
Meeting: Executive
Date: 28 September 2010
Subject: Quarter 1 Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Richard Stay , Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance
Summary: The report highlights the key Quarter 1 performance for Central Bedfordshire Council.

Advising Officer: Richard Carr, Chief Executive
Contact Officer: Ian Porter, Assistant Director Strategy and Performance
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Executive
Key Decision No
**Reason for urgency/
exemption from call-in
(if appropriate)** N/A

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The quarterly performance report underpins the delivery of all Council priorities.

Financial:

There are a number of performance indicators within the corporate suite that have a strong financial link – most notably, the amount of debt outstanding and the percentage of Council Tax collected.

It will be important to consider any financial implications of decisions taken to address ongoing areas of under performance.

Legal:

None.

Risk Management:

Areas of ongoing underperformance are a risk to both service delivery and the reputation of the Council.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

The corporate performance suite includes indicators on sickness absence within the Council and the number of Carlisle Management Solutions agency staff.

Equalities/Human Rights:

This report highlights performance against performance indicators which seek to measure how the Council and its services impact across all communities within Central Bedfordshire, so that specific areas of underperformance can be highlighted for further analysis/drilling down as necessary.

As such it does not include detailed performance information relating to the Council's stated intention to tackle inequalities and deliver services so that people whose circumstances make them vulnerable are not disadvantaged. The interrogation of performance data across vulnerable groups is a legal requirement and is an integral part of the Council's equalities and performance culture which seeks to ensure that, through a programme of ongoing impact assessments, underlying patterns and trends for different sections of the community identify areas where further action is required to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups.

Community Safety:

The corporate performance suite includes an indicator on Serious Acquisitive Crime.

Sustainability:

No direct implications.

Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:

- In the first instance, the corporate performance report is presented directly to the Executive.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1. That the Executive notes and considers this report.**
- 2. That the Executive considers any issues from this report that could be investigated further, including any referrals to Overview & Scrutiny.**

Reason for Recommendation(s): To ensure a rigorous approach to performance management across Central Bedfordshire Council

Introduction

1. The Council's framework for performance management supports the delivery of the Council's priorities.
2. Those indicators that Directors have identified as 'critical' form the quarterly corporate performance suite – included at Appendix A.

3. Generally there has been good performance for the Council during Quarter 1.

Three themes have arisen from the Quarter 1 performance:

1. Impact of economic climate
2. Impact of management action
3. Focussed use of resources.

- 3.1 **Impact of economic climate.** The current economic climate has had a direct impact on the levels of demand for Council services – both in front line delivery and back office support. Examples include the increase in working age people on out of work benefits and the significant increase seen by the Revenues and Benefits service in the numbers of people entitled to Housing Benefit – which has had a major impact on the time taken to process benefit claims.
- 3.2 **Impact of management action.** SCHH has demonstrated a significantly improved level of performance regarding the average time taken for SOVA investigations. Although there has been an increase in the demand for services and the numbers of cases progressing to SOVA inspections, the average time taken to complete an investigation is good and has improved when compared to the previous quarter. This improved performance is as a direct result of effective strategic management, process design and the effective professional development of Social Care staff.
- 3.3 **Focussed use of resources.** Despite reducing resources and increased service demand, Children's Services has continued to perform strongly. Although a 14% increase in the percentage of child protection cases, the 100% performance level of the Council has been maintained. For the percentage of initial assessments within seven working days of referral, the performance of the Council has substantially improved, again despite a substantial (64%) increase in assessments undertaken since this time last year.

Director Summaries

4. **Corporate Health Performance Indicators**

An expanded set of Corporate Health indicators is now being reported. In order to better understand the Council's overall corporate health performance, these indicators are reported both at the Directorate level, and the overall Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) figure.
- 4.1 Sickiness absence across CBC is currently on track to meet the target of 8 days lost per employee. The Quarter 1 figure is an improvement on the same period for 2009/10. There are higher levels of absence noted within Adult Social Care, Health & Housing and a specific focus is being given to understanding and resolving the issues in this area. Sickiness is also high in the Office of the Chief Executive. This is due to a small number of staff on long term sickness leave, having a large impact on the overall figure.
- 4.2 The Council has demonstrated an intention to better understand the use of agency workers supplied through Carlisle Managed Solutions and has developed a new performance indicator to track this. It is worth noting that the largest group of agency workers in the Council are currently care workers.

- 4.3 Undisputed invoices paid within 30 days has seen a large improvement in performance when compared with Q4 09/10 but a small decline when compared to Q1 09/10. The Financial Services improvement plan is currently reviewing the processes that were brought together from the three legacy councils and additional training and workshops are planned across the council to aid better understanding of the Procure 2 Pay process.
- 4.4 We are continuing to monitor the levels of debt outstanding. The Council is currently reviewing the 'Reminder Issuing Process' a partly manual based system, to explore the potential to automate the whole reminder process. This may serve to improve the reduction of the amount of debt outstanding.
- 4.5 **Customer & Shared Services (CSS)**
Although the Q1 performance for Council tax collection has not quite reached its target, it is up slightly on the same quarter last year. 2,200 summonses with a combined value of £2.1m have just been issued for outstanding 2010/11 Council Tax. This should have a positive impact on the levels of council tax collection.
- 4.6 First point resolution: Performance is currently off target due to a number of factors: re-modelling of Customers Services, finalising the staffing structure and preparations for the move of staff into a single contact centre based in Technology House. However, the single contact centre will be operational in Quarter 2. This will facilitate the effective training of customer service advisers and we anticipate that this will improve the levels of first point resolution for our customers.
- 4.7 Although the CBC infrastructure was up and available for 99.95% of the time, user perceptions of system availability have varied because of the complex nature of the Council's infrastructure. For example, the majority of CBC's users still sat on the Bedford Borough Council (BBC) network during Q1 and any outage on the BBC infrastructure would affect CBC user's access to MyApps. There were also outages on individual systems which although resulted in the unavailability of those particular applications they do not affect the overall availability of all systems. The only outage affecting all systems was a hardware failure of the Citrix internal gateway on 24 May 2010. This automatically switched over to the backup gateway but there was a 20 minute interruption to service availability whilst the backup gateway took control, thus service availability was 99.95% over Q1 for all systems.
- 4.8 Time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax for new claims and change events: The Revenues and Benefits service has seen a 12% increase in the number of claims for Housing Benefit in Quarter 1. This has hampered the work to reduce the backlog, although the backlog has almost halved in the past 3 months. The Q1 figure is significantly behind target and well below the performance of our comparator authorities. This needs to be put in context of merging the former MBDC and SBDC teams together, implementing a single IT system and bringing the teams together in July this year. The Audit Commission will be conducting a Benefits Inspection in October and the preparation for this inspection is being used as an improvement plan for the service.

4.9 **Children's Services**

On the safeguarding indicators, our performance is largely good in the light of increased pressures. Timing indicators have been achieved or exceeded target. Despite the impact of sustained referral pressure, the rate of conversion of referrals to assessment has increased. Work is on-going to ensure that sufficient social workers are recruited and that early action is taken by other professionals to enable further improvement. National results released later in the autumn will evidence the influence of increased pressures on local authorities across the country.

4.10 The impact of low numbers requires some comparisons between years to be made with caution. This is the case with short term placement stability where, whilst the outcome is within target, progress has declined slightly. The difference compared to the same time last year is one child. This indicator is still well within the target range and children are moved based on their carefully assessed needs.

4.11 On school performance two new local indicators have been introduced. These will show inspection judgements and our local response at an earlier stage than has been previously reported. They will measure to what extent the Council is focusing its efforts on those schools that are neither good nor outstanding rather than adopting a blanket approach to outcomes in schools.

4.12 The Ofsted Monitoring Report for Derwent Lower concluded that the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. The school and Local Authority Statements of Action for the Mill Vale have been produced and sent to Ofsted and will be implemented and monitored by the School Improvement service from September onwards.

4.13 **Social Care, Health & Housing**

Following a review of the information reported to the council, Social Care, Health and Housing are presenting a more condensed set of indicators that reflects the priorities of the directorate.

4.14 However as a result of the disaggregation of Swift, to create a separate Social Care database for Central Bedfordshire, there have been problems obtaining some performance information for Adult Social Care for this report. ICT are working with Igneous, the suppliers of the reporting software, to resolve the problem.

4.15 Where performance information has been obtained, performance continues to improve for clients receiving self directed support and SOVA investigation. Due to the reporting issues, the causes for the dip in performance on carers' reviews can not be identified, but will be investigated once the information is available.

4.16 Performance information on achieving independence (NI 125) will be available from Q2, following the resolution of the issues in relation to definition and methodology of the indicator with Health.

- 4.17 Housing performance has been unaffected by the ICT problems and performance in relation to households in temporary accommodation remaining strong. However this is a volatile indicator and can fluctuate depending on local economy, although effects continue to ensure households have a range of options available to prevent them from becoming homeless.
- 4.18 Whilst decent homes performance appears to have deteriorated, this is as a result of properties becoming non-decent in April. This increase was anticipated and these properties were included in the decent homes programme this year. The service is confident that it can achieve the national target of no non-decent homes by the end of 2010.
- 4.19 **Sustainable Communities (SCS)**
The start to 2010/11 has resulted in a stable start to the year. The economic climate continues to have an impact across the services and the new Coalition Government actions in cutting costs has resulted in a knock on effect on data sources used for some of the indicators. The indicators identified at the beginning of the year will be amended to take account of these changes. Areas of Economic Growth continue to show a declining performance as the data has a significant time lag and is currently showing what occurred during the recession.
- 4.20 The satisfaction level with the Planning Services at CBC have shown an increase in performance on last year, The number of respondents to the satisfaction questionnaire has increased and will be useful to identify problem and success areas. Overall, Planning continues to provide robust data with a consistent level of performance.
- 4.21 Highways and Transport data has shown improvement and the novation of the AMEY contract to CBC will enable more depth of information to be used to support the performance from the Contract. Areas of concern, such as road accident casualties, will now be supported with additional information such as number of accidents, an identified split between those killed and seriously injured as well as the type of fatal accidents that occur. This will help support the methods used to continue to seek to reduce this figure.
- 4.22 The areas around Community Safety, Public Protection, Waste and Leisure have continued to perform consistently across the service. The data management of waste has been improved and will now appear in the quarterly report to which it relates. It is important to note that the Q1 data, which last year was not available until October, has been produced in a raw format. Further work is required to finalise the data and will be fully operational by the Q2 report. The remaining indicators from the service are being reported and showing a level performance. As these are new indicators, there is no previous data to compare them against.

Areas of strong performance

5.
 - The % of children's initial assessments within 7 working days. Performance has exceeded the target.
 - The % of child protection cases which should have been reviewed during the year that were reviewed on time during the year. Performance remains at a consistent level of 100%.
 - Average time taken for SOVA investigations has seen a marked improvement.
 - People supported to live independently has seen a marked improvement.
 - Number of households living in temporary accommodation shows improved performance with its target having been reached.
 - Planning applicants satisfied with the service received from the Planning Department continues to improve and the target for Q1 has been met.

Areas for improvement

6.
 - The percentage of children in need that led to initial assessments has improved but remains off track. It is expected that performance will have significantly improved by year-end.
 - The percentage of first point resolution within the Customer Contact Centre remains off track with a decrease in performance.
 - Time taken to process housing benefit claims has seen a decrease in its performance and performance remains off track.

Conclusion and Next Steps

7. That the Executive notes and considers this report.
- 7.1 That the Executive considers any issues from this report that could be investigated further, including any referrals to Overview & Scrutiny.

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Quarter 1 Performance Indicators)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

None

Location of papers: (Insert location where papers are held)

Priory House, Bedfordshire