

OPEN

Corporate Policy Committee

Tuesday, 11 July 2023

Performance against the Corporate Plan 2022/23

Report of: Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change

Report Reference No: CP/11/23-24

Ward(s) Affected: All

Purpose of Report

- 1 The purpose of this report is 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 progress made during the 2022/23 municipal year.
- 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 further detail of performance and progress against priorities in quarter 4, which covers the period, 1 January – 31 March 2023.

Executive Summary

- 5 The year April 2022 – March 2023 has continued to be a challenging period for Cheshire East Council. The period saw continued recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and a greater understanding of the impact of "covid scarring" particularly on our children and young people. There has been rises in inflation and the impact of the rising cost of living on residents, changes in Prime Ministers and political uncertainty, a fragile care market, continued and increasing budget pressures

particularly in relation to SEND and adult social care, and support provided to refugees, including those from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

- 6 Despite this challenging context, there has been good progress made against the actions set out in our Corporate Plan to support an open, fairer, greener Cheshire East.
- 7 Key successes during 2022/23 include securing a package of commitments in relation to High Speed Rail Phase 2B, progressing the Crewe regeneration programme, starting the “Delivering Better Value” programme to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and continuing progress against our net zero target, including gaining financial support for decarbonising council buildings. These, and many other, successes were achieved at the same time as managing the Public Interest report, which demonstrated that the council had moved on and learnt lessons from a difficult past, and agreeing a balanced budget, which was the most challenging budget to date to put together.
- 8 In 2022/23 a co-ordinated approach to managing the cost of living crisis was put into place across council directorates. The comprehensive, strategic approach covered food, advice and support with energy costs, broadband, general financial support, places to go for warmth and food, school meals, school uniform, and community and business support. The support included a dedicated telephone number and email address for residents, household support grants to individuals, grants to the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector and the Warm PlaCEs initiative.
- 9 At the end of 2022/23 there were some performance challenges that have been identified: the cost and demand issues in both childrens and adults social care, the ongoing challenges within the planning service, an impact on customer experience and ongoing financial challenge. However, we also have continued to achieve good progress in a number of areas: continuing to make further progress against our ambitious net zero target, a continued high rate of good and outstanding primary and secondary schools, reducing rates of care leavers that are not in education, employment or training, rising number of customers interacting with the Council via digital accounts, achieving our affordable homes target and progressing the Phase 1 Crewe regeneration plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

1. Scrutinise performance against the Corporate Plan for 2022/23 and the end of year position.
2. Consider any amendments in performance reporting, and/or additional data and intelligence that should be included within performance management during 2023/24.

Background

- 10 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

- 11 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. The full quarter 4 and outturn report is at **Appendix A**. This gives further details on progress made against delivery of the Corporate Plan by the end of the 2022/23 municipal year.

- 12 Cheshire East Council delivers around 500 services to around 398,800 residents. There are 3,128 full time equivalent staff in quarter 4. This evidences a relatively steady workforce of approximately 3,000 staff throughout the year.
- 13 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.
- 14 **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

- 15 A key action identified in the Corporate Plan was to implement the Committee system. This was reviewed during the 2022/23 year and quarter 4 continued to be a busy time for committees at Cheshire East, there were 16 service committee meetings held and two meetings of Full Council.
- 16 Recruitment and retention continues to remain a key national challenge for local government, as it has been throughout 2022/23. Cheshire East Council continues to implement the actions it identified through its dedicated officer working group on this subject. There has been a slight reduction in the use of agency staff during quarter 4, to 309 across the council. The average number of agency staff during 2022/23 has been slightly below this at 292.
- 17 One of the priorities under “Open” is to listen, learn and respond to residents. Cheshire East Council have successfully progressed against this objective during 2022/23, launching new strategies for Customer

Experience and Communications, developing a new Consultation and Engagement toolkit and using co production processes wherever appropriate. In quarter 4 representatives of the first ever Cheshire East Peoples Panel attended Corporate Policy Committee to present their recommendations of solutions to support the cost of living. The council were able to support and implement 10 of the 12 recommendations. In quarter 4 the Children and Families committee responded to feedback from children and young people around the name of the Corporate Parenting Committee. Further to the engagement the Corporate Parenting Committee has now been renamed the Cared for Children and Care Leaver Committee.

- 18 Improving the experience of our customers continues to be a priority for the council. In quarter 4 the Estates service developed a case management module within the property system to improve management of property transactions and the customer experience. The service had over 700 enquiries during 2022/23. The system ensures that that no case is “lost” or unduly held up at any stage. Customers of the corporate contact centre are randomly selected to rate the effort they perceived it took to resolve their query. The average customer effort score was 4.3 for 2022/23 slightly below the target of 4. The lower the score the better the performance. However the score for the quarter 4 period was 4, evidencing a position of continuing improvement since quarter 2.
- 19 The council continues to be an active partner in many partnership arrangements. A full review of partnerships is an outstanding action of the Corporate Plan which will be completed during 2023/24. Two highlights of good partnership working in quarter 4 are the Prevent and Channel panel and the sub regional Digital Investment Plan. The Prevent and Channel panel, which reports to the Safer Cheshire East Partnership, received its rating from the annual Home Office benchmarking and was rated as “good” with elements of “outstanding”. In quarter 4, the Economy and Growth committee supported the sub-regional Digital Investment Plan 2023-25, which is part of the Connecting Cheshire partnership programme.
- 20 The councils customers have continued to shift to interact via digital means during 2022/23. Online transactions continue to rise and have increased to 300,395 in quarter 4. Digital accounts have also continued to rise during 2022/23 and have risen at an accelerated pace during the final quarter of the year. In quarter 3, accounts were rising at an average rate of 2,800 per quarter. In quarter 4 this figure was exceeded, with 3,873 new digital accounts. The outturn figure for digital accounts was 126,322, an increase of 23,001 since the end of the previous year. Performance has exceeded the annual target, which was 120,000.

21 A further priority under the “Open” theme is to be a financially stable council which has increased levels of reserves. In quarter 4, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, for the years 2023/24 to 2026/27 was received by Full Council. Feedback to the consultation on this budget was the highest level of engagement since records began. An annual balanced budget was recommended and approved by Council. There does however continue to be significant financial challenges for Cheshire East. One indicator within the performance management framework is the percentage of local taxation collected within two years. This figure is for council tax and business rates combined. For 2022/23 the target was 98.67%. The figure achieved was less than this, at 96.68%, and the figure for quarter 4 was the lowest of the year at 94.4%. This is mainly influenced by collection of business rates and appears to reflect financial difficulties being experienced by some local businesses due to the ongoing impact of “covid scarring”.

22 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

23 During 2022/23, three childrens centre sites have been identified to be developed into Family Hubs (Oak Tree in Crewe, Monks Coppenhall in Crewe and Oakenclough in Wilmslow). The Monks Coppenhall site will be developed as a special educational needs and disabilities centre of excellence.

24 During 2022/23 185 community groups were supported, including support finding and applying for funding through Grantfinder. A total of £1,949,469 has been invested in the sector.

25 Cheshire East council have continued to work with the Home Office supporting people from Afghanistan who have entered the UK through

the Afghan relocations and assistance policy (ARAP). In total the council has supported 472 people under this programme. In quarter 4 the government announced the intention to permanently settle all remaining families residing in hotels, this includes 14 families remaining in Cheshire East.

- 26 The public health team have been successful in applying for the connecting health communities programme, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. This includes a 24 month package is facilitated support to address health inequalities in our East Timorese community.
- 27 There has also been successful performance in relation to the percentage of infants who are breastfed at 6-8 weeks in Cheshire East. Performance has averaged at 53% for 2022/23, higher than the national rate of 47.6%.
- 28 The Holidays Activities with Food (HAF) programme has had a successful year. During 2022/23 the programme was accessed by over 4,000 young people, receiving over 40,000 hours of support and over 11,500 healthy meals. Funding for the programme is in place until March 2025.
- 29 The virtual school has linked with Higher Horizons and Staffordshire's virtual school to facilitate university taster days for cared for young people to raise aspiration and ambition. There are now 10 of our cared for young people attending university.
- 30 The take up of the national offer for 2,3 and 4 year olds remains consistently high and above national rates, with a 75% take up for 2 year olds, and 99% for 3 and 4 year olds.
- 31 Challenges of cost and demand remain in both Adults and Childrens social care. In Adult services residential care admissions for all adults have increased, for adults age 18-64 this remains under the national figure, however for adults age 65+ the Cheshire East figure exceeds the national figure. This reflects pressure from the NHS in relation to hospital discharges and temporary care home places becoming permanent. In Childrens social care the number and rate of childrens social care referrals continues to increase, however this remains significantly below the national rate. There are some timeliness issues within childrens social care in relation to the percentage of education, health and care plans completed within 20 weeks, and the percentage of assessments completed within 45 days. These issues can be attributed to the increasing complexity of individual cases combined with the workforce challenges across social care.

32 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

- 33 There are 6 priorities under the “Green” aim for a thriving and sustainable place.
- 34 The first priority is in relation to well designed, affordable and safe homes. In quarter 4, a further 145 new affordable homes were completed, bringing the total completions for 2022/23 to 465 against a target of 355.
- 35 Visitors to libraries have also exceeded performance targets for 2022/23. The target was 1,000,000 and the actual number of visitors was 1,039,370.
- 36 There remains challenges within the planning service, with a continued backlog of undetermined planning applications, causing an increase in customer complaints. However the volume of the backlog has decreased in quarter 4, evidencing that the focused improvement programme in this area, that has progressed during 2022/23, is starting to have an impact. The majority of applications are currently taking 3-6 months to determine. A modernisation plan is being implemented to restructure the service, update the information technology to support the service and to address the shortage of technical staff.
- 37 The recycling target for 2022/23 was greater than 50% of all waste collected to be recycled or reused. The outturn figure was 54%. Although it appears that rates have decreased over the year, the quarterly figures are difficult to compare as there are seasonal trends in waste and recycling, with significantly more green waste collected following Christmas and Easter.
- 38 There continues to be steady progress towards our net zero target. At the end of 2022/23 there has been 46% progress towards carbon neutrality by 2025. There have been an additional 7 hectares of trees planted during quarter 4, this was significantly less than the planned 30

hectares, due to reduced staffing levels at Mersey Forest. Work to council buildings has progressed, with 9 air source heat pumps nearing completion. In 2022/23 the wider borough target of net zero by 2045 was announced. Base line modelling of carbon emissions for the borough has now been completed and approval has been granted by the Environment and Communities committee to develop a key priorities action plan over the coming year.

Consultation and Engagement

39 Not applicable.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 40 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.
- 41 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.
- 42 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

43 Not applicable.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal

44 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

45 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

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

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

- 47 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

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

Risk Management

- 49 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

- 50 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)

- 51 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

- 52 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

- 53 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:	Sarah Bullock, sarah.bullock@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Performance Report 2022/23
Background Papers:	CP/36/22-23 Performance Quarter 3 2022/23 Decision report (cheshireeast.gov.uk) CP/26/22-23 Performance Quarter 2 2022/23 Decision report template (cheshireeast.gov.uk) CP/13/22-23 Performance Quarter 1 2022/23 Decision report template (cheshireeast.gov.uk)