

REPORT TO: **AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

MEETING DATE: **14th February 2023**

BY: **Chief Executive**

SUBJECT: **Council Improvement Plan 2021-2022 Update Report**

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the Council Improvement Plan 2021-2022 update report to the Audit & Governance Committee.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Audit & Governance Committee notes the progress in achieving the Council Improvement Plan 2021-2022 as detailed in the update report (Appendix 1).

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council Improvement Plan 2021-2022 was approved by Council in February 2021. The 16 actions in the Plan include seven actions carried forward from the 2018-2020 Plan and nine new actions identified in the 2020 Corporate Governance Self-Evaluation and the auditors' 2019/20 Annual Audit Report (October 2020).
- 3.2 The update report (Appendix 1) outlines progress that has been made in completing the actions in the Improvement Plan. The update report includes a new column – Outcome/ Objective – which shows how the action relates to the Council Plan themes and the objective.
- 3.3 The council remained in Business Continuity mode throughout 2021 and for most of 2022 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has necessitated focus on business critical activity and reduction in non-critical activity. This has meant that progress in completing some of the actions in the Improvement Plan have been delayed and consequently the deadline for completion of several actions has been extended.

3.4 Most of the actions in the Plan have been now been completed. However, several are ongoing and/ or will be carried forward into the next (2023-2024) Council Improvement Plan which will be presented for approval by Council in Spring 2023. The new Plan will include relevant outstanding actions from the Recovery and Renewal Plan that are now embedded within the new 2022-2027 Council Plan.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Council Improvement Plan assists the Council in demonstrating that it is achieving Best Value. It provides the necessary focus to improve key areas of the Council at a corporate level, thus aiding delivery of the Council Plan. Moreover, it supports the Council in its striving for continuous improvement, to continue improving the quality and delivery of its services and to meet Council Plan objectives.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – none.

6.2 Personnel – none directly, although certain actions within the Council improvement Plan are likely to require the commitment of staff resources.

6.3 Other – none.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1: Council Improvement Plan 2021-2022 Update Report (January 2023)

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DATE	31 st January 2023

Appendix 1: Council Improvement Plan 2021-2022 Update Report (January 2023)

Council Improvement Plan 2021 – 2022

Update April 2022

	ACTION	OUTCOME/ OBJECTIVE	LEAD OFFICER / DEADLINE	UPDATE
1	<p>Implement the Council Workforce Plan 2018-2022. The implementation plan has 48 actions within 7 work streams</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – sustain a skilled, flexible, high performing and motivated workforce; support and initiate transformational change; build and sustain leadership and management capacity.</p>	<p>SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>Over half of the actions in the plan have been completed and progress has been made on the remaining actions.</p> <p>A new 2023-2027 Workforce Plan was approved by Cabinet, 17th January 2023.</p>
2	<p>Continue to embed transformational change across the Council and ensure it delivers expected improvement and benefits within planned timeframes, prioritising projects that are most likely to lead to major change and significant benefits</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – deliver transformational change and harness the opportunities technology offers in the provision of services</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Completed/ Ongoing</p>	<p>Transformation principles are being embedded across all services. Key Transformation projects (including the On-line HR/ Payroll system and the On-line Customer Portal) have been or are being completed. Capacity has been created to support the delivery of major transformational change projects with significant benefits, including Assets Rationalisation, a new Housing Management System and other digital projects, Commercialisation, and Transforming Services for Children.</p> <p>A prioritisation matrix is used to inform decisions about which projects will be supported.</p>

3	<p>Continue to focus on improving education performance for all children and young people in East Lothian</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Growing our People – reduce the poverty-related attainment gap and raise the attainment and achievement of our children and young people</p>	<p>Head of Education</p> <p>Completed/ Ongoing</p>	<p>The council has adopted the Education Service Progress and Improvement Plan. All schools continue to have a priority relating to raising attainment and achievement in their School Improvement Plans. This, along with progress towards meeting our stretch aims is the focus of termly Associated Schools Group Meetings and Quality Improvement Officer visits.</p>
4	<p>In order to ensure the council continues to have relevant governance policies, guidance, regulations and internal controls that are reviewed and kept up-to-date, a register of such documentation will be prepared and reviewed annually</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – meet the council’s commitment to the principles of openness, accountability and transparency</p>	<p>SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships / SM People & Governance</p> <p>Carried forward into 2023/24 Plan</p>	<p>This project was been on hold as this area of work is not deemed critical within Business Continuity Plans.</p> <p>This piece of work has not yet started but will be scheduled for 2023 and therefore will be carried forward in to the next Council Improvement Plan</p>
5	<p>Establish formal mechanism for evaluating partnership working and the effectiveness of partnerships based on an agreed partnership self-evaluation framework</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – review of the governance arrangements of the East Lothian Partnership</p>	<p>SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships</p> <p>Carried forward into 2023/24 Plan</p>	<p>The East Lothian Partnership was to undertake a self-evaluation exercise drawing on frameworks developed by Audit Scotland, the Improvement Service and EFQM in Spring 2020. This project was put on hold as this area of work is not deemed critical within Business Continuity Plans.</p> <p>This piece of work has not yet started and is now scheduled to be undertaken in Spring 2023 and therefore will be carried forward in to the next Council Improvement Plan</p>
6	<p>The council will explore the development of a Community Charter in partnership with civic society and the</p>	<p>Growing our Communities – extend community engagement and decision making and increase</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>Work commenced on developing the Community Charter but was delayed in order to reflect the development of the Climate Change Charter following the adoption of the Climate Change</p>

	<p>communities and citizens of East Lothian</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation</p>	<p>community and individual resilience</p>	<p>Strategy. Work was then put on hold as this area of work is not deemed critical within Business Continuity Plans.</p> <p>The Community Charter has not been included in the 2022-2027 Council Plan. However, the Plan does include a strong commitment to community empowerment and partnership working with 'civic society'.</p> <p><i>'The Plan builds on the collaborative effort of our staff, partners and communities in responding to COVID: enabling and empowering citizens and communities to be more resilient; being a more enterprising authority in order to be more effective and efficient; harnessing the power of digital to deliver services for the benefit of our customers. Given the scale of the challenges faced by East Lothian, the Council has to look to how it can further harness the power of its citizens and communities. Central to this approach is the Council moving away from doing things for, and to, communities and individuals, to the Council and the communities and citizens of East Lothian working together to identify and then meet our needs in partnership and co-operation.'</i></p> <p>The delivery of this commitment will be monitored as part of the reporting on progress with implementing the 2022-2027 Council Plan.</p>
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7	<p>The Council will ensure it meets any additional requirements to further develop community participation in decision-making arising from the Local Governance Review</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Growing our Communities – extend community engagement and decision making and increase community and individual resilience</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Carried forward into 2023/24 Plan</p>	<p>Work on the Local Governance Review was interrupted by the public sector response to Covid-19 and was further postponed as a result of Scottish Government and COSLA resources being redeployed to deal with the Ukraine humanitarian response. Although dialogue recommenced at the end of 2022 and the Scottish Government plans to launch the next round of the ‘Democracy Matters’ conversations to explore community empowerment and decision-making by the end of March 2023.</p> <p>The outcome of the Review and its implications will be reported to Council.</p>
8	<p>Continue to review reporting and monitoring of expenditure against budgets and recovery plans in order to deliver outcomes within agreed budgets</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – maintain the current rigorous approach to controlling expenditure, ensuring that that it continues to ‘live within its means’ by operating as efficiently as possible</p>	<p>Head of Finance</p> <p>Completed/Ongoing</p>	<p>Quarterly financial monitoring reports to the council provide updates on expenditure against budgets and any recovery plans that may be required to ensure the council delivers outcomes within agreed budgets.</p>
9	<p>The roll out and adoption of the Staff Charter will be monitored and the Charter will be reviewed</p> <p>Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – sustain a skilled, flexible, high performing and motivated workforce</p>	<p>SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>The Staff Charter was adopted in 2019 and has been promoted on the Intranet.</p> <p>The Charter is being updated and will be re-issued following the adoption of 2023-2027 Workforce Plan.</p>
10	<p>The Council should review how the Improvement to Excellence framework and new Council Plan performance reporting is operating</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – meet the council’s commitment to the principles of openness,</p>	<p>SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>A new reporting framework has been developed to report on progress with the 2022-2027 Council Plan Action Plan. A new suite of Top 50 Council Plan Indicators is being developed and will be presented to Council for approval in February 2023. The</p>

	Source: 2018-20 Improvement Plan and 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation	accountability and transparency		Council is adopting the Improvement Service's Public Sector Improvement Framework as its self-evaluation tool. The Improvement to Excellence Framework is being updated to take account of these developments
11	It is important the council ensures its performance reports are improved to that it is easier for elected members and the public to evaluate performance across equalities Source: 2019/20 Annual Audit Report	Growing our Capacity – meet the council's commitment to the principles of openness, accountability and transparency	SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships Completed	The Equality Plan 2021-2025 was approved by Council in October 2021. A new suite of Poverty and Equality indicators has been developed to monitor progress with implementing the Equality Plan and Poverty Plan objectives and actions.
12	The council's reporting and monitoring against its improvement plan could be further improved to update members on what has been achieved through its improvement actions Source: 2019/20 Annual Audit Report	Growing our Capacity – meet the council's commitment to the principles of openness, accountability and transparency	SM Policy Improvement & Partnerships Completed	The update report includes a new column – Outcome/ Objective – which shows how each action relates to the Council Plan themes and objectives. The next Council Improvement Plan will include more detail on the objective of each action and how progress/ achievement will be measured.
13	Refresher training on the Code of Conduct will be provided to elected members in 2020/21 Source: 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation	Growing our Capacity – ensure elected members meet the personal values and principles of public service as set out in the Councillors Code of Practice	SM People & Governance Completed	The 2022 elected members' induction programme included a session on the Code of Conduct.
14	Undertake a review of the arrangements for dealing council business arrangements when the	Growing our Capacity – meet the council's commitment to the principles of openness,	Head of Corporate Resources	Arrangements for dealing council business were reviewed along with Business Continuity arrangements following the COVID pandemic.

	<p>council's Business Continuity Plan has been invoked</p> <p>Source: 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation</p>	<p>accountability and transparency</p>	<p>Completed</p>	
15	<p>Monitor the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan</p> <p>Source: 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation</p>	<p>Growing our Communities – tackle the climate emergency and reach net zero by 2045</p>	<p>Head of Development</p> <p>Completed/ Ongoing</p>	<p>Implementation of the Climate Change Strategy Action Plan is being carried out by the Climate Change Planning Group and reported to Council annually.</p>
16	<p>Review and take action to minimise any negative impact of the COVID19 emergency on the council's revenue and capital budgets</p> <p>Source: 2020 Corporate Governance Self-evaluation</p>	<p>Growing our Capacity – maintain the current rigorous approach to controlling expenditure, ensuring that that it continues to 'live within its means' by operating as efficiently as possible</p>	<p>Head of Finance</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>Quarterly financial monitoring reports to the council have provided updates on expenditure against budgets and on the impact of the COVID-19 response on the council budget. The Council's Financial Strategy and revenue and capital budgets take account of, and try to minimise, any negative impacts of the COVID-19 emergency.</p>