental concerns.
- A series of baseline surveys have been issued to staff and Members to assess their current views around corporate governance in the Council.
- New Council Headquarters provide opportunity for an informal meeting space for Councillors, with additional spaces in Town Hall also being explored.

8. The fully populated working group memberships are set out below for information:

Task and Finish Working Group	Councillor Membership	Officer Membership
Roles and Responsibilities	Cllr Ron Arundale (MIG) Cllr Chris Cooke (Lab) Cllr Janet Thompson (Lab) Cllr Stephen Hill (MICA) Cllr Jim Platt (MICA)	Director of Regeneration Director of Environment and Community Services Head of Democratic Services Head of Commissioning and Procurement Head of Early Help
Training and Development	Cllr Dennis McCabe (MIG) Cllr Alma Hellaoui (Lab) Cllr Antony High (Lab) Cllr Barrie Cooper (MICA) Cllr Luke Mason (Ind)	Director of Education and Partnerships Democratic and Registration Services Manager Head of Resident and Business Support Organisational Development Manager Community learning and employability manager
Constitution	Cllr John Hobson (MIG) Cllr Julia Rostron (Lab) Cllr Denise Rooney (Lab) Cllr Barrie Cooper (MICA) Cllr Jon Rathmell (Ind)	Executive Director of Adult Social Care and Public Health Head of Legal Services (People) Head of Legal Services (Places) Head of Democratic Services Head of Public Protection
Culture and communications	Cllr Dorothy Davison (MIG) Cllr Ian Blades (Lab) Cllr David Branson (Lab) Cllr Matt Storey (Lab) Cllr Stephen Hill (MICA)	Director of Public Health Head of Human Resources Head of Marketing and Communications Head of Economic Growth Interim Head of Culture

Finalised improvement plan

9. The Improvement Plan was agreed by the Board on 17 November 2022 following development work by the Task and Finish working groups and is appended to this report at Appendix One.
10. The overall improvement plan sets out the outcomes that will be achieved by each Task and Finish working group and they have been prioritised. Now this is in place, detailed delivery plans with milestones, action owners and target dates will be developed to ensure successful and measurable implementation of the improvement plan.

Communication and engagement

11. As well as delivering the actions, it is important that the work of the Board and its working groups is regularly shared with Members, staff and other stakeholders to ensure everyone is kept informed of progress, understands changes and are assured that the right actions have been identified and delivered.

12. Since last reported, an intranet page has now been set up which will host key information including board decisions, the improvement plan and general updates. This is supplemented by:

- regular communications to staff by the Chief Executive
- monthly catch up sessions between group leaders and the Mayor
- progress reports to Council on a six-weekly basis on delivery of the Governance Improvement plan.

What decision(s) are being recommended?

13. That Council notes the detailed improvement plan and the progress made since information on the required corporate governance journey was last presented.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

14. The planned approach ensures an inclusive approach to development of a response to the issues identified in the CIPFA diagnostic work while there is an agreed improvement plan in place, a detailed delivery plan will track delivery at pace and assess impact.

Other potential decision(s) and why these have not been recommended

15. Not applicable.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Legal

16. There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

Strategic priorities and risks

17. This report and next steps demonstrate a continued positive impact on the strategic risk of 'failure to achieve good governance'.

Human Rights, Equality and Data Protection

18. Not applicable.

Financial

19. There are no financial costs as a result of this report which is for information only.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Not applicable.

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Lessons Learnt – Best Value Inspection of Liverpool City Council	5 August 2021
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Boho X – draft findings from internal audit and proposed management response	6 April 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Statement of Accounts 2020/21;	22 July 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Lessons learned – Best Value and external assurance within other councils.	22 July 2022
Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee	Commencing a corporate governance improvement journey	22 July 2022
Council	Corporate Governance Improvement Journey – CIPFA findings and next steps	19 October 2022

Contact: Mayor, Andy Preston and Chief Executive, Tony Parkinson

Appendix 1: Middlesbrough Council Corporate Governance Improvement Board Action Plan

Task and Finish Working Groups will require development of a robust delivery plans , supported by CIPFA and Council officers, complying with the corporate Programme and Project Management Framework.

Roles and Responsibilities Task and Finish Working Group		
<i>The desired outcomes for this task and finish group are expected to be:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Defined roles / job descriptions are in place for political groups and group leaders</i> • <i>There are clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers</i> • <i>Improved / more productive relationships between Members and Officers</i> • <i>Improved Member Enquiry process / system</i> 		
Action	Links to other Task and Finish Working / Sub-Groups	Progress timeframe
Consider how a line can be drawn under past issues from a Member perspective e.g., revised Member Code of Conduct		60 days
Review and update Member / Officer protocol	Member / Officer Protocol sub-group Training and Development Culture and Communications	30 days
Review existing process for Member enquiries, considering alternatives	Member enquiries sub-group	90 days
Develop plan to improve engagement between Members and officers	Culture and Communications	30 days
Amend political group terms of reference, to reflect revised code of conduct and expected behaviours, protocols, and principles	Culture and Communications Constitution	60 days
Develop a communications protocol for Members and Officers	Member/Officer Comms sub-group	60 days

Training and Development Task and Finish Working Group

The desired outcomes for this task and finish group are expected to be:

- *That training is measurable, effective and has impact*
- *There is collective engagement and buy-in from Members for the need to undertake / attend training and development*
- *Members are better prepared / positioned to take on role*

Action	Links to other Task and Finish Working / Sub-Groups	Progress timeframe
<p>Review current Member training provision and consider any changes/updates required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What induction training and ongoing development is provided and how is it delivered? • What works well and what could be improved, or added? • Ensure that training delivers greater awareness and understanding of the Nolan principles, consider how to frame training around Council values • Ensure consistent language is used across Member and Officer training • Embed understanding of dual role of Members (Ward and Council-wide) • Refocus the training offer to members on the achievement of understanding rather than delivery of training without testing whether it has landed • Design new Member training programme • Consider whether roles (e.g., committee chair) should be linked to completion of relevant training, and possible incentivisation for completion of core training by Members • Consider volume / type of training to be mandatory 	<p>Constitution Culture and Communications Member training sub-group</p>	<p>60 days</p>
<p>Consider what training should be delivered to Officers in respect of working with Members and understanding of Member/Officer protocol:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training should cover Member and Officer roles and responsibilities, including the principle that Council business is Member-led • Ensure consistent language is used across Member and Officer training • Review training for Heads of Service on Officer/Member training to develop relationships between Heads of Service and Members 	<p>Roles and Responsibilities Officer training sub-group</p>	<p>60 days</p>
<p>Develop learning materials in relation to the Constitution e.g. how to use it, where to find it, statutory duties, etc.</p>	<p>Constitution sub-group Member training sub-group</p>	<p>90+</p>
<p>Develop training around Member and Officer codes of conduct</p>	<p>Constitution Member training sub-group</p>	<p>90+</p>

	Officer training sub-group	
Develop training for candidates before elections to set expectations for the role and ensure candidates are well prepared	Pre-election training sub-group	60 days
Consider further opportunities to develop Executive Member and LMT use of Insights		30 days
Consider extending use of Insights to committee chairs		30 days
Deliver LGA-facilitated development sessions for Executive Members and LMT		60 days

The Constitution Task and Finish Working Group		
<p><i>Desired outcomes for this task and finish group are expected to be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Improved understanding of the Constitution, its role and purpose</i> • <i>A refreshed, fit for purpose, accessible and user-friendly Constitution</i> • <i>Constitution document to support effective decision making</i> • <i>A clearly defined role and purpose for the Council</i> • <i>More effective discharging of functions / duties</i> 		
Action	Links to other Task and Finish Working / Sub-Groups	Progress timeframe
Develop framework for reviewing and updating Constitution, including looking at best practice examples and planning how and when a new Constitution will be developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What works well? • What could be improved? • Ensure that Constitution is easy to read and adhere to 	Constitution sub-group	90 days
Develop Constitution user guide	Constitution user guide sub-group	90+
Deliver training/knowledge sessions to explain new Constitution to Members and Officers	Training and Development	90 days
Review Scrutiny Panel arrangements and map to structure or priorities to ensure alignment across LMT, Scrutiny, Executive portfolios and strategic priorities		90+
Look at options to address concerns that exist in the report that the Council's Standards regime is 'toothless', and assign greater powers to Standards Committee in cases where Member misconduct is evidenced		90 days

Culture and Communications Task and Finish Working Group

Desired outcomes for this task and finish group are expected to be:

- *A shared understanding of ways of working / service pressures / key events between Officers and Members*
- *A forward-looking and shared understanding of town-wide / strategic priorities between Officers and Members to manage residents' expectations*
- *A kinder and more open culture*
- *Confident and open two-way discussions and communication between Officers and Members*

Action	Links to other Task and Finish Working / Sub-Groups	Progress timescales
Continue to review working from home arrangements for LMT and other key Officers	Culture and communications group	30 days
Re-establish an informal meeting space for Councillors that meets their needs	Culture and communications group	60 days
Deliver communications programme/workshop for Members to outline the impact of austerity on Council finances	Culture and communications group	30 days
Conduct a staff survey to baseline current mood in relation to governance concerns and repeat this survey regularly as needed and establish feedback loops	HR	30 days
Conduct a complementary survey of Members to baseline their views and repeat to assess progress and report to the Board	HR	30 days
Develop vision for new culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review existing Council values and consider whether appropriate across Council • Hold workshops with Members and Officers to discuss culture • Develop vision document for Council and launch to Members and Officers 	Culture sub-group	60 days
Review and update social media policy	Culture and communications group	60 days
Review the current access to information rules put in place to support members without the need to resort to FOI and consider ways in which the culture around information can be improved	Culture and communications group	60 days
Set expectations of behaviour / etiquette in meetings	Communications sub-group Roles and responsibilities group Training and Development	60 days
Create opportunities for Members to visit and experience Council services e.g. open days for Members, neighbouring LA's, etc.	Roles and responsibilities group	30 days

Create internal search directory to support Officers and Members to find the right person to speak with	Communications sub-group Training and development	60 days
Embed accessibility and communications of information (e.g. FWP, modern.gov, reports) for Members	Communications sub-group Training and development	30 days

General actions		
Action	Links to other Task and Finish Working / Sub-Groups	Progress timeframe
Establish and diarise regular meetings of Mayor and Group Leaders	Mayor	30 days
Establish regular meetings of Mayor / Chief Executive	Mayor and Chief Executive	DELIVERED
Schedule for ward walkarounds to be reinstated, enabling two-way feedback / updates to be developed	Executive Member and Director of Environment	30 days
Schedule quarterly Executive and Leadership Team strategic away days	Mayor and Chief Executive	30 days
Develop process to ensure Member questions to Executive Members are published in full and in advance, of full Council meetings	Monitoring Officer	30 days
Refresh the approach to the Strategic Plan to ensure it reflects the strategic priorities of the Council and for the town, providing a framework for measuring the Council's contribution to KPIs that will impact on those priorities, as well as reflecting the political administration's priorities	Mayor and Chief Executive	90 days
Ensure move to new Council headquarters, enables shared working space for Executive Members and Leadership Team	Chief Executive	DELIVERED