

2020/21 Annual Audit Report Recommendations - Management Response and Action Plan

Key Recommendation	Management Response	Action Plan
<p>Review and improve the arrangements/provisions for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in the local area set out in the written statement of action following the CQC and Ofsted report from their joint review.</p>	<p>The local area covered by the inspection included the County Council as the local authority, the clinical commissioning group (CCG), public health, NHS providers, early years' settings, schools and further education providers.</p> <p>Five areas of weakness were identified. A written statement of action (WSoA) was co-produced with partners, parent and carers, and submitted to CQC/Ofsted by the deadline of 24 December 2021.</p> <p>Progress on delivery of the WSoA is overseen by the SEND and Inclusion Change Programme Board which has been strengthened with CCG and Warwickshire Parent Carer Voice (WPCV) representation. The detailed governance and engagement arrangements are set out in the WSoA and include Cabinet, the CCG Governing Body and Clinical Quality and Governance Committee.</p> <p>A monthly newsletter has been introduced and the development of a further programme of events developed to inform stakeholders of progress.</p> <p>The local area monitoring arrangements, set out in the WSoA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPIs reviewed monthly by WCC/CCG management teams; • 6-weekly WSoA interim reports on progress to the SEND and Inclusion Steering Group; • Quarterly formal WSoA reports on progress to SEND and Inclusion Change Board, SEND Member Panel, NHS England and the DfE; and • 6-monthly updates to Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee. 	<p><u>Completed Actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written statement of action in response to the review findings agreed by Cabinet 7 December 2021 and submitted to the CQC and Ofsted • In addition to the planned £4.844m investment in the SEND transformation programme, an additional £99k resources to support the delivery of the written statement was approved by Cabinet 7 December 2021 • Steering Group established to oversee development and delivery of the WSoA • Monitoring arrangements agreed as part of the WSoA

Improvement Recommendation	Management Response	Action Plan
<p>Perform a dedicated review of savings after implementation and assess whether there has been any impact on the quality of services.</p>	<p>The performance management framework is focussed on the key performance measures for services and therefore the impact of any completed changes will be reflected in our standard monitoring, where one of these measures is impacted.</p> <p>Prior to decisions being made a pro forma is completed for each savings option. Part of this pro forma requires the following information to be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the proposal impact on users of the service; • The key risks associated with the delivery of the proposal; and • An implementation plan that outlines the key actions and milestones in implementing the proposals. <p>Therefore information on the expected impact of a proposal on the quality of a service forms part of the decision-making process.</p> <p>Where a savings option is sufficiently material to form part of the corporate change plan, we are exploring how the benefits realisation role within the Programme Management Office can be adapted to include the impact of a savings option.</p>	<p><u>Future action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review how/if the benefits realisation role within the Programme Management Office can be used to assess whether there has been an impact on the quality of services for material savings options.

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<p>Enhance the distinction between statutory and discretionary spending in the MTFS provided to Cabinet members and published online.</p>	<p>We question the value of the statutory and non-statutory split having explored this through previous MTFS processes. There is a risk that such an approach can create a skewed and artificial perspective on services, and it can undermine both the strive for VFM across all services and the fact that a number of discretionary services are essential to limiting demand or maximising council resources e.g. economic development is a non-statutory service but is critical for stimulating business rates, growth in the council tax taxbase and increasing economic wealth, all of which in turn limit poverty/deprivation and demand generated through low or no income as well as providing increased resources to support services.</p> <p>For the 2022/23 MTFS we introduced the concept of ‘unavoidable’ options for Members as distinct from those where they have a clear policy choice or are part on an invest-to-save project, which is now visible to the general public. We feel this offers a more nuanced position and gives clarity for Warwickshire citizens moving forward.</p> <p>Equality Impact Assessments/screening documents are prepared for all savings options. These are reviewed and cleared by Legal in advance of any decisions being made. Through this review we would therefore identify if any savings options were adversely impacting on our ability to meet our statutory requirements.</p>	<p>No action to be taken forward.</p>

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<p>Link the people strategy (workforce plan) expectations to the MTFS.</p>	<p>The current people strategy has been specifically drafted in the context of existing resources available, although there has also been a recognition that some aspects of HR support are under pressure and appropriate pressure bids have been made and categorised as unavoidable in the 2022/23 MTFS Refresh.</p> <p>The extensive work on the functional operating models for all services over the past 2-3 years, which are nearing completion in the final areas, has significantly remodelled all areas of the council around the strategy, commissioning and delivery model.</p> <p>Briefing papers supporting the development of the MTFS are prepared to cover the staffing implications of both spending and savings options.</p> <p>More work is needed and is planned specifically in relation to workforce planning. This will include the Authority's response to the difficulties in recruiting and the management of specific areas of skills shortages.</p>	<p><u>Future action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the delivery planning for savings/increased investment to include the impact on the functional operating models for the 2023/24 MTFS refresh. • Undertake a risk assessment of the deliverability of emerging MTFS proposals in light of the workforce plan.

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<p>Incorporate a standard section within reporting to Cabinet and equivalent which sets out legal /regulatory implications, similar to that already provided for financial and environmental.</p>	<p>We have considered the point made about having a legal comments section within reports and on balance we do not feel that a separate section for legal implications in all reports is warranted. The reasons for this are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk of potentially losing legal privilege in respect of internal advice on the points raised by the report; • Report authors are expected to engage appropriate legal staff and, like finance, legal have a final sign off of all Member reports in case anything slips through at an earlier stage. This means that for the most part the legalities are considered prior to publication and form part of sign off; and • Where appropriate and if they are significant enough the legal considerations do get drawn out and highlighted in their own sections, e.g. the legal advice on the creation of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund and the Warwickshire Property and Development Group was material enough to dedicate sections of the report to them. 	<p><u>Future action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remind members, as a standard part of agenda planning meetings, that members have the benefit of legal advice through the report itself rather than as a separate paragraph and that all reports have been signed-off by legal and finance.
<p>Review and renew the goods and hospitality policy, as these were due for review in February 2021.</p>	<p>The gifts and hospitality policy for members was introduced as part of the changes to the Member Code of Conduct approved during 2021/22. There hasn't been a review of the gifts and hospitality policy for staff as the current policy restricts gifts/hospitality to very low levels and there is no desire to increase them. From a financial perspective the limit is described as "nominal", which has tended to be £5 or so and explicitly no alcohol.</p> <p>A review of existing HROD related policies is being undertaken in 22/23 along with a governance review which has been commissioned by the Monitoring Officer. This will incorporate a review of the gifts and hospitality arrangements for staff.</p>	<p><u>Completed action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The gifts and hospitality policy for members was introduced as part of the changes to the Member Code of Conduct approved during 2021/22. <p><u>Future action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the staff gift and hospitality policy as part of the planned governance compliance review.

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<p>Review of updated arrangements in respect of delegated budgets once these have been fully implemented</p>	<p>The roll out of the changes to the delegated budget processes has been delayed due to Covid. The key actions will have all been completed by the end of March 2022 and work is on-going to remove the backlog of schemes.</p> <p>The aim of the new programme is to have members confirm the scheme they want delivered for the year by the end of May. This will allow the minor works team to pull together a programme of works for the contractor to deliver and see most of the works delivered during the year.</p> <p>The aim is to reach a target of 80% of Delegated Budget spent 'in-year'.</p> <p>A review will be scheduled after the closure of the 2022/23 accounts when the new approach will have been operational for a year.</p>	<p><u>Completed Actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a new minor works team in County Highways • Highways Locality Officers (13) in place to help guide members with the schemes they want to put forward, including investigating the schemes and pulling together cost estimates. <p><u>Future Actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 March 2022 - Members seminar on the new arrangements. • 30 March 2022 - Launch the new Delegated Budget website with access for each member to a monthly delegated budget report for their schemes and the progress of each scheme with estimated delivery dates.

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<p>Review and renew the procurement strategy as this covered the period to 2020.</p>	<p>Revised Contract Standing Orders were approved by full Council in December 2021.</p> <p>A renewed Procurement and Contract Management Strategy was approved by Corporate Board in December 2021. The next steps will be for the new strategy to go through the design process, so it forms part of a new standardised approach to strategies and then a formal launch/publication.</p> <p>There will be a need for further updates once the new national procurement legislation and guidance is in place.</p>	<p><u>Completed action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed procurement strategy approved in December 2021. <p><u>Future action</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement strategy published, with a communication and learning and development plan