



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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Name and date of Committee	Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 16 September 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 10
Subject	Council Priorities and Service Performance Report 2021-22 Quarter One
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 Q1
Annexes	Annex A - Performance Indicator report
Recommendation	That the Committee reviews, and challenges as appropriate, performance for 2021-22 Q1
Corporate priorities	<p>Climate Action: Leading the way in protecting and enhancing the environment by taking action locally on climate change and biodiversity</p> <p>Healthy Towns and Villages: Facilitating healthy lifestyles and better wellbeing for everyone</p> <p>A Vibrant District Economy: Securing future economic success through supporting existing local businesses and attracting new businesses to deliver the economic ambitions of the Local Industrial Strategy</p> <p>Strong Local Communities: Supporting and building prosperous and inclusive local communities</p> <p>Meeting the Housing Needs of our Changing Population: Securing the provision of market and affordable housing of a high quality for a wide range of householders making their home in West Oxfordshire</p>
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No

I. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. 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 review of performance indicators is currently underway, and Portfolio Holders are having discussions with relevant managers about priority areas and finding metrics that would be most representative and provide assurance as to how the Council is performing.
- 2.2. A selection of publicly available benchmarking data for the most recent period at that time (2019-20) was included in the 2020-21 Q4 Performance Indicator report on a trial basis. Some of the 2021-21 data has started to be released with the majority available by the end of December 2021. It is proposed that the benchmarking data is updated and reported on an annual basis.
- 2.3. The Commissioning Framework also sets out the relationship between Publica and the Council and their respective responsibilities. 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.
- 2.4. 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. He has noted the capacity issues and high workloads in some services which have contributed to a reduced level of operational performance in those services in Q1, as well as the actions that are being taken to improve performance. He has also noted the continued impact of Covid-19 on our communities, businesses, and customers as well as staff. He has drawn particular attention to the following:
 - i. In February 2021, the Government set out its 4 stage roadmap out of lockdown with the lifting of all restrictions on 21 June, which was delayed until 19 July. As infection rates have been high over the last few weeks, staff are being encouraged to continue to work from home;
 - ii. There were over 126,000 visits to the Council's leisure facilities in Q1 which is encouraging. Although some outdoor fitness classes re-started on 29 March, the Council's leisure centres re-opened on 12 April (Stage 2), with most activities and classes re-starting on 17 May. Some government grant funding has been made available to cover Council losses from waiving management fees, as well as costs incurred by leisure operators during the lockdown, and to support re-opening;
 - iii. A number of services have continued to support businesses to access grants, and carrying out 'test and trace'. Between the November 2020 lockdown and the end of Q1, around £20,344,734 has been distributed in both mandatory and discretionary grants to nearly 1300 businesses across the District. These schemes ended on 30 June 2021, with final payments to be made by the end of July 2021. However, the 'test and

trace' work carried out by the Benefits team has been extended to the end of September;

- iv. The Council's business rates collection figure (in year) continues to be affected by the impact of Covid-19 on businesses, as is the case with other councils throughout the country. The Government supported certain businesses with 100% business rate relief last year, but there are still businesses which are struggling financially. At the end of June 2021, the relief was reduced to 66% which will run until the end of the financial year;
- v. It is encouraging to see that the that the operations team has been targeting fly tipping at recycling banks and reminding both residents and businesses about their duty of care to dispose of waste responsibly.

3. SERVICE PERFORMANCE

- 3.1. The services which relate to the work of this Committee are Housing Support, Planning and Strategic Housing, Land Charges, and Leisure and Communities; and the relevant indicators are listed at the front of the Performance Indicator report at **Annex A** with pages **11 to 19** of that Annex providing the further relevant information.
- 3.2. Overall, performance across all services was mixed due to high workloads and a shortage of resources in some services. The relevant services have commenced further recruitment drives.
- 3.1. Performance for services that relate to the work of this Committee was generally good. The Planning service achieved its targets for planning determination times with the effective use of extensions of time. Similar to other services, workloads are high in Planning, and working conditions during the pandemic have been a challenge. The service has been piloting a hybrid working solution over recent months which should help improve the efficiency of the service (whilst still respecting social distancing to protect staff). However, the time taken to complete statutory consultations has also created delays due to the working arrangements of consultees. The recent ending of the 'work from home' directive has already started to improve this position. Furthermore, the Council has agreed additional resource to increase the number and grading structure of planning officers to better balance workloads and resources.
- 3.2. Of the 10 targeted indicators, seven indicators achieved their targets (Green), two indicators achieved their targets 'within tolerance' (Amber), and one indicator did not achieve its target (Red).
- 3.3. The indicator that did not meet its target was 'Percentage of land charge searches dispatched within 10 working days'. There was a shortage of resources in the team which has since been resolved, and performance for July has returned to the previous high standard of delivery with all land charges searches processed within the timescale.
- 3.4. A full report is attached at **Annex A**.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. None

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1. None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1. None