

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	9 November 2023
Subject:	Council Plan Performance Tracker 2023/24 (Qtr1)
Report of:	Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Head of Service/Director:	Director: Corporate Services
Lead Member:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	1

Executive Summary:

At Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September 2023, consideration was given to the quarter one performance management information for 2023/24. The observations made by the Committee can be found below in Paragraph 2.1. The supporting documents presented at the Committee can be found at Appendix 1.

Recommendation:

To receive and respond to the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's review of the 2023/24 quarter one performance management information.

Financial Implications:

Though the report does not directly impact upon these implications, Finance and Resources is one of the Council's six priorities within the Council Plan. Financial performance monitoring also provides all stakeholders with a good oversight on the Council's financial position.

Legal Implications:

None directly associated with this report.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

Though the report does not directly impact upon these implications, Sustainable Environment is one of the Council's six priorities within the Council Plan.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

None directly associated with this report.

Safeguarding Implications:

None directly associated with this report.

Impact on the Customer:

Though the report does not directly impact upon our customers, Customer First is one of the Council's six priorities within the Council Plan. Performance monitoring also provides our customers and residents with a good oversight on the progress being made in delivering the Council Plan priorities, objectives and actions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** A new Council Plan (2020-24) was approved by Council on 28 January 2020. The approved plan included four existing priorities - finance and resources, economic growth, housing and communities and customer first - plus the approval of two new priorities - garden communities and sustainable environment. Supporting the priorities is a set of objectives and actions. Progress in delivering the objectives and actions are reported through a Council Plan Performance Tracker (Appendix 1). The tracker is a combined document which also includes a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As in previous years, to ensure the plan remains a 'live' document, all actions are reviewed annually and, where appropriate, they are refreshed. The refreshed plan was adopted by Council on 26 July 2022.
- 1.2** Key financial information is also reported so Members have a rounded view of overall performance. This includes the revenue budget summary statement, capital monitoring statement and the reserves position summary.

2.0 QUESTIONS RAISED AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2023

2.1

Questions raised by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Response from Officers
Performance tracker- priority: Finance and Resources	
Page No. 57 – Objective 2 – Action a) Ensure our Council Tax remains in the lowest quartile nationally – A Member questioned whether being in the lowest quartile had any correlation to the quality of services that could be provided by the Council.	The Executive Director: Resources advised that this was a target set by the previous Council and the authority had the eighth lowest Council Tax in the country at £40 below the lowest quartile threshold. Work had not yet commenced in relation to the setting of Council Tax for 2024/25; this was due to be approved in February along with the budget. Output would be greater with a higher Council Tax therefore services currently operated from a lower cost base – this could either be seen as being value for money, or that services could be better, depending on the individual viewpoint.

<p>Page No. 58 – Objective 4 – Action a) Implement and deliver a project plan for the closure of the trade waste service – A Member asked what the environmental impact would be in terms of people disposing of waste in other ways.</p>	<p>The Director: Communities advised that, whilst there was always a risk that people would choose not to do the right thing, he did not believe that businesses that would ordinarily operate in the correct way would start flytipping as a result of the cessation of the trade waste service; however, the Environmental Health team would be monitoring the situation and he provided assurance that robust action was taken in relation to flytipping.</p>
<p>Performance tracker priority: Economic Growth</p>	
<p>Page No. 59 – Objective 2 – Action b) Work with partners to secure transport infrastructure improvements for the all-ways Junction 10 – A Member noted that the commentary stated that Gloucestershire County Council would continue to work closely with National Highways so that the construction of this much-needed improvement scheme worked for all users and he asked for clarification on the interface with Gloucestershire County Council on the issue of a transport route.</p>	<p>The Associate Director: Garden Towns advised that a bid had been made to the government for funding and they were now moving to the Development Consent Order. There would be slightly different involvement as a more formal partner in the process with a direct link for the Council to comment but there was a very structured plan in place.</p>
<p>Performance tracker priority: Housing and Communities</p>	
<p>Page No. 68 – Objective 3 – Action a) Adopt a revised charging schedule for the Community Infrastructure Levy – A Member asked whether this action could be delivered within the revised timeframe.</p>	<p>The Associate Director: Planning advised that a significant amount of work was now underway including an internal audit to ensure money was correctly allocated and to check the systems used to track that – it was anticipated this would be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee at the end of November. There was a broader piece of work to be done around identifying priorities for the use and spending of CIL and establishing governance arrangements and it was anticipated that a timeline for those elements would be available for the Audit and Governance Committee meeting.</p> <p>The Chair indicated that a briefing in relation to CIL was being arranged as part of the Member Induction Programme so there would be an opportunity to ask more questions at that session.</p>

Performance tracker KPI'S- priority: Housing and Communities	
<p>Page No. 70 – KPI 11 – Total number of homeless relief cases held at the end of the quarter – A Member noted there was an increase compared to quarter one of the previous year but that only made sense if there had been a known increase in homelessness – there may be many more people in real difficulty than had been acknowledged in which case the increase was not necessarily negative and could be a positive.</p>	<p>The Head of Service: Housing felt it was difficult to say whether it was positive or negative overall and he stressed that the Council did not set a target. This was only a snapshot of cases based on those who had approached the Council for assistance and did not represent all of the people in need which could not be measured. There had been an increase in the number of cases being dealt with by the Housing team and there were fewer resources and options for resolving these issues. The Director: Communities indicated that the KPIs needed to be reviewed for the new Council Plan. There was a lot of hidden homelessness, e.g. sofa surfers, so it was virtually impossible to obtain an accurate figure at any one time as the situation was constantly changing. In general terms, the Housing team was certainly busier so people were struggling more and that was a trend across the county. The Chair indicated that he had been approached by the Leader of the Council about how the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could assist with gaining a better understanding of how the Council was supporting the cost of living crisis and, if the Committee took on that work, Members could look at data which they felt would be helpful in order to gain a more accurate picture of how effective the Council was being and identify what required greater attention.</p>
<p>Pages No. 71 and 72 – KPI 15 and KPI 16 – Total new affordable housing properties delivered by tenure type and new affordable housing properties delivered on JCS sites by type – A Member asked whether a percentage could be included going forward rather than just numbers.</p>	<p>The Head of Service: Housing advised that the numbers were taken from the returns from registered providers. He undertook to discuss this with Planning Policy Officers to establish whether percentages could be provided going forward.</p>
<p>Page No. 73 – KPI 19 – Percentage of major planning applications overturned at appeal – A Member asked how this could be improved and what caused timescale agreement issues on older cases, some of which seemed to go on for a significant period of time.</p>	<p>The Associate Director: Planning advised that he had inherited responsibility for the Development Management review, part of which was about the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning function. A number of agency staff and contractors had been brought in to address the backlog of planning applications and there was a downward trajectory in the figures he had been provided with during his first weeks in the role. The government had announced backlog funding and skills capacity funding</p>

last month and a bid had been submitted on behalf of the Council; if successful, the authority could be awarded up to £100,000 of Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funding which could be targeted to address the backlog. As well as working on the backlog, there were new applications coming in which needed to be determined within a certain timeframe so there was a lot to be done - he hoped, in time, to be able to give robust and more precise answers to such questions.

In terms of the older cases and timescale agreement issues, he was not sure of all the reasons for Tewkesbury Borough Council's backlog but generally it was a combination of factors including technical information not arriving early enough in the process to allow a decision to be made, Officer workload and the sheer amount of applications or delays with Section 106 Agreements which may be down to Tewkesbury Borough Council or Gloucestershire County Council. There was work to be done to look into the historic over time applications and understand what could be done to clear them. The Member raised concern that these cases skewed the figures and the Associate Director: Planning confirmed that was the case which was why a targeted piece of work was needed to understand the reasons – some would be easier to clear and some would continue to take longer to determine than Officers would like.

In response to a query as to whether there were any financial implications and if there was a level of tolerance, the Associate Director: Planning explained that this particular KPI was derived from a national performance indicator set by government and Councils which fell below the threshold ran the risk of being put into special measures whereby the government could take back responsibility for making certain planning decisions. With regard to financial implications, there would always be a cost of defending an appeal whether that was successful or not and the Inspector could award costs against the Council if it was seen to have acted unreasonably. In terms of the threshold performance tracking downwards, there were numerous other major planning appeals still to be heard and the Council had lost another major appeal the previous day; in his view, this was an area where the authority was potentially

	<p>vulnerable. The Executive Director: Resources advised that, in 2022/23, the Council had spent £600,000 on appeals which had far exceeded the £60,000 budget with excess costs having to be paid from reserves – this was concerning to him and his financial colleagues.</p> <p>A Member indicated that she had raised concern regarding the number of planning applications yet to be determined and had asked for a list of all of those applications over the threshold which the government would expect within the legislation in order to get an indication of the extent of the problem. Another Member sought clarification of the threshold, and how close the authority was to exceeding that, and the Associate Director: Planning explained that the government set rolling periods for the threshold for special measures which meant it was a moveable feast depending on the start and end dates.</p> <p>Following a brief debate regarding how to take this matter forward, and in acknowledging that this issue was due to be discussed by the Leader and Deputy Leader with the Chief Officers Group at a meeting the following day, it was agreed that the Chair would write to the Leader of the Council to inform him of today's discussion and the concerns raised and to offer the Committee's support to help address the problem.</p>
Performance tracker KPI priority: Customer First	
<p>Page No. 84 – KPI 38 – Percentage of formal complaints answered on time – A Member asked whether there was any information on how satisfied people were with the response they received and if any work was being done in terms of the services they fell into and identification of common issues.</p>	<p>The Director: Corporate Resources confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an annual report which provided a breakdown of complaints by service area and type and that was due to be considered at the meeting in October.</p>

Performance Tracker priority: Sustainable Environment	
Page No. 88 – Objective 1 – Action d) Appoint an additional Climate Change Officer to help support the declaration of a borough-wide climate emergency - A Member asked for more information on the Green Champions in terms of what they had achieved and how they could be utilised to help to deliver the Council's ambitions.	The Executive Director: Resources advised that the Green Champions had been established as a result of the Carbon Literacy Training which had been completed by more than 60 Officers. They comprised volunteers who represented their service areas and were helping to take forward some of the projects. The Chair felt it would be beneficial for the Green Champions to attend a future meeting of the Committee at an appropriate time.
Page No. 90 – Objective 2 – Action c) Carry out a review of the litter pickers scheme – A Member questioned why this did not have a smiley face.	The Director: Communities explained that there were no concerns around the litter pickers scheme itself but this action was about reviewing how the scheme was administered and that had not progressed as quickly as anticipated. The main issue was the amount of data and the need to ensure that records were accurate and up to date.
Performance tracker KPI priority: Sustainable Environment	
Page No. 93 – KPI 39 – Number of reported envirocrimes – A Member asked whether anything could be done to address the increase.	The Director: Communities advised that this KPI needed to be reviewed as it currently did not give any information regarding the performance of the team.
Page No. 94 – KPI 40 – Percentage of waste reused, recycled or composted – A Member pointed out that the Ubico report which had been considered at the last meeting of the Committee had stated that the target was 60% and she asked why Tewkesbury Borough Council's target was below that at 52%.	The Director: Communities advised that 60% was a national target for 2035. Whilst the Council's target was 52%, it was working to 60% as a long term goal overall. There would be changes to the percentage achieved throughout the year, for instance, there tended to be an increase during the summer when the weather was better. Another Member asked how the figure was calculated for material that was reused and the Director: Communities advised that this information was collected by Gloucestershire County Council. He undertook to find out how this was measured and provide a response by email.
Page No. 94 – KPI 41 – Residual household waste collected per property in kilograms – A Member asked why the target was to increase residual waste.	The Director: Communities indicated this was an error which needed to be addressed as it was intended to reduce residual waste.

3.0 CONSULTATION

3.1 None.

4.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

4.1 There are no associated risks in relation to the report itself. A number of actions within the council plan are included within the council's corporate risk register. For example, financial sustainability, climate change, delivery of the garden town.

5.0 MONITORING

5.1 Progress on delivery of Council Plan actions is monitored on a quarterly basis by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Council Plan 2020-2024 approved by Council on 26 July 2022

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Overview and Scrutiny Committee report of Performance Information Q1 2023/2024.