

Cumberland Council

Improvement Panel

Draft Terms of Reference

Purpose

1. The purpose of the Panel is:

- To provide external advice, challenge, and expertise to Cumberland Council in driving forward the development and delivery of their Budget Improvement Plan;
- To assure key stakeholders, including Government, Executive, External Auditors, Audit Committee/Scrutiny (whilst not accountable to them) about progress in delivering necessary Improvement Plan actions;
- To provide regular progress reports to the Council on the Budget Improvement plan and Transformation delivery; and
- Seek assurance that key decisions are made cognisant of the financial implications and impact on in-year budgets and the long term MTFS.

2. This will involve:

- Providing regular advice, challenge, and support to the Council on the full range of their financial improvement activities and on delivery of the recommendations in the CIPFA/Government report.
- Regularly monitoring progress against key target improvement indicators, to ensure financial sustainability of the Council is achieved in XX years.
- Working together across specialisms, acknowledging and challenging key dependencies with a collegiate approach to identifying, managing and resolving risk.
- Exploring key issues in detail through deep dives and specially commissioned pieces of work and through workshops.
- Ensuring key decisions are made cognisant of the financial implications and impact on in-year budgets and the long term MTFS.

Meetings

3. Initial Improvement Panel meetings will be held in person on a monthly basis, commencing in September 2024. This will be the subject of regular reviews to ensure appropriate expertise and impact. The first review will take place after the Council's February 2025 budget report. Panel meetings will be held in private with minutes produced also to be private. The Panel will produce reports to Council which will be in the public domain.

Membership

4. Improvement Panel will comprise:

- Independent Chair – Rob Tinlin (former CEX at Southend).
- Independent External Member – Aidan Dunn (Dorset) - TBC
- Independent External Member (Childrens) - Sally Robinson (Hartlepool)
- Independent External Member (Adults) - Jane Robinson (Durham)
- Independent External Labour Councillor – Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton (Leader – Barnsley)
- Independent External Conservative Councillor – Cllr Richard Clewer (Leader – Wiltshire)
- LGA Regional Representative – Dan Archer
- Leader of the Council – Cllr Mark Fryer
- Chief Executive of the Council – Andrew Seekings
- Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Adults and Community Health Portfolio Holder – Councillor Lisa Brown
- Non Statutory Deputy Leader and Children's Services, Family Wellbeing and Housing Portfolio Holder (Statutory Lead Member for Children's Services) – Cllr Emma Williamson
- Financial Planning and Assets Portfolio Holder - Councillor Barbara Cannon

5. Additional independent external members may be appointed to the Panel in the future if

required.

6. Key Officers will attend the Panel meetings as and when required.

Wider Local and Political Engagement

Interaction with Corporate Governance

7. The Improvement Panel will work closely and in concert with the other Governance arrangements across the Council.

Costs and Support

8. The costs associated with the Improvement Panel will be met by Cumberland Council (possibly with support from the LGA).

9. Independent Panel members may need to be paid a fee for their work. The fee will be paid on a personal basis.

10. Panel members will need to work flexibly as the demand of the role requires. However, Cumberland Council may wish to agree in advance the number of days advice to be provided by each panel member over each twelve month period.

11. The Panel will be supported by the Council's programme office to ensure that the overall Improvement plan is proactively tracked, kept up to date and that issues and risks are managed on a day to day basis through officers.