
Meeting: Executive
Date: 7 December 2010
Subject: Quarter 2 Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Richard Stay, Portfolio Holder for Policy and Performance
Summary: The report highlights the key Quarter 2 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 offered.

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.
- Full details to be contained in an Appendix.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Executive note the contents of the report, considering the Council's overall performance position and any associated actions that need to be taken.

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. Directors' Summaries for Quarter 2 are set out below. Appendix A provides the detailed performance data.

3. Following CMT consideration, the report will be presented at the next Executive. Overview & Scrutiny will then receive their section of the report following Executive. The timetable for reporting is as follows:

Executive: 7 December

CCS O&SC: 13 December

SCH&H O&SC: 20 December

CS O&SC: 21 December

SC O&SC: 18 January (2011)

4. Three key themes were identified for the overarching performance position for Quarter 1. Broadly, these themes remain for Quarter 2.

Impact of the economic climate

5. There has been an increased demand on the Housing Benefits service as a consequence of more customers being entitled to housing benefit. Numbers on 'out of work' benefits remain above target, though at a similar level to the previous quarter and significantly below regional and national levels. It is pleasing to report that the number of serious acquisitive crimes in Central Bedfordshire has slightly reduced in the quarter. There has been a significant increase in the demand for temporary accommodation, particularly from households with dependants.

Impact of management action

6. The amount of short term debt has reduced significantly and attention in the next quarter will focus on tackling medium term debt. More services have been migrated to the Contact Centre. Although performance in some indicators for Adult Social Care has shown deterioration, actions reported in the Director's summary in paragraphs 26-29 will result in improvements in the next quarter. Confidence can also be drawn from the management arrangements that have been put in place to enable the Council to understand variations in performance and take appropriate action.

Focussed use of resources

7. Outstanding performance continues regarding the percentage of Council housing stock that meets the 'decent' homes standard.
8. The ongoing focus, despite increased service demand, on standards and practices in key areas of Children's Social Care has resulted in continued strong performance in Quarter 2.
9. Corporately, the impact of continued focus on resources (including staffing) are beginning to show by, for example, improved sickness levels when compared with the same point in 2009/10 and slightly reduced numbers of staff employed and agency staff used. The information reported for overall staffing numbers reflects the Q1 CMT discussion by now reporting numbers actually employed rather than numbers on the establishment.

DIRECTOR SUMMARIES

Corporate Health

10. A slightly expanded set of Corporate Health indicators now includes measures to track and monitor the scale and make up of the workforce. These will be compared against the previous period in order to establish the trend.
11. Sickness absence across CBC has seen a slight increase in Q2 (at 2.13 days per employee), which is consistent with seasonal trends, but still remains lower than the same period last year (2.61 days per employee). This indicator is heavily skewed by long term absences and consequently this will be separated out in future reports.
12. Much attention is being paid to this indicator and management action is focussed on reducing the levels of absence across the piece.
13. Significant progress has been made to integrate the new organisational structures into SAP. To track the full time equivalent (FTE) establishment total and headcount, for CBC, a new indicator has been established, which again, will show the trend against the previous period to show how our staffing levels are changing.
14. The Council has contracted with Carlisle Managed Solutions to provide temporary agency staff. This is now being carefully monitored to understand where we may be able to reduce the requirements for this type of staff, given that they are generally more expensive than permanently employed staff. It is worth noting however, that the largest group of agency workers in the Council continue to be care workers, who fulfil a vital role in covering sickness absence in this service.
15. Undisputed invoices paid within 30 days (85%), has seen a slightly reduced performance against Q1, and is still below target at 90%. However, this is slightly up on the same period last year, and a concerted and proactive effort to clear these invoices is now being pursued.
16. We are continuing to monitor the levels of debt outstanding. The Council will be seeking to re-instate the issue of County Court Judgements on those accounts applicable and will identify best practise in the management of outstanding debts.

Customer & Shared Services

17. Council tax collection is a vital indicator for the Council and needs to be very closely monitored given the likely impact of the challenging economic environment on many of our local residents. Q2 performance is slightly off target, but should recover in the second half of the year.

18. First point resolution of customer queries dropped significantly in Q2. This was a result of a large increase in the overall number of calls during the period at a time when the service was undergoing a significant change to the operation, with the creation of the single telephony centre at Technology House. Now that the teams have settled in and further training has been undertaken on Revenues and Benefits calls, it is anticipated that this indicator will see a marked improvement in Q3.
19. The CBC infrastructure was up and available for 99.10% of the time during Q2. There were 3 main power outages during this time and every effort was made to restore services as quickly as possible, for example: We experienced two major power outages over one weekend, one at Borough Hall and another at Priory House. ICT worked through the weekend and all services were restored prior to normal business on Monday with only minimal impact on the business. This example highlights the need to prioritise the CBC Network project to get all of remaining BBC sites connected to the CBC network as this enables us to quickly provide alternative access methods in the event of system failures in the future.
20. Time taken to process new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims and change events remains well off target. There was a 12% increase in the number of claims for Housing Benefit during Quarter 1, reflecting the impact of the economic climate, which has hampered the work to reduce the backlog of new claims quickly during Q2. This indicator is a major priority and already significant management action has been put in place to reduce the backlog. This should show a marked improvement in this indicator in the second half year.

Children's Services

21. The Council's performance in protecting vulnerable children and young people is good. Key indicators measuring assessment, stability and review are on target. This good performance is being sustained in the context of the increased pressures on Children's Social Care that is being experienced nationally. Our performance in quarter 2 achieved top or second quartile compared to 2009/10 national results.
22. Two schools currently have an Ofsted "Notice to Improve" – Derwent and Mill Vale. Both received this inspection outcome in previous performance quarters. The outcomes for Derwent show that Key Stage 1 remains strong within the school. The school continues to make steady progress and will be subject to a full inspection in the near future. Mill Vale has shown a significant improvement in English at Key Stage 2 this year; one of the Key Improvement areas. Mathematics is in line with national and local authority averages.
23. An Ofsted monitoring visit has occurred for Mill Vale but was outside the reporting period for Quarter 2. This will be reported more fully in Quarter 3 but finds progress to date to be unsatisfactory, with Council support for the school to be satisfactory. The report suggested activities and improvements for Mill Vale school to follow in the next period of recovery.
24. Performance at Key Stage 2 remained the same as last year. Action is being taken to target key areas of improvement in Key Stage 2 and to support the transition midway through the Key Stage from lower to middle schools.

Social Care, Health & Housing

25. The software issues that impacted on reporting in Quarter 1 have been resolved.
26. The number of people supported by the Council to live independently has increased (NI 136). However, this has had a negative impact on the percentage of clients receiving self directed support (NI 130) and Carers' Assessments (NI 135), as it acts as the denominator for both of these indicators. Management action is being taken to review the definition of community based services, which will reduce the numbers reported in subsequent quarters for NI 136 but improve performance reported for NI 130 and NI 135.
27. Whilst the length of time for SOVA investigation has increased, this is as a result of a number of complex investigations being closed in the quarter (8 cases took more than 50 days to investigate); 52% of cases were closed within the 30 days target.
28. The lower numbers of reviews carried out in this quarter was as a result of the team's response to an increase in demand to carry out assessment and support planning work. A refocus in the next quarter will see a subsequent improvement in the number of reviews.
29. The Housing Service remains confident that it will achieve the national Decent Homes target and is currently exceeding the profile for September. However, as a result of the current economic circumstances, there has been an increase in the number of families being housed in temporary accommodation. The performance of this indicator, particularly in relation to families, is dependent on the availability of family-sized accommodation.

Sustainable Communities

30. 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. Central Bedfordshire continues to perform above regional and national average for Economic Growth. The service continues to develop the aim to create an economic powerhouse in Central Bedfordshire.
31. Planning continue to perform well throughout all service areas. The satisfaction level with the Planning Services at CBC continues to improve year on year.
32. Highways and Transport data has shown improvement and with planned novation of the Highways Managing Agent Contract with AMEY there has been a reduction in the number of performance indicators from AMEY to achieve cost reductions, and data that is more relevant for Central Bedfordshire Council reporting purposes than previously. AMEY have spent the summer resurfacing or 'dressing' roads in preparation for winter. With the development of the Local Transport Plan a new suite of transport indicators will be developed to replace the current set.
33. The areas around Community Safety, Public Protection, Waste and Leisure have continued to perform consistently across the service.

OPTIONS

34. None.

FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

35. None directly but there are issues relating to:

- Council Tax collected
- Amount of debt outstanding
- Invoices paid within 30 days.

Appendices:

Appendix A – (Quarter 2 Performance Indicators)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

None

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

Priory House, Bedfordshire