



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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| Name and Date of Committee  | <b>OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 29 FEBRUARY 2024</b>  |
| Subject                     | <b>SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER THREE</b>  |
| Wards Affected              | ALL  |
| Accountable Member          | Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council.<br>Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>   |
| Accountable Officer         | Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer.<br>Email: <a href="mailto:giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>   |
| Report author               | Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst.<br>Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a>  |
| Purpose                     | To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Three (Q3).  |
| Annex                       | Annex A - Corporate Plan Action Tracker<br>Annex B - Council Priorities report<br>Annex C - Performance indicator report   |
| Recommendation.             | <i>That the Executive Resolves to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Note the 2023/24 Q3 service performance report.</i></li></ul>  |
| Corporate Priorities        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Putting Residents First</li><li>• Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All</li><li>• Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li><li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul> |
| Key Decision                | NO   |
| Exempt                      | NO   |
| Consultees/<br>Consultation | Publica Directors, Assistant Directors, Business Managers, Service Managers and Service Leads.   |

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** The new Council Plan was adopted in January 2023 and the Action Plan, setting out how the priorities within the Council Plan will be delivered, then followed. Additionally, following on from the external audit report in August 2023 which included a recommendation to review performance management to match the Council Plan and measure performance, a new performance framework has been developed to include a Corporate Action Plan Tracker and a Priority Report alongside the service output metrics.
- 1.2** A high-level Commissioning Framework was approved by the Executive in October 2020, which sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica provides the necessary information, including a range of performance indicators, to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard.
- 1.3** The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.

## **2. COUNCIL PRIORITY REPORT**

### **2.1** Progress on actions in the Corporate Plan for Q3 include:

- The Climate Team, in collaboration with other Oxfordshire authorities, has secured £298k of Innovate UK funding to enable nature-based carbon offsetting in Oxfordshire.
- Officers continue to process and analyse the feedback received from the latest Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, which concluded in October with the aim of additional consultation in spring 2024.
- Witney Christmas Market witnessed approximately 15,000 shoppers at the Marriotts Walk shopping centre, marking a 59% increase compared to the same period in 2022 and a significant 70% surge from the previous week's visitor count.
- Waterways Day, a successful event with over 100 attendees, featured talks from organisations such as Thames Water and the Environment Agency.
- In November, the Executive approved a new delivery model, jointly developed by Green Axis and Homes England, for the zero-carbon housing development at Waterbush Road, Chipping Norton, with legal agreements currently in progress.
- The Deer Park South Access Project is ongoing, with completed footpath improvements and the installation of a bench offering views over the site's balancing ponds.
- Planning permission granted in November for the decarbonisation of Carterton Leisure Centre.
- Westhive, the Crowdfunding website, in collaboration with Spacehive, launched in October with five projects currently crowdfunding.

### **2.2** An overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex A and the Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex B.

## **3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

### **3.1** Service performance above target:

- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (89.98% against a target of 85%)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (3.21 days against a target of 5 days)

- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.1% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (98.64% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (86.49% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (90% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (96.43% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of high-risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 95%)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (94.73 against a target of 100)
- Number of visits to the three leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (4387 memberships against a target of 4102 memberships and 193,012 visits against a target of 148,440)

### 3.2 Service Performance below target:

#### **Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (84.36% against a target of 87%)**

During Q3, the collection rate was 2.54% higher than this time last year and just shy of the target, with collection rates c. 2% lower than pre-pandemic levels. The service indicates that many businesses since the pandemic have opted to extend the payment of Business Rates over 12 months instead of the usual 10 months to evenly distribute the cost over the year.

**The Resolution:** The service recently completed a thorough improvement programme designed to enhance operational processes. As a result, successful dashboards were implemented, providing detailed insights into individual performance and establishing smart targets for objective measurement of success. Process mapping was conducted to identify areas for optimisation and efficiency, leading to the implementation of weekly work programmes and increased automation. This has facilitated a more streamlined approach to service delivery, leading to a considerable reduction in the backlog of work.

#### **Processing times for Council Tax Support New Claims (21.5 days against a target of 20 days) and Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (6.32 days against a target of 4 days)**

Q3's standalone figures show that Council Tax New Claims are being processed in 14.51 days, against the target of 20 days and Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstance are being processed in 4.56 days against a target of 4 days, however, as the targets are cumulative the rolling statistics are above target for average processing days.

(Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events however remains well within the target of 5 days.)

**The Resolution:** Automation of the work received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers remains at a level of 60-70%, allowing for a heightened focus on applications and other reported changes. The Universal Credit (UC) section of DWP is actively investigating improvements to the data sent to local authorities via a Working Group. Once implemented, there is potential, in collaboration with our software supplier, to automate additional DWP work items.

The automation of processing applications for the DWP and the trial for reduced phone line opening hours at Cotswold and West has released capacity for officers to process claims, contributing to the reduction in the outstanding workload and processing times.

During Q3, the service effectively reduced the outstanding workload to clear the backlog by December. However, partly due to the Christmas break, there has been a natural increase in the number of outstanding applications.

It's important to emphasise that the processing times commence from the moment the service receives an application, irrespective of its completion status. Therefore, even incomplete applications are included in the count from receipt, potentially exaggerating the figures.

#### **Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (70.5% against a target of 90%)**

The Council's performance has fallen below the 90% target this quarter, standing at 70.5%. However, there is a notable improvement compared to the same period last year, with an increase of 16.6% completed within 10 days.

**The Resolution:** During this quarter, the answering teams have continued to face challenges with resourcing issues which is attributed to the decrease in performance since last quarter. Performance meetings are scheduled to address team issues and processes, aiming to ensure targets are met, although much remains in the hands of individual respondents within services.

The service would benefit from all searchable records being digitised and standard procedures being in place for system use. This would in turn streamline searches. Further training and discussions with internal consultees are planned to ensure good practice.

#### **Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (192 against a target of 207)**

Sixty-six properties including 41 for affordable rent and 25 for shared ownership have been delivered during Q3 at Hailey, Woodstock, Witney, Stanton Harcourt, Eynsham and Carterton with 126 delivered during Q1 and Q2.

**The Resolution:** The service notes variations in completions throughout the year, as housing developments typically span at least 12 months, and some projects are phased over several years. The slight decrease in numbers is attributed to delays in handovers due to legal and highway work scheduling. This has affected expected completions in Carterton and Enstone, potentially leading to their delivery in Q1 24-25.

#### **Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (75% against a target of 90%)**

There were four notifications received within Q3, with three being assessed within one day. The notification not assessed within one day was referred to the service by the fire department who had attended the site and, after initial investigations, deemed it was not an imminent health risk.

**3.3** A full report is attached at Annex C and should be looked at in conjunction with this report.

**3.4** As previously agreed, where possible, broader benchmarking has been included in the full performance report to gain a more robust and insightful evaluation of performance. Where benchmarking data is not currently available or outdated, this is noted, and further investigations will be undertaken to look at options.

**4. EXECUTIVE**

4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Executive at its meeting on 6 March 2024; and any comments from the Committee will be recorded and shared with the Executive.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report.

**6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None specifically because of this report. However, a failure to meet statutory deadlines or standards in some services may expose the Council to legal challenge and/or financial liability.

**7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

7.1 Contained in this report.

**8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

8.1 None

**9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Contained in this report.

**10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

10.1 None

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