

ECONOMY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 January 2022

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QTR 2 - 2021/22

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members with performance data against key performance indicators for 2021/22 at Quarter 2.

Report

Performance Summary

2. This report provides performance information in line with an indicator set and scrutiny committee distribution agreed by Monitoring and Coordination Group on 4 June 2018, and subsequently by scrutiny committee chairs.
3. The indicators included in this report are aligned with key priorities. Other indicators may be referenced when appropriate in narrative provided by the relevant assistant directors, when providing the committee with performance updates.
4. The percentage of Council Tax collected is on course to meet the target for 2021-22 and the amount of Council Tax arrears collected is currently exceeding the target. Overall housing benefit debt is also decreasing.
5. Footfall in the town centre slowly increased following the easing of Covid restrictions.
6. There has been a big increase in planning applications with a 40-50% increase from March to May 2021 compared to pre pandemic levels. This increase was across the board of all types of applications. The team has coped well with processing these applications.
7. The unemployment claimant count has fallen since 2020 possibly due to Covid-response measure such as the Kickstart Scheme and growth in local employment opportunities. Employment rates have remained static but show a longer-term gradual increase directly linked to the growth in new employment opportunities. Resident annual incomes have remained relatively static but remain higher than the North East regional average.
8. Despite the pandemic the housing market remains buoyant and is expected to exceed the annual requirement. The Local Plan will hopefully be adopted early in the new year which will result in applications currently in the system being given approval. The adoption of the Local Plan will also result in further applications being submitted to ensure we can deliver our five-year supply going forward.

9. Twenty-two indicators are reported to the committee, seventeen of them on a six-monthly basis and five annually.

10. Performance of the six indicators reported at 6 months that have targets.

a) Four of the indicators show performance is not as good as their target.

FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year

b) One of the indicators shows performance better than its target.

HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected
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c) One of the indicators shows performance the same as its target.

ECI 401	New homes delivered against annual target
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11. Performance of the sixteen indicators reported at 6 months:

a) Of the sixteen indicators reported quarterly all can be compared against their data at Qtr 2 2020/21.

b) Five indicators are showing performance better than at this time last year.

CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average
ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 105	% of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
ECI 401	New homes delivered against annual target
HBS 002	Amount in £s of Council Tax arrears collected

c) Eleven indicators are showing performance not as good as at this time last year:

ECI 321	Monthly unemployed claimant count
ECI 106	24 months to date % of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
FHR 001	Number of FTE working days lost due to sickness (excluding schools)
FHR 003	Number of reportable employee accidents / ill health
FHR 008	Number of complaints upheld by the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman
FHR 019	Staff turnover - Voluntary Leavers
HBS 003	Amount in £s of Housing Benefit overpayments recovered
HBS 009	% of Council Tax collected in year
HBS 010	% of Business Rates collected in-year
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

d) Of the sixteen indicators reported quarterly six can be compared against their previous quarter data.

e) Two of the six indicators show performance better than at Qtr 1.

CUL 080a	Town centre footfall weekly average
ECI 105	% of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)

f) Three of the indicators are showing performance not as good than at Qtr 1.

ECI 106	24 months to date % of non-major planning development decisions within 8 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
LGP 008	Contracted spend as a % of total non-salary spend
REG 312a	% of noise complaints investigated and completed within 6 weeks of the date of receipt (except where diary sheet returned)

g) One of the indicators shows performance the same as Qtr 1

ECI 104	% of major planning applications decided within 13 weeks or within agreed time (EoT)
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12. A detailed performance scorecard is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that performance information provided in this report is reviewed and noted, and relevant queries raised with appropriate Assistant Directors.

Ian Thompson **Mark Ladyman** **Brett Nielsen**
AD Community Services **AD Economic Growth** **AD Resources**

Luke Swinhoe **Anthony Sandys**
AD Law & Governance **AD Housing and Revenues**

Background Papers

Background papers were not used in the preparation of this report.

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report supports the Council's Crime and Disorder responsibilities
Health and Well Being	This report supports performance improvement relating to improving the health and wellbeing of residents
Sustainability	This report supports the Council's sustainability responsibilities
Diversity	This report supports the promotion of diversity
Wards Affected	This report supports performance improvement across all Wards
Groups Affected	This report supports performance improvement which benefits all groups
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
Council Plan	This report contributes to the Council Plan by involving Members in the scrutiny of performance relating to the delivery of key outcomes
Efficiency	Scrutiny of performance is integral to optimising outcomes.

Main Report

Information and Analysis

Human Resources

14. FHR 001 - At Q2 the number of FTE working days lost to sickness is higher than at the same point in 2020/21. However, in the same period of 2020/21 lower figures of sickness were reported as the country was in CV19 lockdown and few staff were absent due to hospital/medical treatment absences, as non urgent procedures were postponed during the pandemic. Managers at all levels continue to manage sickness (with HR support) within the Council's sickness management policies. The Wellbeing programme has produced significant benefits for our workforce and continues to be a key priority within the new workforce strategy, to promote the health and wellbeing of staff.
15. FHR 019 - The number of staff leaving up to the end of Q2 is higher than the same period last year. This is to be expected as the first two quarters of 2020/21 were at the start of the CV19 pandemic and therefore many employers were not recruiting and many employees were cautious regarding seeking new employment. As we come out of the pandemic several employment opportunities have arisen in Darlington which has resulted in staff moving. The Council continues to undertake exit surveys for all staff that leave our employment to understand the reason for leaving and implement improvements where needed. The Council continues to improve its offer to staff through wellbeing projects and other employee benefits to make the Council an attractive place to work.

Health and Safety

16. FHR 003 – The number of reportable employee accidents up to the end of Q2 was 5, which is higher than at the same period in 2020/21, although there was less activity in 2020/21 due to CV19. All accidents are investigated by the Health & Safety team to establish the causes, to identify issues or trends and make recommendations to prevent reoccurrence. The Council has introduced the Airsweb system which allows online reporting of accidents and other health & safety incidents (near misses etc.), with managers having access to a dashboard which allows them to monitor incidents within their own service area. The Health & Safety Team have undertaken a refresh of the "Think Safety" campaign, which has been signed up to by all Assistant Directors, with new publicity materials produced to continue to promote a health and safety culture throughout the Council.

Complaints

17. FHR 008 - It is not possible to make a direct comparison to Q1 and Q2 of 2020/21 as the LGSCO ceased investigating complaints between 26 March and 29 June 2020 due to COVID-19.
18. FHR 009 - Total number of upheld decisions at the end of Q2 are approximately half of the total number of upheld decisions received for the whole of 2020/21.

Procurement

19. LGP 008 - The figures have increased slightly over the last 2 quarters, due to officers having a greater understanding of the procurement rules and the need for value for money and transparency.

Council Tax

20. HBS 002 - The amount of Council Tax arrears collected is currently exceeding the target, with £806k collected by the end of quarter 2 compared to £527k for the same period in 2020-21. The amount of outstanding arrears increased during 2020-21 due to Covid from £4.8 million to £5.8 million, but recovery action has now restarted in the first quarter of 2021-22, which explains the increase in arrears collection. The outstanding Council Tax arrears now stands at £5.0 million.
21. HBS 009 - The percentage of Council Tax collected is currently on course to meet the target for 2021-22, with 52% of Council tax collected by the end of quarter 2. The overall amount collected in quarter 2 of £36.40 million has exceeded the amount collected in 2020-21 for the same period by £3.03 million.

Housing Benefits

22. HBS 003 - The amount of Housing Benefit overpayments collected is currently slightly lower than the target. £269k of overpayments were collected by the end of quarter 2, compared to £310 collected for the same period in 2020-21. However, collection rates are currently at 107% of the new overpayment debt created (£250k), which means that the overall outstanding debt is decreasing (currently at £1.8 million). It is likely that as Housing Benefit claims continue to transfer to Universal Credit, the amount of Housing Benefit overpayments created (and therefore the amount collected) will continue to decrease.

Business Rates

23. HBS 010 - The percentage of Business Rates collected in quarter 2 is currently below target, although collection is expected to increase through 2021-22 and the overall target will be met, with 53% of Business Rates collected by the end of quarter 2. This is because the businesses qualifying for retail and hospitality relief received 100% for quarter 1 only and therefore have only started paying Business Rates from quarter 2 onwards.

Culture

24. CUL 080a - Town centre footfall levels have been closely correlated with Covid-19 lockdown periods during the course of the pandemic, with significant drops recorded during periods of tighter restrictions which have also been reported elsewhere. As these Covid-related restrictions have continued to reduce through the first two quarters of 2020/21, footfall in the town centre has continued to increase and, whilst directly comparable benchmarking data is not available, community mobility data released by Google since the beginning of the pandemic shows that Darlington mobility trends for 'retail and recreation' have recovered more strongly than the UK average.

Planning Applications

25. ECI 104, ECI 105 & ECI 106 - The department has coped remarkably well with processing a massive increase in numbers of applications submitted to the Council in comparison to Pre-pandemic workload. From the months of March to May 2021 we have received between a 40% to 50% increase in applications relative to Pre pandemic levels. This increase was across the board of all types of applications so affected both the Householder improvement type applications along with the larger developments.

Planning Policy

26. ECI 321 - This measure shows the difference in total employment (both Public and Private) compared to the same point 12 months previously, in order to show the number of jobs created in Darlington within the last year. As can be seen, the number of job opportunities increased again in 2020, in contrast to the regional and national picture where job opportunities fell during the first 9 months of the pandemic.
27. ECI 327 - Employment rates have remained static between 2020 and 2021 but show a longer-term gradual increase. This is directly linked to the growth in new employment opportunities.
28. ECI 329 - Resident annual incomes have remained relatively static over the last 12 months, compared with a national trend of decline. Resident incomes remain higher than the North East regional average.
29. ECI 330 - Employee annual incomes have remained static, and are broadly in line with regional levels, reflecting commuter patterns across the north east.
30. ECI 401 - Despite the pandemic the housing market remains buoyant in the Borough and based on the completions so far in the first half of the financial year we would expect to once again exceed the annual requirement. The Local Plan will hopefully be adopted early in the new year which will result in applications currently in the system being given approval. The adoption of the Local Plan will result in further applications being submitted to ensure we have a pipeline of permissions to ensure delivery of our 5 year supply going forward.

Environmental Health

31. REG 301 - To limit the spread of Covid infection during the Pandemic Environmental Health officers were under instruction from the Food Standards Agency not to visit commercial premises unless they had evidence that there was a direct risk to public health. As a result of this, officers were left with a significant backlog of inspections. The Local Authority (LA) recovery plan has re-started the regulatory delivery system for the highest risk businesses and provides greater flexibility for lower risk businesses wherever possible. Officers have developed a plan which triages all currently registered food premises and uninspected premises and ensures that priority is given to the highest risk premises.
32. REG 308 – Premises within the Borough have shown a consistently high level of compliance year on year. This is due to a robust, consistent, and proportionate advice, inspection, and enforcement regime by officers.
33. REG 312a - During Q2 285 noise complaints were investigated and completed. The target of 90% has been met but the increase in the number of domestic noise complaints investigated following Covid has continued and levels have not fallen to pre-Covid levels.