

Report of:

| Meeting of: | Date: | Ward(s): |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee | 28 January 2021 | All |

| Delete as appropriate | Exempt | Non-exempt |
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| | | |

SUBJECT: Quarter 2 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 2 (Jul – Sep '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 2 (Jul – Sep '20) 2020/21 for measures relating to Well Run Council.

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 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 ensures the organisation runs effectively and covers core council services such as Finance, Digital Services, Human Resources and Customer Services.

4. Outstanding issues and queries from Q1 update, presented on 17 September 2020

4.1 The Committee discussed the Quarter 1 (Apr – Jun '20) 2020/21 performance report on 17 September 2020. There were no outstanding queries raised by the Committee.

5. Quarter 2 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 | Q2 2020/21 | On target? | Q2 last year | Better than Q2 last year? |
|--------|--|----------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| WR1 | Percentage of council tax collected in year | 96.1% | 96.2% | 49.1% (profiled) | 47.4% | No | 49.1% | No |
| WR2 | Percentage of business rates collected in year | 96.6% | 96.7% | 52.8% (profiled) | 46.7% | No | 52.8% | No |

WR1: Percentage of council tax collected in year

WR2: Percentage of business rates collected in a year

5.2 The socio-economic consequences of Covid-19 have significantly impacted the income of many council tax and business rates tax payers.

5.3 The first national lockdown commenced on 23 March 2020, just a week before the annual billing year (1 April '20 - 31 March '21). Through lost jobs or reduced income (furloughs), many residents and households are struggling to keep up with instalments. The loss of business income (resulting from closures, reduced demand and/or reduced capacity) means many businesses are also unable to keep up with their instalments.

5.4 The action we can take is limited by a new operational constraint. In order to enforce the collection of these taxes, the debt needs to be confirmed by the magistrates' court. Under normal circumstances, the court would summon the debtor and if there was no appropriate reason for not paying the tax, the court would confirm the debt was legally enforceable by issuing a 'liability order'. Without this the council is unable to enforce the debt, apply for an attachment of earnings or attachment of benefits or use enforcement agents.

- 5.5 Our magistrates' court have suspended council tax and business rates summons work. The court will not re-open for business rates liability orders this financial year – Spring 2021 would be the earliest date. There is a possibility that the Courts will open to hear council tax cases in February or March 2021. However, it would be too late for liability orders issued late in 2020/21 to have a substantial impact on council tax collection. Our ability to collect additional monies so late in the year is particularly impeded where residents and their households are still struggling with the ongoing reduction to their incomes caused by the Covid-19. It is important to note that all the magistrates' courts in London have adopted the same position (so all the London Boroughs have been affected in the same way).
- 5.6 Without any legal authority to enforce the debts owed to us, we have been making regular contact with those debtors for whom we have active contact details* with reminders to pay their instalments and warning of the long-term problems from letting arrears build up. We are using these regular contact methods to encourage debtors to maintain repayments, but these 'encouragements' do not have the same persuasive power or force as the magistrate-backed enforcement methods.
- 5.7 *Debtors are only obliged to provide us with postal addresses (not email addresses or phone numbers). Although we also write to our debtors, we've received significant numbers of returned mail from the business addresses on file. We are presuming they have closed but without contact it is difficult to know the position in every instance.
- 5.8 In addition to the statutory reminders and final notices issued, the team have made a further 47,000 contacts to date, by phone, text and email in attempts to encourage or 'nudge' charge payers to make a payment or keep up with their instalments.
- 5.9 As is the case with all London boroughs, we will not be back on track for 2020/21. After Q1 the Government published national collection rate statistics for all the English local authorities and Islington has experienced the same reduction as the average for the whole of England. With the significant impact of Covid-19, the earliest we are likely to be back on track will be 2022/23.

6. Quarter 2 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 | Q2 2020/21 | On target? | Q2 last year | Better than Q1 last year? |
|--------|---|----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| WR3 | Number of visits in person at Customer Contact Centre | 131,500 | 107,440 | TBC | TBC | TBC | 53,548 | TBC |
| WR4 | Number of telephone calls through Contact Islington Call Centre | 396,211 | 344,707 | 160,466 (profiled) | 155,328 (profiled) | Yes | 177,719 | Yes |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---------|---------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------|--------|------------|
| WR5 | Number of online transactions | 170,156 | 152,883 | 80,264 (profiled) | 93,878 (profiled) | Yes | 79,904 | Yes |
| WR6 | Percentage of calls into Contact Islington handled appropriately | 98.5% | 97.25% | 98% | 98% | Yes | 96.67% | Yes |

WR3: Number of visits in person at Customer Contact Centre

6.2 Since March 2020 the Customer Centre has remained open for emergencies only, planned appointments and the use of computers and courtesy phones. This approach has enabled a continued service provision to those residents who are most in need.

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

6.3 There has been no change to telephone provision or call volumes, which is mainly due to restrictions on recovery action, billing and notices during Q2. Staff resource continues to handle incoming calls to the We Are Islington telephone line and emails.

WR5: Number of online transactions

6.4 Although Covid-19 restrictions eased during Q2, main drivers for online transactions did not change or increase. However, increases in the use of 1) Parking – New Resident Permit; and 2) Council Tax – Moving online forms did increase slightly, as residents have started to move in and out of the borough.

WR6: Percentage of calls into Contact Islington handled appropriately

6.5 We continue to meet this target.

7. Quarter 2 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 | Q2 2020/21 | On target? | Q2 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 | 7.5 | 8.5 | No | 7.90 | No |
| WR8 | Percentage of workforce who are | 11.5% | 11.5% | 10% | 10.7% | No | 12.4% | Yes |

| | | | | | | | | |
|------|---|-------|-------|--------------|---------------|------------|-------|------------|
| | agency staff (by headcount) | | | | | | | |
| WR9 | Percentage of BME staff within the top 5% of earners | 20.1% | 20.9% | 21.7% | 15.86% | No | 20.4% | No |
| WR10 | Percentage of disabled staff within the top 5% of earners | 6.0% | 5.8% | 6.3% | 7.59% | Yes | 6.28% | Yes |

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

7.2 A report on Sickness Absence for quarters 1 & 2 was submitted to PPS Committee on 3 December 2020. At that time HR reported that average number of days sick per employee was 8.5 days, marginally down on the 8.6 days per employee reported for the same period 2018/19. Removing Covid-19 related sickness reduces this to 3.12 days per employee. This reflects a picture which is common across London boroughs in that sickness absence is generally on the decrease to reflect the higher incidences of staff working from home and who are able to manage minor ailments whilst doing so.

7.3 The overall trend is therefore downwards, however long term sickness remains an area of concern and is the biggest factor, along with an ageing workforce, that impacts greater improvement in this area. A full analysis of the data has already been reported to Committee.

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

7.4 Currently, agency workers comprise 10.7% of the workforce, which places Islington in the first quartile (top performance) for all London boroughs. The median for London is 13%. As set out in the December report to this committee, spend on agency workers was reducing at the point of Q2 reporting. However, to address Covid-19, there had been an increased need for agency workers from April - July '20, meaning numbers and expenditure had increased compared to the same period in the previous year. It is worth noting that since the December Committee report, the subsequent urgent set up of Lateral Flow Testing sites to support the Covid-19 response has necessitated the use of additional agency workers and will mostly be seen in Q4 data.

WR9: Percentage of BAME staff within the top 5% of earners

7.5 The percentage of BAME staff within the top 5% of earners has fallen slightly in the past year. As reported previously, due to the small number of staff in the top 5% it only requires a few BAME staff to leave and not be directly replaced with other BAME staff to lower this percentage rate. The situation in the middle and upper quartiles is more positive but improving the rates in the top quartile remains our priority, in particular analysing the data to understand where there is lower representation from e.g. Black or Asian colleagues specifically. The picture in Islington is consistent with that across London and we are actively engaged with London-wide working groups in tackling race inequality to ensure we are joining up with other authorities where appropriate and learning

from best practice. Work is underway as part of the Challenging Inequality programme to introduce various initiatives to address this situation, including diverse panels, improvements to our recruitment processes and training, a modernised approach to learning and careers, the creation of leadership and management programmes and new mentoring schemes. The SLT restructure presents an opportunity to attract and promote diverse talent into vacant senior roles.

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

- 7.5 This is now above target and improving. The Resourcing Team have encouraged new starters to complete disability information and for existing staff, there have been regular messages to remind staff of the importance of updating equalities information, both of which have addressed issues of underreporting.

8. Quarter 2 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 | Q2 2020/21 | On target? | Q1 last year | Better than Q1 last year? |
|--------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------|------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| WR11 | Percentage of new voter registrations processed | New indicator | New indicator | 98% | 100% | Yes | New indicator | N/A |

WR11: Percentage of new voter registrations processed

- 8.2 We maintained our 100% record.

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:



Dave Hodgkinson (Corporate Director Resources)
and Cllr. Satnam Gill (Executive Member Finance
& Performance)

Report Author:
Tel:
Email:

Ayesha Hakim Rahman
Ex. 2340
ayesha.hakimrahman@islington.gov.uk