

Improvement Recommendation	Recommendation	Management Response approved by Audit Committee September 2023	Further Evidence / Questions
1 Key	<p>Cabinet members cannot hold officers to account for performance if reporting is lacking'; and 'in 2022-23 the Council still lacked a performance framework meaning it was reactive to challenge, rather than proactively forward planning or anticipating issues before they emerged'.</p> <p>1) Using the reset Corporate Plan to establish a golden thread for the Council, by creating a performance management framework at corporate and service levels linking outcomes to expected annual measures to track success and report these to the public;</p> <p>2) Developing annual delivery plans aligned with the Corporate Plan and reduce the number of service specific strategies to ensure the golden thread is in place;</p> <p>3) Agreeing performance outcomes, that can be measured, at least annually as part of the new performance management framework;</p> <p>4) Ensuring performance reporting include targets, RAG rating, and actual measures and benchmarking. Reports should use previous year and 'nearest neighbours' data where possible; integrating performance, risk and finance reporting to drive improvement;</p> <p>5) Ensuring the Cabinet receives quarterly performance reports to enable it to hold officers to account;</p> <p>6) Using performance and financial data and benchmarking to look at delivery levels of statutory services to ensure the Council is achieving value for money;</p> <p>7) Ensuring that the new performance management framework and reporting extends to key contracts such as waste and leisure;</p> <p>8) Developing a strategic approach to assessing the levels of statutory services needed to save money;</p> <p>9) Engaging with hard-to-reach customers to ensure they can still access services given the Council's digital by default approach;</p> <p>10) Ensuring partnership performance management, including outcomes, is reported regularly to Cabinet; and</p> <p>11) Engaging key stakeholders, where appropriate, to determine local priorities for resources or opportunities for savings.</p>	<p>Over the past 18 months, the Borough Council has made good progress on establishing a performance management framework. Whilst the framework will need to be continually refined over the coming months, an internal audit of our new framework which was carried out in February 2024 concluded that it offered 'substantial' assurance with very good prospects for improvement.</p> <p>The Corporate Strategy is supported by an annual action plan and suite of Corporate KPIs that are directly aligned with the 'priority actions' of the strategy.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to improve the 'golden thread' through the organisation - annual service plans are being pulled together, report templates are being amended in order to demonstrate linkages with the Corporate Strategy, and the Corporate Strategy Action Plan includes specific linkages to a small number of key council strategies.</p> <p>The performance indicators are reported on a quarterly basis. Once collated, they are first presented to Management Team and Informal Cabinet for consideration. Relevant thematic indicators are then presented to the Scrutiny Select Committees and Overview and Scrutiny Committee before finally going to Cabinet in their entirety.</p> <p>The majority of performance indicators include targets, actual measures and trend data. To improve benchmarking, the borough council has subscribed to LG Inform Plus in order to gain greater access to comparable data. Whilst not all indicators are benchmarked, the majority now are, helping to inform areas for transformation and value for money.</p> <p>The performance indicators cover a wide range of council activity, including a number of indicators that refer specifically to the waste and leisure contracts.</p> <p>The Borough Council is currently working with Digital Kent to deliver an initiative (funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Business Rates Retention Pilot Reserve) that provides hardware and digital training to our most digitally excluded residents. The project will for the entirety of 2024/25, offering support to up to 225 residents in the borough.</p> <p>In terms of engagement with residents, a consultation was undertaken to inform the development of the new Corporate Strategy and assess local priorities. Further individual consultations have been undertaken with residents and local businesses more recently on specific matters that are intrinsic to the Corporate Strategy action plan and that impact on resources and options for savings. A further consultation on the Corporate Strategy will take place in 2025 (which represents the mid-point for the strategy).</p>	<p>Agenda for Audit Committee on Monday, 15th April, 2024, 7.30 pm (tmbc.gov.uk) - see Annex 1 of Report AU 24/20</p> <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 4th June, 2024, 7.30 pm (tmbc.gov.uk) - Report CB 24/71</p> <p>At present the KPIs are initially discussed at SMTs, before being presented to Management Team and Informal Cabinet before being shared with the Scrutiny Select Committees, O&S and Cabinet on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Agenda for Cabinet on Monday, 8th July, 2024, 7.30 pm (tmbc.gov.uk) - Example: Report CB 24/78 (plenty of other reports available)</p> <p>Please see above link which also sets out range of KPIs</p> <p>https://www.digitalkent.uk/information/projects/externally-funded/tmbc</p>

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			<p>An internal audit review of performance management was undertaken from November 2023 - March 2024, finding substantial assurance with very good prospects for improvement.</p> <p>The main action arising from the internal audit is ensuring greater engagement from Members and embedding the KPIs within the culture of the organisation - additional work on benchmarking and presenting the data in reports has been undertaken to improve engagement. Report to Cabinet in October 2024 will set out some proposals for embedding performance management within the organisation (along with reporting Q1 KPIs)</p>
2 Key	<p>The Council needs to improve its procurement and contract management arrangement by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Updating its procurement strategy; 2) Ensuring the contracts register is monitored, kept up to date and used by all services; 3) Ensuring it fully meets the Local Government (Transparency Requirements) (England) Regulations 2015 legislation; 4) Having a suitably trained client lead for procurement and contract management; 5) Provide training for officers and members on procurement and contract management to enable them to fully understand their responsibilities for social value and value for money; and 6) Ensuring the Council's shared arrangements for fraud also include procurement and contract management. 	<p>Management Team acknowledges that updating of the procurement strategy has been an outstanding matter for some time.</p> <p>The Council does not have its own procurement resource and has relied on a working group of officers from across the Council to discuss and deliver procurement priorities and monitor/update the contracts register.</p> <p>For the letting of significant contracts, the Council has always sought professional assistance externally, but it acknowledged that a lack of 'in house' expertise in this discipline has led to a lack of progress.</p> <p>We are now having discussions with another Local Authority with a view to developing a SLA for both the review and revision of the Procurement Strategy along with a named officer for day to day professional advice who could also sit on the Procurement working group. In order to bolster the profile and importance of the procurement function, the Procurement working group will now be chaired by a member of Management Team.</p> <p>Appropriate training for both officers and Members will be developed by the group over the next few months.</p> <p>With regard to the risk of fraud within procurement, the Council's SLA with Kent County Council's Internal Audit and Fraud team does already cover this activity.</p> <p>Procurement fraud awareness training will be offered to procurement leads during 23/24 and a rolling programme will be established"</p>	<p>https://modgov.tmbc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Allid=40455</p> <p>Once the new Procurement Strategy has been approved all procurement documentation used by the Council will be reviewed and updated in liaison with the Partnership to ensure robust documentation is in place and continuity exists across different services.</p> <p>The Council joined the Mid Kent Procurement Partnership in April 2024 to provide Officers with support from fully trained procurement specialists. The Council's internal Procurement Project Group has revised its terms of reference and is chaired at Director level. A new Procurement Strategy for the authority has been produced and will shortly be reported to the Finance, Regeneration and Property Scrutiny Committee for recommendation to Cabinet. The Partnership is already assisting Officers on a number of contracts including Waste, public conveniences and pest control. The Partnership Officers attend all meetings of the Procurement Project Group to ensure a joined up approach across the authority.</p> <p>A programme of dates for staff training on procurement have been set for September and the training will be delivered by the Procurement Partnership Manager. The training will cover the introduction of new legislation and fraud awareness and will subsequently be rolled out to Members.</p>

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1 Improvement	the Council should develop a transformation programme to enable it to reduce spend by looking at different ways of delivering services or by enable others in its system leadership role.	<p>A Management Team/Cabinet LGA Development Day is being arranged for October, themed around transformation. It will look at development of the transformation programme and subsequently the resource requirement.</p> <p>As part of the budgetary process for the Revised Estimate for 2023/24 and Forward Estimates for 2024/25 Services are asked to identify whether services provided were mandatory or discretionary to help develop an overall understanding of cost and priorities.</p>	<p>The Management Team/ Cabinet Development Day took place in November 2023. A number of actions were agreed under the theme of transformation, including (1) Appointment of a Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Manager (2) Joint briefing between Senior Officers, Leader and the opposition groups (3) Amend Committee reports to include links to the corporate priorities and plan. Substantial progress has been made in these respects. A Tonbridge Town Centre Programme Manager has been appointed and starts with the Council in September 2024. The Joint Briefings commenced in early 2024 and a revised committee report template has been developed and is due to go live in October 2024 (following completion of testing with staff).</p> <p>Implemented for 2024/25 Estimates but further development has been put on hold following changes to External Audit Timetable that means External Audit of 23/24 Statements clash with 'normal' estimates timetable.</p>
2 Improvement	improve the Workforce Strategy to include fully costed strategy over the medium to long term	Future revisions of the Workforce strategy will include medium-term impacts requiring reviews of service delivery, succession planning, resilience as well as financial costing.	<p>The Workforce Strategy will be fully updated to reflect the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A planned future management development programme. - Address issues identified in the all staff survey planned for September 2024 - Ensure that the WF Strategy develops closer links to the Council's Vision and Values by updating the Council's employee appraisal scheme which will strengthen areas around staff development and succession planning. - Identify behaviour competencies with close links to the Council's vision and values - Target date for completion January 2025 to be agreed at January meeting of the General Purposes committee. To be updated and reviewed annually.
3 Improvement	<p>The Council needs to improve risk management by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving the format of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) to add for each risk: key controls and assurances; direction of travel; a single named owner; the original risk score and likelihood scores after initial mitigation; current risk scores and target risk scores; and provide updated mitigation quarterly; It would be useful to identify issues, risk and impact separately; Updating the SRR format to align with our proposed SRR changes; Reviewing the SRR risks to ensure they have the right actions and are unique risks; Reporting the SRR quarterly to Cabinet alongside performance and finance; Improving committee reports to facilitate good risk management, referencing strategic risks and their scores and impact in all Council reports; and Developing training for members and staff to raise awareness of risk and responsibilities. 	Some changes have already been made to the SRR to indicate direction of travel and further changes will be made over the next few months. In the light of both last year's recommendation and an internal audit report (which contained similar recommendations) Zurich, the Council's insurers, are being asked to review the Risk Management Strategy, formats of risk registers and risk training for new employees.	<p>Zurich have carried out training on Risk Management to Members, held in January 24 and Officer training is being arranged for the Autumn 2024.</p> <p>Zurich have revised the Council's Strategic Risk Register and procedures and have made recommendation to officers and members for improvement actions</p> <p>Management Team, have reviewed the number of risks contained within the Strategic Risk Register, reducing them down to 23 in January 2024 to 17 in July 2024.</p> <p>Under the Council's constitution the delegated authority for risk management is given to the Audit Committee then sent to Full council for approval.</p>
4 Improvement	The Council need to fully integrate performance and financial reporting for revenue and capital to improve financial reporting	Management Team are currently considering this recommendation and at the time of responding have not finalised a view. Further discussions will take place with Cabinet and Grant Thornton, as it is important that Members are not overloaded with operational data and can focus their attention on strategic matters.	As part of the Budget build for 2025/26 services are to provide details of the costs drivers where volumes can affect the levels of spend and income. This will be incorporated into the reports to Members to in Jan 2025.