



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 5 JUNE 2024
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24 QUARTER FOUR
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Alison Borrett – Senior Performance Analyst. Email: alison.borrett@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To provide details of the Council's operational performance at the end of 2023-24 Quarter Four (Q4).
Annexes	Annex A – Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex B – Council Priorities report Annex C – Performance Indicator Report
Recommendation.	That the Committee resolves to: I. Note the 2023/24 Q4 service performance report.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All• Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency• Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ 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 Q4 include:

- The initial viability report for the Community Infrastructure Levy charging schedule has been received and is currently under review by Officers. The draft charging schedule is expected to be presented to the Executive in the coming months.
- All 23 properties, acquired through the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) in partnership with Cottsway and Miller Homes, have reached completion. The exchange process has been finalised, and the allocation of the properties is currently in progress.
- The legal challenge to the Net Zero Carbon Development policy in the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan was resolved in favour of the community group. Amendments are now underway to align with updated requirements following a Ministerial Statement published in December 2023.
- The Council has secured £50,000 from the DEFRA Coronation Living Heritage Fund to support the Coronation Community Orchard Scheme. Following the closure of the first round of applications in January 2024, six community groups have been awarded grants to commence fruit tree planting.
- The Executive approved the updated Carbon Action Plan in March 2024. A document redesign is currently in progress before its publication on the website.
- Under the Home Upgrade Grant 2 (HUG2) scheme, to date, 15 homes within the district have received grant funding to implement energy-saving measures.

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

Overall, the Council's performance has been positive, with commendable progress in a number of areas including visits to the leisure centres, Official Land Charge Search Times and Processing times for Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit.

3.1 Service performance above target:

- Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (19.57 days against a target of 20 days)
- Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (2.81 days against a target of 5 days)
- Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.17% against a target of 0.35%)
- Customer Satisfaction (99.09% against a target of 90%)
- Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
- Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (75% against a target of 70%)
- Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (94.05% against a target of 65%)
- Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (97.03% against a target of 80%)
- Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)
- Missed bins per 100,000 (81.37 against a target of 110)
- Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (99.23% against a target of 90%)
- Number of visits to the three leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (4769 memberships against a target of 4214 memberships and 202,757 visits against a target of 182,560)

3.2 Service Performance below target:

Percentage of Council Tax Collected (97.76% against a target of 99%) and Percentage of Non-domestic rates collected (97.59% against a target of 99%)

By the end of Q4, the Council noted a slight improvement in their in-year collection rates for Council Tax compared to the previous year, with a 0.4% increase. Although the Council's collection rate fell short of the year-end target of 99% by 1.24%, there has been a consistent upward trend in collection rates over recent years, nearing pre-pandemic levels by a margin of 0.59%. For non-domestic rates, the Council observed a 0.27% increase in their collection rates compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. However, collection rates remain just over 1% lower than pre-Covid-19 levels.

The service has recently concluded an extensive improvement programme aimed at refining operational procedures. This initiative has led to the successful implementation of dashboards, to improve visibility of individual performance as well as the adoption of weekly work schedules and heightened automation. These efforts have enabled a more efficient approach to service delivery, ensuring that the in-year recovery process remains up to date.

While a 99% target is ambitious for collection rates, it is recognised that it may not be achievable within a single year but rather over the debt's lifespan. As such, discussions with the service are planned to review the in-year target to ensure they are realistic yet still challenging.

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (4.2 days against a target of 4 days)

The standalone figures for Q4 indicate that Housing Benefit Changes of Circumstances are being processed within an average of 2.34 days, surpassing the target of 4 days. However, since the targets are cumulative, the rolling statistics show that the average processing days are above target.

Automation of tasks received directly from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and customers is currently operating at a level of 60–70%. This automation allows for a heightened focus

on processing applications and addressing reported changes. Furthermore, the UC section of the DWP is actively exploring enhancements to the data sent to local authorities. Ongoing testing of the system is underway as part of these improvement efforts.

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.

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, so making it even more challenging to meet the target because this delays processing as well as potentially exaggerating the figures.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (234 against a target of 274)

During Q4, a total of forty-six properties were delivered across Hailey, Enstone, and Carterton, comprising 26 for affordable rent and 20 for shared ownership. This brings the year's total deliveries to 234 properties. Completions have begun in Enstone on the 23 properties constructed using the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF), with the remaining expected to be completed during Q1 24-25.

It's worth noting that completion rates vary throughout the year due to the nature of housing developments, which often span multiple months or even years. Some projects may be phased over several years, contributing to fluctuations in completion numbers. Delays in handovers, particularly related to third-party work scheduling, have impacted expected completions in Carterton and Enstone. Consequently, the delivery of these properties has been pushed back to Q1-Q2 of 2024-2025.

The 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) outlined a yearly requirement of 660 homes in West Oxfordshire until 2031, including 274 affordable units. Since 2013-14, the Council have delivered 2,443 homes, falling short of the SHMA's target of 3,014 homes by 517 units. However, there has been an increase in the delivery of affordable homes following the adoption of the Local Plan in September 2018. Typically, these numbers have surpassed annual targets, gradually narrowing the shortfall observed in previous years.

Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (88.88% against a target of 95%)

During Q4, the Council conducted nine inspections, with eight completed within the designated timescales. One food premise was not inspected canceled by the other party but it has since been completed. Throughout the year, a total of 28 inspections were carried out, with 27 of them inspected within the target timescales.

High risk work is naturally prioritised, which can have an impact on lower risk scheduled inspection rates. The service now has a dashboard, which is used for monitoring team performance and tracking lower risk scheduled inspections within the team.

- 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 12 June 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

(END)