

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

21st March 2024

Performance Report – Q3 2023/24

Report of: David Brown – Director of Governance and Compliance

Report Reference No: CP/40/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 To provide the Committee with an oversight of organisational performance against the priorities and vision set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.
- 2 This report covers Q3 of 2023/24, 1st October 2023 – 31st December 2023.
- 3 This report supports the responsibility of the Corporate Policy Committee to have a co ordinating role across all other committees and to exercise corporate oversight of outcomes, performance, budget monitoring and risk management.
- 4 Appendix 1 provides the detail of performance and progress against priorities.

Executive Summary

- 5 This report gives an update on performance against the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan. It describes performance in Q3 (October - December 2023) against the objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- 6 During Q3, there were continued national challenges such as continuing high inflation, continuing cost of living pressures, and recruitment and retention challenges.

- 7 Despite these national and local challenges continuing, there were some positive areas of performance in Q3, including evidenced improvements in childrens services and progress in planning.
- 8 However, as activities continue to be taken to tackle the Councils' financial challenges, such as tight management of recruitment, there remains a risk that some areas of performance, particularly those in respect of timeliness of responses, could continue to be impacted.
- 9 Analysis of any performance changes will be undertaken to ensure that impact and mitigation can be highlighted, as soon as possible, should this be required during the next reporting period.
- 10 There are still anticipated future inspections in both Adults Health and Integration and Childrens Services, which will likely place additional pressure upon the Council, with a risk that recommendations from these inspections will lead to further demands being placed upon already pressured services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Confirm understanding of organisational performance in Q3 of 2023/24.
2. Consider any amendments in performance reporting, and/or additional data and intelligence that should be included within performance management reporting.

Background

- 11 The Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25 outlines 20 priorities for the Council, 6 aligned with the "Open" aim, to be an open and enabling organisation, 8 priorities are aligned to the "Fair" aim, a Council which enables and cares about people and 6 priorities are aligned to the "Green" aim, a thriving and sustainable place. The 20 priorities are as follows:

An open and enabling organisation

- Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making
- Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation
- Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation
- Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
- Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered
- Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents

A council which empowers and cares about people

- Work together with residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase opportunities for all children and young adults with additional needs
- Ensure all children have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

A thriving and sustainable place

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- Reduce impact on the environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- Be a carbon neutral council by 2025

- 12 This report reviews performance against priorities in the Corporate Plan and focuses upon a “One Council” approach to performance management. This includes a balance of quantitative and qualitative data.
- 13 The full Q3 performance report is at **Appendix 1**. This gives further details on progress made against delivery of the Corporate Plan during Q1 of the 2023/24 municipal year.
- 14 The impact of the continued financial challenges facing the Council appear, in some areas, to have been somewhat mitigated. This can be seen in several of the performance measures being reported this Q. However, there has been a continued increase during Q3 in the level of Customer Effort score.
- 15 Cheshire East Council delivers around 500 services to around 400,000 residents. There are 2,866 full time equivalent staff in Q3, a slight increase of 18 FTE, since Q2. The vacancy rate has decreased during Q3 to 10.8%, from 12.2% in Q2 and a reduction in the number of agency staff can also be reported in Q3, from in Q2 304 to 297 in Q3.
- 16 There has been a continued increase in the rate of vacancies in the Adult’s directorate, rising from 12.14% in Q1, to 15.17% in Q3, a small rise in the Place directorate, from Q2 10.6% to Q3 11.1% and a similar rise in Corporate Q2 11.5% to Q3 11.8%.
- 17 The Children’s directorate has reported a reduction in vacancies from Q2 12.1% to Q3 11.3%.

- 18 There has also been a small reduction in the level of staff turnover, from 3.9% in Q2 to 3.5% in Q3. Though there is a small increase in the levels of staff turnover in the Place directorate from 3% in Q2 to 4.5% in Q3.
- 19 An increase in FTE, a reduction in agency staff and a decline in the levels of staff turnover are positive impacts and reflect the approach to move away from employment of temporary staff. This approach can realise savings and can provide greater stability within the workforce.
- 20 There has been a slight increase in the Customer Effort score. The measure has increased by 0.23 since Q2 which is mainly due to longer phone wait times caused by a significant increase in calls about the garden waste scheme.
- 21 There has been a reduction in the variance between the forecast outturn and total net budget this Q. Reducing from 5.3% in Q2 to 3.7% in Q3.
- 22 Service committees receive performance information on a regular basis through their subject matter expert officers, specific to the subject of the committee. This performance report offers an oversight of progress against the Corporate Plan and should complement the more detailed performance, service specific dashboards that are considered at service committees.
- 23 **Open – An open and enabling organisation.**

Priorities

- Ensure that there is transparency in all aspects of council decision making
 - Listen, learn and respond to our residents, promoting opportunities for a two-way conversation
 - Support a sustainable financial future for the council, through service development, improvement and transformation
 - Look at opportunities to bring more income into the borough
 - Support and develop our workforce to be confident, motivated, innovative, resilient and empowered
 - Promote and develop the services of the council through regular communication and engagement with all residents
- 24 The vacancy rate has decreased, and the number of agency staff has reduced during Q3, reflecting the results of the focused piece of work to reduce the number of agency staff. There has been a reduction of around 100 FTE agency staff between Q1 and Q3 and we expect that this figure will continue to decrease as the focussed works continues.
- 25 98.5% of local taxation (council tax and business rates) were collected in Q3, a continued, albeit slight, increase on the previous quarter.

- 26 The previously identified performance in relation to the timeliness of responses during Q2, with 31% of Stage complaints being resolved within timescales, has been mitigated. In Q3 we have seen an increase to 56% of stage 2 complaints being resolved within timescales.
- 27 Timeliness was also previously identified as an issue in relation to freedom of information act responses, with a slight decline in Q2 to 88%. This figure has now increased to 91% in Q3, and now falls into the "Adequate" category of compliance as set out by the Information Commissioner (ICO). The ICO has a minimum expectation of 90% compliance.
- 28 There has been a slight decrease in the performance given by corporate contact centres customers for "perceived effort" of resolving their queries. This score has increased to 4.8 in Q3 against a target score of 4 (lower is better). This is largely due to continued call volumes and queries around the introduction of charges for the collection of green waste.
- 29 There has been an increase in the number of apprenticeships being provided by the Council, with 44 now being reported in Q3. This is an anticipated increase and aligns with patterns experienced in previous years, during Q3.

30 **Fair – A Council which empowers and cares about people.**

Priorities

- Work together with our residents and partners to support people and communities to be strong and resilient
- Reduce health inequalities across the borough
- Protect and support our communities and safeguard children, adults at risk and families from abuse, neglect and exploitation
- Be the best Corporate Parents to our children in care
- Support all children to have the best start in life
- Increase the opportunities for children, young adults and adults with additional needs
- Ensure all children to have a high quality, enjoyable education that enables them to achieve their full potential
- Reduce the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services

- 31 Challenges of cost and demand remain in both Adults and Childrens social care. However, the qualitative performance measures have indicated some positive progress in relation to childrens social care this quarter.

- 32 The rate of Education, Health and Care Plans completed within 20 weeks continues to exceed the national average (59%). There has been a slight decline in Q3 to 69%. However, this is still an increase from Q1 (62%).
- 33 The percentage of childrens social care assessments completed within 45 days has increased again during Q3, to 88% (compared to 63% in Q1). And is now above the National percentage of 82%. This is seen as an early indicator that, when needed, individuals are receiving a support in a timely fashion.
- 34 The rate (and numbers) of cared for children has reduced during Q3 to 533 children per 10,000 or 67%, the national rate is 71%.
- 35 In terms of education, the percentage of good and outstanding primary and secondary schools remain above the national average and has increased during the period from Q2 94% to Q3 96% (Primary Schools) and from Q2 91% to Q3 91% (Secondary Schools).
- 36 The number of children missing from education has increased from Q2 116 to Q3 156, though is still lower than our Q1 position of 197 children.
- 37 One of our poverty indicators is to monitor the numbers of pupil eligible for free school meals, and it is reported that noted that a decrease has been evidenced in Q3, from Q2 8807 to Q3 8621.
- 38 There has also been a reduction in the number of Children in Need reported during Q3 from Q2 2020 to Q3 1924, giving a rate of 264 per 10,000 children, against a national rate of 343 children per 10,000.
- 39 Reported levels of Children with a Child Protection Plan in Q3 are 31.8 per 10,000 and remain below a national rate of 43 per 10,000. These figures also represent a reduction in Q2 levels from 33.3 per 10,000.
- 40 **Green – A thriving and sustainable place.**

Priorities

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe and clean neighbourhoods
- To reduce the impact on our environment
- A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel
- Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all
- To be carbon neutral by 2025

- 41 There are 6 priorities under the “Green” aim for a thriving and sustainable place.
- 42 During the year, there has been a continued reduction in the number of planning applications in hand. Levels in Q3 are reported to be 200, which represents a significant reduction from Q1 levels of 400, and a further reduction from Q2 350. A new process implemented as part of the detailed work into planning now means that each application is allocated a named contact officer on arrival into the service, which is having a positive impact upon performance.
- 43 The number of affordable homes delivered has increased during Q3 to 232, from Q2 93. Year to date, 451 homes have now been delivered, exceeding the annual target of 355.
- 44 The percentage of waste collected sent for recycling and reuse remains reasonably steady, though there has been a reduction during Q3 to 50%, against Q2 56%. The recycling rate is usually lower in the second half of the year due to the reduced garden tonnages, and we are still on track to meet our annual target.
- 45 Progress made towards the net zero target has increased during Q3 to 54% (from 48% in Q2). This is due to an increase in the amount of carbon inset increasing by 6% since Q2.
- 46 The installation of new electric charging points remains on track, with a further 4 new charging points installed in Q3, totalling 24 so far this year against a target of 28.
- 47 The percentage of major applications determined within 13 weeks or agreed time remains above the national target of 87%, with 91% being determined in Q3.
- 48 The percentage of non-major applications determined within weeks or agreed time continues to remain above the national target of 86%, with 88% being determined in Q3.
- 49 There have been no trees planted during the Q, as the tree planting work is seasonal, so this was planned and expected. It is estimated that 15ha of trees are to be planted during Q4, which will give a final figure of 6 ha below the target of 21ha for the year.
- 50 Work continues to be progressed to develop the action plan to support the wider borough target of net zero by 2045.

Consultation and Engagement

51 Not applicable.

Reasons for Recommendations

52 The Corporate Policy Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising performance against the strategic aims and objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.

53 The performance management framework continues to be developed and seeks to provide a robust, customer focussed view of performance. Member input into this development is valued to ensure that performance management reports are of use.

54 Performance management is a tool to allow oversight of the Council's key activities and to enable transparency and understanding around where the Council is performing well, and what are the areas of challenge and improvement.

Other Options Considered

55 Not applicable.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

56 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

57 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Financial implications arising from performance requirements are detailed within the separate financial review reports aligned with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Policy

58 This report demonstrates progress against all priorities within the Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25.

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| An open and enabling organisation. | A council which empowers and cares about people. | A thriving and sustainable place. |
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 59 The range of council activities covered in the Corporate Plan aim to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and the obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Human Resources

- 60 There are no direct human resources implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

- 61 Performance and risk are intrinsically linked. Where risks are identified, performance data can evidence the likelihood of the risk and can also show if risks materialise. The performance report identifies areas where performance is strong and areas for development and improvement. This supports the risk management process by providing the opportunity to review progress and identify areas for improvement and any necessary mitigating actions.

Rural Communities

- 62 The Corporate Plan aims to support greater inclusion for rural communities. In 2022/23 a Rural Action Plan was approved by the Economy and Growth committee, which includes priorities around digital connectivity, access, housing, visitor economy and support for rural based businesses.

Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

- 63 Performance management of the priorities relating to children and young people and cared for children ensure that there is a focus on children receiving the best start in life and that we deliver on our commitments to children and young people in Cheshire East.

Public Health

- 64 This report supports our Public Health priorities using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Tartan Rug to ensure that we work with partners to address issues of poor housing, poverty, employment and education across urban and rural communities.

Climate Change

- 65 Performance against the Corporate Plan contributes to overall achievement of the net zero targets for the council and for the borough.

Access to Information

Contact Officer:

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Performance Report Q3



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Background
Papers:

[Q2 Performance Report](#)

[Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#)