

2022/23 Performance Report Quarter Four/Year end

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	8 June 2023
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Date Portfolio Member agreed report:	25 May 2023
Report Author:	Jenny Legge/Catalin Bogos
Forward Plan Ref:	EX4292

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide assurance that the core business and council priorities for improvement measures in the [Council Strategy 2019-2023](#) are being managed effectively, and where performance has fallen below the expected level, present information on the remedial action taken and the impact of that action.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas, good results for the majority of the measures relating to the council's priorities for improvement, and remedial actions taken where performance is below target.

3 Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Human Resource:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Legal:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Risk Management:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Property:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.
Policy:	To be highlighted and managed by individual services.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
Environmental Impact:		x		
Health Impact:		x		
ICT or Digital Services Impact:		x		
Council Strategy Priorities or Business as Usual:	x x			Supports all priorities and core business of the Council Strategy 2019-2023.
Data Impact:		x		
Consultation and Engagement:	The information provided for this report, has been signed off by the relevant Head of Service/Service Director and Portfolio Holder.			

4 Executive Summary

4.1 This paper provides updates for each component of the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2019-2023:

- Non-targeted influencer measures for context.
- Targeted measures for each core business area.
- Targeted measures for each priority for improvement.
- Corporate health measures for internal context.

- 4.2 The **Influencer measures** indicated that the district continued to fare well. The high demand on our services remained elevated due to Covid-19 pressures. In some cases demand started to decrease compared to the previous quarters, but the main social care demand measures are still increasing.
- 4.3 The economic indicators show strong resilience, with footfall in Newbury Town Centre faring well, and the number of empty business rated properties continuing to fall.
- 4.4 The social care measures highlight increasing pressures and demand on services such as Children Social Care, Adult Social Care, Domestic Abuse, and housing.
- 4.5 Delivering our **Core Business activities** remains strong despite some challenges relating to staff retention and recruitment evident across all areas of work. Particularly strong performance was achieved in relation to: countryside and open spaces, timeliness of providing benefits, our culture, leisure and library services, economic development support for businesses, allocation of school places according to parents' preferences, waste management (including recycling) and the collection of business rates.
- 4.6 Of the measures rated Amber or Red, a number of areas to highlight include:
- Social care visits – high demand on staff can results in recording issues. Staffing challenges impacted our social care services' ability to achieve visit compliance to child protection plan cases. Assurance is provided by the service that managers are checking and authorising situations when visits have to go over timescales.
 - Planning applications determined on time – impacted by local ambitious targets, staff recruitment challenges, additional process requirements and consultation responses' timescales.
 - Keeping streets clean – impacted by an increase in litter dropped from vehicles and resource prioritisation.
- 4.7 Improvement activity through the Council Strategy **priorities for improvement** continued to progress, with the majority of measures targeted for this year being achieved. Areas of achievement to note include: people who feel safe and had their concerns met after having used our Adult Social Care Services, successful outcomes from early response support for parents and children and number of young people (including with special needs) involved in work experience.
- 4.8 Of the measures rated Amber or Red, a number of areas to highlight include:
- Educational attainment (provisional) – Local performance mirrors the national picture, with results being impacted by high levels of staff and pupil absence due to Covid and flu, a higher level of demand for support for pupils with Special Educational Needs, an increase in the number of exclusions, and difficulties in retaining and recruiting teaching assistants.
- 4.9 The council's **corporate health indicators** highlight focus on resource management, a controlled approach to manage service demand and inflation pressures on the Council's funding, resulting in an £0.77m budget overspend (after deployment of reserves set

aside to support these pressures which amounted to £4.71m) and an decreasing in workforce turnover.

5 Supporting Information

Influencer measures

The detailed information on the measures mentioned in this report can be found online in the Performance Portal here: <https://westberksperformance.inphase.com/>

- 5.1 Non-targeted measures of influence are monitored to provide context to the work being carried out across Council services.
- 5.2 The major focus for the district remained responding to a number of international and national challenges, e.g. supporting displaced people due to conflict, and economic challenges which impact at local level too.
- 5.3 Overall, the local **economy has remained strong**. Empty business rated industrial properties remained at consistent level and the number of empty non-industrial units continued to reduce. People visited Newbury Town Centre at a better level compared to the same quarters of previous years (impacted by the Covid-19 restrictions at that time). The number of planning applications rose from last quarter, and remained relatively stable over the longer term trend.
- 5.4 Within the local **social care indicators**, on the background of low crime rates, compared to last year, criminal activity increased slightly in all categories. Thames Valley Police are exploring the rise in Domestic Abuse reporting. In January 2023 their analyst noted that the role of the Local Police Authority Domestic Abuse Champion (DAC), introduced in 2022 was to re-engage on an ongoing basis with victims of domestic abuse post initial reports, supporting Medium Risk and vulnerable victims. Evidence was showing that victims felt much more supported and confident to report further incidents/crimes, and further reports had been made directly to the DAC. This was contributing to improved confidence in reporting crimes.
- 5.5 As of December 2022, crimes of harassment, nuisance and intimidation are no longer reported as part of the Anti-social behaviour dataset. The data reported is therefore lower, but the level is consistent.
- 5.6 Children social care referral and enquiry numbers remain very high. Whilst there are clearly relevant social factors, e.g. increased financial pressures on families, children being less visible during Covid, it is unclear why West Berkshire are now seeing referral/Section 47 investigations (when a child is suffering or likely to suffer abuse) rates that exceed those of statistical neighbours. The number of child protection plans has reached record high levels. The service has commissioned a review by SESLIP (The South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership) to explore these issues further.
- 5.7 The increase in number of Adult Safeguarding S42s enquiries opened (when an adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect) was reflective of the increase in concerns received during the period. Ongoing audits during quarter four continued to support the findings in quarter three that the statutory decision making was both consistent and appropriate.

- 5.8 The service continued to monitor abuse types reflected in S42 enquiries. Examination of information relating to categories of abuse submitted for a S42 enquiry during this reporting period continued to illustrate a complex and variable web of situations that existed across the community with no specific dominant cause or type.
- 5.9 The number of Adult Social Care clients requiring Long Term support has steadily increased since September 2020, and continues to be monitored by the service. This quarters figure was reflective of the demand pressures for Adult Social Care, predominantly in the population aged 65 and over.
- 5.10 The number of households prevented from being homeless, although higher than previous quarter was consistent with this time last year. The number of households in temporary accommodation, although not huge numbers, was the highest it has been since September 2019.
- 5.11 We repaired 779 pothole/edge of road repairs this quarter. This winter was particularly challenging and a huge undertaking for both the Council's Highway Maintenance team and our contractor Volker Highways. Wet weather ahead of the Christmas break followed by freezing weather in the New Year accelerated the deterioration of many sections of road, causing a significant amount of potholes and an increase in highways related claims. However, these conditions are not unique to this district and are affecting roads nationally. In recognition of this issue, the Government made an additional £200m available for pothole repairs in its spring statement, £950k of which was allocated to West Berkshire Council. In addition, the Council also committed an additional £7m over the next 3 years to highway maintenance and we will use this funding to ensure the resilience of our road network going forward.
- 5.12 Borrowing from libraries continued to rise, being 14.5% higher than at the end of December 2021. This shows that people are returning to libraries after the pandemic. The popularity of the Summer Reading Challenge is apparent in the peak of usage during quarter two. West Berkshire had the highest percentage participation of 4-11 year olds in South East England.

Core Business and Priorities for Improvement Performance

The detailed information on the measures mentioned in this report can be found online in the Performance Portal here: <https://westberksperformance.inphase.com/>

Please note:

Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on a 5% tolerance from target.

Planned – are tasks/milestones in progress

Completed with a green star – are measures/tasks which are completed and on or ahead of schedule

Completed with a red triangle – are measures/tasks which are completed later than scheduled

? - means no actual value for the current period has been recorded

n/r - means actual value for the current period is not expected to be reported e.g. annual measure

Core Business Activities

5.13 Four of the eleven core business areas have achieved strong (Green) performance results against challenging targets and on a background of increasing demand on most of the Council's services.

- **Countryside and open spaces** – as part of the wildlife verges project, the verge network has been surveyed.
- **Providing benefits** – timely decisions on new benefits claims
- **Culture, Leisure and libraries** – delivery of digital and physical events across Leisure and Culture Services and attendance to these, visits to libraries, Museum, Shaw House and West Berkshire's sports and leisure centres above targets.
- **Economic Development** – delivered the quarterly business engagement events to provide advice and guidance.

5.14 A further six areas have achieved good performance, within the Amber threshold:

- **Protecting our children** – Children and Family Services is rated by Ofsted as "Good" and maintained very strong performance in relation to the timeliness of assessments. There is assurance that the visits to children in care are taking place in a timely manner with any exceptions being authorised by management. Increasing demand regarding the number of Child Protection Plans, and staff turnover impacted on staff workloads in particular on being able to conduct timely one group meetings and visits to children with a child protection plan. The service is focusing on recruitment and on recording training.
- **Supporting Education** – at 93.8% (76/81), the percentage of schools judged good or better is just below the target of 95%. Improvements plans are in place and have been implemented, but the service is dependent on re-inspection by Ofsted to be able to show any change to this data. The number of children being allocated one of their preferred schools, both primary and secondary, is above target.
- **Collecting bins and keeping streets clean** – better than target recycling levels. The level of litter in the district increased, often due to drivers dropping items from their vehicles. The reduction in the resource level available to the street-cleansing contract, the need for prioritising the Covid response and shortages of HGV drivers has constrained the contractor's ability to sustain an ambitious level of cleansing all over the district. However, the Council has been stepped up cleansing of roadsides.
- **Ensuring the Wellbeing of Older People and Vulnerable Adults** – Only four out of our five adult social care provider services was rated good or better by the CQC (Care Quality Commission). The fifth one, Birchwood care home was inspected in February 2023, and although the overall rating continued to be Requires Improvement, overall the final report was very positive and showed significant improvements across all areas (e.g. responsiveness, caring and effectiveness areas of inspection were all rated as "Good").
- **Maintaining our roads** – % of A roads in need of repair achieved the target of maximum 3%.
- **Council Tax and Business Rates collection** – better than target collection of Business Rates, but Council Tax collection is just 1% under the target, impacted by Covid, Cost of Living crisis and other additional workload, such as the service distributing the energy support scheme to 1,200 households.

5.15 The remaining area has been rated overall Red:

- **Planning and Housing** – timeliness of planning application determination remained below local ambitious targets (Red), even if better than national standards. Performance continued to be impacted by vacancies in the service, consultations responses and additional processing requirements. The service is progressing an improvement plan to ensure the customers' aspirations are met. The % of planning appeals won is below target, however with 44 appeals made in total for the year, the numbers are very low.

Council Strategy Priorities for Improvement:

5.16 Results at the end of quarter four show that progress continued to be made to deliver the Council Strategy priorities for improvement with five of the six being RAG rated Green.

- **Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes** – Strong results have been achieved regarding, people who feel safe and had their concerns met after having used our Adult Care Services, parents feeling well supported by our Early Response Hub, care leavers in education, employment and training and young people who have got involved in work experience and project work experiences.

The percentage of repeat referrals to Children's Services, although slightly off target, is in line with the England average, and better than the regional average.

Supporting more vulnerable young adults into employment resulted 66% of our care leavers aged 19 to 21 benefiting of employment, education or training, compared to the national figure of 52%, and better than our target of 60%.

Government figures show that the number of people sleeping rough nationally rose by more than a quarter last year. The rise follows four years of decreases in rough sleeping, partly due to initiatives during the pandemic. The figures suggest the number of people sleeping rough is 35 per cent lower than the peak in 2017, but 74 per cent higher than in 2010. Locally, the latest available data shows a reduction of rough sleepers from 6 at the end of Sep 2022 to 4 at the end of Dec 2022.

Data about the Rough sleepers offered accommodation was not available at the time of writing this report.

West Berkshire's Youth Offending Team (YOT) received an overall rating of 'Outstanding' following an inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. Inspectors commended West Berkshire YOT for creating 'a culture where everyone feels they belong and have a part to play' - involving children and their parents/carers in every aspect of supervision, and continually looking for ways to improve.

- **Support everyone to reach their full potential** – our educational attainment targets were set higher than the national and regional average as the impact of the pandemic was not known. Local performance mirrors the national picture, with results being impacted by high levels of staff and pupil absence due to Covid and flu, a higher level of demand for support for pupils with Special Educational Needs, an increase in the number of exclusions, and difficulties in retaining and recruiting

teaching assistants. Targets have been exceeded for attainment results at the end of KS2 (primary school).

An innovative pilot project to teach children that being healthy can also help the natural world called 'Wild West Berkshire' was launched. The pilot is a joint initiative with the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). It is designed to show how health connects to nature and includes talks about eating healthier food, taking more exercise and how that helps wildlife and tackling climate change.

Final works on the Newbury Lido refurbishment, including the installation of the new pool tank, interactive splash pad and slides will be completed by the end of June 2023. The Lido will be open to the public this summer.

West Berkshire offers 16 free regular walks taking place either monthly, twice a month or weekly from various locations across the district to promote physical and mental wellbeing. A new limited series of Creative Wellbeing Walks were launched in partnership with Rambler's Wellbeing Walks in Hungerford and Mortimer led by experienced artist Simon Jardine. Each walk included short stops to paint, draw or photograph areas of interest and ends with a creative class, tea and coffee

- **Support businesses to start develop and thrive in West Berkshire -** Placemaking Strategies for Thatcham and Hungerford Town centres were developed by a consultant team led by Hemingway Design, commissioned by the Council in 2022. The Strategies were developed in collaboration with residents, stakeholders and Thatcham and Hungerford Town Councils and endorsed at a meeting of the Executive on 23 March 2023.
- **Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy** – The end of year target for premises that are able to access Gigabit capable broadband has been achieved. Data about the number of affordable homes granted planning permission and the actual number of completions was not available for inclusion in this paper.

Work began to look at options for delivering housing for Ukrainian and Afghan families. A new £6m project, including a £2.5m contribution from central Government, will see a mix of flats and houses purchased. Seventeen residential properties will be delivered as part of our ongoing support for Ukrainian and Afghan families settling in the district.

- **Maintain a green district** - EV charging infrastructure was available in 32% of WBC public car parks. The need to procure a new supplier for EV charging points meant that the 50% target could not be achieved.

Only one landowner committed to the pilot to facilitate increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration project this year. Feedback from landowners indicate that the lack of commitment is a result of unclear guidance from Central Government of Biodiversity Net Gain which includes being unable to formally register their sites. A temporary solution is being investigated by the Council's Planning Policy team with support from the Environment Delivery Team in relation to the one firm pilot project.

Once a temporary solution is in place it is hoped that this will provide reassurance to other landowners and additional pilot projects will come forward.

Liftshare, a car sharing platform, was launched as a pilot scheme for local residents in East Garston, Chaddleworth, Great Shefford and Hungerford. Using Liftshare saves money on travel, reduces our carbon emissions and helps to ensure our communities have access to the places they need to visit.

- **Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships** - By encouraging clients to use assistive technology and telecare, we increased the number of people who feel able to remain in their homes, but know that they can let others know when they need help.

Corporate Health

5.17 At outturn the variance to budget is an overspend of £4.71m. After using the reserves that were set aside to support this, the overspend totals £0.77m.

5.18 Absence levels are more consistent with pre-Covid quarters, with the majority of occurrences being in the People Directorate. Short term sickness levels have risen steadily throughout the year. Days lost to mental health sickness have lessened since their highest in March 2021, and have settled at a consistent level, with work related stress absence at around 3% of all stress, depression and mental health illness days taken.

5.19 Staff turnover dipped from 19.0% last quarter to 15.9%, but continued to be well above the WBC average rate.

Proposals

5.20 To note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan, a maintained strong performance for the core business areas (in particularly challenging circumstances primarily due to recruitment difficulties in a number of areas), good results for the majority of the measures relating to the Council's priorities for improvement and remedial actions taken where performance was below target.

6 Other options considered

None considered.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Quarter four results show that strong performance levels have been maintained and key services delivered to residents as part of the activities in the Core Business category.

7.2 Action plans are in place to address performance measures rated "Amber" and "Red" and the Executive is asked to note these actions and the overall performance reported.

8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Red and amber measures

8.2 Appendix B – Influencer measures dashboard

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee or associated Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

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