



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Name and date of Committee	<b>Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Wednesday 14 April 2021</b>
Report Number	<b>Agenda Item No. 8</b>
Subject	<b>Service Performance Report 2020-21 Quarter Three</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	All relevant Cabinet Members
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861658 Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report provides details of service performance during Q3
Annexes	<a href="#">Annex A</a> – Performance Indicator report
Recommendation	That the Committee reviews, and challenges as appropriate, performance for 2020-21 Q3
Corporate priorities	Modern Council Services and Sustainable Finance: Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No

## **I. BACKGROUND**

- I.1. The Council monitors service performance each quarter as well as progress towards achieving the aim and priorities set out in the Corporate Plan at the end of Q2 and Q4.
- I.2. Performance in those service areas relating to the work of this Committee is provided in this report.

## **2. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK - PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

- 2.1. A high level Commissioning Framework was approved by Cabinet in October 2020. The Commissioning Framework identifies that the provision of robust performance data – quantitative and qualitative, together with a robust analysis of that data and evidence – is vital to ensure that the Council has the information to assess whether its commissioned services are being delivered to a high quality.
- 2.2. A new performance management framework has been developed; a much broader framework than previous frameworks. It sets out six key strands of information on which assurance needs to be provided, with a key shift in focus from performance monitoring to performance management:
  - Business analytics and service assurance
  - Place based measures and comparators
  - Publica Business Plan strategic actions
  - Council Plan priority actions
  - Project and programme management assurance
  - Risk and opportunity management
- 2.3. The performance report will continue to evolve in line with the Performance Management Framework as well as feedback from senior officers and Members.
- 2.4. The Commissioning Framework also sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. Publica's Executive Director (Commissioning) is accountable to the Council for the services commissioned from Publica, and also for the services commissioned by Publica from third parties on behalf of the Council. Publica must ensure that it provides the necessary information to the Council so it can assess whether the commissioned services are being delivered in accordance with the agreed quality and standard. The Council's Chief Executive is responsible for reviewing and approving the information provided in this report prior to its publication.
- 2.5. The Council's Chief Executive has received a report on service performance, and he has assessed it in line with the high level Commissioning Statement, and confirms that overall, services have been delivered to the agreed quality and standard. The Chief Executive has also noted the continued impact of Covid-19 on communities, businesses, customers, services, and staff as the nation moves from response to recovery and back to response again. The recent flooding incidents also meant that Ubico crews, staff, councillors and volunteers were out supporting residents over the Christmas period, while other staff helped with coordination and organisation, and keeping residents and communities up to date with the latest information. He has drawn particular attention to the following:
  - i. Many services continue to support residents, communities and businesses that have been impacted by Covid-19 as part of their every day job. Enormous efforts continue to be made by a number of services in supporting businesses to access grants, and supporting the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and other residents to access the help they need;
  - ii. The Council's leisure facilities re-opened on 25 July 2020 with additional activities being restarted in line with government guidance, but were required to close down again in

line with the announcement of a second lockdown between 5 November and 2 December 2020. Facilities were re-opened in the lead up to Christmas but as Oxfordshire went into Tier 4 on 26 December 2020, all leisure facilities have remained closed from this date. A contract variation and financial recovery package have been agreed to cover the period until March 2021;

- iii. Affordable housing has continued to be delivered in the District and demonstrates the success of the strategic sites included in the Local Plan in bringing forward housing numbers. One hundred and thirty-nine affordable homes were delivered in Q3 bringing the total to 300 for the year so far, and exceeding the Local Plan target of 274;
- iv. The Council's business rates collection figure is being understandably impacted by Covid-19 as is the case with other councils throughout the country. Government has gone some way in helping certain businesses such as retail with 100% business rate relief, but there are still businesses that are struggling financially. The Council is distributing a number of support grants to eligible businesses, however, there is no requirement to use it to pay for business rates;
- v. The Housing team has created exit plans to move households into more secure tenancies including private rented, housing association, and supported accommodation, which has significantly reduced the number of households living in emergency accommodation over the last six months; however, with a third lockdown commencing on 5 January 2021, it is likely that the numbers will start to rise again.

### **3. COVID-19 UPDATE**

- 3.1. During Q3, the key elements of the Community Response hub – call handling, outbound calling, complex welfare support and problem solving, food parcel delivery and welfare checks - were retained but with a much smaller staff resource than during the first lockdown.
- 3.2. The nation entered a second lockdown in November; the Council contacted everyone on the Clinically Extremely Vulnerable list in one form or another depending on their risk factors. An outbound calling team was remobilised to contact a higher risk group, while messages were sent by email and text to others.
- 3.3. Residents that required additional help were referred to the Localities team for more complex support. The team uses a person centred approach to understand the underlying issues and to support the resident to prioritise what s/he may need help with first. This conversation might result in an onward referral to a statutory or voluntary sector service such as Adult Social Care or Citizens Advice, the delivery of an emergency food parcel, a referral to a community support group for befriending or shopping support, or an internal referral to housing services. Between October and December 2020, the Localities team supported 244 residents in this way, and over 1,000 since the start of the response. The lack of a countywide hub such as the one that operates in Gloucestershire has resulted in the district councils in Oxfordshire needing to directly support residents with a wider range of needs. The Community Wellbeing team has remained central to the response and has continued to run the complex calling element whilst balancing the need to continue core work.
- 3.4. During Q3, the Council was also charged with the distribution of its £59k allocation of the government's Emergency Assistance for food and essential supplies funding. The funding was fully utilised on supermarket vouchers for individuals and families in food need (managed by Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire on behalf of the Council), and a grant scheme for community organisations providing food support. In addition, the Council introduced a new grant scheme and allocated £39k to local food projects and foodbanks up to the 31st December.

- 3.5. The Council is continuing to support local businesses who are having to adapt to changing Covid-19 restrictions, and multiple lockdowns. It is responsible for distributing the large range of business grants made available by central government. Financial support is also available to those individuals having to self-isolate under the Test and Trace support payment.
- 3.6. During Q3, the following business grants were awarded:
- i. Local Restrictions Support Grant (closed) – a total of £ 898,890 was paid out to 544 businesses in retail, leisure, hospitality, and events which were mandated to close between 5 November and 2 December 2020. Further retrospective applications have since been received;
  - ii. Additional Restrictions Grant (discretionary) – a total of £114,028 was paid out to 70 businesses from November to the end of Q3. This grant is available for businesses that do not have a business rate assessment of their own, and would include charity properties and regular market traders;
  - iii. Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs funding – grants of £1,000 were paid to 13 businesses during December. This fund closes on 28 February 2021;
  - iv. Local Restrictions (closed) – a total of £16,340 was awarded to 17 businesses that were mandated to close either under the Tier system or current lockdown; the fund opened on 2 December.
- 3.7. The administration of business grants and the Test and Trace isolation payments have impacted on resources across a wide range of services including ICT, Accountancy and Accounts Payable, and Revenues and Customer Services. New online application forms have been created and a new process built in Salesforce; and additional returns have been completed on the value of grants paid for each scheme for government reporting. The Revenues and Customer Services teams have supported businesses in responding to their enquiries on the grant process and grant applications. Although additional resource has been made available externally to help administer the grants, existing resources have to support and train them up.

#### **4. SERVICE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

- 4.1. The services which relate to the work of this Committee are Customer Services and Revenues and Benefits; the relevant indicators are listed at the front of the Performance Indicator report at Annex A with pages 4 to 10 of that Annex providing the further relevant information.
- 4.2. Since the start of the pandemic, many services have been impacted by Covid-19; some services have experienced higher workloads due to demand or because colleagues were supporting residents, communities, and businesses through the crisis. The majority of staff continue to deliver services from home in compliance with Covid-19 instructions and guidance. Overall, many services have performed well in the current conditions and restrictions.
- 4.3. Of the nine targeted indicators, four indicators achieved their targets (Green), four indicators achieved their targets 'within tolerance' (Amber), and one indicator did not achieve its target (Red). A full report is attached at Annex A.
- 4.4. The indicator 'percentage of business rates' has been set to 'Amber' to recognise that it has understandably been impacted by Covid-19, and that the service is encouraging businesses to make contact so that it can offer support to those businesses via manageable repayment plans.
- 4.5. The indicator 'average number of days taken to process new housing benefit claims' did not achieve its target. The number of HB new claims is falling as claimants transfer to Universal

Credit; however, the cases that are left tend to be the more complex cases. The average time has increased over the last quarter as there have been large delays in processing a small number of claims. In addition, staff have been involved in data migration and testing activities relating to the implementation of a new revenues and benefits system.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. None

**6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

6.1. None

**7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

7.1. None

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

8.1. None