
Meeting: Customer & Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 11 October 2010
Subject: Quarter One Performance Report
Report of: Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance
Summary: The report highlights the Quarter 1 performance for the Customer & Shared Services Directorate and Corporate Health Indicators for the Council.

Advising Officer: Richard Ellis, Director of Customer & Shared Services
Contact Officer: Iain Melville, Head of Performance & Risk
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

The Quarterly Performance Report underpins the delivery of the Council's Priorities.

Financial:

None directly but there are issues relating to:

- Invoices paid within 30 days
- Time taken to process housing benefit, council tax, new claims and change events
- Potential investment decisions to improve off track 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):

An indicator on sickness absence is included in the report.

An indicator on the total number of Carlisle Managed Solutions agency staff is included in the report.

Equalities/Human Rights:

It is important that consideration is given to all our Central Bedfordshire communities when considering public facing performance indicators – particularly vulnerable groups.

Community Safety:

None

Sustainability:

None

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. **The Committee notes and considers this report**
2. **The Committee considers any issues from this report that could form part of its work programme**

Background

1. The Council's framework for performance management supports the delivery of CBC's priorities. Those indicators that have been identified as 'critical' form the quarterly corporate performance suite – included at Appendix A. This focuses on a much smaller number of key areas for the Council and now includes a wider Corporate Health set. Consequently there has been a reduction in the number of indicators reported in 2010/11 compared to 2009/10. The majority of these reductions have taken place in Adult Social care and Children's Services. The full set of all the Council's indicators is available with the 28 September Executive papers.
2. Progress with the Council's Performance Management Framework has been recognised by the Audit Commission in the Annual Governance Report. This states "The Council produces relevant and reliable data and information to support decision making and manage performance."

Changes to national performance arrangements following new coalition government.

3. Since the start of the new government there has been a continued move away from nationally prescribed priorities to more locally decided priorities. As a result Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) has been abolished along with the corresponding requirements for self assessments and inspections. Our previous work to support and prepare for CAA was at specific points in the year rather than ongoing throughout the year.
4. A review is currently underway by government on the future of all National Indicators (NIs). So far all 'user survey' based NIs have been scrapped and it is expected that a more radical deletion or complete removal will happen for 2011/12.

5. Currently the Local Area Agreement (LAA) represents the most significant form of government intervention in terms of setting targets for performance indicators for the Council and its partners. It is likely that the Local Area Agreement will not be replaced when the current agreement expires at the end of 2010/11.

Director's Performance Summary

6. **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.
7. Sickness 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. Sickness 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. **Customer & Shared Services**
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.
12. 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.

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.

Conclusion and Next Steps

16. The Committee considers any issues from this report that could form part of its work programme

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Quarter 1 Performance Report)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Executive 28 September 2010 - (Quarter 1 Performance Report)

Location of papers: Priory House, Chicksands