

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
If other:	N/A
Date of meeting:	15 December 2023
Report author:	Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services, Delivery Support Lead, Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead
Report sponsor:	Director of Partnerships
Portfolio holder:	Councillor Mark Watkin
Report title:	Performance and Progress Report – Q2 2023/24

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Following the Mayoral election last year, in June 2022 Watford Borough Council launched its new Council Plan which sets out an ambitious agenda for the town and the council. The Council Plan forms part of the organisation’s strategic framework, which aims to ensure that the council delivers on its commitments. Underpinning the Council Plan is a two-year Delivery Plan and our key corporate strategies, which are supported by a suite key performance indicators (KPIs). This allows the council to ensure that both projects, strategies and high-quality services continue to be delivered, and for action to be taken if areas of concern are identified. A critical part of this approach is regular reporting of the key elements of the council’s strategic framework and day to day performance. This report, therefore, contains updates comprising:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- the external key performance indicators for Q2 of 2023/24.
- Key corporate strategies

1.2 The updates reflect the positive outcomes that have been achieved over the second quarter of 2023/24. The progress achieved since the last update to Overview and Scrutiny Committee is shown in the updates appended to this report (Appendices A, B and C).

1.3 The successful delivery of the commitments in the Council Plan 2022-26 is critical to ensuring we remain focused on what is important to Watford and we are seen by our community as an organisation that delivers on its promises. As such, the council has committed to reporting on progress against our key plans on a quarterly basis. This report forms the sixth of these updates since the approval of the new Council Plan.

1.4 As part of our drive for continuous improvement and in line with the recently approved Continuous Improvement Framework, a review of the council’s key performance indicators across the organisation was undertaken in first part of 2023 with the support of both Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny

Committee. Appendix B reports against the newly agreed key performance indicators.

2.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee note:

2.1 The progress updates within this report relating to:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022 -24 (Appendix A)
- the external key performance indicator results for Quarter 2 of 2023/24 (Appendix B)
- the council's key corporate strategies (Appendix C)

3.0 Report pathway

3.1 Next review body: *Not applicable:*

3.1.1 Indicative date: *Not applicable*

3.2 Final review body: *Not applicable*

3.2.1 Indicative date: *Not applicable*

4.0 Contact Officer:

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Reviewed and signed off by: Kathryn Robson, Director of Performance

5.0 Detailed proposal

5.1 The council has an ambitious agenda for Watford and recognises that a focused, and aligned, strategic framework is fundamental to the successful delivery of its plans for the town.

5.2 Following the Mayoral election in May 2022, the council reviewed and refreshed its strategic framework to better reflect these ambitions as well as the Mayor's Manifesto, local intelligence, community feedback and best practice. The renewed framework, comprising the council's key strategies and plans, confirms our focus on what is important to the town and its residents and that resources are allocated to its priority commitments.

5.3 A critical part of the successful delivery of the renewed framework is robust, and regular, monitoring and reporting of the associated plans including:

- the Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- Key performance indicators.
- Key corporate strategies

This report presents a progress update of the plans outlined in 5.3 and in associated Appendices (A, B and C).

- 5.4 A significant amount of progress has been achieved across all delivery areas. The direction set by the strategic framework has ensured services have clarity on where they need to concentrate, focus their energies and support the council's reputation as a council that gets things done and that delivers on what is important to the town.
- 5.5 Running throughout the council's progress is the strengthening of our organisational approach, governance and structure. This means the council has the essential building blocks in place to support all of our activities and commitments not just across these plans but also across all of our corporate work and effort. This has particularly focused on:
- making sure we have the right capacity to deliver, particularly at the senior level of the organisation and following the recent realignment of Tier 4 management of the council;
 - a renewed emphasis on integrating how we work strategically;
 - making sure the way we make our decisions is transparent, timely and supported by the relevant information; and
 - our organisational culture, underpinned by our recently approved values and behaviours, is directed to our 'one team' approach, shared ownership of our corporate priorities and commitment to deliver
- 5.6 All of our plans and strategies are underpinned by a suite of key performance indicators, which have recently been reviewed and ensure that, as an organisation, we continue to provide high quality services to our residents, businesses and community.

6.0 Council Plan 2022-26 and Delivery Plan 2022-24

- 6.1 The new Council Plan 2022-26 was approved by Council in June 2022 as was the associated Delivery Plan 2022-24.
- 6.2 The Council Plan is designed to be strategic, high level and outward-facing, with an emphasis on outcome focused commitments based around four key themes:
- A greener, brighter future
 - An inspiring, thriving and creative town

- A diverse happy and healthy town
- A council working for our community and serving our residents

Each theme has a number of areas of commitment under which specific projects and areas of work have been identified and articulated through the Delivery Plan 2022-24.

- 6.3 Whilst the Council Plan has a four-year perspective, the Delivery Plan has been developed to focus on key priorities to 2024. The 18-month perspective means that the Council can remain flexible and agile to respond to emerging and future challenges and opportunities over the life of the Council Plan.
- 6.4 By reporting regularly to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress made by the organisation against the Council Plan and, particularly the Delivery Plan, we can ensure we are continuing to focus our resources on what is important to our town and community. It also provides transparency and clear accountability to our community.
- 6.5 The full report can be seen in Appendix A but some key highlights, by Council Plan theme, are included below:

A greener brighter future

- The first two phases of electric vehicle charge point installations, which will number 38 sites when all phases are finished, have been completed. This initiative will support Watford's commitment for investing in sustainable transport and aligns with our Transforming Travel in Watford and Environmental Strategies.
- Treescape Funding to support our commitment to increase Watford's green canopy has been secured and will enable 121 trees and 300 whips to be planted this winter. In addition to this, it is expected that approx. 9,500 trees will be given away in December at the annual tree giveaway event, a joint initiative with HCC.
- A number of engagement activities have been delivered through our 'Tales of the Rivers' workstream within the overall Rediscovering River Colne programme. This includes Wildplay Sessions which had a total of 138 participants and, Junior River Champion sessions with approx. 120 pupils.
- Planned work at Cassiobury Park Wetlands, to improve and enhance the site, is progressing well and is on track to complete by next quarter.

An inspiring, thriving and creative town

- Through the 'Watford Fit to Bid' project we have supported well over 60 Watford businesses to improve their bidding and tendering skills and capacity. The first Meet the Buyer event was a great success and was attended by buyer representatives from big organisations such as Berkeley Homes, Morgan Sindall and Veolia as well as 70 SMEs. The Watford Net Zero project is already supporting around 140 businesses on their decarbonisation journey.
- We have agreed amendments to the long-term vision of the Joint Strategic Partnership (JSP) alongside other South West Herts LPAs. The amendments which will enable us progress to the next stage of the JSP which is to propose and test spatial development options.
- As the completion of the new Watford Business Park units draws near, the park marketing strategy has been launched and we are seeing a promising level of interest in the units. Heads of Terms are currently being progressed with one unit. The new facility is expected to be completed in the next quarter.
- 12 social rented 2-bedroom properties have been delivered in Q1 and Q2 of 2023/24, putting the council on track to deliver our target of 120 properties over 4 years in order to support the housing needs of the most vulnerable members of our community.

A diverse, happy and healthy town

- The Hemel Hempstead Crematorium was officially opened in September 2023. The new state of the art facility has exceptional features including a chapel that can accommodate 140 people, layout that provides complete privacy for mourners, extensive landscaping, changing places facility, memorial gardens and a tranquillity pool.
- We are delivering regular engagement days to reassure and inform the Watford community through Safer Watford, the town's Community Safety Partnership. This quarter we delivered an ASB Awareness Week, Older Persons Active Learning Sessions, Hate Crime Awareness Week and a reassure and inform event at Watford General Hospital. We have successfully secured PCC funding to address violent youth crime. A project will be delivered in local schools to empower young children to make positive choices.
- The Healthy Hub service continues to support residents with their health and wellbeing needs, including mental health. As well as HCC's core offer, the hub offers health checks and face to face appointments to support clients.

- Our Council Tax Discount and Exemptions form went live this quarter and enables our residents to apply online for a council tax discount or exemption. In some cases residents will receive a decision immediately, improving the customer experience, providing greater flexibility and improving service efficiency.
- We have drafted the Watford Business Charter and are preparing for consultation with businesses and stakeholders this autumn / winter. The Charter will encourage businesses to do more in 5 areas: recruit local, buy local, go green, connect with community and be an employer of choice.
- Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Delivery Plan were approved by Cabinet in 2023.

A council working for our community and serving our residents

- Automated surveys for telephone customers to the council has been launched and provide a way of obtaining greater feedback on our services and our customers' experiences with the council. The data that we collate will feed onto our processes for continuous improvement.
- Occupier interest is increasing at Croxley Park and we have recently let 20,000 sq ft at Building 1.
- In line with our ambition to provide resilient and efficient services, work continues to review opportunities for a HR & OD Shared Service with neighbouring LAs, which will provide additional opportunities to reduce ongoing costs.
- The implementation of the council's Values & Behaviours is well underway. Our agile pathfinders and Service Delivery Leads are championing and playing a key role in embedding the values and behaviours.

7.0 Key Performance Indicators

- 7.1 Our key performance indicators underpin our Council Plan by ensuring that the organisation continues to perform against a range of measures relating to the services we provide to our residents, businesses and community.
- 7.2 The measures highlighted within this report have supported the delivery of good quality services by highlighting areas of good performance and, more importantly, under performance. This allows the council to ensure that services continue to offer a high-quality service to our residents and businesses, and for action to be taken if areas of concern are identified.
- 7.3 The attached report (Appendix B), therefore, shows the results for the current set of key performance indicators during the first quarter of the

2023/24 financial year. In summary, out of the 49 indicators, 48 results have been received for Q2 to date. Of those 48 results, 44 have targets set. 30 KPIs exceeded targets, 2 were outside of the target but within tolerance and 12 were outside of the target. Some key highlights, by Council Plan theme, are included below:

A greener brighter future

- Residual household waste was within the new, more challenging target agreed as part of the KPI review. Waste recycled and composted was also within target.
- Both indicators related to fly-tipping exceeded the targets set.
- Net Zero Carbon footprint for Watford Leisure Centre is a new KPI, and the result is reported for the first time in Q2. The target set for this KPI was a 3% reduction by the end of 2023/24, and this has been achieved already, primarily due to the installation of a pool cover. An application for funding has been submitted to install a Solar PV, with a decision expected to be made by the end of December 2023. Customer service response times for Watford Leisure Centre remained high, with 100% of customer comments responded to within 48 hours.
- Beryl Bike usage is measured by counting the numbers of journeys taken within the quarter, which was 34,840 in Q2. Beryl Bike usage is seasonal, with Q1 and Q2 expected to be higher than Q3 and Q4 when the weather is colder. Usage is on track to achieve the target of 115,000 journeys this year.
- Levels of graffiti were within target, and much improved compared with last quarter, and Q2 last year. Levels of fly-posting, litter and detritus were outside of the target, however all showed improvement when compared with Q2 last year. Please see Appendix B for more detail on these indicators.

An inspiring, thriving and creative town

- Excellent results recorded for the Planning team in Q2, with all planning applications processes within timescales.
- The Watford Market occupancy rate measures the number of market units which are occupied with rent paying traders. This indicator has remained steady with 93.50% of the market units occupied, showing no changes since Q1, and is within target.

- The number of parking penalty charge notices issued in Q2 was 10,169, an increase on Q1 which was 8,632. There was one tribunal appeal in Q2, and it was won by WBC.

A diverse, happy and healthy town

- The numbers of households living in temporary accommodation has been over 100 since November 2022, and has increased again since Q1 to 179 in Q2. For 3 years up until December 2022, TA numbers were stable, and ranged between 80 and 98. In line with national trends, the service have seen the numbers rise continuously each month since December 2022, and doubling in 11 months. Accessing private rented housing is becoming harder due to market pressure and affordability, and the service have had significantly fewer Choice Based Letting (CBL) lets this year. Work continues to mitigate the impacts both in terms of prevention work, reviewing the TA strategy exploring how private rental sector can be more affordable and increase access to social lets.
- The number of Homeless households in Temporary Accommodation out of area was 26, an increase on Q1 and significantly over the target of 3 or less. WBC try to place clients in Watford unless accommodation outside Watford is more suitable. For instance, a nightly let for a family with cooking and washing facilities in South Oxhey is considered better than a Travel Lodge in Watford. Current demand means some clients are located outside of the borough, but this is minimised, and clients are worked with to find the best solution.
- There were 3 verified rough sleepers at the end of September, reduced from 11 at the end of June, and within the target of 5.
- The number of homeless relief cases closed with a successful outcome has improved significantly since Q1 and is now exceeding the target. The number of successful homeless preventions also showed improvement since Q1 and exceeded the 60% target at 69%.
- Number of new homes for social rent handed over in Q2 was 12, still on track for the yearly target for 40. The ambition is 120 new homes by 2026.
- Q2 results were generally positive for both Central and Woodside Leisure centres. There was a small increase in swimming lesson take up and memberships at both centres during Q2. There was a drop in the number of visits for both centres, however this is expected during the summer months due to holidays, and schools/collages closing. Customer satisfaction with sports and leisure centres exceeded the target in Q2 with 95% of customers rating the service at 7 or above (out of 10). Customer

forums are taking place at both Woodside and Central branches, where members and visitors can come to talk about what they enjoy and what they want to see moving forward.

A council working for our community and serving our residents

- Average time to process housing benefit claims has reduced by 1 day in Q2 compared with Q1 and is now within target. Average time to process a change of circumstances also dropped compared with Q1 to 7 days, which is outside the target but within tolerance.
- Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates collection are both on track to be within target at the end of the year, and similar to results this time last year. Percentage of Housing benefit classified as 'LA error' reduced compared with Q1 and the position at the end of Q2 was back within target.
- Looking at customer experience measures, self-service levels were above target at 73%. The top 3 forms used by customers self-serving were Report a street Cleansing or Parks issue, General Enquiry and Contact Us. Telephone calls answered were slightly outside of the target but within tolerance, however telephone waiting time to the Customer Service Centre was significantly outside of the target. The CSC was impacted by a number of unexpected staff absences from mid-July through to mid-September, and which impacted this result. In addition, the service had the maximum preauthorised staff leave of 3 FTE during the same period. Due to business continuity planning now in place following learning from last year, the service was able to use the Corporate Apprentice as extra resource on some days, and also divert calls to Revenues on a number of days when they were severely impacted. Q2 is also the busiest month for CSC telephone calls with Garden Waste renewals occurring at this time. Customers requesting callbacks increased by 211%, which resulted in 2,052 calls not being abandoned, improving what would otherwise have been a much more unsatisfactory customer journey.
- FOI response time dropped to 75.5% in Q2, which is the lowest it has been since Q1 the previous year. Out of 163 FOIs received, 40 were not responded to within timescales. Access to reporting is being extended to improve visibility of FOIs outstanding and their due dates.
- Several new KPIs related to Customer satisfaction by contact channel were added as part of the KPI review, and the metrics are based around the percentage of customers who have given a positive rating of the service received. The contact channels assessed in Q2 were website,

telephone and digital. Customer satisfaction for digital channels has improved since Q1, and is now within target, with 91% of customers giving the service a positive rating. Telephone satisfaction was just outside of the target with 97% of customers still rating the service positively.

- Website satisfaction was outside of the target at 43%. Looking at individual forms, Garden Waste forms 89% of customers had a positive experience, which is good news considering Q2 is the quarter when subscriptions are renewed, and the service has noted customer satisfaction ratings drop in the past. Reporting is now enabled for the new Govmetric surveys, which is giving the service more information than before. Face to face customer satisfaction is not currently being measured and will be introduced in line with the new Town Hall opening.
- Two other KPIs related to customer experience were customers signed up to digital/email as preferred contact channel and complaints response time. Customers signed up to digital/email as preferred contact channel remained the same at Q1 at 66%. Complaints response time was well outside of the 100% target at 65%, a significant drop compared with Q1 (91%). New functionality is currently being tested in the Firmstep complaints module that will ask officers to add a reason why a complaint has been answered late. It is hoped this will enable better insight as to how this result can be improved.
- The result for the indicator relating to staff sickness was well within target as usual. Long term sickness remained low in Q2. There was a large increase in short term sickness, with 42 instances in Q2, compared with 25 in Q1.
- Pest control response times were outside of the target. Due to fewer pest control officers (2 instead of 3) there has been a longer wait in treatment times.

8.0 Key Council Strategies

- 8.1 Aligned to the Council Plan are a number of key strategies which guide the organisation's delivery of services in a number of specific areas. These strategies have each been approved individually by Cabinet and, in line with our ambition to strengthen delivery across the council, updates on these strategies are included as part of this quarterly Performance and Progress report.

8.2 These are attached at Appendix C and are intended to give an overview of progress over the past period, highlight the key activities for the next period and provide key pieces of information about the particular area of delivery.

9.0 Implications

9.1 Financial

9.1.1 The Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy is aligned with the Council Plan to ensure that the commitments within the Plan are resourced. The Council’s budget underpins the whole of the Council Plan and Delivery Plan. The importance of the budget is recognised under the theme ‘A Council working for our community and serving our residents’ with the related commitment being ‘Focus and challenge how we manage our budget so it is concentrated on delivering our commitments and securing greater investment for Watford’.

9.1.2 The Chief Finance Officer comments that there are no further financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

9.2 Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)

9.2.1 The Group Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the Council Plan is one of the policy framework documents listed in the constitution that has to be approved by Council. The plan was approved by Council on 13 June 2022.

10.0 Risks

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested control measure	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Slippage on delivery of the Council Plan	Failure to deliver our commitments resulting in poorer outcomes for our town and residents. Potential impact on the	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

	reputation of the Council.			
Failure to recognise milestones / completion of commitments	Lost opportunity to celebrate success internally and externally	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management Clear communication of milestones / achievements	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to promote and recognise the Council's strategic approach and culture that is focused on delivery and outcomes	Lost opportunity to embed a renewed strategic approach and culture that ensures Watford BC remains a high performing, innovative and agile organisation	Regular, robust and accurate reports for Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny that is owned across service areas Linking delivery to staff and team objectives	Treat	3 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 3
Slippage on delivery of the key strategies	Failure to deliver our commitments to staff potentially resulting in failure to deliver our Council Plan.	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to scrutinise	Potential for performance to slip with consequences	Robust scrutiny and challenge	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

organisational performance	for quality of service delivery			
Failure to respond to issues with organisational performance	Potential for issues with performance not to be addressed, and for poor performance to continue	Response to issues identified monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Leadership Board and Portfolio Holders.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to provide transparency over organisational performance	Lack of understanding and trust related to organisational performance, particularly where performance is below the standard expected.	Ensure KPIs have sufficient commentary explaining the context around the quarterly results. Ensure portfolio holders have regular opportunities to review and discuss organisation performance.	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

11.0 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

11.1.1 Equalities

11.1.1.1 An Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) was developed for the Council Plan 2022-2026. This is consistently reviewed based on up-to-date information and data the council receives to ensure the council meets its public sector equalities under the s149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010.

12.0 Data Protection Impact Assessment

12.1.1.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake a Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report.

13.0 Sustainability

13.1.1 The council's commitment to sustainability runs through the Council Plan and a range of actions to deliver our climate change commitments are identified

within the Delivery Plan. These range from pushing forward with delivering greener ways to travel in Watford to promoting Watford's transition to a low-carbon economy. Indeed, an entire theme is devoted to delivering 'a brighter, greener future' with a whole range of activities planned to meet our sustainability commitments.

14.0 People Implications

14.1.1 The Council Plan sets the Council's strategic direction, and is, therefore, a key document for staff, enabling them to understand our commitments and priorities and allowing them to contribute fully to our success and achievements. As the overarching plan for the Council, it provides the framework for all our strategies and policies and links, through the Delivery Plan, to service business plans and individual staff objectives and outcomes. The principles demonstrate how we go about our work and are an important guide for staff on the Council's expectations recognising it is not just what we deliver but how we deliver that is a measure of our organisational culture.

15.0 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

15.1.1 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires the Council to give due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of its functions on crime and disorder in its area and to do all it reasonably can to prevent these. Our theme: A diverse, happy and healthy town, underpins our commitment to 'promote our welcoming and respectful town' and the associated action to 'ensure everyone feels welcome, included and safe in Watford' and to 'establish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls' by working with partners and using our statutory powers.

16.0 Next steps should recommendations be approved

16.1 In order to improve transparency of our corporate performance, a designated web page has been created providing a single location for the Council Plan 2022-26, Delivery Plan 2022-24 and key strategies to be publicly accessible. Alongside these strategies, the Performance and Progress reports will also be available.

17.0 Appendices

- Appendix A –Delivery Plan 2022-24 progress update
- Appendix B –Key Performance Indicators update Q2 2023-24
- Appendix C1 – Economic Growth Strategy 2022-26
- Appendix C2 – Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26

- Appendix C3 – Sustainability Strategy 2023-30
- Appendix C4 – Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy
- Appendix C5 – Community Engagement and Participation Strategy 2023-26
- Appendix C6 - Cultural Strategy 2018-25

18.0 Background papers

- Watford Borough Council: Council Plan 2022-26
- Watford Borough Council: Delivery Plan 2024-26
- Economic Growth Strategy 2022-26
- Customer Experience Strategy 2022-26
- Sustainability Strategy 2023-30
- Transforming Travel in Watford Strategy
- Community Engagement and Participation Strategy 2023-26
- Cultural Strategy 2018-25