
Meeting: Executive
Date: 4 October 2011
Subject: Quarter 1 Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Summary: To report on Quarter 1 2011/12 performance for Central Bedfordshire Council's key performance indicator set.

Advising Officer: Richard Carr, Chief Executive
Contact Officer: Elaine Malarky, Head of Programme 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:

None directly but there are a number of performance indicators within the corporate suite that have a strong financial link, including:

- Council Tax collected;
- amount of debt outstanding;
- invoices paid within 30 days; and
- time taken to process benefits and change events.

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 whether 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:

- This report will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny committees during their October cycle of meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. that the Executive notes the improved overall performance made against this set of indicators and recommends officers to further investigate and resolve underperforming indicators.**

<i>Reason for Recommendation:</i>	<i>To ensure a rigorous approach to performance management across Central Bedfordshire Council</i>
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Introduction

1. The framework for performance management supports the delivery of the Council's priorities. An overview of performance in Quarter 1 2011/12 and Directors' summaries are set out below supported in Appendix A by the detailed performance data.

Appendix A - Overview

2. Overall performance against the data set demonstrates that Council services continue to be supported by strong management decisions and that appropriate actions are being taken to remedy challenging performance issues.

3. For the first time, Appendix A has a cover sheet providing an overview of performance for each of the indicators in the corporate set. During quarter 1 2011/12, it has been possible to Red, Amber, Green (RAG) score 19 of the 31 corporate indicators. The remainder have not been scored, either because no target has been set or the nature of the indicator means it is not suitable to score in this way. Wherever possible and appropriate, the cover sheet also shows the direction of travel for the indicator.
4. Of the nineteen indicators RAG scored, eleven (58%) are Green, five (26%) are Amber and three (16%) are Red. (This compares well with the outturn results for 2010/11 when there were 24 indicators with RAG scores of which ten (42%) were Green; four (16%) were Amber; and ten (42%) were Red).
5. Looking first at the Green indicators. The Council continues to perform well in protecting vulnerable children and young people. It is managing the demand for temporary accommodation and the recent housing stock condition survey has identified that less than 1% of properties have been identified as not meeting the decent homes standard. All 36 of these properties have been included in this year's programme of works.
6. The percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days improved to 92.5% in quarter 1 up from 86.7% in quarter 4.
7. The provisional outturn figures for 2010/11 show that recycling rates have increased to over 51% through continued improvements in the recycling service.
8. The level of first point resolution by the Customer Service Contact Centre remains high at 88.76% during the quarter well ahead of the annual target of 80%.
9. Even though it is not scored as no target has been set for 2011/12, serious acquisitive crime, which includes domestic burglary, robbery and thefts of and from a vehicle, has fallen by 16% in quarter 1 2011/12 when compared to the same quarter in 2010/11. This equates to 136 fewer crimes.
10. Of the five indicators which are Amber, these are all in the main showing either no change or a slight movement since the last quarter. Sickness absence in quarter 1 shows a continuing improvement trend and this is also the case for the percentage of council tax collected which although it has improved is behind target. A range of actions are in place to rectify this and further improvement is expected.
11. The three indicators scored as Red are all showing improvement. These include:
 - the percentage of clients receiving self-directed support, where progress is being made but where a demanding target has been set for this year to enable us to be on track to meet the national target of 100% by 2013;
 - the percentage of Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults (SOVA) investigations completed within 35 days, where performance in the quarter was 67.2% up from last year's outturn figure of 59%. Overall performance being reduced by the time needed to deal with a number of complex cases; and
 - the time taken to process benefit claims and change events, where performance is below target, but has improved significantly when compared to the same period last year.

DIRECTOR SUMMARIES

Adult Social Care, Health & Housing

12. Performance in relation to Adult Social Care has generally remained static over the first quarter of the year. The planned changes to the skill mix of the workforce have impacted on the performance of self-directed support (SCHH 2), carers' assessments (SCHH 3) and reviews (SCHH 6). Action plans have been drafted to improve the performance for self-directed support and whilst the Council achieved the national target of 30% of customers receiving personal budgets in 2010/11 the new national target of 100% of customers receiving personal budgets by 31 March 2013 is very challenging. The 2011/12 target of 60% is also very challenging with plans likely to see improved performance in quarters 3 and 4. Similarly, the action plans for reviews, and, the additional resources in relation to supporting carers will be in place in the autumn, which should see an improvement in performance in quarter 3.
13. A new local measure and target has been introduced for Safeguarding, which reports the percentage of investigations completed within 35 days. Whilst currently below the target, the direction of travel is positive. Long standing cases which usually involve the Police and other partners are regularly monitored to ensure that the individual is safeguarded and when appropriate the case is closed.
14. Performance in Housing continues to be on target with the number of households in temporary accommodation being maintained. A small number of non-decent homes have been identified through the recent Stock Condition Survey; the works to bring up the standard of these properties has been scheduled for this year.

Children's Services

15. The Council's performance in protecting vulnerable children and young people has remained good this quarter. Key indicators measuring social care assessment timeliness, stability and review remain on target to year end 2012. The demand on the frontline teams remains high and there has been a significant increase in the numbers of children subject to child protection plans and care proceedings required to protect children. These are resource intensive activities requiring frontline service and legal support. The implementation of new legislation and guidance is also having an impact on workloads and the level of support required for children.
16. Regular monitoring ensures that current performance reflects consistent application of thresholds for access to services and assessment for children in need and those in need of protection. This demonstrates continuing availability of the service for those most vulnerable, rather than solely pursuing targets.
17. Since the beginning of April, there have been 11 school inspections. Five of these maintained their Good outcome, four improved their Ofsted judgement (one Satisfactory, two Good and one Outstanding). There were two Early Years inspections and both were classified as Satisfactory. Mill Vale Middle School was inspected on 13 June. The school was judged to be Satisfactory taking it out of the Ofsted "Notice to Improve" category. Support from the local authority in providing guidance to the head teacher and governing body has been acknowledged by inspectors.

Ashton Middle School was given a Notice to Improve on 9 February 2011. The School Management Team is focused on the improvements that need to be made, in part from the commissioned support from Alban Academy and Stratton Upper School. Indications are that September will bring a new start and improved practice.

Sustainable Communities

18. Sustainable Communities continues to deliver high performance across a range of indicators. The Economic Growth indicators continue to show the impact of the economic downturn and show that Central Bedfordshire appeared to fair well through and maintain above average performance in comparison to our neighbouring authorities. Success areas from the services include the adoption by Council of the Dunstable Master Plan in May and the Biggleswade Town Centre Master Plan in July 2011. These Master Plans are being used to guide ongoing investment strategies for these areas.
19. Consultation is underway on the first Central Bedfordshire Council Economic Development Plan, which incorporates the first all age skills strategy. This is due to be presented to Council in December for full adoption. The Timebank Project will be officially launched on the 22 September 2011. This provides support to new and existing businesses and seeks to promote growth and investment in the area. We are the first council in the country to trial this approach following a pilot in Manchester.
20. Highways continues to work closely with Amey to maximise the cost effectiveness of the work carried out on our roads network, faced as we are with reduced funding for this work in 2011/12. As a result, whilst there has been a reduction in the length of road being resurfaced, this is being balanced by an increase in the length of road being surface dressed.
21. Planning has seen a dip in performance this quarter. There was a low survey response rate in quarter 1 with only 14 forms received of which ten applicants/agents were satisfied with the service provided. Dissatisfaction relates to a number of issues which have been reviewed and assessed by the Development Management Team and appropriate action taken where possible. On a positive note, Building Control has won four Local Authority Building Control Excellence Awards for the Central Region. These projects have been worked on with local companies and will now go through to the national finals in November.
22. Public Protection, Community Safety, Waste and Leisure continue to show strong performance in each area. We have increased recycling to over 51% in 2010/11 through continued improvement of the recycling service, such as offering reuse and plasterboard recycling at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) and continued promotion of waste minimisation and recycling including targeted work in areas where there has historically been low levels of recycling. The amount of residual waste produced per head of population has also been dramatically reduced and we are top of the 'Race to Zero Waste' league table for the Eastern Region and sixth in the country.

23. Quarter 1 performance in respect of serious acquisitive crime, which includes domestic burglary, robbery and thefts of and from motor vehicles has improved by 16% when compared to the same quarter in 2010/11 with 136 less crimes. Whilst there was a slight increase in thefts from vehicles (up 11%) there were significant reductions in thefts of vehicles (down 25%) and domestic burglaries (down 44%). There were 147 fewer domestic burglaries in quarter 1 2011/12 than there were in 2010/11. This reduction in domestic burglary has been achieved through the successful targeting and subsequent arrest of identified offenders.

Corporate Services - Resources

24. Close monitoring of Council Tax collection has resulted in an increase in the percentage collected in quarter 1 compared to the same period in 2010/11, up from 28.79% to 29.10%. Even with this increase, the need to raise total collection to 98% by the end of the financial year means that the Council is 0.13% behind target, a percentage that equates to £184k. Arrears are being tackled through prompt action, which has already seen 9,000 reminders for late payment sent out. In addition 1,840 summonses and 1,800 Liability Orders have been issued against customers in the Magistrates Court.
25. Whilst the collection of Council Tax is vitally important, it is recognised that this is a time of economic challenge not just for the Council but also for the public. Therefore the Council's target of significantly improving the time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefits claims is very important. Despite quarter 1 performance at 31 days being a significant improvement over last years quarter 1 performance of 54 days, we are behind in meeting our overall average processing time of 25 days for 2011/12. Meeting the 25 day average for the year should ensure that by the close of the year we are processing claims within 19 days. As a result this indicator has been scored as Red. Additional resources have been allocated to working through the backlog of claims and whilst this will temporarily see performance dip as a larger number of older claims are processed, performance will then pick up as our capacity to deal with newer claims improves.
26. The Council's ability to pay invoices promptly is also important particularly at a time of economic difficulty, when the recipients of those payments include small companies struggling with late payments from other customers or charities who have seen other funding streams diminish. It is therefore pleasing to be able to report that the percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days rose from 86.73% in quarter 4 to 92.5% in quarter 1 2011/12. This is the third successive quarterly improvement in performance and reflects the hard work that has been put in by all directorates.
27. Whilst overall the corporate resources indicator set shows strong performance, the increase in the level of outstanding debt during the quarter contrasts with this. The level of outstanding debt rose from £2.862M at the end of quarter 4 2010/11 to £3.59M at the close of this quarter. Careful analysis of the data shows that a small number of invoices with other public bodies in Bedfordshire accounted for just over £1 million of this debt, however chasing and negotiations are well advanced to resolve these debts.

Corporate Services - People and Organisation

28. The Council continues to carefully manage the level of agency staff that it uses; monitoring the reason for their usage and the category of job the agency worker is carrying out. The use of agency workers allows us to be flexible in our resourcing options. This is especially important during times of restructuring where skills or capacity gaps have been identified or there is a need for covering a role prior to commencing change. As the optimum number of agency staff will fluctuate from quarter to quarter due to changing needs, it is not possible to performance score this indicator. However, it is worth noting that the number of agency staff (FTE) fell by 13% in quarter 1 2011/12 when compared to quarter 4 2010/11 and is down 19.5% when compared to the same point in the previous year.
29. We continue to carefully monitor levels and patterns of sickness absence and work closely with all managers, supporting them as they follow our robust sickness absence policies. Building on the sickness absence training already provided to managers, further training is planned over the coming months. As part of this support, Human Resources works closely with Occupational Health to provide support to those identified as having higher levels of sickness absence. The figures show that sickness absence is improving, with quarter 1 2011/12 showing the second successive quarterly fall. However the indicator has been scored as Amber as quarter 1 was above the quarterly target.
30. Despite the continued high volume of calls handled by the Customer Contact Centre, (146,739 during quarter 1) a high percentage of customer calls have again been resolved at first point of contact. After removing 16,449 calls which were merely seeking redirection to a named member of staff, the Service achieved an 88.76% first point resolution rate, well above the target of 80%.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Quarter 1 Performance Indicators

Background Papers: (open to public inspection) - None

Location of papers: Priory House