
Meeting: Customer & Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 13th December 2010
Subject: Quarter 2 Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Richard Stay, Deputy Leader
Cllr Maurice Jones, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Governance
Cllr Steve Male, Portfolio Holder for Customer, Systems & Assets
Summary: The report highlights Quarter 2 performance against the Corporate Health Indicators and Key Performance Indicators for the Customer and Shared Services (CSS) directorate, and Office of the Chief Executive (OCE)

Advising Officer: Richard Ellis, Director of Customer & Shared Services
Contact Officer: Ian Porter, AD 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 the Council's key 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,
- The percentage of council tax offered,
- Invoices paid within 30 days and
- The time taken to process housing benefit, council tax, new claims and change events

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. The Council has additionally provided information relating to the average number employed. The average number employed is defined as the total FTE employed (i.e. all employees on permanent, fixed term and temporary contracts averaged over the quarter).

Equalities/Human Rights:

This quarterly performance report highlights performance against 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:

None.

Sustainability:

No direct implications.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee notes and considers this report, and any associated actions that need to be taken, to ensure a rigorous approach to performance management within CSS and OCE
2. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee considers any issues from this report that could form part of its work programme.

Introduction

1. The Council's framework for performance management supports the delivery of CBC's priorities. Those indicators that have been identified as 'critical' now form the quarterly corporate performance suite – included at Appendix A. The full set of all of the Council's indicators is available with the 7 December Executive papers.
2. The Budget Monitoring Report will be presented to the Committee at the same time as this Quarterly Performance Report, to provide a better link between performance and finance issues.
3. Three key themes were identified for the overarching performance position for Quarter 1. Broadly, these themes remain for Quarter 2, and where these impact upon CSS these are highlighted below:

Key theme (1): Impact of the economic climate

4. There has been an increased demand on the Housing Benefits service as a consequence of more customers submitting a claim for housing benefit. Numbers on 'out of work' benefits remains worse than target, though at a similar level to the previous quarter and significantly below regional and national levels.

Key theme (2): Impact of management action

5. 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 since the beginning of this performance year. Currently, the services that have been migrated into the contact centre in 2010/11 are:

- Music
- Revenues and Benefits
- Planning South

Services due to be migrated before 31 March 2011:

- ICT Helpdesk
- Licensing
- Free school meals
- Transport

Key theme (3): Focussed use of resources

6. 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 numbers actually employed rather than numbers on the establishment.

DIRECTOR'S PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Corporate Health Performance Indicators

7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Much attention is being paid to this indicator and management action is focussed on reducing the levels of absence across the piece.
10. 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.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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 Performance Indicators

14. 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.

15. 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.
16. The CBC infrastructure was up and available for 99.10% of the time during Q2. However, 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.
17. Time taken to process new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims and change events remains significantly 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 the second half year, with an expectation that the target is achieved by year end.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

18. The Committee is also asked to consider any issues from this report that could form part of its work programme.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Corporate Health People (Quarter 2 Performance Indicators)

Appendix B – Corporate Health Finance (Quarter 2 Performance Indicators)

Appendix C – Customer and Shared Services (Quarter 2 Performance Indicators)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection)

Executive 7 December 2010 – (Quarter 2 Performance Report)

Location of papers:

Priory House, Bedfordshire