

Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 19 July 2023

Report author: Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services, Delivery Support Lead, Interim Executive Head of Human Resources and Intelligence, Performance and Improvement Lead

Report sponsor: Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services

Portfolio holder: Councillor Mark Watkin

Report title: Performance and Progress Report: Focusing on delivery

- Council Delivery Plan 2022-24 Quarter 4 Update
- Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 Quarter 4 Update
- Council Performance 2022-23 Quarter 4 Update

Nature of report: For information and noting

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 Organisational Development Strategy, which are both supported by a suite of key performance indicators (KPIs). This allows the council to ensure that both projects 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 Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24; and
- key performance indicators for Q4 of 2022/23.

1.2 The updates reflect the positive outcomes that have been achieved over the final quarter of 2022/23 through strengthening the council's strategic framework and establishing a clear focus for the organisation, including aligning existing KPIs to our Council Plan themes. This has enabled services to concentrate on what is important to the town and

council. The progress achieved since the last update to Cabinet 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 fourth of these updates since the approval of the new Council Plan.
- 1.4 As part of our drive for continuous improvement, a review of the council's key performance indicators across the organisation has been completed and will ensure that the council continues to challenge itself to deliver excellent services to residents, businesses and the community. The new key performance indicators will be reported upon from quarter 1 of the 2023/2024 financial year.

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 Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 (Appendix B)
 - the key performance indicator results for Quarter 4 of 2022/23 (Appendix C)

3.0 Decision Pathway

3.1 Next decision-making body: Not applicable

3.1.1 Indicative date: Not applicable

3.2 Final decision-making body: Not applicable

3.2.1 Indicative date: Not applicable

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

4.0 Detailed Proposal: A refreshed strategic framework

4.1 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.

4.2 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.

4.3 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;
- the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and Delivery Plan; and
- key performance indicators.

This report presents a progress update of the plans outlined in 4.4 and in associated Appendices (A, B and C).

4.4 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.

4.5 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

- 4.6 Both plans are underpinned by a suite of key performance indicators, which have recently been reviewed and which will be reported on within the quarter 1 report due to be reviewed by Cabinet over the next period.

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

- 5.1 The new Council Plan 2022-26 was approved by Council in June 2022 as was the associated Delivery Plan 2022-24.

- 5.2 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.

- 5.3 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 benefit from the approach deployed during its Covid-19 response and remain flexible and agile to respond to emerging and future challenges and opportunities over the life of the Council Plan.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 The full report can be seen an Appendix A but some key highlights, by Council Plan theme are included below:

A greener brighter future

- Work is continuing to promote and provide our residents with options for greener travel and transport solutions. The successful On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS) funding bid will enable

the installation of 79 on-street charge points across Watford. The District Shopping Parade Improvements project will implement measures to promote active ways of travelling such as improved cycle infrastructure and pedestrian walkways.

- Our approach for addressing the climate and ecological emergency and plans for achieving net carbon by 2030 are set out in 'Watford's Environmental Strategy: Addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency 2023-2030' and Delivery Plan 2023-2025 which were approved by Cabinet in March 2023.
- Through our Tree Planting Programme for the year 2022/23, we planted 126 public trees across the borough and in addition gave away 10,000 trees to Watford residents in December 2022 in our popular Tree Giveaway event with HCC.
- Through our 'Tales of the River' project we delivered two successful Wildplay sessions during the February 2023 half term break which was attended by 27 attendees. The sessions offer our younger residents and their parents an opportunity to explore local green spaces and learn about Watford's history and heritage through arts and crafts and other activities.

An inspiring, thriving and creative town

- Following the successful award of the Shared Prosperity Fund, we are overseeing the delivery of projects funded through the Fund. This includes training and support for Watford's small businesses to be more successful in bidding for contracts and in turn supporting their future growth prospects and inviting larger local organisations to act as potential buyers through the Fit-to-Bid project.
- We are progressing our plans to promote Watford as a great location for businesses, attract more visitors and support the local economy. Our place brand and narrative has been developed and shared with a range of partners and a launch is planned in the Summer of 2023.
- The Watford Business Connect has been established and the first meeting, held in March 2023, was a great success, over-subscribed and generated positive feedback from businesses that attended the event. The event also reached businesses that the council had not engaged with previously.
- The Watford Town Centre Strategic Framework was approved in March 2023. The Framework focuses on improvements such as to the infrastructure, environments and transport and will support the economic growth and development of the borough.

- A preferred operator has been identified for Watford Market. A 'Celebrate the King's Coronation' Market Late event was held in May 2023 with more planned throughout 2023.
- The appointment of the new Colosseum operator, AEG, was approved by Cabinet in March 2023. AEG is engaged in the refurbishment of the Colosseum and providing an input into the future design of the building which will support and deliver future entertainment and performances when it reopens with a fresh and exciting programme in 2024.

A diverse, happy and healthy town

- Two Beryl Bike bays have been installed in Cassiobury Park and have been operational since April 2023, making it easier for our residents to use and park the Beryl bikes to travel around the borough.
- We have made significant progress in the delivery of the New Crematorium with neighbouring boroughs. The facility trademark registration has been accepted, highways signage agreed and staff recruited for the opening in the Summer 2023.
- Our Heritage National Lottery Fund application for a development grant of £68k to support the creation of the new museum at the Town Hall was successful. The funding has enabled us to recruit additional resource to progress the design of our exciting, new and modern museum celebrating our town's rich heritage and diversity.
- We are continuing the work to ensure our community buildings are well maintained and benefit our local residents. In the last quarter we completed the stonework and roof repairs for Vicarage Road Cemetery thereby safeguarding this important building for many years to come. We have also progressed the energy performance surveys of our community buildings, allowing us to plan the delivery works that will improve the energy efficiency of our buildings.
- We have appointed Gatherwell to run Watford's Community Lottery, a scheme that will help raise funds to support our local community financially. The inaugural draw is planned for Summer 2023.

A council working for our community and serving our residents

- The review and implementation of the new Tier 4 management level is complete. The new management level will report to Associate Directors and help strengthen the council's ability to deliver the Council Plan and key priorities.

- Following the Building Control and Planning Enforcement Shared Services go-live in November 2022, the Legal Shared Service go-live was achieved in February 2023. These Shared Services with St Albans City & District Council will ensure that we continue to deliver best value, efficient services and achieve better outcomes for our residents and customers.
- The new Voter ID scheme was implemented for the May 2023 local elections, in line with the Elections Act 2022 requirements. The Elections Team ensured that all other requirements were met which ensured the delivery of a successful local election.
- A new set of external and internal KPIs have been agreed in consultation with stakeholders. The new KPIs reflect our ambition to improve our services and deliver value for money to our residents and will be reported on from Quarter 1 of 2023/24.
- The launch and implementation of the council's values and behavioural framework has commenced.

6.0 Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 and associated Delivery Plan

- 6.1 The Council Plan identifies the Organisational Development Strategy as a priority area of work under the theme 'A council working for our community and serving our residents'.
- 6.2 The council recognises our staff are critical to our success and to building our reputation as a council that delivers. At the same time, we know that the commitment of our staff and their passion for public service ensures we keep our residents, our businesses and community at the heart of everything we do. The importance of effectively matching our resources (both financial and staff) to the ambitions of our Council Plan and Delivery Plan was recognised when the plans were presented to Cabinet in June 2022 with a newly approved senior management structure.
- 6.3 The Organisational Development Strategy is also supported by a Delivery Plan, which translates the high level, strategic approach to how we develop our staff into practical and timely actions.
- 6.4 The full report can be seen in Appendix B but some key highlights are included below:
- Health, Wellbeing and Resilience workshops continued to be delivered to employees

- Further fully booked Menopause Awareness and Cost of Living workshops were delivered
- A new provider has refreshed our health and wellbeing offering, as well as planning for an event for the health and wellbeing champions
- The council has signed up to being a 'menopause friendly' organisation
- One Management Development course has been completed and positive feedback has been received. A further course will begin in May this year
- The behavioural framework for all employees has been finalised and will be underpinned by the new values established at the Council.

6.5 It should be noted that the Organisational Development Strategy was approved in June 2020, as the country emerged from the first wave of Covid-19. The council was subsequently required to respond to additional lockdowns and secondary waves of the pandemic. As such, a number of the activities initially identified within the Organisational Development Strategy were not deliverable within the timescales anticipated. Recognising that the council's introduction of agile working and a significant change in the external environment as a result of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis, the council are developing an updated People Strategy which will ensure that our ambitions relating to our commitments to staff remain aligned to our wider strategic direction. Those outstanding activities within the current Organisational Development Strategy will be reviewed and picked up by the new People Strategy.

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. 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.

7.2 The attached report (Appendix C), therefore, shows the results for the current set of key performance indicators at the end of Q4 for 2022/23. However, some key highlights are included below:

- The good overall performance recorded in Q3 continued in Q4, with 28 indicators meeting or exceeding targets out of a total of 36. 8

indicators were outside of the target, and these related to street cleansing, homelessness, council tax collection, return to work interviews and FOI response time. Despite being outside of the target, some of these were still excellent results, such as FOI response time, which remained very high with 97% of FOI's responded to within timescale (167 FOI's received in Q4).

- Out of the 4 street cleansing indicators, the only one within target was graffiti, which has improved significantly when compared with Q4 last year. Levels of litter and detritus also improved compared with Q4 last year, and the result for litter was only just outside of the target. The fly-posting result was the highest recorded since Q3 2021/22, with the main issues being estate agent boards, A-boards attached to street furniture and kerbside vehicle bollard slip over posters found at main retail locations. The target for this indicator is very challenging, so unfortunately it only takes a small number of infringements to push the result outside of the target. Enforcement action can be taken by the council's Planning Enforcement team.
- The Waste and Recycling measures continue to beat targets as they have done since the service changed back in 2021, which is good news. The targets for all Waste and Recycling measures have been made more challenging through the KPI review process. The new target for residual waste has dropped significantly, and if it had been in place for Q4, residual waste would have been outside of target.
- Leisure Centre usage, swimming lesson sign-up and membership increased across all indicators in Q4 for both Central and Woodside centres. Swimming crash courses were marketed, and uptake increased. There was increased marketing for all sessions and 2 membership promotions.
- The result for the indicator relating to staff sickness was well within target as usual, and the lowest figure reported since Q3 2022. Long term sickness remained low in Q4 and an improvement on levels recorded last year. Short-term sickness has also reduced when compared with Q3 and Q4 last year. Covid and flu symptoms were the most common reasons for short term sickness.
- Affordable home completions were lower than expected for the year, with 139 new affordable homes handed over rather than the anticipated 196. This was a result of some key schemes not handing over during the 2022-23 as expected, such as Ascot Road and Brightwell Court (approximately 130 units) but there were also unexpected handovers of approximately 70+ new homes.
- Numbers of statutory homeless were considerably lower than previous quarters, and less than half the levels recorded in Q2 and

Q3. Many households were prevented from becoming homeless or were able to move from temporary accommodation into settled accommodation before WBC needed to make a decision on whether a main duty to house was needed.

- Numbers of households living in temporary accommodation increased during Q4. This is due to increased homeless applications but also a lack of handovers of new homes since the beginning of the year, which meant families were unable to move out of temporary accommodation as expected.
- Average time to process housing benefit claims and change of circumstances were both well within target. This is in part due to the increased automation of processing both Universal Credit and Atlas files. The service has also updated other procedures which has helped speed up processing. Additional online services for Benefits will be launching in June 2023.
- Almost all financial indicators were within target, the only exception being collection of council tax which was just outside of target. The cost-of-living crisis is affecting ability to pay, with many more customers making arrangements to pay over longer periods of time.
- All ICT indicators were within target, with continued good performance from Littlefish.
- The Customer Service Centre (CSC) achieved good performance in Q4 with % of customers self-serving, long wait calls and calls answered all within target. There have been challenges this year due to reduced staff resource between June and October, Energy rebate refunds causing an increase of telephone calls and customer visits to the Town Hall, and more staff resource needed face to face due to services such as Housing having an increased demand. The service made improvements to the telephone services in the last quarter, by introducing a call back facility, where customers do not lose their place in the queue. This improved the long wait times, specifically during the Council Tax billing period.
- Return to work interviews carried out on time was under target at 78.26% (target 100%). The result for Q3 was 68.5% with additional availability of data to service areas contributing to the increase in this performance measure. This area has also been ear-marked for business intelligence development to provide better monitoring and will be addressed once additional resourcing within the Digital Improvement team is in place.

8.0 Implications

8.1 Financial

8.1.1 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'.

8.1.2 The Shared Director of Finance comments that there are no further financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

8.2 Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)

8.2.1 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.

8.3 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 reputation of the Council.	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Robust project and programme management	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Failure to recognise milestones / completion of commitments	Lost opportunity to celebrate success	Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

	internally and externally	<p>Overview and Scrutiny</p> <p>Robust project and programme management</p> <p>Clear communication of milestones / achievements</p>		
Failure to promote and recognise the Council's strategic approach and culture that is focused on delivery and outcomes	<p>Lost opportunity to embed a renewed strategic approach and culture that ensures Watford BC remains a high performing, innovative and agile organisation</p>	<p>Regular, robust and accurate reports for Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny that is owned across service areas</p> <p>Linking delivery to staff and team objectives</p>	Treat	3 (severity) x 1 (likelihood) = 3
Slippage on delivery of the Organisational Development Strategy	<p>Failure to deliver our commitments to staff potentially resulting in failure to deliver our Council Plan.</p> <p>Potential impact on staff's health and wellbeing.</p>	<p>Regular monitoring and reporting to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny</p> <p>Robust project and programme management.</p> <p>Regular checking in with staff through 1:1s, team meetings, surveys, Staff Ambassador Group</p>	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
Loss of skilled staff / difficulties in	Impact on delivery, potential cost	Regular monitoring and reporting to	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

recruiting if Organisational Development Strategy is not delivered and the council is not perceived as a place where staff can develop and grow	implication if needed to recruit on short-term basis to fill posts	<p>Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny</p> <p>Robust project and programme management.</p> <p>Regular checking in with staff through 1:1s, team meetings, surveys, Staff Ambassador Group</p> <p>Build into recruitment literature</p>		
Failure to scrutinise organisational performance	Potential for performance to slip with consequences for quality of service delivery	Robust scrutiny and challenge	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6
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	Ensure KPIs have sufficient commentary explaining the context around the quarterly results. Ensure portfolio holders have regular opportunities	Treat	3 (severity) x 2 (likelihood) = 6

	standard expected.	to review and discuss organisation performance.		
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8.4 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

8.4.1 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.

EIAs were also developed for the Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 during its development. These will also this will be monitored through the life of the respective strategies.

8.5 Sustainability

8.5.1 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.

8.6 People Implications

8.6.1 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.

The Organisational Development Strategy supports the Council Plan and Delivery Plan to equip all staff to deliver the very best service for residents.

8.7 Community Safety/Crime and Disorder

8.7.1 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 'stablish our commitment to the wellbeing of women and girls' by working with partners and using our statutory powers.

9.0 Actions arising from this proposal

9.1 There are no actions arising directly from this report.

10.0 Appendices

- Appendix A – Council Plan 2022-26 / Delivery Plan 2022-24 progress update
- Appendix B – Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24 progress update
- Appendix C – Key Performance Indicators update Q4 2022-23

11.0 Background Papers

- Watford Borough Council: Council Plan 2022-26
- Watford Borough Council: Delivery Plan 2024-26
- Watford Borough Council: Organisational Development Strategy 2020-24