

2024/25 Performance Report Quarter Two

Committee considering report:	Executive
Date of Committee:	12 December 2024
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
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Forward Plan Ref:	EX4541

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide assurance that the priority areas in the [Council Strategy 2023-2027](#) 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 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress made in delivering the Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2027 priorities scheduled for this financial year.
- 2.2 To review those areas where performance is below target i.e., reporting as ‘Red’ or ‘Amber’, and note that the appropriate remedial action is in place.

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 Impact:		X		
Digital Services Impact:		X		
Council Strategy Priorities:	x			Supports all priorities areas of the Council Strategy 2023-27.
Core Business:	x			
Data Impact:		X		
Consultation and Engagement:	The information provided for this report, has been signed off by the relevant Heads of Service/Service Directors, Executive Directors and Portfolio Holders.			

4 Executive Summary

- 4.1 This paper provides updates on performance for this financial quarter on measures used to monitor the [Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2027](#). For details of performance year to date, please view Appendix A or online via our Performance [Portal Performance](#).
 - 4.2 Alongside our targeted measures, we monitor other datasets which provide context and demand on our services themed by economy, social care and the environment.
 - 4.3 To present assurance on the health of our organisation, an overview of turnover, sickness absence, and financial management are also included.
 - 4.4 The delivery of the activities and actions used to monitor the Council Strategy Priority Area continued to progress well.
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- 4.5 The status of two priority areas were Green (achieved and/or exceeded): (i) Services We Are Proud of, and (v) Thriving Communities with a Strong Local Voice
- 4.6 One was Amber, (5% within target or behind schedule): (ii) A Fairer West Berkshire with Opportunities for All
- 4.7 The remaining two were Red, (5% below target or had not been achieved): (iii) Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency, and (iv) The Prosperous and resilient West Berkshire
- 4.8 The **Influencer measures** indicated that the district's economy continued to be robust overall. The unemployment rate and number of empty business premises rose slightly, but the average house price grew as did the number of parking tickets sold in WBC car parks. Crime numbers increased sharply, and pressure on our social care and housing services remained high.
- 4.9 The council's **corporate health indicators** focus on resource management and a controlled financial approach to manage service demand. This quarter the budget manager forecast was an overspend of £11.4m, however actions were in place to potentially reduce this to £2.1m, with a General Fund balance of £3.9m
- 4.10 The turnover figure for all staff has increased to 13.77% for the current year, from 12.47% in 2023/24.
- 4.11 Sickness absence has increased to 10.24 days per worker in the current year from 8.75 days per worker for the same period in 2023/24.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

- 5.2 The Council Strategy 2023-27 was approved by Full Council in October 2023, and is a four-year strategy accompanied by a detailed Delivery Plan divided into the Priority Areas:
 - (a) Services we are proud of
 - (b) A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all
 - (c) Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
 - (d) A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire
 - (e) Thriving communities with a strong local voice
 - 5.3 **Council Strategy Priority Areas** – data returns at the end of this quarter showed that two of the five priority areas had a status of Green (on schedule or delivered), one of Amber (behind schedule, within 5 % of target), and two of Red (ceased/delayed or more than 5% below target).
 - 5.4 For details of performance please view Appendix A of this report or online via our Performance [Portal Performance](#).
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5.5 **Priority Area 1: Services we are proud of**

5.6 Overall, the status of this priority area was Green. Activities to note were:

5.7 The level of litter and graffiti across the district was judged as “Good”.

5.8 Staffing issues impacted the number of council functions that were digitised, and the amount of Council Tax collected this quarter.

5.9 [Our Employee Value Proposition and Careers site](#) was launched to encourage people to join West Berkshire Council.

5.10 The number of staff on training funded by the apprenticeship levy and young people involved in work experience and project work opportunities were much higher than targeted.

5.11 We continued to employ fewer agency staff, saving money, and providing consistency for our clients.

5.12 **Priority Area 2: A fairer West Berkshire with opportunities for all**

5.13 Overall, the status of this priority area was Amber. Activities to note were:

5.14 The conversion of West Point into five homes was completed and ready for people to move in to.

5.15 Echoing a national trend, the number of rough sleepers in West Berkshire continued to rise and be much higher than targeted (21 v 6).

5.16 Although, we recruited more [Shared Lives](#) carers (adult fostering), the overall number reduced due to placements ending and some carers retiring. The service continued to work to hard to recruit more carers to support adults with learning disabilities, mental health problems or other needs that make it harder for them to live on their own.

5.17 Recruitment of [children’s Foster Carers](#) continued to be a high priority. The recently launched regional Fostering Hub will also support those thinking about fostering. The service ran recruitment campaigns to support this area further.

5.18 Our refreshed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy was approved at the [Executive Committee on Thursday, 25 July 2024](#).

5.19 **Priority Area 3: Tackling the Climate and Ecological Emergency**

5.20 Overall, the status of this priority area was Red. Activities to note were:

5.21 Of the 22 suitable WBC car parks, 9 now have 20 or more spaces for electric vehicle charging points (EVCP), and as one of these was in the Kennet Centre, the Car Club can place a fully electric car there. A further 12 were installed on streets without off-street parking.

5.22 So far this year, our residents recycled, composted or reused 55% of their household waste, and we continued to deliver activities designed to educate about the benefits of recycling.

5.23 Priority Area 4: A prosperous and resilient West Berkshire

5.24 Overall, the status of this priority area was Red. Activities to note were:

5.25 The first phase of works on Newbury Wharf neared its completion.

5.26 Plans for sports at Faraday Road supported by the local sporting community were agreed.

5.27 The percentage of pothole/road edge repairs completed (92% this quarter, 88.6% for the year so far), was impacted by staffing issues. Although the defects were temporarily "made safe" by the contractor, they were not completed.

5.28 60% of flood prevention and drainage improvement schemes were completed as scheduled (3 out of 5)

5.29 Priority Area 5: Thriving communities with a strong local voice

5.30 Overall, the status of this priority area was Green. Activities to note were:

5.31 The number of arts-based events provided in community libraries, which included author interviews, Storytime and craft sessions, was well above target.

5.32 The implementation of a "Health in all Policies" approach was on schedule. This aims to improve health and health equity through cross-sector action on the wider determinants of health: the social, environmental, economic and commercial conditions in which people live.

5.33 Refurbishment projects for Hungerford, Kennet and Northcroft leisure centres were all on track to be delivered to time.

5.34 Non-targeted **Influencer measures** were monitored to provide context to the work being carried out across council services.

5.35 To view detailed information on our Influencer measures visit our Performance Portal via this link: <https://westberks.gov.uk/strategy-performance> or Appendix B of this report.

5.36 Overall, the local **economy remained strong**. The unemployment rate rose slightly and there was a 20% spike in the number of empty business rated industrial properties.

5.37 A new data supplier and collection method has been contracted to capture footfall in Newbury, Thatcham and Hungerford town centres and data has been recorded from 1 April 2024 onwards.

5.38 The sale of parking tickets in WBC managed car parks was 8% higher than the same period last year and 7% higher than last quarter. In June, the average house price increased overall and for first time-buyers by 7% on the previous quarter. The number

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of planning applications had been trending downwards over the last year but had increased by 6% on the previous quarter.

- 5.39 The number of all crimes rose significantly by 32% on the same period last year and by 42% on last quarter. An increase of 17% on the same period last year in anti-social behaviour incidents reflected the national picture.
- 5.40 The **social care indicators**, for children's social care referral and enquiry numbers were generally fewer than in previous quarters, although numbers of children in care cases, and children subject to a child protection plan were higher. Requests for support on our Adult Social Care services continued to increase, along with the number of people needing long-term care. The number of households on the Housing Register remained high as did the number of households prevented from becoming homeless.
- 5.41 Within the **Environment** indicators, the number reported fly-tipping incidents, which had been increasing for the last four quarters, returned to the June 2023 level. The amount of pothole/edge of road repairs completed was impacted by sub-contractor availability. A number of defects were temporarily "made safe" instead of being completed.
- 5.42 **Corporate Health**: This quarter the budget manager forecast was an overspend of £11.4m. There were actions to reduce the overspend totalling £5.1m and Service Action Plans containing further mitigations and transformation of £4m, which if achieved would reduce the forecast overspend to £2.1m and result in a General Fund balance of £3.9m.
- 5.43 As reporting on the halfway point of the year, turnover has been calculated as both a 6 monthly and projecting annualised figure. Using the annualised turnover, this would see turnover of 13.77% if the same number of staff left in the second half of the year. This would see an increase from 12.47% to 13.77%.
- 5.44 Q1 and Q2 shows annualised working days lost to sickness per person was at 14.5% (1.49 working days) above the reported Q2 2023/24 annualised figure of 8.75 days lost per employee. The Q2 2024/25 figure of 2.88 working days lost per person is 28% (0.64 working days) above the reported Q1 2024/25 figure of 2.24 days lost per person.

Proposals

- 5.45 To note the progress made in delivering the [Council Strategy Delivery Plan 2023-2027](#), maintaining a strong outcome for the majority of the measures, and remedial actions taken where performance is below target. (For detailed performance data, please refer to Appendix A)
- 5.46 To note the action plans put in place to address under performance for measures rated "Amber" and "Red".
- 5.47 No requests to amend/reprofile targets were made during this quarter due to the work being undertaken to refresh the Council Strategy Delivery Plan.

6 Other options considered

None considered.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This quarter's results show that good progress had been made towards the delivery of the majority of measures under all five Council Strategy Priority Areas. Strong performance levels have been achieved as some of the initiatives listed in the Delivery Plan were completed and key services delivered to our district.
- 7.2 Action plans are in place to address performance for measures rated "Amber" and "Red". Councillors are asked to note these actions and overall performance summarised above and detailed in Appendix A.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A: Detailed year to date performance tables.
- 8.2 Appendix B: Influencer measures dashboard.
- 8.3 Appendix C: Other achievements and news.
- 8.4 Appendix D: Purpose and background.

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

Wards affected: All wards

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