

## Improvement Plan

Completed/in place
On track
Not started

<b>Strategic Direction</b>					
<b>Outcome:</b> Establish a clear strategic direction and values for the Council, providing a basis for performance management and continuous improvement					
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions and status</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>SOLACE Para</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Update / Changes since May 2024</b>
<b>1. Coordinate all improvement activity</b> relating to the themes of this Corporate Improvement Plan, including all SOLACE report's recommendations.	1.1 Draft an improvement plan, for which the Chief Executive and CMB will be accountable.	Completed	6.2, 6.8	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	1.2 Corporate Governance and Standards Committee to scrutinise the Plan and Full Council to adopt plan, with progress reported to Council six monthly for three years.	CGS Committee 15 May Full Council 23 July	6.8	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	Full Council date changed due to pre-election period
	1.3 Appoint a Head of Business Improvement to lead on developing and coordinating actions at pace to deliver the plan.	Joining 13 May	6.8	Head of Business Improvement, Laura Froshaug	Completed as of May 2024.
<b>2. Develop a corporate approach to continuous improvement</b> to ensure it is resourced and treated as business as usual by all services.	2.1 Appoint an Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel to provide a critical friend function.	Completed, subject to council agreement	6.9	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	Finalised, first meeting in August.
	2.2 Carry out an initial restructure of JMT to address governance and finance capacity and capability.	Completed	4.4, 7.14	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	2.3 Propose new structures to be agreed by Executive as part of 2025/26 Budget process following options appraisal of capacity and capability.	Budget to be approved February 2025	4.4, 7.14	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	2.4 Arrange a peer review for 2025/26	Agreed with LGA that a Peer Review will take place in May 2025	6.3	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	2.5 Carry out peer review	May 2025	6.3	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	2.6 Create a refreshed Annual Governance Statement template to ensure it is used as an improvement document. Provide training for staff developing the statement.	August 2024	6.4	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
	2.7 Annual Governance Statement to be prepared by Finance, consulted on with Executive and O&S and owned by CMB, prior to formally being taken to Corporate Governance and Standards Committee for adoption and review mid-year.	Draft AGS by September 2024	6.4	Statutory officers: Richard Bates, Susan Sale, Pedro Wrobel	
<b>3. Produce and embed a strategic framework</b> (including strategies, policies, risk and performance management approaches) and <b>set of values</b> that articulate the Council's	3.1 Develop and publish corporate strategy	Strategy to go to: O&S on 10/11 July Executive on 15 July Full Council on 23 July	7.13i 7.13ii	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	Committee dates amended due to pre-election period
	3.2 Develop and publish corporate values	Adopt May 2024	7.13iii, 9.12	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	Completed as of May 2024, shared with staff.

vision and priorities, and provide a golden thread through service delivery and performance management	3.3 Communicate the new strategy, values, challenges of the Council and the Improvement Plan.	To be completed by the end of July 2024	7.16	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	Comms plan created, to start after election and adoption.
	3.4 Review the range of strategies and policies, identify gaps, clarify timescales and ensure resources in place, starting with people strategy, IT strategy and procurement strategy.	Kick off review July 2024	7.15	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	Changed to On Track from not started. People Strategy in development.
<b>Value for money</b>					
<b>Outcome:</b> Ensure we provide the best value for money by embedding effective finance practices with sufficient capacity, and alignment between the organisation's priorities and its use of resources, including procurement and contract management.					
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions and status</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>SOLACE Para</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Update / Changes since May 2024</b>
<b>4. Establish and embed effective finance and budget policies and procedures</b> with sufficient permanent capacity and resource to create <b>accountability of budget holders.</b>	4.1 Redesignate the S151 officer as a Strategic Director, reporting to the Chief Executive.	Completed	7.4	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	4.2 Appoint a permanent Section 151 Officer, reporting directly to the Chief Executive	Completed	7.3	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	4.3 Revised and implement financial and budget policies and procedures for consistency and clear ownership, with a clear plan for regular review.	Completed	7.5 10.3 10.11	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
	4.4 Ensure capacity and capability of the finance team through recruitment of permanent staff.  Recruitment of permanent staff launched, to replace some of the interims.	Ongoing	10.11	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
	4.5 Finalise the Budget book and implement to improve finance knowledge and ensure ownership by the budget holders. Relaunch Budget monitoring reporting processes. Finalise all budgets and ensure sign off by s151 officer.	Budget book issued  Expenditure report to be published May 2024	10.3 10.11	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
	4.6 Implement improved budget planning and processes that are documented and reviewed regularly.	Completed and ongoing	10.3 10.11	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
	4.7 Regular review of approved and provisional capital programme to ensure continued relevance and prioritisation of spend	First iteration completed Autumn 2023, now ongoing.	10.7	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
<b>5. Ensure accountability to the public purse</b> through revised contract award and management controls, and <b>alignment with the priorities of the Council.</b>	5.1 Renew Procurement Strategy and pipelines	New Procurement Strategy in Summer 2024	7.15	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Changed to On Track, new head of Procurement has started.
	5.2 Implement appropriate controls around contract awards and management, with robust monitoring and a new reporting regime.	New reporting being developed	8.12 9.11	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Contracts database in development

	5.3 Recruit Head of Procurement.	Underway Spring 2024	7.15	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Completed as of June 2024.	
	5.4 Emphasise accountability to the public purse, and value for money, through the Corporate Values.	Corporate Values to be adopted May 2024	9.9 10.12	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	Completed as of May 2024.	
	5.5 Commence Budget and MTFP processes in the summer. This will align with the Corporate Strategy, which is being developed.	MTFP review to start in July 2024	9.9 10.12	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Changed to On track, as it has commenced.	
	5.6 Put together service review programme with in-depth reviews into services which procure large contracts in order to identify any issues that might exist.	September 2024	11.10	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates		
6	Implement <b>regular reviews and reporting arrangements which ensure value for money</b> and best use of public money.	6.1 Corporate Governance and Standards Committee to consider formal action and/or a formal response to the External Auditors in respect of the Value for Money matters it raised in September 2023. The issues raised have been addressed through the Financial Recovery Plan.	Formal response to be presented at CG&S Cttee meeting	10.13	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	No formal response to VFM. Finance is moving reporting to O&S rather than CG&S so will confirm.
	6.2 Ensure regular review of arrangements for managing the property portfolio and report to committee.	Review to be commissioned Summer 2025	10.7	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates Strategic Director – Place, Dawn Hudd		

**Governance**

**Outcome:** Implement effective governance across the organisation, so decisions are made at the right level, with accountabilities and responsibilities clear. Decision-making will be open and transparent, supported by evidence and a committee system that provides constructive challenge.

Objectives	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Update / Changes since May 2024
7 Increase <b>officer and member awareness of the Best Value Duty</b> , and improve quality of challenge between members and officers.	7.1 Member and officer development programmes to be revised and relaunched	September 2024	6.7, 8.18	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
	7.2 Briefing session on Best Value duty to be carried out for all staff and all members	Autumn 2024 October: Councillor training November: officer training	6.7	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	Initially had date for Councillor training is 18th June but this had to be delayed, due to external trainer availability.  The training to all councillors will now be on 17th October

					SS will do follow up training to all officers after 17th October.
	7.3 MO briefing note on Best Value duty will follow the briefing sessions.	June 2024	6.7	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	To mitigate the delay in 7.2, SS sent out a briefing note out to all councillors.
	7.4 Finance training to be provided to all members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee in advance of budget scrutiny	January 2025	9.3	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Planned.
8 Ensure <b>decision-making</b> happens in the right places with clear <b>accountability</b> .	8.1 Review and update the Council's constitution through JCRG, underpinned by a programme of training, followed by regular monitoring. (The Joint Constitutions Review Group is in operation, reviewing and updating the constitutions.)	Complete Constitution review by September 2025	9.13	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	In process.
	8.2 Joint Constitutions Review Group to include review of scheme of delegations, followed by regular review of schemes of delegation and decision-making protocols.	June 2024	8.20	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	Proposed officer scheme of delegations at Full Council 23 July.
	8.3 Ensure process of monitoring the exercise of officers' delegations.	Develop process by July 2024	8.12	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	This will be developed once approved on 23 July.
	8.5 Ensure that all decisions are evidenced and recorded following good principles of public law. The development of the new Corporate Values emphasises the importance of evidence-based decisions, and cost-benefit analysis to deliver value for money.	Corporate Values adopted May 2024	9.14	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Ongoing
	8.5 Implement revised and ongoing member and officer development programmes, training for officers on decision-making. Review capacity and training to ensure cost-benefit analyses underpin decisions.	Development programme relaunch September 2024	6.7	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
	8.6 Implement regular meetings of statutory officers with appropriate agendas and minutes, focusing on strategic issues, performance and risks, rather than on operational matters, including regular meetings with external auditors.	Completed	8.7 8.9	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	8.7 Officer decision-making will be reviewed to ensure decisions are made at the right level, with a decision hierarchy, compatible terms of reference, agendas and minutes.	Completion September 2024	8.19i 8.8	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	

9 Undertake the Governance Work Programme to <b>revise the constitution</b> and ensure the Council uses <b>best practice governance processes and procedures</b> .	9.1 Reviewed Council Procedure Rules to be adopted	Completed	7.15	Strategic Director of Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
	9.2 Review the way Committees operate and plan their work, to ensure that council services are appropriately scrutinised.	Ongoing (see below)	8.17i 8.3 8.4	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
	9.3 Review terms of reference of all Committees	May 2025	8.17		TBC July JCRG meeting, Standards Committees September Council Oct. / Nov
	9.4 Review matters reserved to full Council and local choice functions	May 2025	8.17i		
	9.5 Give consideration to a dedicated Committee to be responsible for the statutory audit function of the Council	May 2025	8.17iii		
	9.6 Review operation of Executive, including agenda planning and decision-making	May 2025	8.17i 8.3		
	9.7 Review the way the Executive operates through the Executive Procedure Rules, bring the protocol to Full Council	May 2025	8.17i		Executive Decision Making Protocol JCRG, CGSC July / Aug, Full Council Sept.
	9.8 Review the effectiveness of the Council's scrutiny function, considering abolishing the Executive Advisory Boards and creating an additional Overview & Scrutiny Committee.	Underway May 2024	8.17ii 8.4		
	9.9 Review the arrangements and operation of the Executive Shareholder and Trustee committee to ensure good governance practice, and that the Committee has oversight and responsibility for the Council's shareholder relationships.	January 2025	10.14		

**Culture**  
**Outcome:** Embed a public service culture, outward-facing, innovative, building partnerships, listening to and working with our communities and businesses to deliver effective services that are value for money

Objectives	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Update / Changes since May 2024
10 Embed a <b>positive culture of sharing information</b> , whilst respecting the duty of confidentiality. <b>We listen and respond</b> to colleagues, residents and businesses.	10.1 Review, adopt and promote new whistleblowing policy.	Completed January 2024	8.13	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
	10.2 Review officer code of conduct and HR policies.	Review officer code of conduct April – Jun 2024 and Communicate to all staff by Summer 2024  Kick off review of all key HR policies Summer 2024	8.19iii 8.13 8.14	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	
	10.3 Training for all of JMT by HR specialist on how to conduct employment investigations.	Summer 2024		Assistant Director of Organisational	

				Development, Robin Taylor	
	10.4 Increase and improve communication between services, colleagues and stakeholders. Establish new weekly staff engagement forum has been to encourage a more open, collaborative culture.	Ongoing Complete	9.8	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	Weekly staff briefings
	10.5 Ensure CMB explicitly takes a more open approach, including Member briefings on contentious issues, supported by clear confidentiality duty.  All-Member briefing in May 2024 to take Members through this report and improvement plan.	Ongoing  All-member briefing May 2024	9.8	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	10.6 Briefing for members and councillors on exempt and confidential information	Summer 2024	9.4	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	Completed 15 May
	10.7 Share this report with Waverley Borough Council to discuss implications with WBC Members. Report shared with WBC, and members briefed.	Report shared with WBC executive, WBC group leaders briefed	4.4 12.14	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	LF to check if it needs to go to JCC
11 Embrace opportunities for <b>innovative working</b> , including through <b>partnerships</b> .	11.1 Waverley Borough Council to consider carrying out a similar review.	WBC have commissioned a review from SOLACE, date to be confirmed.	12.14	Chief Executive, Pedro Wrobel	
	11.2 Establish effectiveness of the collaborative working arrangements, including benefits. (£700k of financial savings delivered so far, with an additional £400k between both authorities budgeted for 24/25.)	Full cost benefit analysis of collaboration to be produced over Summer 2024	12.11 12.5	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Commenced work with Local Partnerships
	11.3 Review the: aims; short and long term priorities; programme governance arrangements; and current and future resourcing, of the Transformation and Collaboration Programme.	July 2024	11.12 12.11 12.15 12.8 10.9	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	In process.
	11.4 Develop a plan for spend on the Transformation and Collaboration Programme to access flexible use of capital receipts regime.	May 2024	10.9 11.12	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Flexible Use of Capital Receipts policy live in the Feb budget paper.
	11.5 Undertake a gap analysis between revised Transformation and Collaboration Programme and current resource and capability levels.	July 2024	12.15 12.8 10.9 11.12	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	In process.

<b>Service delivery</b>					
<b>Outcome:</b> Ensure effective service delivery, focused on achieving the right outcomes for residents and businesses, and supported by an effective performance reporting, risk-management, monitoring and audit regime					
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions and status</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>SOLACE Para</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Update / Changes since May 2024</b>
12 <b>Review current arrangements for service delivery</b> , ensuring the right processes are achieving the right outcomes.	12.1 Review the operation of the generic back-office team handling a range of different processes, and its relationship with front line services.	Autumn 2024	11.11	Assistant Director of Communications and Customer Service, Nicola Haymes	Commenced.
13 Ensure effective service delivery through <b>monitoring, reporting, management and auditing of performance and risks</b> , so that relevant service risks and outcomes are identified and measured, KPIs are strategically aligned, risks are analysed and mitigated and areas of underperformance are addressed. Ensure that performance and risk frameworks are meaningful and visible to Members.	13.1 Review internal audit plan quarterly as risks and issues emerge to ensure a more robust plan and review process	IA Plan reviewed May 2024.	8.15	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Quarterly review
	13.2 Review performance and risk management frameworks to ensure there is a clear golden thread between strategic goals and performance monitoring.  Ensure regular performance monitoring, ensure it is visible and informs decision-making.	July 2024	8.10	CMB and Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	Risk framework has been reviewed, we have agreed to develop a new risk management strategy and approach the Council that meets sector best practice and improves the internal control environment: aiming for April 2025.
	13.3 Promote the existing Performance Agreement Process (PAM), guidance and documentation. Review PAM process in line with the newly developed corporate strategy and values once those are agreed and published.	Promote PAMs April – Align with strategy and values Summer 2024.	8.11 8.19ii	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	
	13.4 Revise quarterly performance reporting format with changes to format of risk registers to include high level Red, Amber, Green dashboard and quarter-to-quarter direction of travel.	May 2024	8.19ii 8.10 8.11	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	We developed a new risk register template that improves the format and has a risk heatmap, with direction of travel.
	13.5 Corporate risk register to be reviewed and updated by CMB and Assistant Director of Organisational Development on a quarterly basis.	Completed 26 March 2024. Quarterly reviews will now take place.	8.10	CMB and Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	
	13.6 Ensure service risks are reviewed by JMT members at quarterly risk management group meetings, with any key matters escalated to CMB.	Quarterly reviews by JMT	8.10	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	
	13.7 Corporate and enterprise portfolio risk registers to be reviewed at least quarterly by CMB.	Quarterly review by CMB	8.10	CMB	
	13.8 Implement a system for the consistent design and approval of service plans and their associated budgets, providing clear accountability and reflecting the scheme of delegations approved by the Council.  Revised service plan design with section for budgets, awaiting JMT approval.	New service plan design and finalise documents July 2024	8.11 11.9 10.3	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor	This has commenced with Strategy & Finance teams.
13.4 – changed to completed.					

	13.9 Continue collaborative working between Finance and Organisational Development to produce service plans with accurate budget information	New service plan design and finalise documents July 2024	8.11 11.9	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	This has commenced with Strategy & Finance teams.
<b>Housing</b>					
<b>Outcome:</b> Ensure that housing services are effective, value for money, and recognise the vital importance of providing a safe and secure home					
<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Actions and status</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>SOLACE Para</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Update / Changes since May 2024</b>
14 Ensure robust governance and assurance controls are in place for Housing Services	14.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive action plan to address the findings and recommendations of the SOLACE governance review of housing	Completed	Hsg review	Strategic Director Housing & Environment, Julian Higson	Commenced implementation with workstream leads within Housing.
15 Ensure that landlord services are compliant with legislative requirements, including building safety and the four Consumer Standards	15.1 Commission an external expert assessment against the new Consumer Standards, to include a gap analysis and recommendations for action	Commissioned	Hsg Review	Assistant Director of Housing, Annalisa Howson	Housing Quality Network (HQN) appointed to complete a mock inspection against all RSH consumer standards over the summer, to identify areas of compliance and improvement.
16 Deliver high quality value for money housing services	16.1 Implement a transformation programme for housing services to achieve best in sector outcomes for residents, building on the findings of the SOLACE review and external assessment.	October/November 2024		Strategic Director of Housing & Environment, Julian Higson	Phase 1 SOLACE Actions started; external assessment findings will be added post September when available.



## New actions added to the Improvement Plan:

Actions and status	By when?	Owner	Update / Changes since May 2024
Replenish the Council's reserves position which has been depleted in recent years, becoming an adverse indicator on OFLOG finance indicators.	Autumn 2024	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	
Develop a written agreement and engagement approach with the Unions Guildford Borough Council recognise which clearly states what we will consult on with them, and how we will engage with them.	January 2025	Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Robin Taylor Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
Upskill key officers in fraud awareness and prevention	Summer 2024	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	Senior officer from housing, legal and finance attended and have cascaded the training.
Review the governance process and reporting on declarations of officer interests, gifts and hospitality	March 2025	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
Develop a new Money Laundering Policy	Summer 2024	Strategic Director of Finance (S151), Richard Bates	Anti Money Laundering Policy was approved at CGSC, alongside the updated Anti Fraud & Corruption Strategy, Anti Bribery Policy, Counter Fraud Policy and Fraud Prosecution Policy
Develop a policy for how the council uses interim staff.	December 2024	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	
Review and update our member / officer relationship protocol, including training for councillors and staff	March 2025	Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services, Susan Sale	Officers expressed a need for aligning, refreshing and reviewing the protocol. Training: responsibilities and relationships between Councillors and Officers is arranged for councillors and staff. Protocol is developed and will be running through committee process.