

Title of report: Q2 Performance Report

Meeting: Cabinet

Meeting date: Thursday 21 December 2023

Report by: Cabinet member finance and corporate services

Report by: Director of Strategy and Transformation

Report author: Director of Strategy and Transformation

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review the performance for Quarter 2 2023/24 and to report the performance position across all Directorates for this period.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **To review the performance for Quarter 2 year 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

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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2. All the projects are being captured in detail on a delivery dashboard and progress monitored. Of the 22 activities of the delivery plan, 4 are complete (blue), 11 are on track (green), 5 are at risk (amber) and 2 are paused (violet).
3. Where targets have been set, 63 percent of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded targets – there remains some work within the directorates to ensure all measures have targets established.
4. Local Plan Review – a number of informative workshops have been held with cabinet over the last couple of months to clarify direction on a number of key issues. The draft plan is now being revised to reflect cabinet priorities, working towards REG 18 consultation in the spring 2024.
5. There has been a high take up of UK Shared Prosperity and Rural Prosperity Grants, with capital applications fully allocated to projects in 2023/24. For example, there was very high levels of applications for the Festivals and Events Grants which have supported existing and new activities over the summer.
6. A Planning Improvement Board has been established including the Leader, Cllr Swinglehurst and Cllr James (Chair of the Planning Committee) to oversee the implementation of the planning improvement plan. Improvements will enhance the service to planning and applicants, whilst making systems and processes more efficient. A capital programme bid has been submitted for the critical replacement of the very dated and extremely limited Civica IT system.
7. Herefordshire Council Building Control has been selected as a regional winner of the Local Authority Building Control Awards for the Eign Gate residential event and is a shortlisted finalist for the Grand Finals 2023.
8. The Environmental Health Team have again operated an out of hours service over July and August, investigating a high number of complaints related to outside night time events at a wide range of pubs and entertainment venues.
9. As part of the Planning Improvement Plan/ Directorate Transformation Programme, a review of systems and processes is underway, and planning pre-app services are due to be re-launched from January 2024. Although we continue to face high levels of turnover in the team. We are currently recruiting Head of Planning and Building Control, Strategic Planning and Neighbourhood Planning Manager, and 2 Senior Planner posts. However, high levels of vacancies are having an impact on planning performance.
10. A regulatory services transformation programme is also underway, reviewing the future requirements to deliver the service and seeking to reduce the large number of disparate teams. The Environmental Health team continue to face critical vacancies (8) and are unable to recruit to key posts.

Performance: Environment

11. Of the 26 activities (Projects) of the delivery plan, 2 are complete (blue); 22 are on track (green); and 2 are at risk (amber).
12. Where targets have been set, 80 percent of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded targets – there remains some work within the directorates to ensure all measures have targets established.
13. Work continues on the Public Realm Future Operating Model programme. We are actively engaged in discussions with Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) to agree the services that would be transferred back to the council and which will continue to be delivered by them. A final report is due to be presented to Cabinet in March 2024. At the same time, we have commenced a detailed discussion with BBLP with regard to the need to better manage our

existing plant and fleet. This will require a fundamental review of the existing fleet, and will identify those elements that need replacing and when, and will also provide the Service with options to reshape services as a result. Once the full fleet picture is developed, the funding arrangements to deliver this will need to be decided upon.

14. Keep Herefordshire Warm advice service is delivering as expected against target for this time of year and we have had a successful transition to a new provider – YES, after an open procurement exercise. The KPI is red due to the target doubling compared to last year (2,000 instead of 1,000 enquiries).
15. Carbon County Reduction – the first panel meeting for the Marches Energy Grant was held in September, 4 grants were awarded, totalling £43,164.93.
16. Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) 2 - the original procurement for this scheme has been abandoned based on the concerns and issues with Surefires ability to deliver the contract. The decision was taken following a briefing at Directorate Leadership Team.

The new Invitation to Tender went live on 10 October with a closing date of the 24 October and will be appointing two contractors in this round to reduce any further risk to the project. Residents who have applied for the scheme have been notified of the delay and this is being managed by Herefordshire Council and Severn Wye Energy Agency as our customer journey support; our first batch has been approved for 2 Park Homes and installs are in progress.
17. The pipeline to pass over to the new installers is 73 properties and promotional work is ongoing; we have re-forecast the number of properties for this financial year from 152 homes to 100.

Performance: Community

18. All performance measures in Community Wellbeing are currently on track to achieve target this quarter. Recruitment across the care sector remains a major challenge.
19. Of the 47 activities of the delivery plan, 16 are complete (blue); 21 are on track (green); 6 are at risk (amber); 2 are compromised (red); and 2 are paused (violet).
20. Social care operations and commissioning continues to work with partners to transform the discharge to assess offer for patients. The initial high level operational plan has been signed off and work is now underway on processes, standard operational procedures and resources behind all the pathways. While this work continues, there was a decline in people accessing a permanent residential setting in September following introducing new ways of working within the integrated discharge team.
21. Numbers into substance misuse treatment have increased and Herefordshire is on track to reach the ambitions set out in the drug strategy – From Harm to Hope. The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) is pleased with the outcomes being achieved in Herefordshire. In addition, treatment outcomes and representations into the service following treatment continue to show good outcomes. The number of people accessing treatment following leaving prison are low and need improvement. This is down to a number of reasons including recruitment and effectiveness of pathways. It may also be down to data flow. The next steps are to review the pathway with Turning Point, the substance misuse service, and probation using the national self-assessment framework to inform this. Turning Point are also in the process of recruiting new criminal justice workers to support the pathway.
22. Turning Point, has produced a number of short, but very powerful films to support recovery month. September is 'Recovery Month' and as part of this there is an organisation called Recovery Street Film Festival who gather short films about people's journey to recovery and then tour the country showing the ones that are shortlisted. The films below have been submitted from Herefordshire and we are hopeful they will be shortlisted:

- a. Matt's Story – Happy Days: <https://youtu.be/xUzfaHWCOfw>
 - b. Adam's Story – Brutal Honesty: https://youtu.be/DUo4P_mXF0I
 - c. Jimi's Story – Up Up and Away: [Up Up and Away - YouTube](#)
 - d. Caia's Story – Just want a normal life: https://youtu.be/rLTvZ_tQty4
 - e. Maria's Story – Spaghetti of Wool: [Spaghetti of Wool - YouTube](#)
23. The Local Government Association, in partnership with Partners in Care and Health, is offering a programme of free support to local authorities to enhance their commissioning functions. Herefordshire Council has taken up the offer and secured support for an independent review of the All Age Commissioning structure. The review will consider the overall effectiveness of the current structure, the limitations of the structure, the effectiveness of processes and function and make recommendations for improving the commissioning function, including structural changes. The review will take place between September 2023 and November 2023.
 24. As part of the Hereford Museum & Art Gallery Redevelopment, the Museum Service has finished removing collections from the building including the 1600 year old Roman-era floor mosaics which were successfully removed from the stair hall. Two public open days saw 200 people visit the building to see the mosaic be taken down.
 25. The temporary library is operating from the education room in the Museum Resource & Learning Centre. Hoard open mornings and family days have been well attended. A range of collections-based activity has been continuing in the stores, linked to the relocation of the collections from the Museum & Art Gallery.
 26. Following the first Monitoring Visit in March 2023, Ofsted carried out their second and third Monitoring Visits in June and September respectively. The second Monitoring Visit focussed on Children in Need or those subject to a Child Protection Plan. Ofsted observed that Social Work practice has started to improve and positive progress is being made with some families although the quality and effectiveness of practice remains variable.
 27. The third Monitoring Visit considered children in care and achieving permanence. There was positive feedback in respect of practice for our disabled children but the approach to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children was not deemed as equitable or inclusive. In both Monitoring Visits Ofsted recognised that some parts of the service are much improved and no formal safeguarding concerns were raised during the three Monitoring Visits. Evidence of progress was noted but the pace and impact of improvement needs to be improved upon.
 28. Work with our Improvement Partner, Leeds has started and following the launch events Restorative Practice training is being rolled out across the service and there has been positive feedback from staff. Leeds is also supporting the leadership team and initial sessions have been held. We have commissioned training in respect of Supervision focussing on front-line Managers.
 29. As part of the statutory notice, a Children's Commissioner was appointed to review the Council's capacity and capability to improve services within a reasonable timeframe. The Commissioner's initial report was published on 1 March 2023 and included several recommendations for the Council to resolve. A 6 months review of progress meeting took place to assist the Children's Commissioner in preparation with her next report and recommendations. The report by the Children's Commissioner is due to be published in December and will be shared with Cabinet in due course.

Performance: Corporate

30. A set of measures of corporate performance, which have been selected as an indication of the overall health of the organisation, are included in Appendix A. Where targets have been set, 79 percent of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded target.

31. The proportion of invoices paid on time continued to be better than target throughout Quarter 2 and better than the corresponding period last year; this despite the increase in invoices being processed from 51,844 to 54,867 over comparative periods.
32. Council tax collection rates remain on a par with last year; business rate collection rates are currently lower than last year, although the gap is closing significantly 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.
33. The processing of housing benefit new claims and change of circumstances continues to remain steady and within target.
34. Responding to FOIs and EIRs remains better than target (95%). 469 of the 479 requests (98.61%) received during the first six months have been responded to within timescale.
35. Despite being behind target there has been significant improvement in the response times to complaints across directorates. Historically responses to complaints have been late, inconsistent or non-existent. There has, however, been significant improvement in the response times across directorates. Internal workshops are offered to C&YP on a weekly basis and 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.
36. Through the past year the annualised sickness absence rate has increased from 8.72 days at the end of September 2022 to 8.99 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at the end of September 2023, however, this has decreased after identifying peaks during the winter months of 2022. Levels of absence attributed to Covid-19 did begin to stabilise, although the figures have fluctuated in the past 3 months, decreasing from 5.19% in August to 4.99% in September. The winter flu vaccination programme for 2023 for Council employees has commenced and should help to reduce the impact of influenza over the coming months.
37. The service is proactively managing 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.
38. Workforce stability is good and improving, with turnover decreasing from a little over 13% in August 2023 to 11.83% in October 2023. Of note is the turnover within Children and Young People that is now at 11.42% having been above 20% a year ago; and Adults and Communities seeing a 11.42% annualised turnover compared to 19.02% twelve months ago. It is anticipated that the Local Government Pay Award, may aid recruitment, particularly at the lower end of our pay bands, although many of our recruitment challenges remain. 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.
39. A continued positive shift in the proportion of parking transactions being made by card or phone has been maintained. 587,459 / 968,116 transactions have been made by card or phone in the first six months.
40. Improvement in recovery rate of penalty charge notices (PCN) has continued, meaning the average amount collected per PCN is just above the target.

Community impact

41. 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.
42. 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

43. 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

44. 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.
45. 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

46. 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

47. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Risk management

48. 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

49. None in relation to this report.

Appendices

Appendix A Delivery plan dashboards

Background papers

None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Governance	John Coleman	Date 01/12/2023
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 30/11/2023
Communications	Luenne Featherstone	Date 30/11/2023
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 30/11/2023
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 01/12/2023
Approved by	Amy Pitt	Date 13/12/2023