

# BEST VALUE COMMISSIONERS

Governance Board

Wednesday 1st May 2024, 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Council House

## Board Members

John Biggs, Co-chair and Commissioner  
John Coughlan, Co-chair and Commissioner  
Jackie Belton, Commissioner  
Graeme Betts, Interim Chief Executive  
Amjeed Kabil, Projects and Change Manager  
Deborah Carter-Hughes, Assistant Director, Legal  
Julia Lynch, Assistant Director, Legal  
Jennifer Grey, Political Assistant, Liberal Democrat Group  
Sue Harrison, Strategic Director of Children & Families  
Ed Hammond, CfGs  
Amerdip Kaur, Head of Special Projects  
Marie Rosenthal, Interim Monitoring Officer  
Councillor John Cotton, Leader of the Labour Party  
Councillor Roger Harmer, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party  
Lyuba Donskaya, Chief of Staff  
Elizabeth Thomas, Chief of Staff

## Apologies

Councillor Robert Alden, Leader of the Conservative Party  
Councillor Sharon Thompson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party  
Max Caller, Lead Commissioner  
Tom Smith, Chief of Staff

## 1 Welcome & Introductions

1.1 John Coughlan introduced the meeting and welcomed attendees.

## 2 Previous Minutes

2.1 Board members agreed the minutes from the last meeting.  
2.2 Councillor Roger Harmer confirmed that the previous minutes spelt his name wrong but otherwise agreed with the minutes.

## 3 Stabilisation Plan

3.1 Marie Rosenthal updated the board that the Council are three months into the six-month Stabilisation Plan with twelve major activities in train currently. The responsible Officers for each activity are currently providing monthly updates.. Within these monthly updates, progress is tracked and challenged. Currently: two activities are completed; six activities are at risk from being delayed and one activity is reported as “off track”. The “off track” activity is the Corporate Plan. The new timeline suggests this will not be delivered by June 2024 as planned, but instead October 2024. As such, new milestones have been developed for the new timetable. Activities may lack corporate objectives until the Corporate Plan is developed.

## The Commissioners:

Max Caller CBE, John Coughlan CBE, Chris Tambini, Pam Parkes FCIPD, Jackie Belton, Myron Hrycyk, Lord John Hutton, John Biggs.

- 3.2 Jackie Belton queried whether the Stabilisation Plan is being monitored by CPMO activity. Amerdip Kaur confirmed that the Stabilisation Plan predates the Improvement and Recovery Plan and that the Improvement and Recovery Plan focuses on the long-term stabilisation of the Council and as such the Stabilisation Plan is not being monitored by CPMO activity. Eventually the Corporate Plan will be monitored by CPMO.
- 3.3 Councillor Roger Harmer asked for the reason why this activity has fallen behind the timetable. John Coughlan confirmed that while the Improvement and Recovery Plan is being implemented, it is enough that current corporate priorities have been set out in the Improvement and Recovery Plan.
- 3.4 **ACTION: A statement of clarity surrounding the Corporate Plan and its timetable would be helpful to the board and Officers.**
- 3.5 It was noted that Audit Committee did not meet in March, and this has had an impact on the rollout of training around the Stabilisation Plan.
- 3.6 Fiona Greenway will write a letter to the Extended Corporate Management Team and Audit Committee to highlight that this training is mandatory for all members.
- 3.7 John Biggs highlighted that the Council need a new Chair of Audit Committee with proper induction and training.
- 3.8 Sue Harrison advised that there needs to be a Communications strategy in order to mature the set of actions within the Improvement and Recovery Plan.

#### **4 Members Survey Findings**

- 4.1 Ed Hammond helped to launch this survey which went live on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024. 55% of members participated and responses have been collated. One major area of improvement that was highlighted was surrounding public messaging and there were five key themes in the survey. 35% of Councillors believe the Council have had a negative impact on their overall wellbeing. Graeme Betts notes that further work needs to be done to manage citizen expectations, so they respond differently to their Councillors. More training is needed so Councillors can champion the resident's views whilst not undermining Officers. It was also suggested that thought should be given to ways in which members can in turn receive feedback from officers. Further surveys will be done in due course to further engage Councillors.

#### **5 Member Officer Protocol**

- 5.1 Ed Hammond has been redesigning the member officer protocol with the Constitution Working Group. Standards Committee will assess this changed protocol in six months to monitor improvement. The draft Protocol has been shared with members of the Governance Board and the Extended Corporate Management Team for feedback.
- 5.2 **ACTION: Corporate Leadership Team advising to have the opportunity to offer feedback on the redesigned protocol.**

#### **6 Improvement and Recovery Plan Governance Programme**

- 6.1 There are three aims:
- A well-run Council
  - A financially sustainable Council
  - Delivery of good services.
- 6.2 The aim of the programme is to improve Governance and the team have identified seven activities over the next two years which should help to improve Governance. John Biggs noted that it is important that this programme looks at officer conduct. There needs to be enforced sustainable behaviours which will revise the current Governance. Marie Rosenthal confirmed that her team are working on this programme and will present this at the next Governance Board meeting.

#### **7 AOB**

- 7.1 There is no other business.