

# Corporate Scrutiny Committee

09 October 2024

## Nottingham City Council Improvement Plan

### Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

#### 1 Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the arrangements put in place to ensure delivery of the Council's Improvement Plan which was approved at Full Council on 5 August 2024.

#### 2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the arrangements and provide comments or recommendations regarding the information presented.

#### 3 Background information

##### Overview

- 3.1 The Council received Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 22 February 2024, which included the appointment of Commissioners to oversee the next phase of its improvement journey.
- 3.2 The Directions included a requirement for the Council to develop and agree an Improvement Plan to the satisfaction of the Commissioners, and to report on the delivery of the Plan at six monthly intervals or at such intervals the Commissioners may direct.
- 3.3 Since Directions were issued the Council has undertaken work at pace to develop and agree an Improvement Plan Direction and put in place relevant and proportionate arrangements to ensure delivery of the Plan.

##### Development and agreement of an Improvement Plan

- 3.4 Throughout its improvement journey to date the Council has used improvement plans to collate, prioritise and direct its activity. This was first articulated as the Recovery and Improvement Plan (approved at Executive Board in January 2021) which evolved into the Together for Nottingham Plan (approved at Full Council in October 2022 and refreshed in March 2023).
- 3.5 The Council has now created a successor Improvement Plan, building on the improvement journey set out in the previous plans. The Improvement Plan was developed in close liaison with Commissioners

and agreed with them on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The Plan has also received political support and approval at the Council's Executive Board on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024. At an Extraordinary Meeting of City Council on 5th August 2024, councillors formally approved the Plan as the Council's overarching improvement plan in response to the Commissioner-led intervention.

- 3.6 The new Improvement Plan sets out how the Council will address the issues and challenges that have led to the current intervention and respond to the actions required by Commissioners. It is built around three aims of enabling and supporting the Council to become:
- (1) A council that delivers with clear direction and purpose
  - (2) A council that is financially sustainable
  - (3) A council that is well-run with effective people, processes and systems
- 3.7 Extensive engagement with the Council's leadership informed the development of the Improvement Plan. This included workshops with the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and Directors and workshops with Executive Members. This approach has allowed for a realistic and pragmatic Plan to be developed, based on eleven key programmes of activity.
- 3.8 The Improvement Plan provides a clear statement of intent that the Council must change at pace to respond to the challenges it is facing. The future Council must look, feel and operate significantly differently to the Council of today. It needs to be clear on its role and purpose, realistic about what it can deliver, effective and efficient in how it operates, and focussed on consistently getting the basics right so that the City's residents and partners know what they can expect from their Council. The Plan provides the basis for further transformation, change and improvement activity to be developed, resourced and delivered.

### **Staff engagement and involvement to deliver improvement**

- 3.9 The Improvement Plan recognises that improvement is everyone's responsibility, and its development and delivery is supported by an internal communications programme including a range of opportunities for officers to be informed and involved in the delivery of the Plan. This commenced with all-staff and all councillor briefings on the Improvement Plan and builds on the engagement undertaken with the Corporate Leadership Team, Directors Forum and Senior Leadership Forum.
- 3.10 A 'Change Community' has been established which provides an array of opportunities for staff to have their say on improvement, put forward ideas for consideration (budget savings and service improvement), and participate in the delivery of the Improvement Plan programmes through focus groups, completing surveys, or being part of a sounding board. Initial response and interest from the organisation in the Community has

been extremely positive and there are currently more than 600 officers signed up to participate.

### **Strengthening governance and assurance**

- 3.11 Informed by the learning from previous experience – including a lack of pace in delivering other improvement plans - relevant governance and assurance arrangements have been put in place to monitor and manage the delivery of the Improvement Plan. Arrangements will ensure clear accountability and responsibility. Corporate Directors have been appointed as Senior Accountable Officers (SAOs) and accountable for the delivery of the improvement programmes assigned to them. Reporting to SAOs, Responsible Delivery Leads (RDLs) (normally Director level) have responsibility for day-to-day delivery of programmes, including putting in place project teams and resources, checking and managing processes and escalating risks.
- 3.12 The remit of the Transformation and Change Oversight Board (TCOB), was extended in June 2024 to include oversight of the Improvement Plan delivery and specific programmes in it, including the delivery of budget savings and development of further savings proposals. Chaired by the Chief Executive, the TCOB holds Senior Accountable Officers (SAOs) to account for delivery, identifies mitigations for activity that is identified as being off-track, and agrees resourcing required to support delivery.
- 3.13 A Corporate Performance Management Office (CPMO) has been formed to strengthen delivery oversight and management, and provide independent and transparent reporting to the TCOB, which is supplemented by assurance reviews on key projects. CPMO reporting on the Improvement Plan to the TCOB is currently being mobilised and is expected to commence in September.
- 3.14 The TCOB meeting provides visibility of progress on key initiatives at a high level within the organisation, and the opportunity for the Chief Executive to hold Corporate Directors to account on progress and provide a clearing house for unblocking issues and / or collectively working together to complement performance. It also provides an opportunity for Commissioners to question and challenge progress and mitigations being discussed.
- 3.15 To ensure an element of elected Member oversight scrutiny, the Deputy Leader is also a member of the TCOB, and Executive Members are briefed regularly on the delivery of programmes relevant to their portfolios. It is envisaged that a six-monthly report be presented to Full Council.

### **Delivery Progress**

- 3.17 The Council is fully committed to delivering the Improvement Plan at pace with strong support from the Executive leadership and Corporate

Leadership of the council. Effective implementation of the Improvement Plan will lead to the Council exiting the Commissioner-led intervention over two years. Many of the activities contained in the Plan have already begun, while some activities have actively been given a later start date due to dependency on the prior completion of other deliverables, due to resource planning, or where further engagement and scoping is still to be undertaken.

- 3.18 The TCOB will regularly monitor delivery of the Improvement Plan and specific programmes within it, including the delivery of budget savings and development of further savings proposals.

#### **4 List of attached information**

- 4.1 Nottingham City Council Improvement Plan

#### **5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information**

- 5.1 N/A

#### **6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report**

- 6.1 [Together for Nottingham Plan](#)

- 6.2 [Secretary of State's Intervention in Nottingham City Council](#)

#### **7 Wards affected**

- 7.1 All

#### **8 Contact information**

- 8.1 Paul Clarke, Assistant Chief Executive,  
[paul.clarke4@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:paul.clarke4@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)