

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 15 JUNE 2021
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT – QUARTER 4 (2020-21)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises our strategic performance data on an exception basis following the monitoring and review of performance reports by Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. This report covers the period 1 January to 31 March 2021.
- 1.2 Any business projects and key performance indicators reported as ‘target not met’ are exception reported in the appendices to this report.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Cabinet note the contents of this report and approves any proposed actions highlighted in the appendices.

3. Explanation

- 3.1 A performance exception report is presented to the Cabinet on a quarterly basis as part of our current performance management framework.
- 3.2 By working with Corporate Directors and Heads of Service in the production of this report we embed accountability for performance within our Officer structure. This allows for a flow of detailed information to and from the council’s leadership.
- 3.3 For this report it is important to note that the impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt by the council’s services. This is a contributory factor in some business projects which have not been completed or have not started within the year and with some performance indicators which have not met their forecast outturns.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Failure to deliver business projects and key performance indicators may have a financial impact for the council. Where this is the case it will be referenced in the report and associated appendices.
- 5.2 An example of ones with direct impacts are collection rates for debts, which have been adversely impacted by the pandemic. Examples of indirect impact on finances would be void turnaround time which will impact on income. Any financial impact will also be considered, and reported where necessary, within the council’s quarterly budget monitoring reports.

6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 A risk assessment of our performance management framework can be reviewed quarterly on the council's strategic Risk Register.

7. Security and Terrorism Implications

- 7.1 There are no security and terrorism implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

8. Procurement Implications

- 8.1 There are no procurement implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

9. Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct climate change implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 10.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

11. Communication and Engagement Implications

- 11.1 There are no communication and engagement implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

12. Human Resources Implications

- 12.1 There are no human resources implications directly arising from the contents of this report.

13. Link to Corporate Priorities

- 13.1 This report is linked to all the council's current corporate priorities as it shows the status of those business projects and performance targets associated within each priority.

14. Equality and Diversity

- 14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service related policies or the development of new service related policies.

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Date: May 2021

Appendices:

Appendix One Business Plan Projects
Appendix Two Key Performance Indicators

Business Plan Projects – Quarter 4 (2020-21)

Progress for all business projects under each of our five Corporate Priorities is summarised here.

61% of our Business Plan projects which commenced have been completed this year with a further 38 per cent rolling forward into 2021-22. Those which rolled forward have been impacted by COVID-19 which has led either to a delay in projects starting or, in some instances, not starting at all.

Corporate Priority	Purple (completed)	Green (on schedule and rolling forward into 2021-22)	Red (not on schedule)	Totals
1 – Our Community	11 (79%)	3 (21%)	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
2 – Our Environment	10 (83%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
3 – Our Housing	6 (33%)	12 (67%)	0 (0%)	18 (100%)
4 – Our Economy	8 (57%)	6 (43%)	0 (0%)	14 (100%)
5 – Our Council	8 (62%)	5 (38%)	0 (0%)	13 (100%)
Totals	43 (61%)	28 (39%)	0 (0%)	71 (100%)

Four business projects did not commence at all in 2020-21. These were:

- 1) **Deliver an air quality project to educate and raise local awareness of the issues associated with poor air quality in the borough.**
This project did not start due to the pandemic. The service team leading on this expects to undertake this project in 2021-22.
- 2) **Participate in the county council's whole systems approach to obesity to identify any changes required in our own local approach.**
As we continue our recovery from the pandemic the county's obesity strategy has not been a current Public Health priority. However we are continuing to encourage healthy eating and physical exercise through our new local healthy hub. Work is due to start on this project in 2021-22.
- 3) **Prepare a Supplementary Planning Document Design Guide to improve the quality of new development in the borough.**
No progress has been made on this due to the pandemic. The new Planning White Paper is proposing radical changes to the planning system, including the preparation of design guidance and design codes for individual sites. Therefore it seems sensible to await further guidance before progressing this detailed and expensive work.
- 4) **Create a new asset management strategy and action plan including a condition survey of the council's operational assets.**
External analysis has now been completed on the council's commercial asset portfolio. This will be used, along with local knowledge, with the information obtained from the garages project and condition surveys to help shape the strategy over the coming months. This means the new strategy and action plan will now be delivered in 2021-22.

Key Performance Indicators - Quarter 4 (2020-21)

A summary of our Key Performance Indicators collected over Quarter 4 is shown here.

Total Number of Key Performance Indicators	KPI targets met / exceeded	KPI targets not met	KPI targets met within tolerance	KPI targets with no data reported due to the COVID pandemic
56 (100%)	35 (63%)	11 (20%)	3 (5%)	7 (12%)

Eleven Key Performance Indicators did not meet their targets in Quarter 4. These are exception reported here with service comments to explain their performance along with a comparison to last year.

These KPIs are collected and reported by following services – Resources (5), Community and Housing Strategy (2), Planning (2), Housing Operations (1) and Housing Property (1).

Brief description of indicator	Quarter 4 2019-20 Performance		Quarter 4 2020-21 Performance		Service Comments
	Target	Outturn	Target	Outturn	
KPI 01 The percentage of all invoices paid within 30 days or within stated terms <i>Head of Resources</i>	97.50%	95.80%	97.50%	95.49%	<p>Performance slipped below the target during Quarter 4. This has included a number of older invoices which have been processed as issues get resolved in time for year end.</p> <p>The overall performance for the year is relatively good at an average of 97%. We expected lower performance than in earlier years as we introduced a 'no purchase order no pay' policy. This can take time to bed in with services and suppliers.</p>
KPI 02 The percentage of council tax collected as a percentage of the total due <i>Head of Resources</i>	97.70%	97.50%	97.70%	95.07%	<p>Performance is behind target due to the difficulties residents have faced in the pandemic. There has been an increase in council tax support claimants and residents contacting the council tax office experiencing financial difficulty in making payments.</p> <p>Recovery action in 2020-21 recommenced in late October but ceased shortly afterwards due to successive national lockdowns, the last of which persisted through to year end.</p>
KPI 03 The percentage of non-domestic rates collected as a percentage of the total due <i>Head of Resources</i>	99.10%	99.30%	99.10%	96.04%	<p>Performance is still relatively good but collection is down due to the financial difficulties facing businesses during the pandemic.</p> <p>A lot of businesses have not traded at all or have seen a considerable drop in income in the past year. The second and third national lockdowns from November onwards have made the situation worse in this reporting quarter.</p>

Brief description of indicator	Quarter 4 2019-20 Performance		Quarter 4 2020-21 Performance		Service Comments
	Target	Outturn	Target	Outturn	
<p>KPI 30 The number of Decent Home assessments undertaken in properties in the Private Sector</p> <p><i>Head of Community and Housing Strategy</i></p>	200	149	200	89	<p>Decent homes inspections result from our own pro-active work, in responding to complaints about premises, and from the HMO license applications received.</p> <p>Inspections have been undertaken in accordance with Government guidance on how to safely work in people's homes. Enforcement activity has been done using a bespoke Covid risk assessment to ensure the safety of both the property occupiers and inspecting officers. This does mean the time taken to arrange and undertake inspections is considerably longer.</p> <p>Wherever possible complaints have been resolved without visits to the property. This would not lead to a 'Decent Homes' assessment for this indicator, so more assessments have been done than is reported here.</p> <p>As restrictions ease routine inspections have restarted on a risk-based priority basis. We anticipate returning to pre-pandemic assessment levels over 2021-22.</p>
<p>KPI 33 The percentage of council tenants 'satisfied' overall with the responsive repairs service provided (based on the last repair completed)</p> <p><i>Head of Property Services</i></p>	92.00%	87.50%	92.00%	71.96%	<p>The backlog of housing repairs has reduced significantly, and outstanding complaints are being addressed. The team is now working back in the office.</p> <p>A full review has commenced of the responsive repairs service and a number of temporary surveying staff have been recruited. Plans are in place to fully modernise the council's approach to managing the 'customer journey', including the better use of technology to design out issues leading to low satisfaction levels.</p> <p>This will also include changing the way customer surveys are carried out to increase response rates which are currently low.</p>

Brief description of indicator	Quarter 4 2019-20 Performance		Quarter 4 2020-21 Performance		Service Comments
	Target	Outturn	Target	Outturn	
KPI 37 The average void property re-let time in days for normal general needs housing (YTD) <i>Head of Housing Operations</i>	18.00 days	22.19 days	18.00 days	25.88 days	The 'key to key' void process is being reviewed to drive up empty home performance with the help of our contractor. Additional dedicated resources have been brought into the council's surveying team to help manage voids as well.
KPI 62 The level of sundry debt as an average number of days to collect (Debtor Days) <i>Head of Resources</i>	37 days	40.4 days	50 days	52.4 days	The debtor days have continued to increase during this quarter as the full impact of the pandemic on debtors' ability to pay is being reflected in performance. Liaison with debtors is ongoing and many have agreed to extended payment plans. This means increasing the number of days for repayment of their debts.
KPI 64 The percentage occupancy rate for the Weltech Business Centre <i>Head of Resources</i>	95.00%	100.00%	98.00%	89.37%	The impact of the pandemic on businesses at the Centre continued to affect occupancy rates in this quarter. However, as the national situation eases more businesses are returning to the workplace. There are currently 7 units vacant with one of these let in mid-April, just outside of this reporting period.

Brief description of indicator	Quarter 4 2019-20 Performance		Quarter 4 2020-21 Performance		Service Comments
	Target	Outturn	Target	Outturn	
<p>KPI 65 The percentage of Housing Needs Register applications assessed within 28 days</p> <p><i>Head of Community and Housing Strategy</i></p>	95.00%	100%	95.00%	75.88%	<p>As in Quarter 3 the service team has received an increased number of applications in this quarter than in previous years. This is impacting on the ability to meet the 28-day target.</p> <p>In Quarter 4 a total of 655 applications were made which is around 200 more than expected and more than 40% higher than the usual number.</p> <p>Of the 205 applications made in January 15 took longer than 28 days to process. Of the 238 made in February, 48 took longer than 28 days. In March, a total of 212 were made with 117 processed within 28 days.</p> <p>This situation will be monitored closely to ensure that the right level of resources are in place, should the increased number of applications continue.</p>
<p>KPI 77 The percentage of planning applications validated within 10 working days for major applications</p> <p><i>Head of Planning</i></p>	--	--	70.00%	50.00%	<p>Six major applications were received in this quarter and three were validated within 10 working days. This resulted in 50% of all majors being validated in time.</p>
<p>KPI 81 Maintenance of a rolling five year supply of specific deliverable sites for housing against the housing target in Local Plan or standard methodology plus any necessary buffer</p> <p><i>Head of Planning</i></p>	--	--	5.0 years	2.6 years	<p>The housing land supply figure was updated in the Annual Monitoring Report and now comprises 2.58 years supply.</p>