Auditor Recommendations Management Action Update Template

Auditor's Annual Report 2024/25

Recommendations and management actions from pages 60 to 75

Purpose

This document has been used to obtain and record the latest position against each of the management actions previously proposed in response to the recommendations resulting from Grant Thornton's 2024/25 Value For Money review. Where possible and relevant, updates should state what has been completed, what remains outstanding, any revised timetable, supporting evidence and any issues requiring escalation.

Reporting date	October 2026
Prepared by	Shaun Allen
Report / committee	Audit & Risk Management Committee / 27 October 2026

Contents

Overall Assurance Position 3
SR1 | Statutory recommendation – Financial Sustainability Risks 4
SR2 | Statutory recommendation – Change Programme 11
SR3 | Statutory recommendation – Regeneration Programme Financial Risks 12
SR4 | Statutory recommendation – Officer / Member Relations 16
KR1 | Key recommendation – Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit 18
KR2 | Key recommendation – Council Plan 21
KR3 | Key recommendation – Business Cases for Regeneration Projects 22
KR4 | Key recommendation 4 – Senior Leadership 25
KR5 | Key recommendation – Recruitment of Senior Staff 27
KR6 | Key recommendation – Local Area SEND Partnership Board 29
KR7 | Key recommendation – Review of Regeneration Report 32
KR8 | Key recommendation – Single Project Management Office 33
KR9 | Key recommendation – Regeneration Projects and Procurement Rules 34
KR10 | Key recommendation – Procurement and Contract Management 36
IR1 | Improvement recommendation – Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority 40

Overall Assurance Position

Substantial progress has been made in implementing the management actions arising from the Auditor's Annual Report. A number of actions have been completed and embedded, while others remain in progress, including actions where revised delivery dates have been set out.

A Green status indicates that the specific management action has been completed or is progressing as planned where the action is ongoing. It does not necessarily indicate that the underlying financial, governance or operational risk has been fully eliminated. Where significant residual risks remain, these are identified within the individual updates and continue to be managed through the Council's established governance arrangements.

Particular areas requiring continued management attention include financial pressures within Adult Social Care, delivery of savings and transformation activity, completion of the regeneration and capital assurance arrangements, and implementation of strengthened procurement and contract management arrangements.

SR1 | Statutory recommendation – Financial Sustainability Risks

Financial sustainability | Source page 60-62

Recommendation

We recommend the Council takes immediate and effective action to manage the financial sustainability risks it is facing and this should include:

•Developing and implementing effective mitigations to support adult social care delivering to the approved budget.

•Exploring opportunities to accelerate existing plans to build back reserves to a more sustainable level.

•Identify additional savings plans at pace to help bridge budget gaps identified in the MTFS 2025/26-2029/30.

•An assessment of planned improvements in the budget setting and monitoring process to ensure they are indeed appropriate. The Council should specifically introduce enhanced arrangements to support effective demand modelling within adult social care whilst ensuring this directorate is sufficiently supported and enabled to provide accurate budget forecasts as part of the Council's budget monitoring process.

•Review the affordability of future borrowing commitments identified in the Council's Capital Programme.

•Review existing arrangements for local taxation collection to ensure they are optimal.

•Enhancing existing arrangements for managing key financial risks.

•Ensuring that member oversight of the Council's action to address its financial challenges is optimal and reflects the significance of the situation.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1.1 **Adult Social Care (ASC) delivery to budget** Implement an ASC Financial Improvement Plan which will include: defined governance structure, high-cost package reviews, approach to market management, continuing public health and healthcare interface controls, demand management plans and a clear commissioning savings pipeline (with cashable savings tracked monthly). **Responsible officer:** Director of Adults, Health, and Strategic Commissioning / and Finance Working Group **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** The management actions associated with action 1.1 have been implemented and embedded within the Directorate's financial management and governance arrangements. Financial oversight is maintained through three-weekly financial monitoring meetings, Directorate Management Team Budget and Performance reviews, monthly budget challenge sessions with the Director of Finance, bi-monthly meetings between the Director of Finance and the Director of Adult Social Care, monthly reporting to Committee, and weekly briefings to the Chair of the Adult Social Care and Public Health Committee. Monthly outturn forecasts to year-end, savings delivery, mitigating actions and emerging risks are routinely reviewed and challenged through these governance arrangements. Further work has also been undertaken with the Executive Director for People to consolidate the Directorate's controls, mitigations and assurance arrangements into a single overarching framework document, whilst recognising that the underlying controls and governance processes are already operating and embedded. The department is on track to deliver its approved savings plan for 2026/27 and has plans in place for cost control and review. There is good tracking through commissioning. Delivery of savings and mitigating actions is tracked regularly through established governance processes. In addition, an Adult Social Care Financial Recovery and Modernisation Plan is being developed, supported by a Financial Controls and Assurance Plan to strengthen oversight, support financial sustainability and identify further opportunities for improvement and transformation. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Action complete (oversight continues however) / Green **Next steps / issues:** Despite the implementation of the agreed actions and delivery of planned savings (hence Green RAG status), Adult Social Care continues to experience significant demand-led financial pressures. The current forecast (prior to formal Q2 monitoring) indicates a potential net overspend of £5.3m after mitigation, which is equal to 3% of budget (for comparison purposes, North-West councils are reporting an average forecast overspend of 2.2% with the largest adverse position presented being 10.2% at one particular Council) with underlying gross demand pressures significantly higher. The principal drivers of this pressure continue to be increased numbers of people requiring care and support for the first time, rising complexity and acuity of existing care packages, and sustained hospital discharge activity generating additional demand for community-based care. The Directorate will continue to implement and strengthen recovery, assurance and transformation plans, including high-cost package reviews, commissioning activity, demand management initiatives and preventative approaches delivered in partnership with the NHS. Progress will continue to be monitored through established governance arrangements and reported regularly to Members. A continuing risk remains in relation to the timeliness of Continuing Healthcare assessments and funding decisions by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB, which can impact the Council's ability to secure appropriate funding contributions.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1.2 **Adult Social Care (ASC) delivery to budget** Regular directorate deep-dives to review financial early warning triggers and facilitate the formulation and tracking of agreed corrective actions. **Responsible officer:** Director of Adults, Health, and Strategic Commissioning / and Finance Working Group **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** The management action has been implemented through the governance arrangements established under recommendation 1.1. Regular deep-dive reviews are undertaken to assess emerging financial pressures, evaluate mitigating actions and support timely decision-making. These arrangements provide ongoing oversight of expenditure, demand management activity, commissioning actions and savings delivery. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Action complete (oversight continues however) / Green **Next steps / issues:** Whilst governance and monitoring arrangements are operating effectively, the Directorate continues to face significant pressures arising from increasing demand, greater complexity of care needs and sustained hospital discharge activity. These factors continue to place pressure on expenditure despite the delivery of savings and mitigating actions. Further work is ongoing through the Adult Social Care Financial Recovery and Modernisation Plan and associated Financial Controls and Assurance Plan to identify additional opportunities for cost control, service improvement, demand management and long-term financial sustainability. This includes continued review of high-cost care packages, and demand-led costs as outlined in 2.1 below. A continuing risk remains in relation to delays in Continuing Healthcare assessments and funding approvals, together with sustained hospital discharge pressures, both of which contribute to ongoing financial pressures within Adult Social Care. The Directorate are also working with the NHS under the neighbourhood health model to try and target the top 1% of the population who are at risk of falling into crisis through hospital admission. By having targeted multi-agency plans we hope to prevent, reduce, or delay admission into hospital and the care system.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 2.1 **Reserve Recovery** Supported through demand management, particularly in Adult Social Care, and tighter in-year control should forecasts deteriorate. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery	**Latest position:** The quarter 1 monitoring report presented to P&R on 22 July 2026 identified a forecast £4.8m adverse variance in Adult Care & Health, which is expected to increase in quarter two, and Children, Families & Education are also predicting an adverse variance in advance of formal quarter 2 reporting. Existing controls are being intensified with immediate attention on demand-led costs. Demand and activity oversight has increased in ASC, with regular reviews of new clients, length of stays, service starters and leavers, and the associated financial impacts. High-cost care packages are being reviewed across all social care, and cost and care assumptions are being challenged. A consistent operational checklist for funding and placement decisions it to be implemented and the priority is to contain demand-led growth while protecting appropriate care outcomes. Council-wide spend and recruitment controls remain in place, with additional establishment staffing scrutiny via the Executive Leadership team in order to mitigate forecast overspends emanating from demand where possible. **Revised due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery **Status / RAG:** Ongoing as per plan / Amber **Next steps / issues:** As set out on page 61 of the Auditor's Annual Report, it is recognised that strengthening reserves is an important component of financial sustainability and resilience, particularly given the volatility in demand-led services and the wider economic climate. It therefore remains a commitment to achieve a general fund balance equivalent to 5% of the Council's net budget in the medium term. However, the Council's position is clear in that reserves cannot be rebuilt by aspiration alone: reserves can only be increased sustainably by achieving and maintaining in-year financial balance and delivering recurring savings. In the current local government context, characterised by continuing real-terms funding constraint, rising and increasingly complex demand for services, with limited scope for rapid, painless cost reductions, attempting to increase reserves in an accelerated manner without a credible and deliverable route risks either setting an undeliverable plan or driving short-term actions that are not sustainable and could undermine statutory responsibilities. It is in this context that the management actions were agreed.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 2.2 **Reserve Recovery** Accelerating the development of a robust, costed and deliverable savings pipeline aligned to the MTFP gap. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery	**Latest position:** Savings proposals are currently being developed for 2027/28 and beyond as part of the 2027/28 budget setting process. See action 3.1 below for details. Operational efficiencies are tracked through a revised budget monitoring report. As part of savings identification, a rapid, high-level, piece of work is underway to review staffing across the organisation, the aim being to identify meaningful and recurring deliverable staffing reductions by giving consideration to which activities can be stopped, reduced, changed, transferred or be automated. **Revised due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery **Status / RAG:** Ongoing as per plan / Amber **Next steps / issues:** See action 3.1 below for details.
Action 2.3 **Reserve Recovery** Reviewing the affordability and phasing of future borrowing commitments within the capital programme, with new dedicated resource to enhance oversight of capital programme delivery. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery	**Latest position:** A new Director of Capital Programmes post has been created as part of the SLT restructure, and an interim appointment made. The postholder has oversight of the delivery of the Capital Programme. A review has been undertaken to establish a clear baseline of approved schemes, committed expenditure, funding sources, future borrowing and associated revenue costs. Affordability and delivery risks, particularly for borrowing-funded schemes, are assessed to identify projects that should proceed, be reviewed, paused or re-profiled. See Statutory Recommendation 3 below for further update. **Revised due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery **Status / RAG:** Ongoing as per plan / Amber **Next steps / issues:** Project ongoing as above, see Statutory Recommendation 3 below for full details.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 2.4 **Reserve Recovery** Reviewing the effectiveness of local taxation collection arrangements (inclusive of a restructured Revenues and Benefits service) to protect the revenue position and reduce exposure to financing and collection risks. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery	**Latest position:** A new staffing structure for Revenues and Benefits was introduced in August 2026 and is currently being implemented Alongside this and building on the work undertaken to produce a revised Corporate Debt Policy (approved by Policy & Resources Committee in March 2026), work is progressing on the development of a corporate debt management framework to create a consistent, Council-wide approach to debt recovery across all debt types. The initial focus is on Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates, with the aim of improving collection rates and reducing aged debt. The project includes a review of key areas of local taxation collection and performance, including credit management, new property inspection and completion processes, write-off procedures, aged debt recovery, and enforcement activity. **Revised due date:** Ongoing via MTFP delivery **Status / RAG:** Ongoing as per plan / Green **Next steps / issues:** Project ongoing as above with MTFP impacts to be determined during Q3. Staff recruitment underway.
Action 3.1 **Delivering additional savings at pace** Costed, deliverable savings plans across the MTFS time-frame to be produced with accompanying business cases, defined action owners and implementation timelines that will be tracked by Service/P&R Committees. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance to set approach & SLT members to produce proposals **Original due date:** September each year	**Latest position:** Savings proposals are currently being developed as part of the 2027/28 budget-setting process. A revised savings template has been introduced, requiring each proposal to be supported by a business case, clearly defined actions, identified responsible officers and milestone delivery timelines. Progress against approved savings proposals will be reported to Finance Working Group, Policy and Resources Committee and the relevant Service Committees through the ongoing budget monitoring process. As part of savings identification, a rapid, high-level, piece of work is underway to review staffing across the organisation, the aim being to identify meaningful and recurring deliverable staffing reductions by giving consideration to which activities can be stopped, reduced, changed, transferred or be automated. An approved savings tracker has also been incorporated within the revised quarterly budget monitoring reports presented to Policy and Resources Committee and Service Committees. The tracker provides enhanced oversight of savings delivery, including RAG-rated assessments of deliverability, progress against planned actions and details of any mitigation required where delivery risks are identified. **Revised due date:** October for consolidated first draft savings proposals **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber **Next steps / issues:** Financial modelling to be completed to inform consolidated first draft savings proposals. Staff reduction proposals to be considered by Executive Leadership Team.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 3.2 **Delivering additional savings at pace** Delivery of in-year efficiencies to be given visibility in budget monitoring reports to Service/P&R Committees to demonstrate progress. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance to set approach & SLT members to produce proposals **Original due date:** 2026/27 Q1 Report	**Latest position:** The quarterly budget monitoring report presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 22 July 2026 introduced a significantly revised reporting format designed to improve the clarity, accessibility and focus of financial information provided to Members. The revised approach seeks to provide a clearer understanding of the Council's overall financial position, key financial risks and the management actions being taken in response. The report adopts a by-exception approach, concentrating on the most significant forecast variances, delivery of budget savings, implementation of in-year mitigating actions, and issues requiring further management intervention or Member consideration. Key features include a financial dashboard, analysis of the principal drivers of the financial position, a summary of operational efficiencies and corrective actions, together with graphical presentations of financial performance and RAG-rated savings delivery. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Continue to provide improved financial information to Members in quarterly monitoring reports, and Capital monitoring reports to be similarly refreshed (as per 4.1 below).
Action 4.1 **Budget setting & monitoring improvements** Continue with the planned enhancements already underway (finance system/EPM maturity and revising the approach to capital monitoring, regular financial dashboards to facilitate management insight and reaction) and: budget phasing, forecast confidence scoring/RAG rating, benefits tracking, and clearer escalation routes for forecast deterioration with financial management a component of performance management/review. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** 2026/27 Q1 Report	**Latest position:** Per 3.2 above, the quarterly budget monitoring reports to P&R and Service Committees have been refreshed to enhance focus on material aspects relevant to Committee and include forecast confidence scoring and RAG rating of savings delivery. Revenue budget phasing is also now in place in EPM. Financial dashboard reporting delivered by Power BI reports. Responsibility for monitoring of Capital budgets has now transferred from service affiliated finance teams to the dedicated corporate finance team to allow more focused monitoring and consistent approach across the entire capital programme. EPM has been implemented for Capital, although this can be enhanced with profiled budgets. Project managers are utilising revised functionality and are able to view the actual spend to aid monitoring and forecasting. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** The work completed will be built upon to further enhance capital monitoring and reporting.

SR2 | Statutory recommendation – Change Programme

Financial sustainability | Source page 64

Recommendation
The Council must urgently mobilise its change programme to develop robust savings plans that will help deliver the significant savings required to balance the budget gaps identified in the MTFS. These plans should be supported by approved business cases that identify the resources required to deliver change programme savings and the baseline against which benefits will be measured.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 A new Target Operating Model to improve long-term sustainability of the Council will be developed. **Responsible officer:** Director of Transformation **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** The Council's new operating model was taken to Policy & Resources committee 22 July 2026 as an appendix to the new Council Plan (P&R 22 July 2026). Both documents are scheduled for approval by Council in October 2026. The Target Operating Model sets out an early intervention and locality model that connects a network of partners working at community level providing early support to mitigate increasing demand for higher cost, crisis interventions. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** These documents are scheduled to go to Council on 12 October 2026 for ratification.
Action 2 A refreshed transformation programme, including immediate savings with robust business cases and longer-term transformation, will be developed. **Responsible officer:** Director of Transformation **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** The draft refreshed transformation programme has been developed around a core of 4 key programmes with an additional suite of efficiency projects. This was presented to the Local Oversight and Assurance Board and Finance Working Group ahead of the original due date. Governance and regular reporting has been put in place. Financial modelling and benefit realization planning are being undertaken to validate the target savings from these activities. **Revised due date:** Original date met but October will see the next stage in process **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber **Next steps / issues:** A revised MTFP is being developed which aligns with the transformation programme and associated financial modelling.

SR3 | Statutory recommendation – Regeneration Programme Financial Risks

Financial sustainability | Source page 64

Recommendation
The Council should take immediate action to assess the financial risks and liabilities across its whole regeneration programme and ensure that they are properly taken into account in revenue, treasury management and capital plans. The regeneration programme should be reviewed to ensure that it is affordable, supports the Council's future financial sustainability and does not detract from the aim of working together to create a more efficient, effective and accessible Council.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 1. Whole-programme financial exposure assessment • Create a consolidated view of regeneration commitments and liabilities (reviewing aspects such as contract variations, borrowing impacts, contingencies, grant conditions / claw back, guarantees, impairments, revenue consequences), with scenario/sensitivity analysis. The outcomes from this review to inform revenue, treasury management and capital plans. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** 31/08/2026	**Latest position:** The regeneration capital portfolio comprises several programmes of work. One distinct programme of work being the 'Borough Yard' redevelopment. Due to the scale of that programme, the Council commissioned KPMG to carry out a Financial Assurance Review of the project earlier this year. A report is due to be taken to P&R in November regarding a decision to enter into the construction contract for the Borough Yard enabling works. Regarding the remaining programmes, the first phase of the review consisted of a programme level health check of regeneration portfolio. Through this first review phase, a log of the individual projects that fall under each programme was recorded and in order to fully appraise the status of the regeneration portfolio, a granular review (at individual project level) was agreed. A summary of the regeneration portfolio and its associated approved budget (per the approved capital programme Q1 2026/27) is shown below:

Regeneration Portfolio within Approved Capital Programme	
Regeneration Programmes/Schemes	15
Total Approved Budget in Capital Programme (Q1) £'m	92
Of which Funded via Grants (£'m)	64
Of which Funded via Borrowing (£'m)	28
Total Approved Funding (£'m)	92
No. of Programmes Covered in Review	9
Total Approved Budget of those Programmes (Q1) £'m	87
Of which Funded via Grants (£'m)	63
Of which Funded via Borrowing (£'m)	24
Total Approved Funding (£'m)	87
Proportion of Approved Budget Covered	95%

*Note – the remaining items within the regeneration portfolio not included within this review are individual schemes as opposed to programmes, with smaller associated budgets. Included within these remaining items are internal funding budgets available to supplement the regeneration portfolio as a whole (total £3m)

Management action	Latest progress / update
	The project level review has been undertaken by a working group of the Interim Director of Capital Programmes and Assets, the Head of Corporate Office, and officers from Finance and the Project Management Office. This itemised analysis covered funding liabilities and commitments, clarifying funding split between grant and Council borrowing and reviewing levels of contingency within the funding. The presumption of the review is that borrowing should be avoided wherever reasonably possible and otherwise kept to the minimum necessary. Each scheme is therefore being challenged on the need, timing and scale of borrowing, with alternatives considered before any borrowing requirement is accepted. This challenge process has been undertaken with the acknowledgement that there is the potential for abortive costs negatively impacting on the Council's revenue position. Where grant funding is present, what are the associated conditions and deadlines – do the projects align to these and is there any risk of grant clawback to be addressed, for example, although the Local Regeneration Fund (LRF) has a utilisation deadline of March 2028, some projects may complete after this date where they are supported by match funding or other funding sources that are not subject to the same deadline. In these cases, LRF funding would be utilised on eligible expenditure incurred before March 2028, with any remaining costs funded from alternative sources, allowing overall project completion to be achieved after the March 2028 deadline. Should any schemes be withdrawn, the implications of any abortive cost charges to revenue to be clearly reported to chief officers and Members. The review did not reveal required action in this respect. The LRF funding, its allocations and status are reported to the 'Economic, Regeneration & Housing' Committee with the next update scheduled for December 2026. The output from that meeting will then be reported to the 'Policy & Resources' committee as part of the next quarterly capital report in February 2027. **Revised due date:** 30/11/2026 (once Borough Yard has been to P&R) **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber (in recognition of ongoing Borough Yard review) **Next steps / issues:** Moving forward, the now established working group will continue to appraise the programme status as standard practice, and report into the Capital Programme Delivery Board.
Action 2 2. Affordability and prioritisation • Undertake an affordability gateway review for each major scheme before further commitment with the aim of pausing/resetting/reprofiling schemes where affordability and capacity are not proven. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** 30/06/2026	**Latest position:** As part of the review carried out and described in Management Action 1, this detailed project-level assessment reviewed each scheme and categorised projects as Continue, Pause, Reset or Reprofile, providing a clearer understanding of programme priorities, risks and delivery challenges within the context of the Council's financial circumstance providing a clear steer. Council borrowing should be minimised wherever possible. Any confirmed reductions in borrowing can then be reflected in treasury management and revenue planning. Per above (Action 1), the 9 regeneration programmes covered by the review have £24m of Council approved borrowing in the capital programme. These programmes have had a total of £12m of borrowing already used to finance activity (to 2025/26) with a further £2m being financed to Q2 2026/27. The most notable areas of

Management action	Latest progress / update

borrowing incurred to date and current borrowing approved in the programme are summarised below:

Regeneration Programme/Scheme:	Borrowing applied to 2025/26 £'m	Future Borrowing £'m
Birkenhead Town Centre		
Substation	3.3	1.2
Birkenhead Waterfront		
Waterfront Infrastructure and Argyle Street		1.8
Borough Yard	3.6	6.5
Central Birkenhead		
Charing Cross/Grange Road/Conway St/Europa Blvd	4.5	3.4
Office Quarter Building Fit-Out (Cat B)		6.3
Liscard Town Centre		1.4
Total	**11.4**	**20.6**

The internal affordability review of the regeneration programmes has been completed, excluding Borough Yard, which is subject to a separately commissioned external review by KPMG. The revised due date allows the remaining Borough Yard work to be completed and reported to Members.

The review produced clear outcomes, including the reprofiling of the following schemes:

- The three elements of the market provision project in Birkenhead
- Birkenhead Waterfront Infrastructure
- Birkenhead Priory
- Community Hub in Liscard Town Centre

The review also identified the following schemes to be paused:

- Development at the former House of Fraser site
- Price Street
- Dock Branch Infrastructure
- Egerton Village

These categorisations enable the Council to reprofile resources appropriately and seek clarity on funding before further progression.

The review confirmed that the following schemes have been completed or are close to completion:

- Woodside Ferry Pontoon
- Egerton House
- Argyle St Creative Hub
- Charing Cross/Grange Rd
- Conway St/Europa Boulevard
- Startyard

The review confirmed that the following schemes are to proceed as planned:

- Substation in Birkenhead
- International Battle of the Atlantic
- Education Engagement Network
- Future Yard
- Joy
- Liscard Town Centre Works (various elements)
- New Ferry works (housing redevelopment, highways and environmental works)

Management action	Latest progress / update
	In respect of the external review of the ‘Borough Yard’ programme, because the Council has elected to pay more upfront to transfer additional risks to Sisk and achieve greater cost certainty, this has helped mitigate cost risk to a limited extent. The KPMG review has presented the consideration that housing delivery remains subject to viability risk, with limited headroom to absorb adverse movements in construction costs, finance costs and sales values. While the Master Development Agreement largely transfers plot-level delivery risk and provides the Council with protection through phased drawdown and viability gateways, the Council remains exposed to the consequences of development delay or non-delivery, including reduced land receipts and delayed regeneration outcomes. **Revised due date:** 30/11/2026 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber (in recognition of Borough Yard review) **Next steps / issues:** The output resulting from the KPMG review of the Borough Yard programme will be included in a report to Members at the Policy & Resources Committee on 18 November 2026. This report will cover the review findings, recommendations and proposed actions regarding the delivery of the programme.

SR4 | Statutory recommendation – Officer / Member Relations

Governance | Source page 65

Recommendation

The Council should take immediate steps to re-build trust between officers and members and reinforce the effective operation of its Protocol for Member/Officer Relations. This should include:

- the active involvement of the Council's most senior political leaders and officers in reinforcing and modelling behaviours which reinforce integrity and build trust

- Introduction of a development programme which rebuilds and reinforces a culture of trust between members and officers and ensures a minimum standard of mandatory training is in place to ensure member and officer roles are understood and respected

- the inclusion of effective member/officer relationships as a priority in the Council's planning for future constitutional change.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 1. Senior leadership sponsorship and modelling • Member/Officer Relations Protocol reviewed to ensure it effectively sets clear expectations on behaviours, roles/boundaries, and how concerns are raised/resolved. • Joint statement from political leaders CEO and Monitoring Officer endorsing the Member/Officer Relations Protocol. **Responsible officer:** Monitoring Officer **Original due date:** 31/05/2026	**Latest position:** The Protocol For Member/Officer Relations has been revised and will be presented to the Constitution and Standards Committee for consideration and approval on 24 September 2026 (Committee Agenda 24 September 2026)) **Revised due date:** 24/09/2026 **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Following the endorsement at committee, a joint statement will then be produced and circulated and promoted through the organisation.
Action 2 2. Reset and reinforce the Protocol in day-to-day governance • Practical operating guidance that supports the Protocol in respect of matters such as officer/member engagement, decision-making, handling challenge, information governance and ensures it can be used consistently across all political groups and senior management. **Responsible officer:** Monitoring Officer **Original due date:** 31/05/2026	**Latest position:** Following Committee endorsement on 24 September 2026, the revised arrangements will be implemented. Code of Conduct training has been scheduled for November 2026 and will include a specific focus on the protocol to support consistent understanding and compliance. **Revised due date:** January 2026 and for new member induction May 2027 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber (as over original due date and reliant on future approval, although no issues anticipated) **Next steps / issues:** As above

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 3 3. Development programme and mandatory training minimum standard • Implement a mandatory development programme for all councillors and relevant senior managers **Responsible officer:** Monitoring Officer **Original due date:** 31/05/2026	**Latest position:** Political awareness training is being reintroduced through a programme of e-learning and face-to-face training sessions to strengthen understanding of governance arrangements and member/officer roles and responsibilities. **Revised due date:** January 2027 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber **Next steps / issues:** As above
Action 4 4. Embed as a priority within constitutional / governance change • Ensure the Council's governance/constitutional development plan explicitly includes strengthening member/officer relationships. **Responsible officer:** Monitoring Officer **Original due date:** 31/05/2026	**Latest position:** The protocol will be embedded within the new Member Induction arrangements and the Member Learning and Development Strategy 2027-2031 to support consistent awareness and application by Members. **Revised due date:** February 2027 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber **Next steps / issues:** To be agreed by Constitution and Standards Committee Feb 2027

KR1 | Key recommendation – Dedicated Schools Grant Deficit

Financial Sustainability | Source page 66

Recommendation

We recommend the Council places a significant organisational focus on:

• Continue interventions that will support the management and mitigation of the DSG deficit, including those progressed within the former Delivering Better Value programme. Whilst satisfying itself there is sufficient oversight and governance of these specific programmes relating to the control of DSG expenditure.

• Enhancing budget monitoring reports considered by the Policy and Resources Committee, so they include reference to the DSG deficit and associated treasury management and reserve implications.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 Refresh the DSG Management Plan. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** DSG Management Plan has been refreshed, updated and aligned to the submitted SEND Reform Plans. Management plan presented to Schools Forum High Needs Funding Group and party leaders in June 2026: Agenda for Wirral Early Years and Schools Forum on Tuesday, 16th June 2026, 5.00 p.m. | Wirral Council **Revised due date:** Next review subject to SEND Reform Plan monitoring and intent to align governance. Subject to half termly review by the Schools' Forum High Needs Funding Group **Status / RAG:** Complete (with ongoing review) / Green **Next steps / issues:** This activity largely overlaps and has been superseded by the DfE SEND Reform monitoring process. Review of reporting and governance will be undertaken in the Autumn of 2026 following Reform Plan approval in order to streamline and clarify priorities.
Action 2 Produce a DSG Workplan. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** The DSG workplan in contained within the governance tab of the DSG Management Plan. This is aligned to the SEND Reform Plans as submitted to DfE in June 2026 **Revised due date:** Workplan is subject to half termly review under the Terms of Reference of the Schools' Forum High Needs Funding Group. **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** This activity largely overlaps and has been superseded by the DfE SEND Reform monitoring process. Review of reporting and governance will be undertaken in the Autumn of 2026 following Reform Plan approval in order to streamline and clarify priorities.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 3 Establish a DSG Oversight Panel to monitor delivery of the workplan, reporting to Schools Forum and the Children, Young People and Education Committee. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** A standing sub-group of Wirral Schools' Forum was established in September 2025 to provide DSG oversight and monitor the delivery of the DSG management plan. **Revised due date:** TORs due to be revised in September 2026 to increase scrutiny and focus on High Needs Budget **Status / RAG:** Complete (with ongoing review) / Green **Next steps / issues:** Establish a standing link between the Schools Forum and Wirral's Local Area SEND Partnership in order to increase understanding and provide review of oversight and governance in light of the SEND reform plans
Action 4 DSG deficit reporting to be incorporated into budget monitoring reports for Policy & Resources Committee. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 30/09/2026	**Latest position:** The Quarter 1 monitoring report presented to Policy & Resources on 22 July 2026 included the headline figures for forecast DSG deficit, the forecast impact on Treasury Management costs, and narrative on the DSG deficit: P&R Q1 monitoring report, 22 July 2026 Deficit reporting processes are being developed subject to approval of SEND Reform plans and impact of any write down and DfE quarterly monitoring. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** The quarter 2 monitoring report being presented to the P&R meeting on 18 November 2026 will include an update on the forecast DSG deficit.

KR2 | Key recommendation – Council Plan

Financial Sustainability | Source page 67-68

Recommendation

We recommend the Council completes its review of the Council Plan 2023-2027, and the refreshed strategic ambitions are embedded across the Council. This will support the whole organisation to mobilise and respond to the acute financial challenges the Council faces.

Management action

Action 1

Transformation Director to initially focus on a refresh of the Council Plan and development of a Target Operating Model to inform the transformation strategy that will be integral to the MTFS.

A mid-point review of Council Plan delivery was reported to committees early in the 2025/26 financial year. Work to refresh the Council Plan was progressed with the new Council Leadership in summer 2025 but finalisation and approval of the refreshed Council Plan document was paused Autumn 2025 to focus management and leadership capacity on the Council's adverse in-year budget position and forecast gap in 2026/27.

The pause has also allowed time to review the outcome of the government's 3-year funding settlement in order to ensure that the new Council Plan can be aligned to and reflect the Council's financial realities and challenges.

In light of the funding settlement, a refreshed Council Plan will be brought forward during the final quarter of 2025/26 and presented for approval at the earliest possible opportunity.

The new plan will clearly articulate a refined set of priorities and target outcomes to ensure that Council resources are targeted to have the maximum impact and benefit for Wirral's communities. The plan will be supported by a performance management framework to monitor progress over time and provide accountability for a performance management culture, where any under-performance is identified quickly and corrective action put in place to turn this around.

1. New Council Plan to be published by 30 September 2026.

2. Engagement sessions will be set up with staff, to ensure everyone is contributing to financial challenges. Starting in Summer 2026 and completing December 2026.

Responsible officer: Director of Transformation

Original due date: 1. 30/09/2026 / 2. 31/12/2026

Latest progress / update

Latest position:

1. The new Wirral Plan: A New Chapter for Wirral 2027-31 was reported to Policy & Resources Committee in July 2026 and unanimously supported by all political groups and recommended to Full Council for approval. The Plan will be monitored using the new Local Outcome Framework which is published on the Council's website Wirral Outcomes Framework | wirral.gov.uk

2. Regular budget challenge sessions are being held with Directorate Management Teams in relation to in-year budget performance and future budget pressures and savings. Further challenge sessions have been introduced in relation to managing the workforce and reviewing Directorate established structures.

Revised due date:

n/a

Status / RAG:

Green

Next steps / issues:

The Council Plan is scheduled for approval by Council at its meeting in October and further challenge sessions to continue.

KR3 | Key recommendation – Business Cases for Regeneration Projects

Governance | Source page 68

Recommendation

The Council should adopt a robust approach to the development and approval of business cases for regeneration projects which:

• Ensures that a clear set of outcome and output expectations are identified. This should include outcomes about financial returns and the projected impact on Council Tax and/or business rates income. Where the Council intends to secure wider regeneration benefits these should be identified in advance in specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound terms.

• Ensures that funding bids are not made without sufficient project planning having been carried out. This should include professionally prepared and validated cost estimates, valuations and business plans which have been open to scrutiny, challenge and have senior management and member approval.

• Develops detailed income and cost projections which include sensitivity analysis and scenario planning so that potential risks are fully understood and the financial implications for the Council's revenue and capital budgets are considered; and uses an appropriate documented option appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of decisions.

• Ensures that any future borrowing implications for the Council include minimum revenue provision and include sensitivity analysis of the impact of potential changes in interest rates.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 The Council will implement a formal Gateway Review framework for all major capital projects and regeneration schemes. This will incorporate the stages set out in the recommendation to ensure effective project management. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** An established governance pathway was in place at the original due date for admitting projects to the Capital Programme. The process set out below included defined officer and Member review and approval stages, providing scrutiny of proposals and assurance that investment was limited to schemes of appropriate strategic importance. • The relevant service area was required to submit an outline business case for capital resources and obtain approval from the appropriate Departmental Management Team • Finance officers reviewed whether the proposed expenditure was suitable for capital financing, the funding and expenditure included in the bid, and the indicative revenue budget implications, including Minimum Revenue Provision and interest costs • The proposal was presented to the Change Advisory Board (CAB), a multidisciplinary panel of senior officers, for review and consideration of whether the project was appropriate • Where CAB recommended that a bid was appropriate, the business case was escalated to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) for approval or rejection • Where SLT determined that the project was a valid requirement, Member approval was sought in accordance with the Council Constitution, first through Policy & Resources Committee and then Full Council, before the project could be added to the Capital Programme To further strengthen governance, enhance oversight and decision-making arrangements for all major capital infrastructure projects and regeneration schemes, a revised project gateway process has been drafted. As part of this work, examples of good practice from other local authorities, including Manchester City Council, have been considered to inform the Wirral gateway framework. The framework is being led by the recently appointed Interim Director of Capital Programmes and Assets and the Head of the Project Management Office, who are working to ensure that the revised process aligns with the Council's emerging governance structures and provides

Management action	Latest progress / update
	clear approval, assurance and escalation routes throughout the project lifecycle. It has been agreed that the outcomes of the wider Regeneration Programme Review will be incorporated into the gateway framework to ensure that lessons learned, identified risks and best practice are embedded within future arrangements. The key enabling work is now in place to support implementation of this recommendation. The initial focus on SR3 has completed the regeneration review, with its outputs and findings informing the framework under this key recommendation. The new Director of Capital Programmes has also become established, alongside the restructure of senior officers across the Council, particularly within the Place area. The framework can now be appraised by senior officers ahead of its live launch, supporting a robust implementation and reflected in the revised implementation date. **Revised due date:** 31/10/2026 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Green **Next steps / issues:** The framework will provide a consistent approach to project initiation, approval, monitoring and review, supporting stronger governance and delivery across the capital programme. Recommendations in relation to proposed changes/way forward will be reported to SLT and then through appropriate programme and constitutional change control governance.
Action 2 It will include a comprehensive assessment of both the initial financial costs as well as the projected future financial implications of a project. This analysis will include a detailed analysis of the underlying assumptions and will be reported to the relevant committee as part of the decision-making process to ensure transparency. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** At the original due date, established controls were already in place to assess projects before their inclusion in the Capital Programme. As set out under Action 1 of KR3, proposals followed a defined governance pathway involving scrutiny and approval by both officers and Members. This process required the submission of a business case setting out the project's financial implications, followed by formal consideration through the approved route culminating in decisions by Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council. Schemes of particular significance were also reported to the relevant service committee, providing an additional level of Member oversight. The existing business case for projects seeking Council investment included the financial costs and wider financial implications of each proposal. As part of the assessment, the associated revenue impact on the treasury budget, including Minimum Revenue Provision and financing costs, was identified and considered before the business case progressed through the approval process. As part of the gateway framework, refreshed business case documents will include elements per the key recommendation, namely: • Clarity of outcome, output and SMART benefit expectations (financial and non-financial)

Management action	Latest progress / update
	• Appropriate project planning costs are included – which have been scrutinised • Procurement, Planning and Legal sign off • Scenario projections for costings, income forecasts • Clearly stated revenue and capital implications (to include interest rate sensitivity and capital repayment profiling) • Value for Money Future implications for revenue budgets e.g. maintenance costs, council tax generation, other potential income generation **Revised due date:** 31/10/2026 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Green **Next steps / issues:** Business Case documentation to be reviewed and approved by senior officers before live launch.

KR4 | Key recommendation 4 – Senior Leadership

Governance | Source page 69

Recommendation
The Council should ensure that it has sufficient professional capacity, capability and senior leadership available to ensure that its regeneration objectives can be met.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 The Council is in active discussions with the LCR Combined Authority around the inclusion of key regeneration areas within a Mayoral Development Corporation. This will aid in ensuring that the necessary skills, experience and capacity are in place to undertake the extremely challenging areas of regeneration within the Borough. **Responsible officer:** Chief Executive Officer **Original due date:** Ongoing	**Latest position:** The Combined Authority considered a report on the 25th September 2026 which agreed the proposed approach for establishing a consistent city region wide Mayoral Development Zone framework for prioritising, governing and delivering strategic regeneration areas. **Revised due date:** Ongoing **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Green **Next steps / issues:** Meetings with the LCR CA are progressing to define a potential zone within Wirral.
Action 2 A revised senior management structure will be implemented that will ensure the appropriate roles are in place to support the strategic aims of the Council. **Responsible officer:** Chief Executive Officer **Original due date:** Ongoing	**Latest position:** The revised senior management structure was approved by Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee on 23rd March 2026. The new structure establishes new Executive Director roles for Place and People, and Director of Capital Programmes and Assets and other new Director posts. This will ensure that the Council has sufficient, effective capability at a senior level to deliver the necessary change for the organisation. The Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee on 2nd September 2026 approved the establishment of the Director roles for Operations, Housing & Communities and Regeneration, Planning and Economic Development following a staff consultation process. An Executive Director of People has been appointed, and interim or permanent appointments have been made to various Director posts. However, recruitment for the Executive Director of Place role has to date been unsuccessful. **Revised due date:** Ongoing **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Green **Next steps / issues:** Recruitment to the Executive Director of Place post, and permanent Director recruitment is ongoing and will continue into 2027. The restructure of the senior management team within the People directorate is expected to take place January – March 2027.

KR5 | Key recommendation – Recruitment of Senior Staff

Governance | Source page 70-71

Recommendation

The Council must ensure that its arrangements for the recruitment of senior staff are lawful, compliant with the Constitution and reflect sector guidance. The Council's practice should include:

• A protocol to guide senior appointments to permanent and interim senior roles which is based on and affirms the duty to appoint on merit.

• The use of independent advisors to facilitate the recruitment process alongside the Council's Human Resources function to provide assurance about the objectivity and integrity of the process.

• A requirement for all members of a recruitment panel to be trained prior to taking part in any interview process, to declare any knowledge of any candidate involved in the process and, where there is a conflict of interest, to remove themselves from the process.

• The incorporation of technical assessments, other assessment exercises and input from stakeholder groups to inform and provide evidence to support recruitment decisions.

• The identification of clear criteria in advance of the recruitment process which a successful candidate is expected to meet, and documentation of the decision of the panel which sets out how the panel considers their chosen candidate meets the criteria.

• The preservation of all notes, scores and records of discussion of interview panel members to support feedback to candidates and to protect the Council in the event of legal challenge.

Management action

Action 1

A protocol for recruitment will be produced addressing the recommendation made; this will be presented to the relevant committee for adoption.

Currently, individual reports to the Senior Officer & Appointment Staffing Committee (SOAS) panel provide information to members on recruitment options available to them for each senior recruitment role. This information can be captured in a protocol and include reference to S7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Currently, use of independent advisers, is assessed and decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. The use of independent advisors can be included in the recruitment options provided to members as part of individual reports as above.

Currently members are briefed prior to each recruitment exercise and member training is available online. The SOAS agenda at each meeting, provides for members to make a declaration of interest as a matter of course.

Independent assessment can include paid for professionals to assess experience and/or technical skills. Independent assessment can also include inclusion of stakeholders from partner organisations. The protocol referenced above, can set out clearly the options available when recruiting and each recruitment process can have an officer recommendation as to what would be the recommended level of assessment for individual recruitment exercises.

Criteria is identified on the job description/person specification for the role. Interview questions are based on this criteria. Questions are scored and panel decision, including comments, is recorded on assessment sheets. This documentation will be extended to cover filtering and shortlisting stages of recruitment and not just apply to formal interview stages (March 2026).

Currently all records are kept for 6 months as per document retention policy. Unsuccessful candidates are provided with feedback after interviews. Feedback is also used to produce Learning & Development plans for successful candidates if necessary and as appropriate. Retention of documents will also be extended to filtering and shortlisting stages (March 2026).

Responsible officer: Director of Law and Corporate Services

Original due date: 31/05/2026

Latest progress / update

Latest position:

A new Senior Recruitment Protocol has been developed, which was presented to and approved by the Senior Officer Appointments & Staffing Sub- Committee on 23 March 2026: Agenda for Senior Officer Appointments and Staffing Sub-Committee on Monday, 23rd March 2026, 10.00 a.m. | Wirral Council

The new protocol systematically incorporates all audit findings and aligns with constitutional requirements and the Officer Employment Procedure Rules.

Revised due date:

n/a

Status / RAG:

Complete / Green

Next steps / issues:

n/a

KR6 | Key recommendation – Local Area SEND Partnership Board

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness | Source page 72

Recommendation

We recommend the Council, and it partners, through the activities of the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, take the following actions:

• Build on recent SEND improvement activity and push forward remaining priority actions to secure meaningful and sustainable SEND service improvement.

• Ensure compliance with DfE improvement notice requirements within set timescales.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 Complete a local area partnership Maturity Assessment. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** This has been completed as part of the SEND Reform Plans, which were submitted to Department for Education in June 2026. **Revised due date:** Six monthly reviews from are anticipated from October 2026, however this is dependent on whether this element of the reform plan is accepted in full by the DfE. **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Work on increasing partnership maturity to support SEND Reform plans will form part of the Local Area SEND Partnership's forward workplan subject to approval of the SEND Reform Plans.
Action 2 Produce and implement delivery of a SEND Reform Plan, as per direction of Department for Education. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** The SEND Reform plans were completed and submitted to DfE in June 2026. Subject to approval the reform plans will instruct the forward work plan and prioritization of activity of Wirral's Local Area SEND Partnership Board (LASPB). Implementation will be monitored by the LASPB and DfE with financial implications for the HNB monitored through Schools' Forum **Revised due date:** Action complete. Ongoing implementation subject to DfE approval **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** The forward plan of the LASPB will be revised upon approval by the DfE of the SEND Reform Plan.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 3 Refresh the Local Area SEND Partnership Board Risk Register. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** A risk register workshop was undertaken in April 2026 with the register updated and approved by LASPB. The risk register is revised bi-monthly and presented to LASPB for approval. **Revised due date:** Action complete with ongoing review. The next revision will be presented in November 2026. **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Ongoing monitoring of the risk register in line with direction from LASPB.
Action 4 Continue to deliver the Priority Action Plan through the Local Area SEND Partnership Board, with monthly oversight from Department for Education and NHS England. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** Monthly	**Latest position:** The Priority Action Plan (PAP) continues to be delivered through the LASPB governance with DfE and NHS-E present. The position statement and recommendations for prioritisation were approved by the LASPB in July 2026. While actions for delivery of PAP remain broadly on track, risk remains in terms of EHCP timeliness and ND waiting lists being behind intended trajectory, which is largely a result of demand pressures. **Revised due date:** n/a (ongoing) **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Amber **Next steps / issues:** The PAP is raised at monthly LASPB and risks and issues associated captured through partnership governance.
Action 5 Successful delivery of 6-monthly Stocktake Reviews related to Improvement Notice (March and September 2026). **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 31/03/2026 and 30/09/2026	**Latest position:** Stocktakes have been undertaken with largely positive feedback received on the rate of progress of the local area in delivering its priority actions. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Wirral is due a local area monitoring inspection from September 2026, which will inform future arrangements. The next Stocktake is due in March 2027, but this may be subject to change following any monitoring inspection.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 6 Deliver the SEND Intervention Fund workplan. **Responsible officer:** Director for Children, Families and Education **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** The SEND Intervention Workplan has been fully delivered with partners recruited, a SEND youth group established and present in the LASPB, and communication and marketing strategies and workplans in place. Parent engagement sessions and survey insight reporting into the LASPB in October 2026. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** As above, parent engagement sessions and survey insight reporting into the LASPB in October 2026.

KR7 | Key recommendation – Review of Regeneration Report

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness | Source page 72

Recommendation
The Council received an independent 'Review of Regeneration Report' in October 2025 which was commissioned in July 2025. The review identified "considerable failings" in the Council's approach to regeneration and set out 25 recommendations. The Council should now reflect on the key findings of the report and implement the recommendations at pace.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 The Council has already considered this report and agreed an action plan. This was approved by the Policy and Resources committee on the 17th December 2025. **Responsible officer:** Complete **Original due date:** Complete	**Latest position:** The Council has already considered this report and agreed an action plan. This was approved by the Policy and Resources committee on the 17th December 2025. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Completed - Green **Next steps / issues:** n/a

KR8 | Key recommendation – Single Project Management Office

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness | Source page 73

Recommendation
The Council should operate a single Programme Management Office and ensure that a consistent approach is applied to the management of all projects, including regeneration projects.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 The centralisation of the Regeneration PMO with the Corporate PMO is currently being worked up and will be implemented from April 2026. **Responsible officer:** Director of Transformation **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** The Regeneration PMO was centralised within the Corporate Programme Office from May 2026. A project health check has been completed and new gateway review process is in the process of being implemented for all capital schemes. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** The Regeneration PMO is being re-defined as a Capital Assurance Team that will be dedicated to supporting and assuring the Council's capital programmes and projects for the Director of Capital Programmes. This will ensure consistency across the capital portfolio including projects that emerge from the regeneration pipeline.

KR9 | Key recommendation – Regeneration Projects and Procurement Rules

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness | Source page 73

Recommendation
The Council must ensure that procurement activity to deliver regeneration projects is carried out in accordance with its procurement rules and that the risk of escalation of contract costs is minimised by fully completing design and specification work before letting contracts. Contract management arrangements should include prompt reporting to members of cost and budget variations over specified thresholds. Contract management responsibilities and change control processes should be clearly set out and adhered to.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 Gateway review framework to be implemented for major capital projects, including design sign-off, procurement readiness, and risk review. **Responsible officer:** Director of Finance **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** At the original due date, established controls were already in place to provide assurance before projects were admitted to the Capital Programme. The relevant service area was required to submit an outline business case and obtain Departmental Management Team approval. Finance officers reviewed capital eligibility, proposed funding and expenditure, and the indicative revenue implications, including Minimum Revenue Provision and interest costs. Proposals were then considered by the multidisciplinary Change Advisory Board (CAB), which provided senior officer scrutiny and determined whether they should be recommended to the Senior Leadership Team. Where supported by SLT, proposals progressed through the formal Member approval route, including Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council, before inclusion in the Capital Programme. The Council has reviewed practice in a number of local authorities and is in the process of implementing a gateway review process based on the Manchester City Council model. A health check of all regeneration programmes and projects has been undertaken to determine the recommended way forward as either: continue, pause, reset/reprofile. Any changes will be reported through appropriate governance with decisions taken at the required level. As per KR3, the gateway framework will cover all necessary aspects to ensure that, from the starting point of a business case, appropriate review, challenge and scrutiny is provided by key departments within the Council, including Legal Services, Planning and Procurement. Business cases will include fully appraised costs, such as professional fees and professional valuations, to ensure full awareness before approval. A Procurement Strategy will be developed to establish the agreed routes to market, whilst identifying and assessing key commercial, operational and procurement risks, together with any associated issues and mitigation measures. Where a scheme fails to demonstrate sufficient readiness, it will be paused, reset or reprofiled before procurement commences or any further financial commitment is made. **Revised due date:** 31/10/2026 **Status / RAG:** Ongoing / Green **Next steps / issues:** Recommendations in relation to proposed changes/way forward will be reported to SLT and then through appropriate programme and constitutional change control governance.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 2 Monthly Highlight Reports and Risk Escalation: PMO to produce monthly highlight reports, escalating key risks to SLT. Subsequent member reporting will follow highlighting cost increases and/or variations. **Responsible officer:** Director of Transformation **Original due date:** In place	**Latest position:** Monthly highlight reporting, issue and risk escalation is managed through the Regeneration Portfolio Board with exceptions and any escalated risks going to the Regeneration Oversight Group chaired by the Chief Executive. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Revised governance arrangements have been agreed by SLT that will see all capital programme/project reporting through a monthly Capital Programme Delivery Board that will report and escalate directly into SLT on a 5 weekly frequency. A workshop of the Council's Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee is scheduled for 2 November to review their requirements in relation to format and frequency of reporting products.
Action 3 Clear change control processes will be articulated and adhered to, with monitoring facilitated via above-mentioned highlight reports. **Responsible officer:** Director of Transformation **Original due date:** In place	**Latest position:** A change control form has been adopted and is accessible on the Council’s intranet page. This is used for change requests and are submitted to the Change Advisory Board and reported through to SLT. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** n/a

KR10 | Key recommendation – Procurement and Contract Management

Procurement and contract management Economy, efficiency and effectiveness | Source page 74

Recommendation

We recommend the Council further strengthens its procurement and contract management arrangements by:

• Adopting, with some urgency, a Procurement Strategy and Contract Management Framework to strengthen procurement arrangements and to help ensure contracts are being are managed effectively, efficiently, and in compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements, organisational responsibilities and requirements set out in the Council's CPRs.

• Developing and embedding contract management procedures, such as a risk based methodology, to increase corporate oversight and assurance that contracts are being appropriately managed.

• Cascade a comprehensive, and mandatory, training programme to all officers charged with procurement and contract management responsibilities to support the introduction of Procurement Strategy and Contract Management Framework.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 Produce a Procurement Strategy and Contract Management Framework with a clear operating model and roles across directorates. **Responsible officer:** Assistant Director - Procurement and Commercial Services **Original due date:** 31/10/2026	**Latest position:** The Procurement Strategy will address: Strategic Purpose of Procurement activity Governance and Compliance with specific focus on complying with the PA23 Procurement Act and the CPRs Market Engagement and approach Social Value and Community Benefits Contract Management and lifecycle approach Risk Management and Due Diligence Capability and Skills Development The Contract Management Framework will include the following themes: Governance and Contract Ownership Planning and Administration Relationship Management – using a risk-based approach Performance Management and KPIs Risk and Financial Management Exit Planning To provide assurance that procurement activity relating to major capital and regeneration projects (as well as other aspects of Council operations) complies with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, exceptions, waivers or instances of non-compliance are identified, escalated to senior management and reported through the appropriate governance arrangements to Audit and Risk Management Committee. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Amber (risk target date may not be achieved) **Next steps / issues:** Engagement session with Finance Working Group 6th October. Draft Contract Management Framework to be produced for circulation, review, input and sign off by Director of Finance/SLT by the end of October'26

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 2 Implement a risk-based contract assurance method using contract value and risk to classify contracts as Gold, Silver or Bronze, with routine compliance reporting. **Responsible officer:** Assistant Director - Procurement and Commercial Services **Original due date:** 31/10/2026	**Latest position:** Further to the above, the Contract Management Framework will include a risk-based approach to contract assurance utilising a gold, silver and bronze methodology to reflect the importance of live Contracts and the level of assurance required. **Revised due date:** 31 October 2026 **Status / RAG:** Amber (risk target date may not be achieved) **Next steps / issues:** Engagement session with Finance Working Group 6th October. Draft Contract Management Framework to be produced for circulation, review, input and sign off by Director of Finance/SLT by the end of October'26
Action 3 Make contract management training available to commissioners through the Council's FLO learning platform. **Responsible officer:** Assistant Director - Procurement and Commercial Services **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** The original planned completion date of April 2026 was not met. A phased approach was adopted with the Procurement Team undertaking training first to inform the subsequent approach. A list of Commissioners has been established, and the Government Commercial College Contract Management Training is being developed on the Flo system with the support of Organisational Development. This training will be mandated to all of the identified commissioners. **Revised due date:** 31/10/2026 **Status / RAG:** Amber (to reflect delayed implementation) **Next steps / issues:** As above, training to be rolled out on the Flo platform, and will be mandatory training for the identified commissioners.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 4 Consider contract management software options and identify the most suitable corporate solution. **Responsible officer:** Assistant Director - Procurement and Commercial Services **Original due date:** 30/04/2026	**Latest position:** Procurement arranged for a series of demonstrations of Contract Management Solutions within the Public Sector Arena to identify what could be a solution to meet the organisation's needs, DDAT were involved in the process. **Revised due date:** N/A **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Software options were identified and reviewed but were not considered to offer enough value to warrant expenditure as the return on investment was not considered appropriate. Software/system implementation was also considered in the context of limited resources amidst already active Council activity.

IR1 | Improvement recommendation – Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority

Economy, efficiency and effectiveness | Source page 75

Recommendation
We recommend the Council reviews its governance and oversight arrangements in respect of its participation within the Merseyside Recycling & Waste Authority (MRWA) to ensure they are sufficient.

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 1 Regular MRWA updates to Committee to be provided. **Responsible officer:** Director of Neighbourhoods **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** The MRWA's Chief Executive Officer has attended the Council's ECET committee 20 October 2025) to provide an overview of MRWA developments, finances and overall performance in waste management and treatment. Committee members have subsequently scrutinised aspects of the MRWA's function and their role in the LCR WM partnership. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Regular scrutiny of MRWA operations by Wirral Council will continue. In particular the Council will be invited to scrutinise the MRWA's retendering of their Waste Management & Treatment Contract over the next year.
Action 2 Quarterly updates to the LCR chief executives' group to continue to be provided. **Responsible officer:** Director of Neighbourhoods **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** As lead officers for the LCR WM partnership, the Director of Operations and the MRWA's Chief Executive Officer update the LCR Chief Executive's group on progress with the partnership's work programme and key issues, also receiving instruction from the Chief Executives to present back to the partnership. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** Above arrangements to continue

Management action	Latest progress / update
Action 3 Provide additional support to the member representative on the Board with the aim of enhancing the role. **Responsible officer:** Director of Neighbourhoods **Original due date:** 31/07/2026	**Latest position:** Officers have been working with and briefing the Council's members of the MRWA, one of whom is the deputy chair of the ECET Committee. The Council's members are being briefed specifically on the significant retendering exercise the MRWA is undertaking and its implications for Wirral Council. **Revised due date:** n/a **Status / RAG:** Complete / Green **Next steps / issues:** As above