

Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 22 July 2021

Report author: Business Intelligence Manager

Title: End of year 2020/21 Council Performance Report

1.0 Summary

- 1.1. Watford Borough Council's Council Plan sets out the council's ambitions and commitments from 2020 to 2024. Underpinning the Council Plan is an 18 month Delivery Plan, which is supported by a suite of key performance indicators. These measures support the delivery of good quality services (both internal and external) by highlighting areas of good performance and, more importantly, under performance.
- 1.2. The attached report (Appendix A) shows the results for the current set of key performance indicators at the end of 2020/21. The report, therefore, shows:
- The results for the end of the year (unless highlighted otherwise). Some metrics show the result for quarter 4 if that is more relevant.
 - The results for last year – 2019/20 (shown in the graphs for the majority of the indicators) and for the two previous years where relevant.
 - The results for Quarter 1, 2 and 3 2020/21 for the indicators where quarterly results are more relevant.
 - The target that has been set for 2020/21
 - Whether the indicator result is above, below or on target, shown by the green (above target), red (below target) or orange arrows (on target).

2.0 Risks

| Nature of risk | Consequence | Suggested Control Measures | Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer) | Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood) |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Failure to scrutinise organisational performance | Potential for performance to slip with consequences for quality of service delivery | Robust scrutiny and challenge | Treat | 6 |

3.0 Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note the key performance indicator results for 2020/21, appended at Appendix A.
2. Note that the KPIs will continue to be reviewed as part of the Business Intelligence Strategy, and Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be kept up to date with any changes to the KPI's, or the process for collecting, analysing or presenting KPI data.

Further information:

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Appendices

Appendix A – End of Year Key Performance Indicators 2020/21

4.0 End of year / Quarter 4 KPI Review

4.1. Good levels of performance have been maintained across most areas of the council throughout the year, although in some areas the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact. The majority of staff continue to work remotely and are likely to continue working from home until autumn 2021. Key indicators to particularly highlight for the Committee's attention are:

1. Average time to process housing benefit claims was not within target, however considering the volume of new claims received in 2020/21, which was increased on previous years and other additional work due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this is assessed as an acceptable level of performance and is still a better performance than in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The average time to process change of circumstances was well within target, and particularly good performance considering the volume of change received throughout 2020/21.
2. Planning continues to achieve excellent performance, with all indicators above target for quarter 4 and an annual outturn on all indicators that exceeded the target set.
3. Delivery of channel shift from phone and face-to-face contact to digital self-service has been a key component of the council's strategy over recent years. Development has started on a reporting dashboard to monitor channel shift, however a complete picture of customer channel shift is not yet available. Targets were not set for 2020/21, but will be set for 2021/22. There were some encouraging figures reported in quarter 4 that indicate a growing use of self-service channels. Examples of this are:
 - 1,888 Street Cleansing and Parks issues were reported during quarter 4; 1,342 (71%) of these were completed by customers and 492 (26%) were completed by a Customer Services Agent on behalf of the customer.
 - 562 Green Waste sign ups, with 492 (87.5%) completed online by customers and 70 (12.5%) via the Customer Service Centre.
 - 640 applications for financial support for residents self-isolating submitted, with 100% of these completed online by customers without assistance from the CSC.

4. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests responded to within 20 working days was below target throughout the year. A process is currently being developed that will allow us to capture FOI requests and responses centrally. This will allow better oversight of responses from services and enable Group/Executive Heads to be alerted of any issues in their service area.
5. The annual outturn result for the percentage of calls answered by the Customer Service Centre was just below target. This was as a result of an increase in volume of calls to the CSC particularly in quarters 2 and 3 and fluctuating resource levels.
6. The annual rough sleeper count took place on 21 November 2020 and the number recorded was 8. Bi-monthly counts are also undertaken and the last one on 26 March 2021 found no rough sleepers. One action in the council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Action Plan is to have zero rough sleepers on the streets of Watford. This was achieved from 15 January until the end of March.
7. The number of households in temporary accommodation remains steady. The Housing Property Team has been particularly successful in moving households in temporary accommodation on into the private rented sector despite Covid-19 restrictions over the last year. In addition, Housing Solutions Officers have also been very successful in preventing households from becoming homeless and therefore avoided them having to go into temporary accommodation (see indicator 13 in the main report below for detailed figures related to this work). It is anticipated that numbers in temporary accommodation may increase from the autumn of 2021 when government pandemic measures on banning evictions fall away. Preparations are in hand to cope with any increase in the number of households who need temporary accommodation. As from 1 April 2021, single homeless households and families are being accommodated separately as per one of the key objectives of the council's Temporary Accommodation Strategy.
8. The pandemic has clearly had a significant impact on the Parking Service. Parking restrictions were enforced for little more than 4 months of the year, in recognition that many residents would not be able to find a space, or park legally near their homes, as a result of the 'stay at home' guidance. Additionally, car parking facilities were also impacted because enforcement was suspended to accommodate NHS staff that required a parking space, as well as providing a further opportunity for residents to find a space where they may not have been able to park on their street due to the increased volume of residents at home. Further to the car parks, significant revenue was lost on on-street pay and display, and across all Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ) in the form of bay suspensions, dispensations and vouchers. The service managed to reduce the income lost in respect of CPZ permits by adding periods of enforcement to the permit upon expiry, rather than refunding permit holders, effectively deferring the income. Service levels appear to be returning to pre-pandemic levels now, but obviously this is likely to change if there is a further lockdown.
9. Figures on waste and recycling continue to show very positive results, and are reflective of the successful waste service changes implemented in September 2020. When compared with quarter 4 2019/20, this quarter has seen a reduction of 16kg of residual waste per household. There has been an increase in 420 tonnes of recycling, 493 tonnes of food waste and a reduction in 314 tonnes of residual waste - all contributing to the over 50% recycling rate. The quarter 4 results are particularly encouraging as quarter 4 is traditionally the lowest performing quarter due to seasonal fluctuations in garden waste and increased residual waste over the Christmas period.
10. Annual street cleansing indicators were within target for litter, detritus and graffiti. Fly posting was not within target, however the quarter 4 result did show some improvement when compared with quarter 4 last year.

11. Usage of Watford Leisure Centres has been heavily impacted by Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the national lockdown in January 2021 the only footfall during quarter 4 was from West Herts College who made use of Watford Central from 8 March.
12. The outturn for Collection rates of council tax was just below target. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic for most of 2020/21 only gentle reminders for non-payment were utilised and formal recovery work, including taking customers to court to secure liability orders, did not start until late 2020.
13. The outturn for NNDR was below target and below 2019/20 performance. This is due to many businesses being severely impacted by the pandemic and they are still recovering, which has affected the collection rate.
14. ICT indicators demonstrate on target performance against network and system stability indicators. Indicators associated with the performance of the Service Desk contractor are below target, as a result of the impact of new ways of working due to Covid-19 and a change in operating model from the contractor. Considerable work is underway to address these performance levels and to ensure that any impact on frontline service delivery is minimised. AmicusITS have been working on adjustments to the team and a creation of a new overflow pod. Customer satisfaction remains consistent, with 90% of customers who fed back rating service as 'awesome' or 'fair'.
15. Staff indicators included a particularly good result for staff sickness, recording the lowest figure on record. Return to work interview rates were not within target, as they were affected by additional workload arising from the pandemic. Managers and HR to continue to work together to review and monitor compliance rates.