

**Chief Executive Department  
Town Hall, London N1 2UD**

**Report of:**

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>Ward(s):</b>
Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee	17 September 2020	All
<b>Delete as appropriate</b>	Exempt	Non-exempt

**SUBJECT: Quarter 1 Performance Report: Well Run Council**

**1. Synopsis**

- 1.1 The council has in place a suite of corporate performance indicators to help monitor progress in delivering the outcomes set out in the council's Corporate Plan. Progress on key performance measures are reported through the council's Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis to ensure accountability to residents and to enable challenge where necessary.
- 1.2 This report sets out Quarter 1 (Apr – Jun '20) progress against targets for those performance indicators that fall within the Well Run Council outcome area, for which the Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee has responsibility.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note performance against targets in Quarter 1 (Apr – Jun) 2020/21 for measures relating to Well Run Council.
- 2.2 To note responses to queries raised by the Committee when it discussed the Quarter 2 (Jul – Sep) 2019/20 report on 23 January 2020.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 A suite of corporate performance indicators has been agreed for 2018-22, which help track progress in delivering the seven priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan - *Building a Fairer Islington*. Targets are set on an annual basis and performance is monitored internally, through Departmental Management Teams, Corporate Management Board and Joint Board, and externally through the Scrutiny Committees.

- 3.2 The Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring and challenging performance for the following key outcome area: Well Run Council, which covers core council services such as Finance, Digital Services, Human Resources and Customer Services, to ensure the organisation runs effectively.

#### **4. Outstanding issues and queries from Q2 update, presented on 23 January 2020**

- 4.1 The Committee discussed the Quarter 2 (Jul – Aug) 2019/20 performance report at its' meeting on 23 January 2020. There were a number of outstanding issues and queries raised by the Committee:
- 4.2 Discussion took place on channel shift, and that whilst there has been a reduction in the number of callers to the Customer Centre, the number of online transactions needed to increase

##### **Update:**

As reflected in 6.4 of the report, growth in our online transactions has been limited/ restricted and influenced by COVID.

Like for like comparable data is difficult to produce as since the original measure, new self-service routes that sit outside of the original suite of products have been introduced. The primary difference has been the launch of paperless visitor vouchers through RingGo. Previously books of vouchers were purchased via My eAccount, but now residents go direct to RingGo and buy specific periods of times rather than books with multiple "scratch cards". We have seen a fall in My eAccount online requests, yet an overall surge / increase of spending via RingGo.

There have been no new online service offers within My eAccount for last year and this year as this alongside other technology is under review as part of a wider Digital Strategy.

- 4.3 It was stated that the reports on sickness and agency staff would be submitted to the next and following meetings of PPS respectively

##### **Update:**

The next dates for reporting on sickness and agency staff are due to take place at PPS meetings on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 respectively.

- 4.4 A Member referred to sickness absence, and that a report was due to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. The Member stated that there was a need to review long term sickness cases, how they are being managed by senior management and trends, possibly reviewing cases of long term sickness absence of 6 months or more

##### **Update:**

Specific focus on long term sickness will be included in the report on sickness absence at the PPS meeting due to take place on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

- 4.5 Reference was also made to the high number of muscular/skeletal injuries in E&R, and that there needed to be a focus by management on reducing these, and to set a zero injury figure, even if this is not ultimately achievable. There was a need to look at what training and action was being taken to reduce this figure. Councillor Hull stated that this could be looked at

##### **Update:**

Managers can access H&S training DSE Assessments, manual handling and other relevant training through the online H&S portal. Directorates, particularly those with a large proportion of manual staff with large number of older employees have been working with HR to agree action plans to support the data reports issued by HR and provided regularly to departmental teams. For example all staff in E&R and Housing who return from long term sickness, a physical injury or operation are given a refresher in manual handling training. Further detail will be provided in the next report to PPS on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020.

- 4.6 A Member also referred to the need to look at trends over a period of time, comparative data with other neighbouring Local Authorities, an analysis of long term sickness, the number of staff in each department, and a narrative of sickness absence from the relevant Director on reasons etc. In addition, there should be an analysis of sickness absence by grade

**Update:**

The Head of Business Partnerships & HR Business Analytics meets with the Occupational Health Account Manager every quarter to review medical referrals by reason, by Directorate and by Service. Benchmarking data against comparative councils is included within the annual report and will be provided again in the next report to PPS. The percentage of medical referrals are per year is 17% in Islington compared to an average of 13% across London, this is principally due to high number of manual and insourced staff. However, despite the increase in referrals, absence due to mental health and MSK remains in line with that of other councils which make up 23% and 20% of total sickness absence respectively.

- 4.7 The Chair expressed the view that the figures on stress/mental health/depression and anxiety also needed to be separated out, as the level of support and other issues would not be the same in each case

**Update:**

The data format and content has been revised to provide a greater level of detail to support corporate and directorate action plans. Additional interventions and support are also in place or have been considered through Able Futures (nine months 121 support), the Employee Assistance Programme and OH. As part of the council's response to the pandemic a Staff Wellbeing Hub was created on the intranet. This includes a wide range of support and tools through internal (e.g Mental Health First Aiders, Mental Health Ambassadors, COVID Return to Work Risk Assessment Forms, Remote Working and Reasonable Adjustments Guidance) and external (e.g MIND) sources. Additional support is also available to staff and teams who have experienced a Covid-19 death. HR are currently working with the OH provider to review the support available to managers of staff returning to work as part of the 'return to normal' plans. Staff Wellness Surveys have run since April '20 to provide CMB with insight into the anxieties staff are facing at work and in their personal lives. Each Directorate has been tasked to develop an action plan to address issues identified. This work is currently on-going and a summary of the updated information will be provided at the next PPS Cttee. meeting.

## **5. Quarter 1 performance update – Managing our budget effectively and efficiently**

- 5.1 Key performance indicators relating to objective:

PI No.	Indicator	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Target	Q1 2020/21	On target?	Q1 last year	Better than Q1 last year?
WR1	Percentage of council tax collected in year	96.1%	96.2%	<b>25.3% (profiled)</b>	<b>24.9%</b>	<b>No</b>	25.3%	<b>No</b>
WR2	Percentage of business rates collected in year	96.6%	96.7%	<b>26.2% (profiled)</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>No</b>	26.2%	<b>No</b>

5.2 *WR1: Percentage of council tax collected in year*

*WR2: Percentage of business rates collected in a year*

In these unprecedented times, modelling outcomes for tax collection when there is so much economic and social uncertainty is impossible. Through lost jobs or reduced income (furloughs) many of our residents and households will be struggling to find the money to keep up with their instalments. Through loss of business income (resulting from closures, reduced demand or reduced capacity) many of our businesses will be struggling to find the money to keep up with their instalments. And the lower collection rates we're experiencing are believed to be reflective of the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of monitoring performance, we are keeping our original pre-COVID targets for both Council Tax (at 96.3%) and Business Rates (at 96.8%). These target collection rates reflect our pre-Covid expectations as we don't have the ability to forecast what the actual outcomes might now look like as a result of Covid-19. It is unlikely that even the Government can establish meaningful Covid-projected outcomes ahead of a recession, massive job losses, significant impact on business incomes, business failures still to come and so on.

However, we believe there is still value in retaining our original targets in the reports we produce, to enable Islington to understand and quantify the impact Covid-19 is having on our revenues by showing the percentage difference compared to our original target collection profile.

Over and above the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are also restricted by a new operational constraint. In order to enforce the collection of these taxes, for example, by using an attachment of earnings, attachment of benefits or enforcement agents, the debt needs to be confirmed by the magistrates court.

In normal times, the court would summons the debtor and if the debtor did not give an appropriate reason for not paying their tax, the court would confirm the debt was legally enforceable by issuing a "liability order" for the debt. Without a liability order the council cannot enforce the debt. Our magistrates court have suspended council tax and business rates summons work for the foreseeable future, indicating they might not re-open for this kind of work until Spring 2021. As a result we cannot enforce the collection of these taxes.

Instead we are limited to making regular contact with our debtors to remind them that they have to pay their instalments and warn them that if they let arrears build up then this will become a problem for them in the future. We are using these regular contact methods to encourage debtors to maintain their repayments but our 'encouragements' don't have the same persuasive power or force as enforcement methods. All the magistrates courts in London have adopted the same position (so all the London Boroughs have been affected by this in the same way).

The magistrates courts and various councils including Islington are exploring the potential for 'virtual' court hearings and the possibility of debtors using Islington's premises to make their representations. However even if virtual courts could be held before the end of 2020/21, the timing and impact on this financial year is likely to be minimal as based on our current understanding we don't expect such courts to be fully operational until next year at the earliest.

## 6. Quarter 1 performance update – Harness digital technology for the benefit of residents and staff

### 6.1 Key performance indicators relating to objective:

PI No.	Indicator	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Target	Q1 2020/21	On target?	Q1 last year	Better than Q1 last year?
WR3	Number of visits in person at Customer Contact Centre	131,500	107,440	TBC	TBC	TBC	26,559	TBC
WR4	Number of telephone calls through Contact Islington Call Centre	396,211	107,440	80,232 (profiled)	75,561	Yes	89,326	Yes
WR5	Number of online transactions	170,156	152,883	40,131 (profiled)	37,404	No	36,702	Yes
WR6	Percentage of calls into Contact Islington handled appropriately	98.5%	97.25%	98%	98%	Yes	97.67%	Yes

*WR3: Number of visits in person at Customer Contact Centre*

### 6.2

A target for 20/21 is yet to be proposed as a new delivery model is under consideration, which would make direct comparison impossible at this stage.

Since the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 the Customer Centre has been closed to customers with the exception of emergency services, provision of Resident Support Service crisis awards and urgent customer access to courtesy phones and PCs.

The move to emergency only in the centre has clearly shown that residents can and have accessed services in other ways, generally via phone and online channels. Changing to an appointment only system will provide services the opportunity to focus their resources on residents with more complex support needs/vulnerability.

A report is being considered proposing the re-opening of the centre via an appointment-only basis, a reduced self-serve facility and on the day emergencies.

Individual services have been working with the customer centre manager to identify and establish processes and procedures for assessing whether a customer can access a face-to-face appointment or continue to be directed to alternative channels.

Social distancing is a factor in relation to ongoing capacity in the centre however the closure supports channel shift to more cost effective options. The new model is being considered in September 2020.

*WR4: Number of telephone calls through to Contact Islington Call Centre*

- 6.3 The Call Centre consists of 60 office-based staff and managers working across two sites, which includes the site in Ashton Manchester. The call centre moved quickly from an office-based operation to all staff working from home, while providing a full service to customers and maintaining targets. During Q1, resources assigned to We Are Islington, handled an additional 5932 calls and 3555 emails; these volumes are excluded from the reported volumes. This is a massive achievement by the call centre that demonstrates the versatility and collaborative working. Call volume may have fallen faster than profiled given we have been unable to issue any council tax and business rates summons notices.

*WR5: Number of online transactions*

- 6.4 The first two/three months of C-19, impacted residents and in a number of cases resulted in less need for services offered online. Decrease in council tax billing and recovery actions, less people moving within and around the borough, limited parking enforcement, and also reduced need for permits and vouchers.

The ability of services which provide an online offer to return to normal will affect actions that can be taken to get back on track. We will continue through our call centre to use sign posting techniques to drive take up. If the customer centre moves to appointment only this may help increase activity. We are already seeing an increase in online activity for visitor vouchers via RingGo; this will reduce the need for purchasing paper voucher via My eAccount; which is a positive impact. However in terms of like for like reporting we will see a further fall against the target, as RingGo volumes sit outside the reporting suite.

With decisions made on the re-opening of the customer centre and some assertive channel shift, we may be able to increase the overall online transaction numbers into Q3. This however is still subject to events surrounding C-19 over the autumn winter period and the return to normal service delivery. There are also no new online/ self-service channels scheduled for 20/21.

*WR6: Percentage of calls into Contact Islington handled appropriately*

- 6.5 Target was met.

**7. Quarter 1 performance update – Make sure our workforce is diverse, highly skilled and highly motivated**

- 7.1 Key performance indicators relating to objective:

PI No.	Indicator	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Target	Q1 2020/21	On target?	Q1 last year	Better than Q1 last year?
WR7	Average number of days lost per year through sickness absence per employee (in previous 12-month rolling period)	8.60	8.30	<b>7.5</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>No</b>	8.0	<b>No</b>
WR8	Percentage of workforce who are agency staff (by headcount)	11.5%	11.5%	<b>10%</b>	<b>11.7%</b>	<b>No</b>	12.8%	<b>Yes</b>
WR9	Percentage of BME staff within the top 5% of earners	20.1%	20.9%	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>16.67%</b>	<b>No</b>	20.2%	<b>No</b>
WR10	Percentage of disabled staff within the top 5% of earners	6.0%	5.8%	<b>6.3%</b>	<b>6.77%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	5.81%	<b>Yes</b>

*WR7: Average number of days lost per year through sickness absence per employee (in previous 12-month rolling period)*

- 7.2 Average working days lost remain constant with no change at 8.3 per employee. Long term sickness was high during the reporting period and the reasons relate cancer and other serious or chronic conditions which are more challenging to manage.

Directorate Management Teams receive monthly reports on all staff who hit the short (8 days) and long term (20 days) targets which require action under the Sickness Absence Procedure. HR Business Partners present data reports highlighting actions taken against each employee according to the stage of the process and any trends or issues identified.

These are discussed with Service Directors tasked to take forward actions agreed according to the nature and duration of the absences and to reflect any other underlying issues (e.g sickness absence as a result of action under another (e.g Disciplinary) HR procedure. The majority of long term sickness cases have been resolved however until these 'drop off' the rolling 12 month period they will continue to be counted against the corporate target.

A new and more robust Sickness Absence Procedure was introduced in February 2020.

A new COVID return to work form is now in place separate from the standard return to work from sickness absence form.

The MyHR system was upgraded in July which improves the ease in which managers can record absences. Further planned upgrades to the HR Dashboard and reporting tools over the next six months will allow managers direct access to absence data and alerts for staff whose pay is due to reduce to half or nil pay due to the nature and duration of their absence.

HR is working with the OH provider to improve the timely management of ill health retirement cases as this is also a factor affecting the duration of long term cases.

It is difficult to assess if and when sickness absences will reduce to the 7.5 target set as this is the responsibility of line managers with support from HR. In response to the Covid pandemic a new Staff Wellbeing Hub and regular staff wellbeing surveys have been implemented. With approx 80% of staff working from home with no short term prospect of a return to work locations HR has seen some evidence of a reduction in some types of absences, however with the introduction of new COVID sickness categories and continued long term absences as would be expected with an ageing and manual workforce it is too early to understand and undertake detailed data analysis. Sickness absence will continue to be monitored by HR Business Partners and Directorate Management Teams on a monthly and quarterly basis.

*WR8: Percentage of workforce who are agency staff (by headcount)*

- 7.3 As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak the numbers of agency staff engaged increased in the first quarter, albeit from a high starting point to provide cover for staff that were required to attend work as they could not carry out their duties from home but could not attend due to shielding. Departments have been tasked to reduce their number of agency workers through temp to perm recruitment exercises and through recruitment to vacant posts. Temp to perm activity and recruitment activity has risen since June and the headcount figures for July are the lowest in the last 12 months. The target of 10% on headcount is challenging due to the number of in- house services that the Council operates compared to other Councils. To achieve 10% would mean a reduction of 88 agency workers by headcount. Based on reductions seen in the last month, the target could be achievable by the beginning of the third quarter of 20/21 based on a sustained reduction of 20 per month.

*WR9: Percentage of BME staff within the top 5% of earners*

- 7.4 The percentage has fallen slightly in the past year to 19.5% of BME staff within the top 5% of earners. Due to small number of staff in the top 5% it only requires a few BME staff to leave and not be directly replaced with BME staff to lower this percentage rate. The situation in the middle and upper quartiles is more positive in this respect however improving the rates in the top quartile remains an absolute priority. The picture in Islington is consistent with that across London, however there is a robust plan in place as part of the Challenging Inequalities work stream in conjunction with HR to put into place numerous actions to rectify this situation including improvements to our recruitment processes, high profile messaging to managers and the creation of leadership and management programmes. To lead these actions we have recently made new senior appointments in Strategy & Change and within HR to lead on this and related equalities measures.

*WR10: Percentage of disabled staff within the top 5% of earners*

- 7.5 A common issue in reporting on the number of disabled staff is that employees do not always declare a disability. The Resourcing Team have encouraged new starters to complete disability information and we now have a more complete data set for new starters. For existing staff, there

have been regular messages on Izzi to remind staff of the importance of updating equalities information through MYHR, the latest being published in July 2020. HR will continue to remind staff to complete this information on MYHR. Improvements to MYHR have also made equalities information more visible to staff and we hope that this will increase the number of staff that record their disability status.

## **8. Quarter 1 performance update – Be open and accountable**

- 8.1 Key performance indicators relating to objective:

PI No.	Indicator	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Target	Q1 2020/21	On target?	Q1 last year	Better than Q1 last year?
WR11	Percentage of new voter registrations processed	New indicator	New indicator	<b>98%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>Yes</b>	New indicator	<b>N/A</b>

*WR11: Percentage of new voter registrations processed*

- 8.2 We surpassed our target and maintained our 100% record even with two out of four team members redeployed to the BECC for the first quarter of this year.

## **9. Implications**

### **Financial implications:**

- 9.1 The cost of providing resources to monitor performance is met within each service's core budget.

### **Legal Implications:**

- 9.2 There are no legal duties upon local authorities to set targets or monitor performance. However, these enable us to strive for continuous improvement.

### **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:**

- 9.3 There are no environmental impact arising from monitoring performance.

### **Resident Impact Assessment:**

- 9.4 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010).

- 9.5 The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a clear set of priorities, underpinned by a set of firm commitments and actions that we will take over the next four years to work towards our vision of a Fairer Islington. The corporate performance indicators are one of a number of tools that enable us to ensure that we are making progress in delivering key priorities whilst maintaining good quality services.

**Signed by:**



[Corporate Director and Exec Member]

Date: 8 September 2020

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