

Title of report: Q3 Performance Report

Meeting:	Cabinet
Meeting date:	Thursday 29 February 2024
Cabinet member:	Cabinet member finance and corporate services
Report by:	Director of Public Health
Report author:	Performance Team Lead

Classification

Open

Decision type

Non-key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To review performance for Q3 2023/24 and to report the performance position across all Directorates for this period.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **To review performance for Quarter 3 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 53 activities of the delivery plan, 7 are complete (blue), 22 are on track (green), 20 are at risk (amber) and 4 are compromised (red).
3. Where targets have been set, 50 percent (63 percent at Q2) of performance measures within the theme are on target.
4. Growth Hub business support services remain on track. However, funds provided via the LEP are due to end in March 2024. Government as yet have not provided any details of how Local Authorities can access funds for these services from April.
5. Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect visited the county on the 12 January. Very positive conversations were held regarding inward investment, growing the local economy and making the case for critical infrastructure.

Performance: Environment

6. Of the 35 activities (Projects) of the delivery plan, 6 are complete (blue); 22 are on track (green); 4 are at risk (amber); 2 are compromised (red); and 1 is paused (violet).
7. Where targets have been set, 33 percent of performance measures within the theme are on target.
8. Environmental Health (8 vacancies) and Development Planning continue to carry significant levels of vacancies which is significantly impacting performance. We are introducing market supplement payment for Environmental Health officers, to help retain current and fill some of the vacancies (funded through the reduction in headcount). We are discussing with Capita the possibility of utilising their planning services to provide some short term resilience, not least government have reduced the period to determine applications (16 weeks) before fees have to be repaid.
9. Both services are subject to transformation programmes, seeking to improve efficiencies, introduce a new planning and regulatory IT system (replacing capita), and reviewing structures.
10. Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) No of measures - Second round of procurement complete and awards made to two contractors – Evolve Energy Solutions & PHS Home Solutions. They have mobilised very quickly and 130 properties have been passed to them for Retrofit & Tech surveys. 43 quotes received to date, 20 of which have been approved by our funders and installs are being booked. The remaining quotes are pending funder's approval. The deadline for final batch submission has been changed to end of February.
11. Keep Herefordshire Warm (KHW) - the latest figure indicates that 19.2% or 16,302 households were in fuel poverty during 2021. Leaflet approved and being printed to send out with council tax bills. KHW now run Warmth on Prescription service funded by Household Support Fund.

Performance: Community

12. Of the 84 activities of the delivery plan, 26 are complete (blue); 38 are on track (green); 9 are at risk (amber); 6 are compromised (red); and 5 are paused (violet).
13. All but one of the performance measures in Community Wellbeing are on track to achieve target this quarter. The number of adults aged under 65 being admitted to care homes has significantly increased and the year-end target has already been reached at Q3.

14. The dementia friendly adaptations and refurbishment to Hillside have been completed. The Independent Living Demonstration Centre adaptations are due to be completed in early January, with a view to the Centre opening in March 2024.
15. The number of presentations to the Housing Solutions team has continued to rise with, on average two households being accommodated daily. Demand is exceeding supply so that the team is having to place households out of county but they are the priority to return to the county as soon as a vacancy become available. Concentrated work is underway with private landlords to secure additional temporary accommodation to obviate the use of bed and breakfasts/ hotels. In terms of rough sleepers, numbers have significantly reduced, which is contrary to the national trend. The winter provision opened on 11 December 2023 and has been delivered through a strong partnership of organisations and charities. The provision is a dormitory style shelter for men, with self-contained 'pods' for women and is staffed throughout the night by staff from partner charities and members of the local community, who have all been through a formal vetting process prior to appointment.
16. Significant progress has been made in relation to the working age adults transformation project. This has involved improving relationships between commissioners and providers, developing a co-production approach; developing specifications for the new framework for supported living and day opportunities and consultation on changes to the fee arrangements for Supported Living in relation to sleep-ins to bring these into line with the regional approach of charging a flat rate and average level of fee paid.
17. The draft Autism strategy, which is a joint strategy across Herefordshire and Worcestershire Councils and NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB), is in the final stages of consultation prior to formal approval. The Carers' Strategy work is progressing well, following consultation with a number of partnership boards and ongoing engagement with unpaid carers/those with lived experience. The aim is to complete the draft strategy early in 2024 for final consultation.
18. The number of people waiting for home care services has significantly reduced from over 100 in April 2023 to less than 20 in November 2023. This has involved bringing in new providers through the secondary framework and developing approaches with existing Framework 1 providers to expand provision into an area where care provision was extremely challenging.
19. 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; and exploration of alternative bespoke models of support with a view to starting a pilot early in January 2024.
20. 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.
21. Within the area of Children and Young People, Ofsted has completed three monitoring visits; in March 2023 focussing MASH and assessment; in June 2023 focussing on children in need and those subject to a child protection plan and in September 2023 focussing on children in care and achieving permanence. None of the three monitoring visits resulted in a formal safeguarding concern being raised. Whilst Ofsted highlighted that more work is needed, in all visits it was recognised that some parts of the service are much improved. Outside of the improvements needed within children's services, Ofsted challenged us in respect of some gaps in respect of performance reporting, limited recruitment activity and our engagement with

partners does not yet provide tangible benefits. The fourth monitoring visit, focussing on care leavers is expected in February 2024.

22. Work with our Improvement Partner, Leeds continues and most staff have now undertaken Restorative Practice training and there has been good engagement and positive feedback from staff.
23. The Commissioner, as part of the statutory notice, published a 6 month review of progress in December 2023. The Commissioner agrees with comments made by the Ofsted inspectors that there is evidence of some improvement and areas of much better practice although the pace of change is not fast enough.
24. In respect of performance, we have started to see some real traction and on a number of measures we are narrowing the gap between us and statistical neighbours or the England average. Our audit activity has increased and both these allow us to continue to focus on the quality of practice with increased vigour.
25. At present, the 2023 calendar year up to the end of December has exhibited a significant reduction in the numbers of KSI casualties recorded on the entire Herefordshire road network, provisionally standing at 72 recorded casualties. When comparing to both 2022 and the averages witnessed over the preceding 5 years, whilst both Q1 & Q2 exhibited KSI casualty numbers close to the average, Q3 & Q4 currently exhibit significantly low recorded numbers. At this stage figures quoted are to be considered provisional pending any "late" records and formal data sign off with West Mercia Police and the Department for Transport, later in 2024.
26. Reasoning for the reductions may be linked to a reduction in overall travel and are likely due to a number of wider influencing factors, which may ultimately be reflected in the overall national figures for the year. Firstly, both national research and experience suggests that road collisions and casualties reduce during periods of economic slowdown, which is likely to be influenced by the current cost of living crisis and higher inflation. Historically, this has been shown to impact on overall travel as the population seek to reduce the associated financial burden this may bring. Secondly, more frequent instances of inclement weather were experienced across both Q3 & Q4, which is also known to reduce overall levels of travel. A third factor relates to changes in the national level CRASH reporting system operated by the DfT through the Police. A review and changes to contributory factor coding numbers has been rolled out from the start of October which has introduced complications to the data recording and distribution process, and this may lead to a backlog of late records, as this issue is ironed out.

Performance: Corporate

27. 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, 74 per cent (79 percent at Q2) of performance measures within the theme have met, or exceeded target.
28. The percentage of invoices paid within target is 91.15% for the first nine months of this financial year, better than target and performance at the same point last year; this despite the increase in invoices being processed from 80,683 to 82,450 over comparative periods.
29. The processing of housing benefit new claims and change of circumstances continues to remain steady and within target.
30. Council tax collection rate is now in a realistic comparable state from hereon in and is only marginally behind the same point last year. Business rates collection rate gap is closing significantly with only a 0.05% 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.

31. 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 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.
32. FOI and EIR requests have reduced again during December and we are hoping that this is as a result of the information we have published via the disclosure log. The reduction in requests take pressure off service areas having to answer requests on top of their day to day duties. In addition to the 58 requests processed we also handled 22 requests under Business as Usual.
33. Through the past year the annualised sickness absence rate has increased from 8.77 days at the end of November 2022 to 9.13 days per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) at the end of November 2023, reversing the improved rates that had been reported since August.
34. 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.
35. Workforce stability is good and improving, with turnover decreasing from a little over 17% at the start of the year to 12.48% in November 2023. Of note is the turnover within Children and Young People that is now at 12% and Community Wellbeing seeing a 13.16% annualised turnover having each been at over 19% a year ago. 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.
36. The headcount has increased by 56 from 1,370 at the end 2022/23, to 1,426 at the end of November 2023. The FTE also increased by 44 from 1,223 to 1,277 over the same period. The increase is an ongoing trend, with a net increase in headcount across all the directorates apart from Economy and Environment over the past twelve months. This is as a result of increased recruitment activity and stabilising retention rates, resulting in more vacancies being filled.
37. Continued shift in proportion of parking transactions being made by card or phone. 893,413 / 1,451,775 transactions have been made by card or phone in the first nine months.

The Office for Local Government – Local Authority Data Explorer

38. 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.
39. Oflog aims are to ensure effective accountability; where councillors and the public are confident and have the information they need to effectively scrutinise local decisions; where council leaders and officers can benchmark themselves against their peers and find examples of practice to learn from; and where central government and its partners can quickly identify where there might be challenges and step in to give support, where appropriate.
40. 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.

41. 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.
42. At present, the Explorer covers six areas of performance. These areas are:
 - Waste management
 - Planning
 - Adult social care
 - Roads
 - Adult skills
 - Corporate and finance
43. Oflog are looking to supplement and expand the metrics in the Data Explorer to cover a more holistic range of local government responsibilities (e.g. public health). It is also seeking to improve the existing metrics in future versions to make them more outcomes focused as it matures. Services are giving consideration to the availability of data for these metrics, with a view to their inclusion as part of future quarterly performance reports to cabinet, which should enable better and meaningful comparisons between authorities through the Data Explorer, which 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.
44. The current set of measures identified on the data explorer are found in Appendix B.

Community impact

45. 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.
46. 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

47. 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

48. 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.

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

Resource implications

50. 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

51. 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

52. 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

53. 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:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published

Governance	John Coleman	Date 06/02/2024
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 05/02/2024
Communications	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 05/02/2024
Risk	Kevin Lloyd	Date 21/02/2024

Approved by Hilary Hall Date 23/02/2024

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.