

Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 20 July 2022

Report author: Business Intelligence Manager

Title: End of year 2021/22 Council Performance Report

1.0 Summary

1.1. Watford Borough Council's new Council Plan sets out the council's ambitions and commitments from 2022 to 2026. Underpinning the Council Plan is a two year Delivery Plan, which is supported by a suite of key performance indicators. The new plans replace the previous plans, which covered the period from 2020 to 2022 and the measures highlighted within this report have supported the delivery of good quality services (both internal and external) 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.

1.2. The attached report (Appendix A), therefore, shows the results for the current set of key performance indicators at the end of 2021/22. 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 – 2020/21 (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 2021/22 for the indicators where quarterly results are more relevant.
- The target that has been set for 2021/22
- 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

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested Control Measures	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate or transfer)	Risk Rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
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	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	6

3.0 Recommendations

3.1. It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note the key performance indicator results for 2021/22, 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 KPIs, or the process for collecting, analysing or presenting KPI data.

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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. There are positive signs of recovery in the wake of the Covid pandemic, particularly in areas such as Leisure Centre membership and usage. However the effects of Covid can still be seen in other areas, such as the impact on short term staff sickness, with both the Delta and Omicron variants emerging during 2021/22. The council has taken the opportunity of the move to working from home imposed in response to the Covid pandemic to embed greater agile ways of working for our staff and the organisation. The majority of staff, therefore, continue to work flexibly with further opportunities to build upon the progress to date once the council's temporary accommodation (to facilitate the wider Town Hall refurbishment as part of the Town Hall Quarter programme) becomes available in the Annexe this summer. Key indicators to particularly highlight for the Committee's attention are:

1. Average time to process housing benefit claims has now moved back within target due to strong performance in February and March, taking one day off the overall position when compared with Q3. The average time to process change of circumstances was outside the target by one day, although improvement was shown between Q3 and Q4. This is extremely strong performance given that, as well as their usual workload, the service had responsibility for administering a range of Covid related grants and funding for the community and businesses during 2021/22. Throughout the year the service processed 2515 claims for Covid related grants. 1,047 payments were made, totalling £523,500.
2. In general, Planning achieved excellent performance throughout the year, surpassing targets during most quarters. In Q4, the processing of 'minor' and 'other' types of planning applications was completed well within the targets set. The processing of 'major' planning applications was below target, due to one application being agreed outside of the allocated timeframe. As the number of major applications is relatively small, one application can have a significant impact on percentage results.
3. Delivery of channel shift from phone and face-to-face contact to digital self-service is continuing to progress, with more services being made available online. The Q4 result and the end of year result have both exceeded the target set for 2021/22. The most used online process for 2021/22 was reporting street cleansing/parks issues (Report-it) (4,663 forms submitted), followed by the garden waste service (3,038 sign ups / 2,396 renewals), and the General Enquiry form (2,224 forms submitted). The service are currently developing new reports to analyse general enquiries received from customers across all channels. This will enable better insight in to how, and why, customers are contacting WBC, areas of the website that could potentially be improved as part of our continuous improvement approach, and better monitoring of responses to ensure they are within agreed timescales. It will also help to ensure CSC resources are effectively deployed according to demand across the different access channels.
4. The annual outturn result for the percentage of calls answered by the Customer Service Centre was just below target. There were several factors affecting this result, including new Council Tax bills being sent out in March, and over 45,000 election canvassing emails sent in August and September, which generated a lot of significant enquiries.
5. The annual rough sleeper count took place in November 2021 and the number recorded was 6. The average number of verified rough sleepers (i.e. observed rough sleeping by the New Hope Outreach Plus service) has been 4 per week during the last quarter of 2021/22.

6. The number of households in temporary accommodation remains reasonably steady and has ranged between 82 and 98 over 2021/22. The year ended with the number of households in temporary accommodation at 96, with a relatively large number of new housing association homes handed over towards the end of the quarter.
7. Overall Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) issue rates for parking contraventions have returned to similar to pre-pandemic levels i.e. 28,000 in 2019/20 and 30,000 2020/21, despite the fall in pay and display and off-street car park use. Whilst quarterly PCN issue figures were consistent, the fall in Q3/Q4 was the combination of reduced Christmas/New Year enforcement hours, contractor staff illnesses (Covid) and their reported recruitment issues at the time, which occurred between Dec 21 - Feb 22. However, compliancy is also a factor and one that we would expect to see as less new restrictions are introduced and motorists, including residents, become more familiar with the existing arrangements. It is important to bear in mind that the objective of parking enforcement, as per the Traffic Management Act 2004 legislation, is to achieve compliancy and a falling rate of PCNs, as opposed to an ever increasing number.
8. Figures on waste and recycling were better than the target for both Q4 and the yearly target - a good result for the service. As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, targets will be made more challenging from Q1 2022/23, having been consistently reached since the changes to the service in September 2020. Annual street cleansing indicators were within target for graffiti, but below target for detritus, fly posting and litter. Storm 'Eunice' affected the results for litter and detritus as litter and other debris were blown around including domestic related waste by bins being blown over. This situation took time to recover, just as the Q4 survey was underway.
9. Usage of Watford Leisure Centres was heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, however all centres are now showing positive signs of recovery, with numbers steadily rising.
10. The outturn for collection rates of council tax was below target by 1%, however given 2021/22 was another collection year heavily impacted by Covid this is considered a good result.
11. The outturn for NNDR was on target, and this is considered a good result given the challenges that many businesses have faced in 2021/22. Additional resource was put into the recovery of business rates in Q4.
12. ICT indicators showed a dramatic improvement after in introduction of Littlefish, the council's new IT service desk operator, and have continue to improve as the service has bedded in. There has been an ongoing reduction in the number of calls to the service desk, with many staff preferring to use the Littlefish Live chat function. A service request portal was further developed later in 2021, and this is also actively used by staff.
13. Staff absence has, unsurprisingly, increased during the year. Covid 19 has been the main driver for this, however levels still remain below target. 35% of short term days lost have been due to Covid 19.

Appendices

- Appendix A – End of Year Key Performance Indicators 2021/22