

Report of:

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee	25 March 2021	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt

SUBJECT: Quarter 3 Performance Report: Well Run Council
1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Corporate performance indicators help monitor progress against outcomes in the council's Corporate Plan. Progress on key performance measures are reported to Scrutiny Committees on a quarterly basis. This ensures accountability to residents and enables challenge where necessary.
- 1.2 The Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee has responsibility for the Well Run Council outcome area. This report sets out Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec '20) progress against this.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note performance against Quarter 3 (Oct – Dec '20) indicators for Well Run Council.

3. Background

- 3.1 Performance indicators track progress against seven outcome areas in the council's Corporate Plan. Performance is monitored internally through Department Management Teams and Corporate Management Board and externally through Scrutiny Committees.
- 3.2 The Policy & Performance Scrutiny Committee is responsible for monitoring and challenging performance for the Well Run Council outcome area. This ensures effective council management through core services including Finance, Digital Services, Human Resources and Customer Services.

4. Outstanding issues and queries from Q2 update, presented on 28 January 2021

4.1 The Committee raised two queries on the Quarter 2 (Jul – Sep '20) performance report, presented on 28 January 2021:

1. What is the council tax collection rate split between Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) and non-CTRS claimants?

4.2 Cash receipts from CTRS claimants are lower in 2020/21 when compared to last year. However, the system treats the £150.00 reduction like a discount, which reduces the amount due. Therefore the collection percentage shows as up by 13%.

4.3

Q3 Council Tax Split between CTRS & Non-CTRS	CTRS		Non-CTRS		Total CTAX	
	Q3 Last Year	Q3 2020/ 21	Q3 Last Year	Q3 2020/2 1	Q3 Last Year	Q3 2020/2 1
Net Debit	£6.884m	£4.419m	£116.157 m	£121.842 m	£123.041 m	£126.261 m
Net Receipts / Payments	£4.934m	£3.741m	£84.251m	£85.129m	£89.184m	£88.871m
Amount Left to Collect	£1.951m	£0.678m	£31.906m	£36.713m	£33.857m	£37.391m
Percentage of Council Tax collected in year	71.7%	84.7%	72.5%	69.9%	72.5%	70.4%
		+13%		-2.6%		-2.1%

Does the council issue court summons for outstanding debt?

4.4 Ordinarily the council does issue summons and obtain liability orders for outstanding debt. However, from March 2020 (Covid-19) to February 2021 Magistrates' Courts closed themselves to summons requests and the award of liability orders. This suspended our ability to enforce tax collection for ten months but we continued to encourage debtors to pay instalments and avoid the consequences of arrears.

4.5 Since reopening in February 2021, Magistrates' Courts requested reduced summons in February and March to help manage demand during lockdown. We expect volumes to return to normal rates from 2021/22.

4.6 Usually, if residents do not pay their council tax after receiving a statutory reminder or final notice, the council uses nudge techniques (SMS / letters / calls / emails) as additional reminders. If ignored, the council issues a summons, which is a request for the court to grant a liability order against the resident.

4.7 A liability order gives the council a number of options to secure payment of outstanding debt:

- Attachment of earnings: regular deductions from wages by the resident's employer.
- Control of goods: enforcement agents (formally bailiffs) may seize goods and sell them at auction.
- Means hearing / testing: residents can be ordered to pay a weekly/monthly sum (subject to their means) or be sentenced to up to three months in prison (if Court deems resident 'wilfully refusing' to pay).
- Attachment of benefit: weekly deductions from income support.
- Insolvency: bankruptcy proceedings may be instigated against resident.

- Charging Order: could be set against the property and may result in a forced sale.

4.8 In line with Member preference, we only use enforcement agents as a last resort and never for CTRS residents. CTRS claimants also have court costs removed to prevent an increase in debt. With enforcement agents also subject to lockdown restrictions, their recent effectiveness has been limited.

4.9 The most common types of council support in avoiding debt are CTRS or residents agreeing payment plans.

5. Quarter 3 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	Q3 2020/21	On target?	Q3 last year	Better than Q3 last year?
WR1	Percentage of council tax collected in a year	96.1%	96.2%	72.5% (profiled)	70.4%	No	72.5%	No
WR2	Percentage of business rated collected in a year	96.6%	96.7%	76.1% (profiled)	71.6%	No	76.1%	No

WR1: Percentage of council tax collected in a year

WR2: Percentage of business rates collected in a year

5.2 Both residents (through lost jobs or reduced income) and businesses (through closures, reduced demand and /or capacity) have struggled to keep up with instalments. Financial support to residents and businesses has helped many through these difficult times.

5.3 In line with the other London Boroughs we have experienced far lower collection rates since the pandemic. Performance in January and February shows that 2020/21 collection is likely to be 3% less for council tax and 8.5% less for business rates against (pre-Covid) targets.

6. Quarter 3 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	Q3 2020/21	On target?	Q3 last year	Better than Q3 last year?
WR3	Number of visits in person at Customer Contact Centre	131,500	107,440	N/A	N/A	N/A	82,589	N/A

WR4	Number of telephone calls through Contact Islington Call Centre	396,211	344,707	240,698 (profiled)	231,875	Yes	262,226	Yes
WR5	Number of online transactions	170,156	152,883	120,395 (profiled)	142,758 (profiled)	Yes	118,911	Yes
WR6	Percentage of calls into Contact Islington handled appropriately	98%	97%	98%	98%	Yes	97%	Yes

WR3: Number of visits in person at Customer Contact Centre

- 6.2 The Customer Centre has operated as an 'emergency only' service since March 2020. Numbers are minimal and there are no direct comparisons between this and previous years.

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

- 6.3 There has been no significant change to call numbers. This has calls have remained on target while staff continue to support incoming calls to We Are Islington. Note that We Are Islington calls are not reflected in these figures.

WR5: Number of online transactions

- 6.4 In September 2020, Single Person Discount reminders proactively instructed residents to use the My eAccount online form. Wider online transactions remain consistent.
- 6.5 The volume of transactions through our external provider RingGo is not reflected in these figures as this service it outsourced. However, numbers continue to increase, with 29,616 eVoucher transactions in October 2020 and 1,622 permission to park transactions in September 2020. These are both the highest so far and have significantly reduced manual intervention.

WR6: Percentage of calls into Contact Islington handled appropriately

- 6.6 Performance remains acceptable.

7. Quarter 3 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	Q3 2020/21	On target?	Q3 last year	Better than Q3 last year?
WR7	Average number of days lost per year through sickness absence per employee (in previous 12-month rolling period)	8.6	8.3	7.5	8.4	No	8.3	No

WR8	Percentage of workforce who are agency staff (by headcount)	11.5%	11.5%	10.0%	11.4%	No	11.5%	Yes
WR9	Percentage of BAME staff within the top 5% of earners	20.1%	20.9%	21.7%	22.0%	Yes	20.9%	Yes
WR10	Percentage of disabled staff within the top 5% of earners	6.0%	5.8%	6.3%	7.8%	Yes	5.8%	Yes

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

- 7.2 Sickness absence has reduced marginally since Q2. This reflects a picture common across London boroughs, with sickness absence decreasing to reflect the higher incidences of staff working from home and able to manage minor ailments. Removing Covid-19 related sickness reduces this to 6.74 days per employee.
- 7.3 Long-term sickness remains the main driver of sickness absence figures, with mental health and musculo-skeletal conditions being the most common causes. We continue to support staff with access to wellbeing support and homeworking equipment.

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

- 7.4 Agency workers comprise 11.4% of the workforce by headcount, which places Islington in the first quartile (top performance) for all London boroughs. The slight increase since Q2 results from the rapid set-up via agency staffing of the Lateral Flow Testing sites as part of the council's Covid-19 response. This increase will mainly be reflected in Q4 data before figures start to reduce again.
- 7.5 The median for London is 13% of FTE which is the formula used for benchmarking rather than headcount. Agency workers comprise 10.03% of the workforce by FTE.

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

- 7.6 BAME staff within the top 5% of earners is above target. In the Q2 report, there was an error where some minority ethnic groups were not accounted for in the data presented, but this has now been resolved. The last reported median for London was 17%. 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.
- 7.7 As part of the Challenging Inequality programme various initiatives are being introduced to focus on this target, including:
- diverse panels;
 - improvements to our recruitment processes;
 - a modernised approach to learning and careers;
 - the creation of leadership and management programmes; and
 - new mentoring schemes.

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

7.8 The target has been achieved in this quarter.

8. Quarter 3 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?	Q3 last year	Better than Q3 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 The target has been achieved in this quarter.

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 In relation to the Best Value duty (1) the Council must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, (2) functions are the sum total of the authority's activities, and (3) regard must be had to the 3Es, economy, efficiency and effectiveness (Local Government Act 1999).

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 clear priorities, underpinned by firm commitments and actions that we will take to work towards our Fairer Islington vision. The corporate performance indicators are one of many tools that enable us to ensure 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)

Date: 17 March 2021

Report Author: Ayesha Hakim Rahman
Tel: Ex. 2340
Email: ayesha.hakimrahman@islington.gov.uk