

Corporate Policy Committee

5 October 2023

Performance Report – Quarter 1 2023/24

Report of: Sarah Bullock, Director of Policy and Change

Report Reference No: CP/17/23-24

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 quarter 1 of 2023/24, 1 April 2023 – 30 June 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.
- 5 Appendix 2 provides Office of Local Government data.

Executive Summary

- 6 This report gives an update on performance against the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan. It describes performance in quarter 1 (April-June 2023) against the objectives within the Corporate Plan.
- 7 In Cheshire East, local elections took place in May 2023, the middle of the quarter, with the first time that voter photo ID was required. The elections resulted in almost half of the Cheshire East Councillors being new elected members. However, the leadership and joint administration arrangements of the council remained the same.
- 8 During quarter 1, there were continued national challenges such as continuing high inflation, continuing cost of living pressures, recruitment and retention challenges and a period of employee relations disputes and strikes outside of local government.
- 9 Despite these national challenges continuing, overall performance in quarter 1 was encouraging, particularly with progress in relation to regeneration and the net zero target, improvements beginning to be evidenced in childrens services and further reduction of the number of applications in hand in the planning service.
- 10 The Council continues look at ways to manage the impact to its financial position. However, in doing so, it is anticipated that performance across the Council will require greater focus over the next period.
- 11 Anticipated future inspections in both Adults Health and Integration and Childrens Services 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.
- 12 Further detailed performance data in relation to adults, health and integration and children and young people can be found in the reports presented to Adults and Health Committee ([Decision report Adults score card Q1 2023-24 hcm.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)) and Children and Families Committee ([1. Q1 Scorecard 2023-24.pdf \(cheshireeast.gov.uk\)](#)).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Corporate Policy Committee is recommended to:

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

Background

- 13 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

- 14 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 1 performance report is at **Appendix 1**. This gives further details on progress made against delivery of the Corporate Plan during the first quarter of the 2023/24 municipal year.

- 15 Cheshire East Council delivers around 500 services to around 398,800 residents. There are 2,717 full time equivalent staff in quarter 1. This is slightly lower than our average figure of 3,000 during 2022/23, reflecting the agreed action to support management of financial pressures, by reviewing all vacancies and only recruiting to posts which are crucial to statutory service delivery.
- 16 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.

17 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

- 18 Quarter 1 is the period of local elections and thereafter Annual Council and the appointment of members to specific roles and responsibilities. For this reason, there was only one meeting per service committee during quarter 1.
- 19 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 an increase in the vacancy rate to 10.7%. At the same time, there has been a slight increase in the use of agency staff during quarter 1, to 392 across the council. This has risen from 309 in quarter 4 and from an average number of agency staff during 2022/23 at 292. A panel is being established as part of our tighter financial management arrangements by considering the management of vacancies and agency staff. This will ensure that recruitment of permanent and agency workers is limited to only essential roles. These additional arrangements

should further reduce agency usage and limit non-essential recruitment. Where it is more appropriate to recruit a permanent member of the workforce, this will be the desired option.

- 20 In quarter 1 the scheduled annual review of the committee system was delivered. This was a review following two municipal years of operation, resulting in some best practice amendments to the constitution.
- 21 Quarter 1 was a period of continued financial challenge and during the period proposals were managed to implement the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and to manage demand. 97.8% of local taxation (council tax and business rates) were collected in quarter 1.
- 22 There were some performance issues identified in relation to the management of complaints during quarter 1, with 54% of Stage 1 and 45% of Stage 2 complaints being resolved within timescales. Performance in this area is being reviewed by the Customer Services team. From the 18 complaints referred to the LGO, 5 of these were upheld. Review of the upheld complaints has not shown any trends, they were in relation to a variety of issues, such as SEND, household bins, land and direct payments. ICO standards continue to be met in relation to responsiveness to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act.
- 23 Health and safety data has been incorporated into the performance report for the first time this year, rather than being reported separately. This shows that there were 157 accidents relating to the council in quarter 1, which is comparable to the level in quarter 1 last year (162). There has however been a significant increase in the numbers of accidents in schools, 170 in quarter 1 this year compared to 89 in the same period last year; this relates to a significant improvement in proactive recording of accidents within a small number of schools in relation to pupil accidents. There were no RIDDOR reportable accidents relating to pupils in Quarter 1, although there were two relating to teaching staff at the same school who were taken to hospital after falls and trips. There was one RIDDOR reportable incident at Tatton Park where a member of the public slipped and was taken to hospital as a precaution. In all cases, there were no defects which required rectification.
- 24 Improving the customer experience remains an organisational priority. An improvement in customer satisfaction has been evidenced in quarter 1 in relation to customers that contacted the corporate contact centre. Following a slight decline at the end of 2022/23, the customer effort score is back up to the target level of 4 (the lower the score the better).

25 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

- 26 In quarter 4 of last year, three childrens centre sites were 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. In quarter 1 there were focussed engagement sessions in relation to the Family Hubs, which were then opened in quarter 2.
- 27 In quarter 1 there has been successful performance in supporting children and families to find homes in Cheshire East, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and families that have needed to be housed following the closure of Chimney House.
- 28 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 improving timeliness. The rate of Education, Health and Care Plans completed within 20 weeks has now exceeded the national average (62% against 58%) and although the social care assessments completed within 45 days (63%) remains below the national average (84%) the position is an improving one compared to 2022/23.
- 29 Quarter 1 has been a period of progress for regeneration in Cheshire East and planning permission has been granted for the OnSide Youth Zone in Crewe. A group of children and young people are supporting the development of this project.

30 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

31 There are 6 priorities under the “Green” aim for a thriving and sustainable place.

32 The first priority is in relation to well designed, affordable and safe homes. Last year 465 affordable new homes were completed, exceeding the target of 355. Quarter 1 continues to be a period of successful delivery with 126 affordable homes delivered. At the end of the year, it was reported that the backlog of applications in hand with the planning service had started to reduce. There has continued to be progress in this area during quarter 1, with approximately 400 applications. 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. At the end of last year, it was reported that applications were taking around 3-6 months to determine. At quarter 1, the service is now reporting that half of all applications are determined within 10 weeks.

33 There continues to be positive progress towards our net zero target. At the end of 2022/23 there was 46% progress towards carbon neutrality by 2025 and at the end of quarter one this has increased to 56%, principally due to the completion of the planned 9 air source heat pumps in council buildings. No trees have been planted during the quarter, as the tree planting work is seasonal, so this was planned and expected. Work continues to be progressed to develop the action plan to support the wider borough target of net zero by 2045.

34 Office for Local Government

35 The Office for Local Government (OFLOG) has been established and have defined their purpose as “to provide authoritative and accessible data and analysis about the performance of local government”. OFLOG have published that they have three strategic objectives: “to empower citizens with information about their local authority, enabling them to

hold local leaders to account, to increase local leaders' and councils' understanding of their relative performance, supporting them to improve and better innovate and to increase central government's understanding of local government performance, highlighting excellence and identifying risk of failure to facilitate timely and targeted support."

- 36 The initial OFLOG data for Cheshire East is shown on the online Local Authority Data Explorer Tool and is attached at **Appendix 2**. The OFLOG data set currently covers just four domains: adult social care, waste, adult skills and finance.
- 37 The 8 indicators in relation to finance, highlight the challenge that we are already aware of in Cheshire East, in relation to the low levels of reserves. There are 3 indicators in relation to adult skills. The proportion of the adult population with a level 3 + qualification is higher than the England median or our CIPFA neighbours, however the two indicators in relation to 19+ further education, skills and achievement are lower than our comparator authorities. There are 3 indicators in relation to waste. The data evidences that Cheshire East has a higher proportion of household waste sent for recycling. The amount of residual waste is lower than the England median but slightly higher than comparator authorities and the contamination rate is comparable to the England median but higher than comparator neighbours. There are 7 indicators in relation to adult social care, the first five are all from the adult social care outcomes framework and Cheshire East exceeds the England median in all 5 areas. The staff turnover rate for adult social care is consistent with the England median and slightly lower than in comparator authorities. The proportion of requests for support resulting in a service is a higher rate than both comparator authorities and the England median.
- 38 The performance team will continue to work alongside OFLOG as the organisation develops.

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

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, Director of Policy and Change Sarah.bullock@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Performance Report Q1 Appendix 2 – Office of Local Government data
Background Papers:	Children and Families Committee - Q1 Scorecard 2023-24.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk) Adults and Health Committee score card Q1 2023-24.pdf (cheshireeast.gov.uk)