

From: Roger Gough – Leader of the Council
Amanda Beer – Chief Executive Officer

To: County Council – 18 July 2024

Decision No: n/a

Subject: **Year-end Quarterly Performance Report, 2023/24**

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This is the Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) for Kent County Council covering the last quarter of the financial year ending 31 March 2024. The report presents information for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and activity measures across the Council Directorates, and a summary of the Corporate Risk Register

Of the 38 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) contained within the QPR, 17 achieved target (Green), 11 achieved or exceeded the floor standard but did not meet target (Amber). 10 KPIs did not meet the floor standard (Red).

Recommendation(s): The County Council is asked to NOTE the Performance Report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) is a key mechanism within the Performance Management Framework for the Council. The report summary for Quarter 4, 2023/24 is attached at Appendix 1, and includes data up to the end of March 2024.
- 1.2. The 2023/24 QPR includes 38 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) where results are assessed against Targets set at the start of the financial year. This is one more KPI than the previous year when there was 37.

2. Quarter 4 Performance Report

- 2.1. Results for KPIs compared to Target are assessed using a Red/Amber/Green (RAG) status.
- 2.2. Of the 38 KPIs included in the report, the latest RAG status are as follows:
 - 17 are rated Green (two more than the same Quarter last year) - the target was achieved or exceeded.
 - 11 are rated Amber (one more than the same Quarter last year) – performance achieved or exceeded the expected floor standard but did not meet target.
 - 10 are rated Red (two fewer than the same Quarter last year) – performance did not meet the expected floor standard.

2.3. The 10 indicators where the RAG rating is Red, are in:

- Customer Services
 - Percentage of complaints responded to within timescale
- Governance and Law
 - Percentage of Freedom of Information Act (Fol) requests completed within 20 working days
 - Percentage of Data Protection Act (DPA) Subject Access requests completed within statutory timescales
- Environment and Transport
 - Percentage of satisfied customers with routine Highways service delivery, 100 call back survey
- Children, Young People and Education
 - Percentage of Education, Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks
 - Percentage of pupils (with EHCP's) being placed in independent or out of county special schools
 - Percentage of case holding posts filled by permanent qualified social workers
 - Percentage of foster care placements which are in-house or with relatives and friends (excluding UASC)
- Adult Social Care
 - Percentage of new Care Needs Assessments delivered within 28 days
 - Long Term support needs of older people (65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes.

2.4. With regards to Direction of Travel, which identifies any significant trend over the past 6 quarters, nine indicators show a positive trend (seven more than the same Quarter last year), 20 are stable or with no clear trend (four fewer than the same Quarter last year), and nine are showing a negative trend (two fewer than the same Quarter last year).

3. Commentary

3.1. This report shows some improvement in the position reported last year. Most notably, with two additional Green KPIs, two fewer Reds, and seven more indicators with a positive Direction of Travel. That being said, there are still 10 KPIs rated Red, and eight of these were also Red rated last year, with all Directorates having at least one.

- 3.2. The performance indicators giving greatest concern remain closely aligned with the services where the financial strains and demand are most acute (particularly Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, children in care placements and Adult Social Care). Initial requests for Education Health & Care Plans continue on an upward trajectory. In Adult Social Care, the numbers of people requiring ongoing support continues to increase, especially those with a mental health need, and safeguarding enquiries also continue to increase. At the end of Quarter 4, open Highways enquiries were at the highest level we've seen for at least the last 10 years; and there was the highest annual number of Freedom of Information requests since 2018/19.
- 3.3. As reported last year, it is important to note that this demand-led pressure on services in Kent continues to be reported by many upper tier local authorities across the country. The long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on service demand continues, there is a knock-on effect on adult social care services as NHS providers struggle to meet demand and catch up with significant waiting lists, whilst the social care provider market continues to be fragile given workforce and inflationary pressures. The need for the Government to implement a sustainable funding model for adult social care is imperative if all local authority services are not to face ongoing financial and capacity pressures. Weather related demand and market pressures are impacting on the quality of the road network at national level.
- 3.4. Moving back to the situation in Kent, it is important to consider in more detail the 10 KPIs rated as Red. Many of these indicators are varied in both their nature and the severity of their situation in terms of how far below floor standard they are and in their direction of travel (whether they are improving, worsening or stable / no clear trend). It is useful to view these in three categories: those well below floor standard, those moderately below floor standard, and those slightly below floor standard¹.
- 3.5. Those well below floor standard:
- Percentage of complaints responded to within timescale (stable / no clear trend)
 - Percentage of Subject Access Requests completed within timescale (worsening trend)
 - Percentage of Freedom Information Requests completed within 20 working days (stable / no clear trend)

These first three can be seen as Corporate KPIs, in that they involve different Directorates working with the central Customer Services team. The level of demand and complexity of some of these requests, and the other concurrent pressures on services has in-part led to continuing issues in meeting response times. There is also an issue of dealing with a backlog of older cases, meaning it is not always possible to prioritise new requests over those which have been waiting longer which also impacts on KPI performance.

¹ Well below floor standard defined as over 10% of value or over 10 percentage points below. Moderately below is between 5% - 10%, or 5 to 10 percentage points below floor standard. Slightly below is less than 5% of value or less than 5 percentage points below.

- Percentage of Education, Health and Care plans issued within 20 weeks (worsening trend)

Similar to the above KPIs, there is a focus on working through a very large backlog, which has now reduced very significantly. The number of EHCPs issued during Quarter 4 was well over twice the number issued in the same period the previous year, as the backlog is dealt with. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the number of open assessments that are already beyond the 20-week timescale, giving optimism that a corner has been turned and that performance will improve during 2024/25.

3.6. Those moderately below floor standard:

- Long Term support needs of older people (65 and over) met by admission to residential and nursing care homes (worsening trend)

Adult Social Care has seen more people needing to start a long-term placement in a care home, either from hospital discharge pathways or following increased needs. Practice Assurance Panels were introduced in March 2024 to ensure all opportunities for support in the community are considered and exhausted before people enter long term support in care homes.

- Percentage of new Care Needs Assessments delivered within 28 days (stable / no clear trend)

Delivering timely and high quality Care Needs Assessments is a key driver and priority for adult social care, and is included in all targeted work and action plans across adult social care. Following service redesign, all Area Operational Managers are now in post in the four areas adding capacity for managing performance.

3.7. Those slightly below floor standard:

- Percentage of customers satisfied with routine Highways service delivery (stable / no clear trend)

This KPI has moved above and below floor standard during the year. Negative feedback from customers included dissatisfaction at the time it took for issues, such as drainage problems and pothole repairs, to be resolved. The high demand for work as mentioned earlier has no doubt contributed to the recent performance level.

- Percentage of pupils (with EHCP's) being placed in independent or out of county special schools (stable / no clear trend)

The SEND service continues to aim at supporting more children with EHCPs in mainstream settings, and ensuring maintained special school places are targeted at those children with the most complex needs.

- Percentage of foster care placements which are in-house or with relatives and friends, excluding UASC (stable / no clear trend)

Performance against this measure is impacted by extended timescales of care proceedings and the availability of in-house foster placements, which is a national issue. Various actions are being taken to address this, including the development of a national recruitment hub, a scheme to support existing foster carers, and improved support for all types of kinship carers.

- Percentage of case holding posts filled by permanent qualified social workers (worsening trend)

Management actions being taken regarding the recruitment and retention of Social Workers include: a focus on reducing caseloads and administrative burdens to assist with the retention of social workers; participation in the Frontline programme which funded 12 Social Work Apprenticeships along with Kent's own Step-up to Social Work Apprenticeship programme.

3.8. In addition to the Red KPIs, there are also some Amber rated KPIs that are close to their floor standard with a worsening direction of travel. As a result, responsible Directors are considering the appropriate interventions necessary to ensure performance against these indicators does not deteriorate further so they do not become rated as Red. These are:

- Percentage of pupils permanently excluded from school
- Number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system

3.9. Finally, and for balance, it is worth noting the many positive aspects in the report. Callers' satisfaction with Contact Point advisors has met or exceeded target for over a year. The number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty (NUE) achieved the highest 12-month performance for over 2 years. Visits to and issues from Kent libraries continue to exceed the levels seen last year. Only 0.1% of our waste went to landfill over the last 12 months and our Greenhouse Gas emissions continue on a downward trend towards net zero. Over 90% of our schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. Repeat child protection plans are in the middle of the target-met range. Short-term bed use in Adult Social Care is now the lowest since mid-2021; and finally, the number of eligible people receiving an NHS Health Check continues to increase.

4. Recommendation(s)

The County Council is asked to NOTE the Performance Report.

5. Contact details

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