
Meeting: Executive
Date: 15 March 2011
Subject: Quarter 3 Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Richard Stay , Deputy Leader
Summary: The report highlights the key Quarter 3 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, the percentage of Council Tax collected and the invoices paid within 30 days.

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 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 Recommendations: 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. Directors' summaries for Quarter 3 are set out below. Appendix A provides the detailed performance data.
3. The following provides an overview of the performance position for Quarter 3.

4. The start of the new performance year saw an increase in the demand on the Housing Benefits service, as a consequence of more customers being entitled to housing benefit. As a result of targeted management action, the backlog, that the increased demand generated in Q1 and Q2, has been reduced from 800 in Q1 to 273 in Q3, and it is anticipated that the Council's performance in this area will continue to improve. The time taken to process claims has fallen from 54 days at Q2 to 37 days for Q3.
5. The percentage of Council Tax collected during Q3 2010/11 is slightly behind that which was collected during Q3 2009/10. However, Q3 saw significant inroads being made in collecting the previous year's Council Tax arrears.
6. At the beginning of the financial year the Council tax arrears was £9.47M. By the end of Q3, £3.3M of council tax arrears had been collected of which £787k was collected during Q3. The amount of arrears collected each quarter as a percentage of the total outstanding at the start of each quarter remains broadly similar.
7. The amount of long term debt has reduced in the quarter as a result of focussed management intervention. However, short term debt has risen. Invoices paid within 30 days remains below target.
8. The actions reported for Social Care Health and Housing during Q2, have resulted in improvements during Q3.
9. We continue to perform well, regarding the percentage of the Council's housing stock that meets the 'decent' homes standard.
10. 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 3.
11. GCSE results indicate that 54.2% of students at Key Stage 4, achieved 5 A*- C grades, including English and mathematics. This represents an improvement of 4% compared with 2009. These figures place Central Bedfordshire above the national average and improving faster than the national rate of improvement, although this figure is still at the bottom of the ranking of statistical neighbours.

Director Summaries

Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

12. The planned review of the definition of community based services has commenced and, as expected, has had a positive impact on the percentage of clients receiving self directed support (NI 130), together with the continuing increase in the number of clients receiving a personal budget. The review has also seen a positive effect on Carers' Assessments (NI 135). However, there is still concern about the number of joint assessments / reviews resulting in a carer's service or advice and information, as this continues to decline. Management action is being taken to identify the reasons for this and to implement the necessary actions to improve performance. As previously reported, this review has reduced the reported number of people supported by the Council to live independently (NI 136). This provides an accurate picture of the number of people receiving services or support to live independently and ensures we continue to meet the needs of our communities.
13. There has been an improvement in the length of time for SOVA investigations and long standing investigations are now regularly reviewed to ensure that all appropriate actions are being taken and cases are closed when appropriate.
14. Unfortunately the percentage of clients receiving a review of their needs within 12 months continues to decline. Management action is being taken to identify the reason for the decline in performance and to implement any necessary actions.
15. The national target for non-decent homes has been achieved. There has also been an improvement in the number of households in temporary accommodation, which can be attributed to the continuing success of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention.

Children's Services

16. The Council's performance in protecting vulnerable children and young people remains good. Key indicators measuring assessment timeliness, stability and review are on target. Increased pressures on Children's Social Care have impacted on our ability to achieve our target for the ratio of initial assessments to referrals. Regular monitoring continues to assure that current performance reflects consistent application of thresholds for access to services and assessment, rather than solely pursuing targets.
17. In this quarter, two schools currently had an Ofsted "Notice to Improve" – Derwent Lower School and Mill Vale Middle School. Derwent, however, has had an inspection recently and has been judged to be good. Mill Vale is showing some signs of improvement and impact in terms of a strengthened Senior Leadership Team and improvements in teaching and learning. The next stage will be for the school to provide evidence of impact on pupils' achievements and to consider its model of future delivery within the overall school review framework.

18. Performance at Key Stage 4 increased by over 4% last year, but is 4.4% below that of our statistical neighbours. Five schools are part of the second year of the national Gaining Ground programme where good progress is being made in developing the use of data, improving the quality of learning and developing middle leadership.

Sustainable Communities

19. Across the board, Sustainable Communities continue to deliver high performance across a range of indicators. Highways and Transport indicators continue to perform well across the service with good satisfaction levels being recorded with the AMEY contract from both Parish Councils and Members following a survey carried out during 2010. Work was also carried out during the summer months on repairing damage to 22km of road surfaces and applying a surface dressing to over 28km of road surfaces on minor routes to prevent winter damage. During the prolonged severe weather in December, the roads were regularly salted and cleared with all planned salting runs achieved.
20. There has been a delay in central government reporting of the Economic Growth indicators, which continue to highlight the recession, during which Central Bedfordshire appeared to fair well and maintain above average performance in comparison to our neighbouring authorities. This includes a delay in the reporting of indicator NI152 working age people on out of work benefits, which is expected to be updated in March 2011. The proxy indicator that is used which shows the number of people claiming job seekers allowance as a percentage of the working age population has been showing a steady improvement with a decline in percentage of claimants. In other areas, the library service has experienced an increase in the number of items issued with over 25,000 more items loaned in 2010 when compared to the 1,400,000 items issued in 2009.
21. Planning also continues to perform well across the service with high levels of customer satisfaction being reported and an improving return and response rates for applications made.
22. Performance in Public Protection, Community Safety, Waste and Leisure continue to show solid performance in each area.

Customer & Shared Services

23. 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. Q3 performance is slightly off target. However, significant inroads have been made in collecting previous years' Council Tax arrears. This will directly impact on the current year's collection performance as customers previously in arrears begin to catch up with their payments.
24. First point resolution of customer queries has improved slightly in Q3 but still remains significantly off target. It is now possible to identify where specific problems are occurring and target appropriate management action to meet staff training needs or to implement service migration. The introduction of the new golden numbers should further improve performance in Q4.

25. Time taken to process new Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claims and change events is now showing an improving trend. There was a 12% increase in the number of claims for Housing Benefit during Quarter 1, reflecting the impact of the economic climate, which hampered the work to reduce the backlog of new claims quickly during Q2. However, the Council has achieved an 11 % reduction in the overall number of items of outstanding correspondence in Quarter 3 which will have a positive effect on this indicator during Q4.

Corporate Health Performance Indicators

26. Sickness absence across CBC has seen a slight increase in Q3 (at 2.72 days per employee and is slightly higher than the same period last year (2.6 days per employee). Performance for this indicator is heavily influenced by long term absences and consequently has been separated out in this report (45% of current sickness levels are classified as incidents of long-term sickness). Current performance levels should be considered in the context of seasonality (a higher sickness figure in winter is often common) and the staffing changes the organisation is currently facing.
27. Much attention is being paid to this indicator and management action continues to focus on reducing the levels of absence across the organisation.
28. The Council's contract with Carlisle Managed Solutions to provide temporary agency staff is now being carefully monitored to understand where we may be able to reduce the requirements. 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.
29. The number of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days (85%) has seen a slight improvement in performance against Q2, but 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. This includes enforcement of 'No PO No Pay' from 1st March 2011, which will reduce the number of invoices that cannot be input to SAP, and the streamlined requisitioning training to improve the monitoring and management of unpaid and blocked invoices.
30. We are continuing to monitor the levels of debt outstanding. The Council has reinstated the issue of County Court Judgements on those accounts applicable and will identify best practice in the management of outstanding debts.

Conclusion and Next Steps

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

Appendices: Appendix A – (Quarter 3 Performance Indicators)

Background Papers: (open to public inspection) - None

Location of papers: Priory House.