
Meeting: Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 31 July 2012
Subject: Quarter 4 Performance Report
Report of: Cllr Maurice Jones, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources
Summary: The report highlights Quarter 4 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 acknowledges 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 is important to note that these improvements have taken place against a difficult economic background, one that not only restricts the finances available to the Council, but also brings about increased demands on some services. An example being 'The time taken to process Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit claims' (CH2), where improvements in processing times have to be set in the context of significantly increased workload as the number of claims being received by the service increases.
2. Appendix A includes at the front a table providing an overview of performance for each of the indicators in the corporate set considered by this Committee. The set has reduced by one this quarter as the measure of the number of agency staff used by the Council, no longer forms part of this indicator set. For performance in Quarter 4 2011/12, it has been possible to RAG score five of the six Corporate Services indicators. Two are green, two are amber and one is red. It is important to note that the Red and Amber indicators are all showing improvement.
3. As this is Quarter 4, it has also been possible to RAG score the outturn performance for the year for five out of the six indicators. Here RAG scores are consistent with the performance in Quarter 4 with the exception of CH5 Corporate sickness absence, where improved performance in Quarter 4 was not sufficient to offset under-performance earlier in the year
4. The following paragraphs provide a brief summary highlighting key performance for Quarter 4 and outturn performance where this is known. The tables attached as Appendix A provide the details for each indicator.

Corporate Services - Resources

5. Strong performance throughout the year by the Revenues and Benefits Team ensured that at the close of the year 97.95% of all Council Tax due had been collected, an improvement on the 2010/11 performance. Whilst this was 0.05% below target and therefore scored as Amber, it is impressive performance bearing in mind the continuing economic conditions. (CH1)
6. The considerable effort that has gone into improving the processing times for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit is beginning to show results. In March 2012 the processing time had fallen to 17 days well below the 25 days in March 2011. The average time taken in 2011/12 was 30.6 days down from 42 days in

2010/11. Performance has been scored as Red as the Council did not meet its target of 25 days, however the work undertaken to clear the backlog in 2011/12 alongside improvements in the process of handling of such requests means that the Council is well placed to meet its new monthly targets in 2012/13, despite a growing volume of work. (CH2)

7. The Council continues to be a prompt payer of invoices with 92.32% of all undisputed invoices paid within 30 days. This is the second successive annual improvement and demonstrates the Council's Commitment to support its suppliers during this difficult economic climate. (CH3)
8. The Council continues to carefully monitor the amount of debt owing to it and the age of that debt, and includes this as a measure in the Corporate Indicator Set. Whilst this measure provides a snapshot of the level of debt broken down by the length of time that the debt has existed, it is highly affected by seasonal factors such as the bulk issuing of invoices. The decision has therefore been taken to replace this measure in the 2012/13 set with a more sophisticated one that is less prone to seasonal variation and which helps the Council monitor its progress in reducing long term debt. The new measure will focus on debt over 1 year old with a proposed target that this is reduced by 10% during the year. To ensure consistency, this measure will exclude debt which is already subject to legal process or charges on the sale of assets. In cash terms this will amount to a target reduction of £120k for 2012/13 year. (CH4)

Corporate Services - People and Organisation

9. Sickness absence fell to its lowest level since Quarter 1 2010/11 in Quarter 4 with a rate of 2.04 days lost per employee, well below the 2.42 days experienced in Quarter 4 2010/11. This performance is very close to the target of 2 days and has therefore been scored as Amber for Quarter 4. Despite this improved performance the average rate for the year at 9.21 days missed the target of 8 days and was a slight deterioration from the 9.07 days achieved in 2010/11, hence the outturn performance has been scored as Red. (CH6)
10. During the quarter the Customer Service Contact Centre continued to meet its target of resolving 80% of calls that it receives at the first point of contact, with a rate of 86.25%. This resulted in overall performance for the year of 88.3% this is strong performance for a service that handled 582,582 calls during 2011/12. (CH7)

Appendices:

Appendix A – Quarter 4 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