## Appendix 4

### CIPFA External Assurance Review 2026 - Recommendation Mapping and Delivery Arrangements

**Purpose**
The purpose of this appendix is to demonstrate how the recommendations contained within the CIPFA External Assurance Review are being addressed through the Council's existing improvement and assurance arrangements.

The Council's approach is based on the principle that improvement activity should be delivered through a single coherent framework wherever possible. This avoids duplication of effort, reduces governance complexity, promotes clear accountability and enables resources to remain focused on implementation rather than administration.

The review has identified three broad categories of recommendation:

**Category A - Fully aligned with existing External Auditor (Statutory Recommendations denoted as SR and Key Recommendations denoted as KR), Regeneration Review or Transformation actions**
No separate workstream required. Progress monitored through existing arrangements.

**Category B - Partially aligned with existing actions**
Existing programmes address the majority of the recommendation but additional actions or assurance evidence are required.

**Category C - Additional CIPFA-specific recommendations**
Not directly covered by existing action plans and therefore require explicit incorporation within existing corporate improvement arrangements.

**Summary Assessment**

| CIPFA Recommendation | Existing Delivery Route | Assessment |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Recovery plan, operating model and ASC demand management | SR1, SR2, Transformation Programme, MTFP | A |
| 2 Regeneration, procurement, controls and behaviours | SR3, SR4, KR3, KR8, KR9, KR10 | A |
| 3 Finance capacity and capability | Finance Improvement Programme and SLT restructure | B |
| 4 Financial reporting and training | SR4, revised budget monitoring, Member development | B |
| 5 Risk escalation and reporting culture | Corporate Risk Management arrangements | C |
| 6 Capital receipts assumptions | Capital review and MTFP refresh | B |
| 7 Capital affordability controls | SR3 and capital programme review | A |
| 8 Commercial exposure and investment oversight | SR3 and regeneration review activity | A |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9 Performance consistency across services | Council Plan and performance framework | C |
| 10 Embedding adult and children's operating models | ASC Recovery Plan and SEND Reform Programme | A |
| 11 Demand management and prevention | ASC Recovery Plan and SEND Reform Programme | A |
| 12 Strategic commissioning and market management | ASC, SEND and commissioning programmes | B |
| 13 Delivery grip and accountability | Transformation Programme and MTFP | A |
| 14 Procurement and commercial capability | KR10 and senior management restructure | A |
| 15 Strategic commissioning pipeline | Commissioning and financial sustainability work | B |
| 16 Improved Member reporting and scrutiny | Report redesign programme | C |
| 17 Governance, commercial capability and business cases | SR3, KR3 and SR4 | A |
| 18 Leadership stability and restructure | Senior management restructure | A |
| 19 Member/officer relationships | SR4 | A |
| 20 Accountability, delivery culture and performance | Transformation Programme and Council Plan | B |

**Recommendations Addressed Through Existing Action Plans**

The following recommendations are considered substantially addressed through existing approved action plans already monitored by the Audit and Risk Management Committee:

**Financial Sustainability and Recovery**
Recommendations 1, 7, 8 and 13.
These recommendations align directly with:

- Statutory Recommendation 1 - Financial Sustainability Risks;
- Statutory Recommendation 2 - Change Programme;
- Statutory Recommendation 3 - Regeneration Programme Financial Risks;
- the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- the Transformation Programme; and
- the Adult Social Care Financial Recovery and Modernisation Plan.

No separate governance arrangements are proposed.

**Governance, Regeneration and Procurement**
Recommendations 2, 14 and 17.
These recommendations align directly with:

- Statutory Recommendation 3;
- Statutory Recommendation 4;
- Key Recommendations 3, 8, 9 and 10;
- the Regeneration Review Action Plan;
- procurement improvement activity; and
- the developing Gateway Review Framework.

No additional governance arrangements are proposed.

**Leadership and Member/Officer Relationships**
Recommendations 18 and 19.
These recommendations align directly with:

- Statutory Recommendation 4;
- implementation of the revised Member/Officer Relations Protocol;
- Member development arrangements; and
- the senior management restructuring programme.

No additional workstream is proposed.

**Additional Activity to be Incorporated Within Existing Programmes**

The following matters are not considered sufficiently explicit within the External Auditor recommendation tracker and will therefore be incorporated into existing programmes and monitored through normal governance routes.

**Finance Capacity and Capability**
(CIPFA Recommendation 3)
Additional actions:

- Strengthen financial modelling capability – actioned with additional resource onboarded in August.

**Financial Training and Financial Literacy**
(CIPFA Recommendation 4)
Additional actions:

- Deliver mandatory financial awareness training for Members – actioned as part of annual cycle of training.
- Deliver financial management training for budget holders and senior managers – actioned with in-person and Flo training modules delivered.

**Risk Escalation and Early Warning Culture**
(CIPFA Recommendation 5)
Additional actions:

- Refresh officer guidance on escalation of financial and operational risks.
- Reinforce expectations through management training.
- Review consistency of risk reporting arrangements.

Governance: Corporate Risk Management Framework and Audit & Risk Management Committee.

**Capital Receipts Assumptions**
(CIPFA Recommendation 6)
Additional actions:

- Review capital receipt assumptions as part of each MTFP refresh.
- Ensure assumptions are evidence based and linked to deliverable disposal plans.
- Report significant variances through capital monitoring.
  Governance: Director of Finance and Director of Capital Programmes.

**Strategic Commissioning and Market Management**
(CIPFA Recommendations 12 and 15)
Additional actions:

- Develop strategic commissioning plans for high-cost demand-led services.
- Improve market intelligence and forecasting.
  Governance: Executive Director of People

**Member Reporting and Decision-Making Information**
(CIPFA Recommendation 16)
Additional actions:

- Promote shorter, more focused decision reports.
- Develop report templates, guidance documents, and training for report authors.
- Ensure reports clearly identify options, risks, assumptions and financial implications.
  Governance: Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director – Governance & Corporate Support, Director of Finance and report authors.

**Organisational Accountability and Delivery Culture**
(CIPFA Recommendation 20)
Additional actions:

- Strengthen benefits realisation and accountability arrangements.
- Embed performance and financial accountability through management structures and performance review framework.
  Governance: Transformation governance arrangements and Executive Leadership Team.

**Conclusion**
Having reviewed the CIPFA recommendations in detail, officers are satisfied that the substantial majority are already being addressed through existing approved improvement plans and governance arrangements. Where additional actions are required, these will be incorporated into existing programmes of work rather than establishing a separate improvement framework.

This approach provides a clear line of sight from recommendation to delivery, avoids duplication, reduces governance complexity and ensures that management effort remains focused on implementation and measurable improvement rather than the creation of additional reporting structures. Progress will continue to be reported through existing assurance arrangements and future updates to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.