

To: The Executive
19 March 2024

Council Plan Overview Report **Chief Executive**

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Executive of the performance of the council over the third quarter of the 2023/24 financial year (October - December 2023).

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the performance of the council over the period from October to December 2023 highlighted in the Overview Report in Annex A, this includes any recommendations made by Overview and Scrutiny in Annex B.**

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To brief the Executive on the council's performance, highlighting key areas, so that appropriate action can be taken if needed.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 None applicable.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The council's performance management framework requires the preparation of Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs) by each department. These QSRs provide an update of progress and performance against departmental Service Plans and are published on the intranet.
- 5.2 The QSRs have been combined into the Council Plan Overview Report (CPOR), which brings together the progress and performance of the council as a whole. The CPOR enables the Corporate Management Team and the Councillors to review performance, highlight any exceptions and note any remedial actions that may be necessary, either from under-performing or over-performing services, across the range of council activities.
- 5.3 The current CPOR report reflects the outgoing Council Plan (2019-2023). Reporting on the new plan will commence for Q1 (April – June) 2024.
- 5.4 The CPOR performance information will also be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny. This process enables all Members to be involved in performance management. Any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Commission will be included within the report for the Executive to consider.
- 5.5 The CPOR for the third quarter (October-December 2023) is shown in Annex A.
- 5.6 Key achievements during quarter three have included:
- Adoption of the Council Plan and Business Change programme for 2024-2027 with unanimous cross-party support.
 - Children in Care service maintained an 'Outstanding' rating following a focused visit from Ofsted in November.

- The first submission of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan under the Safety Valve Programme was made.
- Several public consultations were open for residents to have their say on, including the local transport plan; housing allocation; local plan; economic strategy; sports & leisure; and the draft council budget.
- In response to the Climate Change Emergency Motion, a Joint Climate Action Board has been established, overseeing ten working groups. The inaugural meeting of the Board was held in October.
- Social Prescribers & Happiness Hub collaborated for World Mental Health Day & delivered a successful 'Stay Connected this Winter' programme.

5.7 There also continue to be challenges the council is working to resolve:

- The focus on managing costs within the original budget remains a priority. Work on the 2023/24 budget continues and actions have led to an improved position since Q2.
- In addition, significant financial pressures were identified through the safety valve programme. A Management Plan has been in development to submit in Q4.
- The complexity of cases across numerous service areas in adult and children's social care is increasing and putting pressure on teams. Service delivery reviews and streamlining are helping to provide required support.
- Despite some recruitment success in Q3, difficulties remain in recruiting to roles in social care, IT, building surveyors, and engineering. This is a focus of the new business change programme, to commence in the next financial year.

6 Advice Received from Statutory and Other Officers

Legal Advice

6.1 There are no specific legal implications relevant to this report.

Financial Advice

6.2 There are no specific finance implications relevant to this report. Key budget information is included in section two.

Other Consultation Responses

6.3 None specific

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 This report does not require an equalities impact assessment as this is a management reporting tool.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 There are no specific strategic risk implications relevant to this report.

Climate Change and Ecological Implications

6.6 The recommendations in Section 2 above are expected to have no impact on emissions of CO₂ or ecological considerations. The reasons the Council believes that this will have no impact are that this is a management reporting tool.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

6.7 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications relevant to this report.

Background Papers

Contact for further information

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Annex A – Council Plan Overview Report

[Attached as a separate document]

Annex B – Overview and Scrutiny Commission review

Date of Overview and Scrutiny Commission

29 February 2024

Having reviewed the report, the Commission would recommend to the Executive the following area of focus, when reviewing the Quarter 3 report:

- For Executive to consider how partners ensure there is sufficient capacity and timeliness in keeping to the 20-week timescale for agreeing Education, Health and Care Plans?

Summary of questions and answers during the Commission meeting:

Questions were as follows:

Q - Page 60 – What has been done to address the rising number of absences in the workforce attributed to stress?

A – This data was directly related to the People Directorate, with staff in client facing roles, who work in a challenging environment. A number of support mechanisms were open to staff, such as free counselling and return to work support for individuals, which had been taken up by staff.

Q - How were the Council consulting with the public about updates to the SEND service?

A – The Council recently agreed a new SEND Strategy which was out to consultation. The Council was also consulting with the Parent/Carer Forum and listening to the children who used the service.

Q – How was the council supporting Welfare Officers to assist parents in getting children to school?

A – The Council could support and steer but schools were at the forefront of working with parents regarding children's school attendance.

Q – Does the Council have a strong and resilient staff cohort to manage priorities against SEND objectives?

A – There had been an increase in agency staff to meet demand and the directorate was in the process of restructuring to maintain permanent staff. It was considered there was better capacity than last year but the Chief Executive acknowledged there was still a lot of work to do in this area.

Q – What was the capacity in undertaking consultation on SEND activity?

A – Consultation required capacity and the Council were drawing in other mechanisms, such as IT, to assist with consultation and number of co-production opportunities were being increased.

Q – Page 51, indicator L139 – Why were 50% of maintained schools not good or better?

A – There were two maintained secondary schools in the borough, one of which was the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), and was rated inadequate. It was noted the PRU was in the process of closing.

Q – Page 51, indicator L402 - Why was the percentage of care leavers NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) RAG rated red?

A – Out of 26 care leavers considered NEET, 14 were unable to be in education, employment or training due to illness or disability. Three others were due to pregnancy or parenting responsibilities. In the last quarter the number of NEET were 18 and this quarter it was reduced to nine. It was also noted indicator L405 registered 95% of care leavers were in touch with the Council, which was thought to be positive.

Q – Page 65, section 5 under section 'Community Health' How was the Average Happiness Rating gauged?

A – This indicator was drawn from Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, collected nationally and officers were unaware how it was gauged.

Councillors thanked the Chief Executive and noted it had been a solid performance during Quarter 3.