

Title of report: Quarter 4 Performance Report

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 16 May 2024
Cabinet member:	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
Report by:	Director of Public Health
Report Author:	Head of Corporate Performance and Intelligence

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review performance for Q4 2023/24 and to report the performance position across all Directorates for this period.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **To review performance for Quarter 4 2023/24, and identify any additional actions to achieve future performance measures**

Alternative options

1. Cabinet may choose to review delivery and operational performance more or less frequently; or request alternative actions to address any identified areas of under-performance, including referral to the relevant scrutiny committee.

Key considerations

Performance: Economy

2. All the projects are being captured in detail on a delivery dashboard and progress monitored. Of the 52 activities of the delivery plan, 14 are complete (blue), 19 are on track (green), 15 are at risk (amber) and 4 are compromised (red).
3. Where targets have been set, 58 percent (50 percent at Q3) of performance measures within the theme are on target/complete.

Performance: Environment

4. Of the 37 activities (Projects) of the delivery plan, 12 are complete (blue); 17 are on track (green); 6 are at risk (amber); 1 are compromised (red); and 1 is paused (violet).
5. Environmental Health (8 vacancies) and Development Planning continue to carry significant levels of vacancies which is significantly impacting performance. Following a recent recruitment round 3 Senior Planners have been recruited, and we are continuing to seek to fill remaining vacancies. We have introduced market supplement payment for Environmental Health officers, to help retain current and fill some of the vacancies (funded through the reduction in headcount). Both planning and regulatory services are a focus of the council's transformation programme, and will significantly benefit from the introduction of a modern IT system (approved in the February full council budget) replacing the very dated and soon to expire IT system which is inefficient.
6. FCC have been appointed as our new provider for the collection of household waste. The new contract will provide the council with new vehicles across the fleet, and 2 electric vehicles will operate in the city centre.
7. Work to deliver the Future Operating Model has progressed during the period.
8. The new Head of Transport & Parking commenced work with the Council in January.

Performance: Community

9. Of the 84 activities of the delivery plan, 32 are complete (blue); 30 are on track (green); 17 are at risk (amber); 0 are compromised (red); and 5 are paused (violet). Permanent admissions to residential & care homes for younger people (18-64) per 100,000 population has not met expected level. The expected level will be reviewed for 24/25 to a rate of 18 per 100,000 – this is based on previous year's trends and also still a challenging level to meet.
10. Progress continues to be made in relation to short breaks for children, including mobilisation of new providers offering group based activities and 1:1 daytime support. Work is continuing to commission overnight short breaks including: two potential short breaks foster carers (subject to panel approval) with the independent sector; commencement of procurement for overnight residential short breaks on a block contract basis.

11. The annual fee rate review process for adult care services has commenced and a survey of existing providers was undertaken during December to better understand the pressures they are currently experiencing. There has been representation from a higher number of providers during the year, requesting an in year review of fees. Given the economic climate and the recently announced increase to the National Living Wage, it is anticipated that this trend will continue.
12. In February 2024, Ofsted carried out their fourth Monitoring Visit focussed on children in care aged 16 and 17 years old and care leavers. Ofsted noted that our practice is still too variable and whilst some children and young people receive a better service, not enough do. Whilst feedback from Ofsted across each of the four Ofsted monitoring visits has acknowledged that improvements have been made, not all improvement is quick enough and some basic practice is not yet consistently good enough for all children and young people.
13. Improved practice across the service is focusing on:
 - I. The quality of assessments;
 - II. The quality of plans and planning;
 - III. Supervision and management oversight;
 - IV. Purposeful visiting,
 - V. Safely reducing the numbers of children in our care
14. The Practice Standards have been amended and to reflect a focus on high support and high challenge, the Performance Meeting framework and reporting template has been amended so that these now incorporate a focus on outstanding actions from audits and enhanced performance narrative.
15. The Ofsted annual conversation has been moved to 21 August 2024 and the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) is being prepared. A fifth Ofsted monitoring visit is likely in the summer and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) inspection is also anticipated.
16. The refreshed Improvement Plan is due to be presented to Cabinet in June 2024. Deborah McMillan has taken over from Gladys Rhodes-White as our DfE Improvement Advisor. Eleanor Brazil remains the Children's Commissioner, and her progress review report was published in December 2023. The next review is expected to take place in June 2024.

Performance: Corporate

17. The percentage of invoices paid within target is 92.26% for the 12 months of this financial year, better than target and performance at the same point last year; this despite the increase in invoices being processed.
18. The processing of housing benefit new claims and change of circumstances continues to remain steady and within target.
19. Council tax collection rate is now in a realistic comparable state from hereon in has hit Target for 23/24 year. Business rates collection rate gap is closing significantly with only a 0.0530% gap compared to last year. As there has been a re-valuation in business rates for 2023, it should be noted the overall charge of Business rates last year will differ to this year but expected collection remains within the scope of last year.
20. Despite being still behind target, the response rates to complaints has improved during the last couple of months. Historically responses to complaints have been late, inconsistent or non-

existent. There has, however, been significant improvement in the response times across directorates. Saying this, there is still a cause for concern in that complaints are not being considered a priority, leaving complainants feeling unheard and unimportant. Internal workshops are offered to C&YP on a weekly basis and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Complaints Handling training is offered to all directorates. A 'best practice' has been written to share with staff to ensure we are following the statutory guidance when handling a complaint.

21. Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests remain above target.
22. Through the past year the annualised sickness absence rate has increased from 8.81 days at the end of February 2023 to 9.17 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at the end of February 2024, reversing the improved rates that had been reported since August.
23. The service is continuing to proactively manage absence and greater focus is being given to supporting our employees to be healthy in order to improve attendance. Work is in progress to focus on different ways to support employees to stay at work or return to work as soon as possible. These activities include: improving and refreshing manager skills on having difficult conversations to promote good relationships where employees feel supported; rolling out mental health awareness training to ensure we can support those who are struggling and intervene before the situation reaches crisis point; promoting increased physical activity.
24. Workforce stability is good and improving, with turnover decreasing from 18.18% at the start of the year to 12.65% in February 2024. The council approach to reward and recognition continues to be reviewed to ensure that the overall employment offer is competitive, and Herefordshire Council is seen as an employer of choice, continuing to capitalise on the very positive results of last year's staff survey.
25. Continued shift in proportion of parking transactions being made by card or phone. 62.02% transactions have been made by card or phone in the last 12 months.

The Office for Local Government – Local Authority Data Explorer

26. The Office for Local Government (Oflog) is an office of the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and was launched in July 2023. Oflog has been established to provide information about the performance of local government to audiences in all levels of government and to the public.
27. One of the primary tools Oflog will use to monitor local government performance will be via the [Local Authority Data Explorer](#). The aim of the tool is to create an overlapping and holistic picture of local government performance – with the facility to easily view metrics across different domains (Although is generally out of date)
28. The data presented in the Data Explorer will be standardised, to enable better and meaningful comparisons between authorities, and it will have the functionality to show local authorities alongside their statistical neighbours. For statistical neighbours, Oflog will use Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA)'s [nearest neighbour model](#) in order to try to compare authorities who are similar in terms of demographics and size, amongst other things.
29. At present, the Explorer covers six areas of performance. These are: waste management, planning, adult social care, roads, adult skills, corporate and finance
30. The current set of measures identified on the data explorer are found in Appendix B.
31. The Data found for Oflog has not changed from Q3 as they work over a longer delivery period. Some of the data is also historic and therefore should be interpreted with caution.

Community impact

32. In accordance with the accepted code of corporate governance, the council must ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. To support effective accountability the council is committed to reporting on actions completed and outcomes achieved, and ensuring stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the council plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner.
33. Regularly reviewing performance with a view to identifying actions which will further drive improvement in outcomes or efficiencies helps ensure the council achieves its County Plan priorities.

Environmental Impact

34. This report details how progress is being made in achieving the Delivery Plan which details how the council is working to deliver the environmental ambitions set out in the County Plan. Individual projects and deliverables included within the Delivery Plan will all be subject to their own governance arrangements and assessment of environmental and ecological.

Equality duty

35. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

36. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. As this is a decision on back office functions, we do not believe that it will have an impact on our equality duty.

Resource implications

37. These recommendations have no direct financial implications, however cabinet may wish to consider how money is utilised in order to meet the council's objectives.

Legal implications

38. This Council is a best value authority designated under the Local Government Act 1999. It is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way it exercises its functions. Measuring performance is a tool to evidence such improvement.

Risk management

39. The risks associated with the council's business are recorded on the relevant service risk register and escalated in accordance with the council's Performance Management Framework and Risk Management Plan. The highest risks, i.e. those scoring greater than 16 after controls, are escalated to the council's Corporate Risk Register.

Consultees

40. None in relation to this report.

Appendices

Appendix A Delivery plan dashboards

Appendix B Oflog metrics

Background papers

None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 08/05/2024
Finance	Judith Tranmer	Date: 07/05/2024
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 29/04/2024
Communications	Luenne Featherston	Date 29/04/2024
Equality Duty		
Procurement		
Risk		

Approved by	Matt Pearce	Date 08/05/2024
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