
Meeting: Customer and Central Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 16 April 2012

Subject: Quarter 3 Performance Report

Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources

Summary: The report highlights Quarter 3 performance 2011/12 for the Corporate Health indicators recorded by Corporate Services - Resources and Corporate Services - People and Organisation.

Advising Officer: Deb Clarke, Assistant Chief Executive. Charles Warboys, Chief Finance Officer.

Contact Officer: Elaine Malarky, Head of Programme and Performance

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

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; Undisputed 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 agency staff being used.

Equalities/Human Rights:

This report highlights performance in respect of 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.

Community Safety:

None

Sustainability:

No direct implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the overall improvement made against this set of indicators and considers any issues from this report that could form part of their work programme.

1. Overall performance against the Corporate Health indicators in the Council's Corporate Indicator Set demonstrates improvement. It shows that services are continuing to be supported by strong management decisions and that appropriate actions are being taken to remedy challenging performance issues.
2. Appendix A has a cover sheet providing an overview of performance for each of the indicators in the corporate set considered by this Committee. During quarter 3 2011/12, it has been possible to RAG score five of the seven Corporate Services indicators. Two are green and improving, two are amber and improving and one is red with no change in performance. The remaining two 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.
3. The following paragraphs provide a brief summary highlighting key performance for Quarter 3. The tables attached as Appendix A provide the details for each indicator.

Corporate Services - Resources

4. The interventions used to chase outstanding payments, including reminder letters and the issuing of summonses has ensured that the percentage of Council Tax collected remains very close to target. By the close of Quarter 3, the Council had collected 84.73% of the Council Tax due to it. This is 0.26% up on last year, but still 0.37% (527k) off target, hence the amber rating. The level of payments collected by the Council's bailiffs has increased significantly in 2011/12 compared to 2010/11 and with £1.2m passed to the bailiff in Quarter 2 for collection, we remain confident that the year end target of 98% will be achieved.
5. In relation to the processing of Housing Benefit and Council Tax, performance during Quarter 3 is on par with that of 2010/11. More encouraging is the significant drop in processing times between November and December 2011 and is an indication that we have made good progress in clearing the backlog. In December the volume of outstanding benefit changes reduced to its lowest for 24 months and processing times improved by almost 25% between November and December. It is still anticipated that processing times will be brought into line with monthly targets by the end of the year (the processing target for the month of March 2012 is 19 days). However achieving an overall average rate of 25 days for the entire year is unlikely due to the impact of dealing with the backlog.

6. Performance in Quarter 3 2011/12 for the percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 30 days, improved on that achieved in Quarter 2, returning to the level achieved in Quarter 1, and again the 90% target has been achieved. The seasonal comparison also shows a significant improvement in Quarter 3 this year compared to same quarter in 2010/11. At a directorate level all directorates showed an improvement this quarter.
7. Good progress is being made in reducing the amount of outstanding debt due to the Council. However the challenge for the Council is not only to reduce the overall level of debt but also to ensure that the proportion of older debt is kept under control. Progress is being made in this respect with debt over 90 days falling by £530k this quarter and debt under 90 days old falling by £610k. £926k of the £4.228m over 90 days old is secured on properties so takes longer to recover. A target covering the ratio between older debt (over 90 days old) excluding that secured on property and all debt outstanding is being developed.

Corporate Services - People and Organisation

8. The Council continues to monitor the level of agency staff that it uses, including the reason for their usage and the category of job the agency worker is carrying out. The use of agency workers continues to be one of the mechanisms that allows the Council to be flexible in the fulfilment of its resourcing needs. 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.
9. The year on year sickness absence has improved and this figure is lower than the comparable period last year. After a reduction in staff sickness absence for the three successive quarters, Quarter 3 2011/12 shows an increase. The indicator has been scored as AMBER as the 2.63 days lost per employee remains above the quarterly target of 2 days. Human Resources continue to work closely with Occupational Health to provide support to those identified as having higher levels of sickness absence.
10. At 89.95% the Customer Service Contact Centre continues to surpass its target of resolving 80% of calls that it receives at the first point of contact. This is a considerable achievement bearing in mind the high volume of calls received during the quarter (129,087) and the fact that 41% of these came through on the 'General Enquiries' line

Appendices:

Appendix A – Quarter 3 2011/12 indicators for Corporate Services - People and Organisation and Corporate Services - Resources.

Background Papers: (open to public inspection) - None

Location of papers: Priory House