

Best Value improvement Board

TITLE	Author	ITEM NO	Date
Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 – April-Sept 2017 Update	Afazul Hoque Interim Service Manager Strategy, Policy & Performance		11 th September 2017

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Council's Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 covering the period April-September 2017. The report builds on the June 2017 submission to the Secretary of State and details the continuous progress against the five areas of Communications, Property, Elections, Organisational Culture and Grants and the 26 actions found within the Improvement Plan.
- 1.2. The Directions from the Secretary of State for Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) requires the Council to submit quarterly update reports. The second quarterly update report will be submitted on 29th September 2017.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The Board is asked to:
1. Consider and comment on the draft update report attached as Appendix 1
 2. Consider and agree any revised milestone timescales in the Improvement Plan attached as Appendix 2.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The Council as part of its final submission to the Secretary of State for DCLG submitted a Best Value Improvement Plan 17-18 and outlined proposals to set up a Best Value Improvement Board to drive sustainable improvement across the organisation by providing oversight, support and challenge. Following the Secretary of State revoking the previous Directions and the removal of the Commissioners involved in the governance of the Council, the Secretary of State issued new Directions which will be in force until 30th September 2018.
- 3.2. In line with the new Directions the Council has undertaken the following:
- Submission of quarterly reports on all outstanding actions in the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 to the Secretary of State with the first update submitted in June 2017;
 - Set up a new Best Value Improvement Board, chaired by the Mayor, with cross party representation and external representatives to provide suitable challenge to improve all Council activities;

- Developed proposals for an independent review of achievement against the Best Value Action Plan and Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18. This will be undertaken with the LGA in the form of a Corporate Peer Review and is planned for June 2018.
- 3.3. The Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 has five key priority areas comprising 26 strategic actions. These priority areas are a continuance of those found in the Best Value Action Plans arising from the original Secretary of State's Directions. The Plan demonstrates continued implementation where previous activities could not be implemented before the Directions expired as well as continued improvements.
 - 3.4. During the period April-Sept 2017 work has continued to deliver the milestones in the Improvement Plan. Regular updates have been provided to Corporate Leadership Team and all activities have been incorporated within individual Directorate Plans to ensure focus remains on delivery.
 - 3.5. A review has been undertaken on the lessons learnt from the delivery of the UK Parliamentary Election 2017. These will be taken forward for the upcoming local elections in 2018. Following discussions with the Cabinet Office the Council has withdrawn from participating in the Pilot ID Scheme as there was not sufficient time to develop an effective scheme. A project group will meet on a monthly basis to plan for 2018 elections ensuring all milestones set out in the Best Value Improvement Plan are delivered.
 - 3.6. The Council's new Communications Strategy, now widely shared with four major campaigns, launched this quarter. An asset audit (identifying 1,183 marketing sites) has been completed and poster sites and 12 plasma screens are now live in the Council Town Hall, Mulberry Place. An intranet project manager is now in post and specification/project scope is currently under development. The Council's revised core values have been agreed by senior management and communicated to all staff. Conversation groups are also in place to engage staff in upcoming changes.
 - 3.7. The Children's Services Improvement Board has now met three times, and has set a clear forward plan to focus on relevant thematic issues for each meeting. The Improvement Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State on 19 July 2017. This will be updated monthly, and will feed into the Quarterly Progress Report to the Best Value Improvement Board, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
 - 3.8. Planning consent has been granted for the conversion to residential use for two vacant community buildings that will be transferred to Housing. Temporary community use has also been agreed for a vacant community building by the Mayor.
 - 3.9. The review of the Third Sector Team has been a comprehensive review and is now complete and proposals for consultation have been produced. The review included benchmarking with other Local Authorities, a full options appraisal (exploring savings and efficiencies, incorporating Commissioner, Committee and Senior Management expectations) and liaison with our ICT

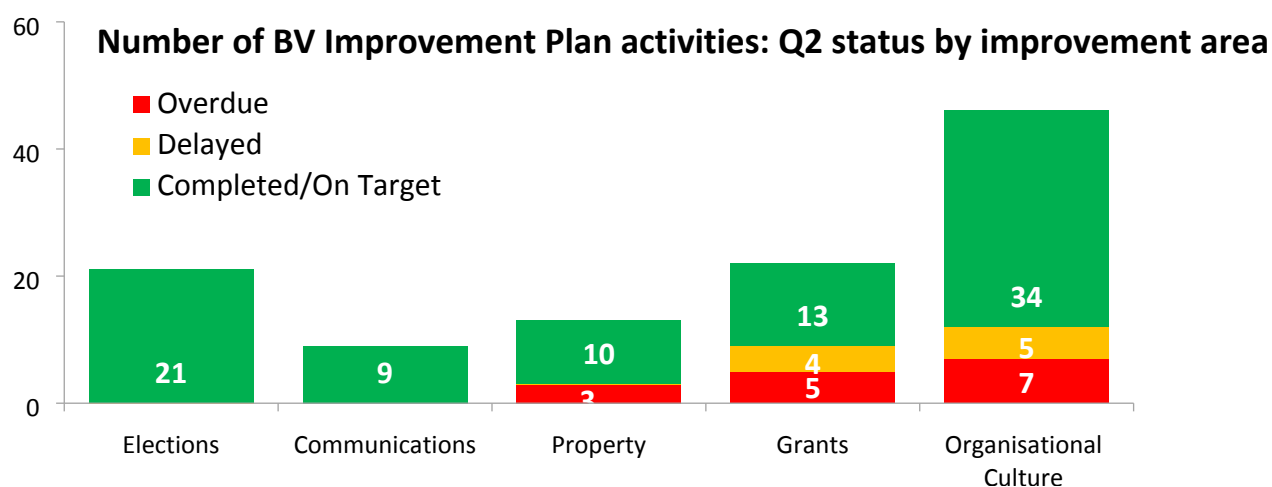
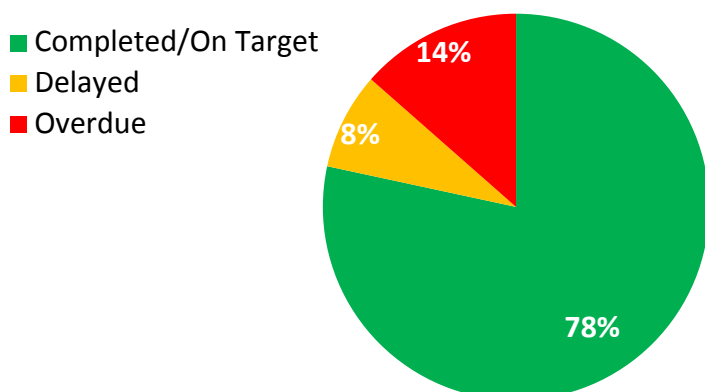
partner to develop an improved, transparent, online Grants system. Commissioning of the Community Cohesion Theme completed for 5 out of the 8 lots that were put out to tender with plans to award the remaining 3 lots in the next few months. Scoping work for development of Grants Policy completed, which will be developed with stakeholders over the next quarter.

4. OVERALL PROGRESS AGAINST BEST VALUE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

4.1. The charts below shows progress against the 115 milestones in the Best Value Improvement Plan. In order to ensure consistency in the reporting of the status of key milestones the following criteria have been applied:

- **On Target** – where the key milestone will be achieved by the deadline
- **Completed** – Where the key milestone has been achieved by the deadline
- **Delayed** – where the key milestone has not yet been completed but will be completed within a month of the original deadline
- **Overdue** - where the key milestone has been delayed by more than a month from the date of the original deadline

BV Improvement Plan activities : Overall Q2 Status



5. **COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**

- 5.1. The Best Value Improvement Plan is a priority for the Council, and requisite resources have been identified within the budget in order to deliver the outcomes. Any additional resources required to deliver any of the activities will need relevant authority before commencing.

6. **LEGAL COMMENTS**

- 6.1. The Council is a best value authority within the meaning of Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999. As a best value authority, the Council has an obligation under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness” (the best value duty).
- 6.2. Where the Secretary of State is satisfied that an authority is not meeting its best value duty, the Secretary of State may: (1) direct the authority to take action to bring itself into compliance with that duty; (2) direct that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee and that the authority follow the Secretary of State’s instructions and provide such assistance as may be required (Local Government Act 1999). In accordance with this power the Secretary of State gave directions to the Council on 17 December 2014, 29 April 2015 and 6 May 2015. Revised directions were also given on 16 January 2017.
- 6.3. The directions are enforceable by the Secretary of State, who may seek an order in the High Court requiring the Council to remedy any breach. Under the current circumstances, it is appropriate for the Council to take steps to comply with the directions and to monitor its compliance with the directions. The report relevantly informs members of progress and appropriately indicates that Cabinet approval will be sought before presenting the required update to the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- 6.4. Although the Directions expired on 31st March 2017 and the specified functions to be carried out by the Commissioners on behalf of the Secretary will return to the authority, it is open to the Secretary of State to issue fresh directions to the Council for it to take specific action which is considered necessary or expedient to secure the Council’s compliance with its best value duty without specifying that specified functions be carried out by the Secretary of State or a nominee.
- 6.5. When taking action in response to the directions, the Council must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the public sector equality duty). Compliance with this duty has been a feature, to the extent relevant, of the Council’s action in response to the directions.

6.6. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Appendix 1: Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 summary

Appendix 2: Best Value Improvement Plan 2017-18 delivery plan