



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	EXECUTIVE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024
Subject	SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024-25 QUARTER ONE
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 2024-25 Quarter One (Q1).
Annexes	Annex A – Council Priorities Report Annex B – Corporate Plan Action Tracker Annex C – Performance Indicator Report
Recommendation	That the Executive resolves to: I. Note the 2024/25 Q1 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 Q1 include:

- In September 2023, the Council reduced its customer services call centre hours to 9am-2pm, for a trial period of 6 months, focussing on peak times and boosting online services, as call volume dropped by 37% and online form usage rose by 350% over three years. Following the successful trial, the Executive resolved to make the reduced phone lines permanent in June.
- The Executive approved the draft CIL charging schedule in July, with an 8-week public consultation on the draft running from 2 August to 27 September 2024.
- An updated Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and Phase 1 Water Cycle Study have been commissioned to support the Local Plan evidence base, with the preferred option paper currently in preparation.
- The eHGV trial for refuse collection was undertaken in May and produced positive results, with climate change officers exploring funding options with Local Authorities and the Greater South East Net Zero Hub.
- Provisional sites for EV microhubs have been agreed upon at Ducklington, Brize Norton and Burwell Hall.
- As part of the Deer Park South Access Project, interpretation panels have been installed to enhance visitors' understanding of the area's natural features and heritage. Additionally, surfacing improvements have been made to the bridleway along the southern boundary of Deer Park South, improving accessibility and enjoyment for all users.
- The draft District Charter Markets Strategy is currently under development. A draft brief for an Expression of Interest is also being prepared, focussing on the management and operation of the Charter Markets in Chipping Norton and Witney, with the possibility of including additional markets at Marriotts.

- 2.2** The Council Priority highlight report is attached at Annex A with an overview of progress against all actions in the Corporate Plan is attached at Annex B.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

- 3.1 Overall, the Council's performance for the quarter has been largely positive, with notable progress in Collection Rates, Planning Determination Times, and Missed Bin Collections. Visits to the Leisure Centre, Gym Memberships, and Land Charges Response Times remain high. Additionally, Customer Satisfaction continues to be strong, with the Council topping the Gov Metric league table in June. However, the percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed is increasing, and the Number of Affordable Homes delivered is showing a negative trend.
- 3.2 A review of the targets for Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates Collection was conducted, as the previous 99% in-year collection target was recognised as unrealistic to achieve within year and more realistic over the debt's lifespan (indeed the taxbase calculation assumes 98.5%). Benchmarking was undertaken for all English Councils' previous years' collection rates, as well as the Council's specific similar Local Authorities, using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Nearest Neighbours model. This benchmarking exercise demonstrated that a Council Tax Collection Rate of 98% and a Non-Domestic Rates Collection Rate of 98.5% would place the Council within the top quartile for both the Nearest Neighbours and all English Councils. Following agreement from the Portfolio Holder and the Section 151 Officer, the in-year collection targets have been amended. Additionally, regression analysis was conducted on previous years' collection rates for specific quarters to ensure the targets more accurately reflect whether the Council is on track.
- 3.3 Service performance above target:
- Percentage of Council Tax Collected (33.69% against a target of 33%)
 - Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected (37.15% against a target of 33%)
 - Processing times for Council Tax Support new claims (18.85 days against a target of 20 days)
 - Processing times for Council Tax Support Change Events (2.51 days against a target of 5 days)
 - Percentage of Housing Benefit overpayment due to LA error/admin delay (0.14% against a target of 0.35%)
 - Customer Satisfaction (98.71% against a target of 90%)
 - Building Control Satisfaction (100% against a target of 90%)
 - Percentage of major planning applications determined within agreed timescales (100% against a target of 70%)
 - Percentage of minor planning applications determined within agreed timescales (94.92% against a target of 65%)
 - Percentage of other planning applications determined within agreed timescales (96.41% against a target of 80%)
 - Percentage of official land charge searches completed within 10 days (98.19% against a target of 90%)
 - Percentage of high risk food premises inspected within target timescales (100% against a target of 90%)
 - Percentage of high risk notifications risk assessed within 1 working day (100% against a target of 90%)
 - Missed bins per 100,000 (85.59 against a target of 110)
 - Number of visits to the leisure centres & (Snapshot) Number of gym memberships (4,949 memberships against a target of 4,800 memberships and 206,370 visits against a target of 197,500)

3.4 Service Performance below target:

Processing times for Housing Benefit Change of Circumstances (5.39 days against a target of 4 days)

Q1 commenced with the usual small backlog of work for changes in circumstances at the end of Q4 due to end-of-year processing, which the team has worked hard to reduce. Although the Council is currently above target for processing times, there has been an improvement compared to the same period last year, with processing times decreasing by approximately 2.5 days.

However, the reduction in HB Change applications means that any delay in assessing an application due to outstanding evidence has a more noticeable impact on the average processing days. Additionally, the managed migration of HB to Universal Credit commenced in April, with some minor glitches reported in the system. While the migration was planned in stages, some stages have been brought forward, which will further decrease the number of changes received and may potentially increase processing times.

Percentage of FOI requests answered within 20 days (86.5% against a target of 90%)

In Q1, the Council answered 86.5% of FOI requests within 20 days, up from 79.78% in Q4, falling below the national target of 90%. Most FOI requests continue to be received by Development Management and Environmental, Welfare, and Revenue Services. To reduce the number of information requests, the Council is reviewing the information currently available on its website and aims to publish additional guidance and Frequently Asked Questions.

Percentage of Planning Appeals Allowed (cumulative) (42.31% against a target of 30%)

Between 1 April 2024 and 30 June 2024, thirteen appeals were decided, with eight supported, including a split decision, resulting in an allowance rate of 42.31%. Of these, six were Upland applications, with four supported, resulting in a 33.33% allowance rate. The remaining seven were Lowlands applications, with four supported, including a split decision, equating to a 50% allowance rate. As this metric is cumulative, it may decrease throughout the year depending on the number of appeal decisions received.

Number of Affordable Homes Delivered (48 against a target of 69)

During Q1, a total of forty-eight properties were delivered in West across Woodstock and Carterton comprising 36 for affordable rent and 12 for shared ownership. Properties delivered in Carterton include 10 homes acquired using Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding.

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, attributed to works required from statutory service providers and highway work scheduling, have impacted expected completions in Carterton and Enstone. Consequently, the delivery of these properties has been pushed back to later in the year.

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 592 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.

- 3.5 A full report is attached at Annex C and should be looked at in conjunction with this report.
- 3.6 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. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- 4.1 This report will be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 4 September 2024. The draft minutes of that meeting will be circulated to all Members and any recommendations from the Committee will be reported to the 11 September 2024 Executive meeting.

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)