



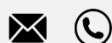
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Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Report for:	Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Quarter 1 Performance Report – Corporate and Commercial Services
Date:	5 th September 2023
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Sally Symington, Portfolio Holder for Commercial Strategy and Delivery
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	Appendix A – Key Performance Indicator report Appendix B – Financial Services Operational Risk report
Background papers:	None
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	TRO – Traffic Regulation Orders

Report Authors/ Responsible Officers

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Building strong and vibrant communities Ensuring economic growth and prosperity Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery Climate and ecological emergency
Wards affected	All
Purpose of the report:	To provide Members with the performance

	report for Quarter one 2023-24 in relation to the Corporate and Commercial directorate.
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	That Members note the performance of the service as set out in the report.
Period for post policy/project review:	Quarterly

1 Introduction

This paper will provide an update on service performance over Q1 2023/2024 for the Corporate & Commercial Directorate, including Commercial Development, Finance & Resources and Legal & Democratic Services. It will also highlight key service achievements over this same period.

2 Commercial Development

This section of the report provides an update on the performance during Q1 2023-24 of Commercial Development Services.

2.1 Key Performance Indicators

The key performance indicators for Commercial Development can be found at Appendix A.

2.2 Procurement Activity

The Procurement team are currently supporting the delivery of a number of commissioning and tendering activities in compliance with the Council's Commissioning & Procurement Standing Orders.

2.3 Procurement Compliance

Following a Procurement Assurance internal audit report, the recommendation was to update the Finance & Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee with any non-compliance procurement activities.

Table 1 - Number of times the Procurement Standing Orders have been set aside during Q1

Contract	Justification	Responsible Officer
Head of Strategy Quality & Assurance Maternity Cover Arrangements	Given the tight timescales the service is working to, the level of delivery needed within the role, the fact that a suitable and available candidate has been sourced through a supplier the Council has an existing relationship with, a decision was made to set aside the procurement standing orders to directly award a contract. Not awarding the contract to Green Acre Limited and using the Crown Commercial Services framework agreement will result in the post not being covered for a period of time.	David Barrett

Table 2 - Non-Compliant procurement expenditure during Q1

Contract	Annual Value	Reason	Responsible Officer	Mitigation
Supply of Sacks for Environmental Services	£40,000	Contract expired	Robert Williams	Report on contract award being presented to Commercial Board in July. If awarded expenditure will become compliant
Supply of Bins & Caddies	£40,000	No contract in place	Robert Williams	Report on contract award being presented to Commercial Board in July. If awarded expenditure will become compliant
Haulage of Waste from Cupid Green	£45,000	No contract in place	Robert Williams	Contract award report being presented to Commercial Board in Sep. If awarded then future expenditure will become compliant
Supply & Fitting of Tyres to Commercial Fleet	£75,000	No contract in place	Robert Williams	Contract award report being presented to Commercial Board in Sep. If awarded then future expenditure will become compliant
Supply of Grounds Maintenance Equipment	£110,000	No contract in place	Robert Williams	Contract award report being presented to Commercial Board in Sep. If awarded then future expenditure will become compliant

2.4 Commercial Strategy & Programme

With support from consultants and working across the Council's Corporate Leadership Team, an initial Commercial Programme was formed in 2022, with 12 Initial Business Case (IBCs) opportunities identified for further development to Full Business Case (FBCs). The 12 IBCs were reduced to 9, with the other 3 incorporated into ongoing transformation projects taking place within Housing and Waste Services.

- Fees & Charges – Agreed as part of the budget approval process by Finance & Resources OSC in Dec 2022
- Light Industrial Units – Agreed by Finance & Resources OSC IN Feb 2023
- Legal Services – Discussions ongoing
- Planning Service – Discussions ongoing
- Environmental Services – Discussions ongoing
- Developer Account Manager – Paused for 12 months to enable catch up caused by planning moratorium
- Parking Services – presented to Finance & Resources OSC in July and again in Sept
- CCTV – Paused for 12 months to enable service improvements to be implemented
- Insurance – Work ongoing

Work progressed over 2022-23, with the outcome of the review of Fees & Charges being presented to this Committee in December 2022 as part of the budget approval process, and plans for development of Light Industrial Units on garage sites presented to the Committee in February and Cabinet in March 2023.

3 Shared Service opportunities (Legal Services, Planning Service and Environmental Services) are progressing discussions with neighbouring authorities, with the outcome of these discussions due to be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet in due course.

The Parking FBC was presented to this Committee in July and following feedback and further modelling is due to be presented to this Committee on 5 September.

3 Legal and Democratic Services Q4 Performance Report

3.1 The Legal Team

The Legal team frequently represent the Council in the courts and tribunals, leading on injunctions, prosecutions and defending employment tribunal cases and judicial review proceedings. In the last quarter the Legal team presented the following case in court:-

Matter	Client/type	Case Detail
Flytipping prosecution	DBC -V- Meredith	Fine £1,230 Legal costs of £500

The Monitoring Officer also progressed changes to the Council's Constitution and procedural rules during the Last quarter. Firstly to approve changes to minute taking which will mean that Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings will be recorded and the recording will be retained and displayed on the Council's web-site and stand as the record of debate rather than having long written minutes, and Secondly to note that going forward meeting Portfolio Holder updates will be provided in writing and published with the agenda in advance of the meeting rather than being read out at Council.

3.2 Corporate and Democratic Support

Democratic Services

During Quarter 1, Democratic Support carried out the following activities:-

- Delivered 1 Full Council meeting, live streamed via YouTube
- Delivered Annual Council & Mayor Making Ceremony, live streamed via YouTube
- Supported 16 committees (including agendas & minutes)
- Processed and administered 10 new Portfolio Holder Decisions, published 5 completed decisions
- Processed 8 Officer Decisions

The team undertook the delivery of the Postal Vote receipt and opening for the Local Elections May 2023;

- Recruited 16 Temporary Election Assistants (external) and 26 Postal Vote Opening Staff (internal DBC staff)
- Delivered 26 Postal Vote Opening sessions
- Processed 11,896 Postal Votes

The team launched the New Member Induction and Development Programme for 2023/24;

- Design and production of New Member Handbook 2023
- Updated website pages and created profiles for all 51 newly elected Councillors
- Delivered 2 successful Member Induction Days (including coach tour of the Borough)
- Delivered the following training sessions;
 - ICT troubleshooting & introduction to meetings
 - Statutory committee training – Licensing
 - Statutory committee training – Development Management
 - Statutory committee training – Appeals
 - Chair & Vice Chair training
 - Code of Conduct training (mandatory)

The team supported the delivery of the verification & count of the Local Elections on 4th May 2023, and alongside our colleagues in the Electoral Services Team, were invited to the Annual Staff Recognition evening where we were awarded the Chief Executive's Commendation Award for our work in connection with the Local Elections 2023.

Digital Print & Post Room:

In addition to the day to day workload and ad hoc requests for support and reprographics, during Quarter 1 the team;

- Processed and franked a total of 56,574 outgoing mail items, at a total cost of £33,184.72 (includes HVCCG & CAB which is recharged)
- Processed and banked 478 cheques with a total income of £153,024.52
- Received and banked 11 emergency cash transactions with a total value of £5,488.96

- Supported the Electoral Registration Team with various print requests during Local Election
- Supported the wider organisation with ad hoc reprographics requests
- Supported the Legal team with printing/scanning various court bundles
- Our Courier service continues to deliver personnel urgent letters, delivery of stationery items to staff, including collections of confidential waste

The team was also invited to an annual staff recognition evening as a shortlisted finalist for 'team of the year' award.

3.3 Electoral Services

Electoral Register

During Quarter 1, the following changes were made to the Electoral Register:-

Additions 1636

Deletions 1369

Changes 193

Movers 449

Staff Training

Throughout Q1, the team attended:

- AEA Eastern branch meeting
- AEA Post Polls report launch

Local Elections 2023

The local elections were successfully completed on the 4th of May 2023. The verification and counts were then completed on the 4th and 5th of May.

Election statistics

- Pre-election day:
396 staff employed across all roles (postal votes, station, count staff).
- Postal Votes:
Postal votes received and processed 11,731 (70% return)
- 4th/5th May:
37,594 Borough ballot papers counted

7,528 Parish ballot papers counted

29% turnout
- Time to process (approx):
3 ½ hrs to verify 45,122 ballot papers

7hrs to count and declare 25 Borough ward ballot paper

3 hrs to count and declare 8 Parish area ballot papers

The Elections team were awarded the Chief Executive Commendation award at the Staff awards ceremony. This was very much appreciated by the team, which recognised all of the hard work and dedication that went in to the successful deliver of the recent local elections.

Voter ID

The local awareness campaign worked extremely well and Election Day did not present any issues around voter ID.

- 170 voters refused a vote because of no ID or ID was wrong or not an acceptable form
- 126 returned with appropriate ID.
- 44 didn't return.

210 Voter Authority Certificates issued prior to the election – 97 were used on Election Day.

Election evaluation

Following the election, the team sought feedback from anyone involved in the process, for example, polling station staff, station inspectors, core team, and agents. This was considered by the Returning Officer and the core election team. A plan has been produced to action the points or suggestions raised. In addition the proposed action plan has been discussed with the Returning Officer, SLT and election agents.

Upcoming compulsory projects

There are a number of compulsory reviews and new legislation due to take place or be implemented over the next 18 months – 2 years. A timeline has been produced to illustrate when each will be carried out and team discussions to set actions.

This includes:

- Parliamentary Boundary Review
- Electoral Review
- Polling District & Polling Place Review
- Elections Act – implementing final aspects of the act (e.g. postal vote handling, overseas electors)
- Parliamentary election – date to be confirmed

In addition to business as usual:

- Annual Canvass
- Av Refresh
- Preparing for PCC election 2024

3.4 Licensing

- The team have been very busy during the first quarter and have issued 25 Licensing premises applications, 6 animal activity licences, and 14 taxi driver renewals. The team have also been busy investigating complaints against a variety of licensing matters but none have resulted in formal action being taken during Q1.

4 Finance & Resources Q4 Performance & Operational Risk Report

4.1 Introduction:

Operational Risk and Performance reports are presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis. They provide Members with an opportunity to scrutinise performance against a range of key indicators.

4.2 Quarter 4 Finance and Resources performance report:

- A. This report outlines the 2022/23 Quarter 4 (January – March) performance of the Finance and Revenues and Benefits services, the details of the quarterly KPI's are included in the enclosed the Appendix A Corporate and Commercial Performance report.

The Performance appendix detail the current performance against a range of agreed Key Performance Indicators. These report detail that there is only 1 red KPI where performance requires improvement;

FIN02a Time taken for debtors to pay –

This has been adversely impacted in the last 2 years by several government Covid policies around debt collection and in particular around enforcement of the collection of commercial rent, these policies have either limited or prevented the standard debt collection processes.

This has resulted in the Council holding more historic commercial property debt resulting from the pandemic, where either businesses have chosen to repay debt through payment plans which take longer to pay back and delay payment, or have not been paying their debt as previously expected.

The “normal” debt recovery processes only returned in November 2022 and improvement has been made since these changes came about but the service will take time to return to pre covid levels. During 2022/23 this KPI peaked at over 60 days and is now around the 50 – 52 days so improvement has been made to date. The commercial property and finance team are working in combination with commercial property tenants to improve this performance.

The council has a bad debt provision that could fund unpayable debts and the impact on the council’s cashflow of this reduced performance is minimal. Although the financial impact at present is negligible the service is driven to improve this level of performance, to pre covid levels in 2023/24.

4.3 Finance and Resources Quarter 4 Operational Risk Report

The Qtr 4 Finance & Resources operational risk register is attached in Appendix C. There are no changes to the scoring at quarter 4 from quarter 3. At present there is one red rated operational risk in relation to the council tax and business rates collection. The collection rates finished slightly behind the targeted levels in 22/23 but both rates are an improvement on year on year, but not yet achieving pre covid performance levels.

Although the in-year collection rate has underperformed from a budget/cash perspective the in year collection of previous year’s arrears has exceeded expectations and hence there is no reported budget pressure in 22/23. The poorer collection performance in quarter 3 and 4 combined with the current economic outlook, would suggest the collection rate performance in 23/24 will be very challenging and hence will be under close scrutiny.

5 Financial and value for money implications:

Poor performance or increased risk would indicate areas of concern and potential lack of best value, and these services and processes are reviewed as part of the ongoing corporate financial monitoring framework and reflected in the budget monitoring reports presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet.

6 Legal Implications

N/A

7 Risk implications:

The process of reviewing and reporting performance and operational risks is part of the wider risk management processes undertaken by the council, to ensure risk management and mitigation is undertaken where required and follows the strategic risk strategy outlined by the council.

8 Equalities, Community Impact and Human Rights:

No Community or equalities assessment has been undertaken specifically as part of this report. The services and the service delivery processes are assessed periodically to ensure these services reflect the Council's policies on service delivery.

9 Sustainability implications (including climate change, health and wellbeing, community safety)

N/A

10 Council infrastructure (including Health and Safety, HR/OD, assets and other resources)

N/A

11 Conclusions: Performance and risk are outlined in the appendices and summarised in the report, and the Committee are asked to note the report.