

Council Performance & Budget Summary

October 2020



The performance summary outlines trends in information the Council uses to monitor service delivery. It shows performance against relevant targets.

Recommendation

That Cabinet notes the Council Performance and Budget Summary (October 2020).

Due to the circumstances surrounding the outbreak of **Covid-19**, and the declaration of a 'major incident' by the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum, in line with UK Government guidelines, the Council and its contractors/partners are not operating on a 'business as usual' basis. Changes to service delivery are reflected in this report.

Commentary

The table below provides commentary for indicators giving more detailed explanation, and any action the Council is taking to improve performance where appropriate.

	Measure	Comments
R	Forecast budget variance at the Year End (General Fund for year in question)	<p>The predominant financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council remains pressure on income. The net overspend for the Council for the year is forecast to be £3.9m before the calculation of Central Government's Income Guarantee Scheme. This represents c.21% of the annual budget.</p> <p>The current forecast Income Guarantee Receipt is c.£2.1m. This means the latest Forecast Outturn for the General Fund is net spend of £1.8m over budget, or 9.9%.</p>
R	Average time to re-let dwellings (excluding temporary accommodation) (cumulative, April to March) (days)	<p>The void (empty property) turnaround figure is based on the average time it takes to turn around empty properties for re-let (cumulative, April to March) (the average 'key to key' time). This has fallen slightly in October. This figure is calculated as the total number of void days divided by the number of properties let. The overall figure is still impacted by the letting of 11 long term voids that were let in September which, together, added 1,978 days to the overall cumulative figure (12,040 days). Since April, 137 properties have been let.</p> <p>There were 32 outstanding re-let voids at the end of October. Of these, 11 voids were with the contractor (for works) and 21 with the Lettings Team (for letting). There were 29 lettings in October.</p> <p>Of the 21 properties that were 'void' with the Lettings Team on 31 October:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 were 'general needs' properties, and • 4 were 'elderly designated' properties.
G	Number of properties let	There was an increase in the number of lettings in October, an increase of 8 from the previous month. There is work already

	Measure	Comments
G		in progress to review letting procedures to continue to improve performance.
A	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due	<p>In October, there were 1,957 tenants in rent arrears. The arrears percentage (at 5.3%) is a decrease on the previous month and there has been a reduction in arrears of £66,000 similar to the previous month.</p> <p>There has been a slight increase in the percentage of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) from 24.8% in September to 25.3% in October. This equates to 1,215 tenants in receipt of UC in October, compared to 1,190 tenants in September. The current arrears balance for tenants in receipt of UC is £888,755. This is slightly less than the previous month.</p> <p>During the pandemic, rent arrears have been monitored daily. It now appears that the figures are plateauing. As we enter another lockdown there may be a further increase in arrears as some tenants move back into furlough.</p> <p>Council staff have now recommenced visits focusing on those cases where there has been limited contact. Early evening calls have also re-started.</p>
A	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	The average length of stay in temporary accommodation has reduced slightly in line with the reduction of the number of households in temporary accommodation.
G	Percentage of repairs completed within target	Following the easing of lockdown restrictions and the full return of Morgan Sindall Property Services' workforce, further repair appointment slots were made available. The contractor's joint approach allowed new works orders to be raised and completed to target (at the residents' convenience), alongside priority orders that could not be done during the initial lockdown period. This increased the completion of works orders within target and addressed the priority backlog repairs.
R	Percentage of planning applications not determined (within time limits or agreed timescale)	The service has a backlog of applications awaiting validation. This is due to staff turnover with two officers having recently left the authority, and issues with the performance of the planning software. During October, the planning software received a security update which impacted the servers on which the planning system operates. This has resulted in the network being turned off intermittently. While IT support staff have worked hard to resolve the issues, significant periods of down time occurred over the course of 10 days. Possible solutions to deal with this issue are still being explored by this team. Given the age of the IT system, it has been agreed that a replacement IT system is to be sought. This is, however, a project which will take a period of 18 months to 2 years to complete. The backlog at the validation stage impacts the length of time that consultees can comment on proposals and the length of time given to case officers to assess development proposals. The Technical Support Team are working hard to reduce the backlog. Recruitment to this team will help to improve the reported figure in future months, although other options are also being explored.

	Measure	Comments
R	Number of planning applications that have not been determined in time (at end of month)	The validation backlog discussed above means that case officers have a reduced time to assess and consider development proposals. This has resulted in an increase in the number of out of time applications during October. The Development Management Officers have also experienced IT performance issues as discussed above. Planned recruitment to the Technical Support Team will assist with reducing the backlog and provide officers with more time to review applications. In addition, a Graduate Planning Officer has returned from a secondment to the Planning Enforcement Team. The delay in validation is highlighted to applicants and agents on the Council's website. Officers continue to update agents and applicants with revised timescales for considering their applications and requests for extended time periods are made. It is noted however that agents and applicants are not obliged to agree these requests and as this problem persists there may be an increased reluctance for agents to agree. The matter will be discussed at the Planning Agents Forum in December, so that agents are aware of the measures which are being undertaken to address the issue.
A	Parking Penalty Charge Notices issued	<p>There was a reduction in the number of Parking Penalty Charge notices issued in October. During the school half-term holiday in late October, the time usually spent by Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) making school visits was reallocated to other illegal parking hotspots.</p> <p>CEOs will continue to use their local knowledge to take a proactive approach to enforcement.</p>
R	Fly-tipping incidents	<p>Although there was a reduction in fly-tipped construction waste and rubble during October, there was an increase in small fly-tips of single items, including sofas, fridges and mattresses. The Council's contractor, Veolia, continues to operate the clean-up service as usual.</p> <p>The three 'hotspot' areas within the District with the most fly-tipping incidents during October were:</p> <p>Coleman Green Lane; Nashes Farm Lane; Hogg End Lane.</p> <p>CCTV is in operation at several known fly-tipping locations. The Council will seek to prosecute offenders wherever possible.</p> <p>The Council offers a bulky waste collection service for large household items weighing less than 100kg. Further information is available at: https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/bulky-items-collections</p>

Parking Services Civil Enforcement Officer recruitment update

Milestone	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Overall	Commentary
Job descriptions written	B						G	The staff and Unison consultation finished in early October. Posts were advertised internally w/c 12 October. Existing (transferred) CEOs are in post. Any remaining posts will be advertised externally in early November. Interviews will take place, and offers made, during the w/c 30 November. It is expected that CEOs will begin work during the period December 2020 to February 2021, subject to any notice periods.
Staff and Unison consultation	G	B						
Posts advertised internally		B						
Existing (transferred) CEOs in post		B						
Remaining posts advertised externally								
Closing date for applications								
Interviews and offers made								
Appointment of permanent CEOs								

Key

The performance information colour coding relates to the measure's target or trend. For indicators with a target: Green is where a target is achieved, Amber is up to 10% worse than target and Red is worse than 10% from target. For indicators with trend analysis: Green highlights an improved performance; Red a worse performance. In the table above, Blue indicates the completion of a project milestone.

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	Bigger or Smaller is Better	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	TARGET	
Finance	Forecast budget variance at the year end (General Fund for year in question)	Smaller	1.9%	1.3%	-0.1%	-0.5%	-0.5%	1.6%	23.0%	25.0%	25.0%	19.0%	20.0%	17.0%	21.0%	0.0%
Housing	Average time to re-let dwellings (excluding temporary accommodation) (cumulative, Apr-Mar) (days)	Smaller	67	61	74	69	69	63.5	60	71	81.2	78	80	88.75	87.8	26
	Number of voids over 26-day target (but below 90 days)	Smaller	24	19	13	21	29	21	18	27	16	20	10	5	12	Trend
	Number of voids over 3 months	Smaller	15	16	14	8	8	8	11	17	19	15	14	3	1	Trend
	Number of properties let	Bigger	20	29	17	17	13	23	12	15	23	18	25	19	29	Trend
	Void properties as a percentage of total stock	Smaller	1.30%	0.95%	1.01%	1.01%	1.00%	0.74%	0.93%	1.10%	1.04%	0.92%	0.71%	0.81%	0.67%	1%
	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due	Smaller	4.0%	3.8%	3.6%	3.8%	4.1%	4.3%	4.5%	5.0%	5.1%	5.7%	5.6%	5.6%	5.3%	5%†
	Percentage of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit	Smaller	15.4%	15.8%	16.3%	16.6%	17.2%	17.7%	20.8%	22.5%	23.2%	23.9%	24.5%	24.8%	25.3%	
	Number of households in temporary accommodation	Smaller	130	129	129	125	131	129	133	124	116	116	104	109	108	Trend
	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	Smaller	27	29	29.9	29	27.2	28	30.7	32.5	33.6	30.5	32	31.4	30.5	Trend
	Percentage of repairs completed within target	Bigger	97%	94%	94%	93%	94%	93%	95%	97%	92%	95%	93%	92%	100%	95%
	Percentage of repairs completed at first visit	Bigger	88%	89%	90%	88%	85%	89%	91%	95%	92%	94%	92%	89%	90%	80%
	Total number of households in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax support		6,531	6,527	6,521	6,522	6,507	6,827	7,143	7,284	7,324	7,383	7,368	7,360	7,357	
	Days to process Housing Benefit new claims (12 month average)	Smaller	15.1	15.1	14.8	14.6	14.6	14.3	13.6	13.1	13.5	13.0	13.3	13.3	13.2	21
	Days to process Housing Benefit change in circumstances (12 month average)	Smaller	4.6	4.4	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.5	6
Planning & Building Control	Planning and Building Control applications received (including pre-app, trees and condition discharge)		478	393	340	445	418	391	327	304	451	456	402	448	446	
	Percentage of Council's planning decisions supported at appeal (cumulative 12 month)	Bigger	85%	86%	87%	88%	88%	92%	76%	78%	80%	78%	80%	76%	73%	66%
	Percentage of planning applications not determined (within time limits or agreed timescale)	Smaller	22%	19%	13%	29%	21%	30%	18%	35%	28%	31%	24%	42%	40%	25%
	Number of planning applications that have not been determined in time (at end of month)	Smaller	52	53	29	74	50	54	23	65	54	46	39	67	67	40
Community Services	Parking Penalty Charge Notices issued	Smaller	624	976	776	861	877	876	36	89	488	1,011	867	1,066	894	Trend
	Percentage of Parking Penalty Charge Notices paid three months previously	Bigger							81%	83%	75%	19%	64%	75%	81%	TBD
	Number of spoiled Parking Penalty Charge Notices	Smaller							0	3	1	11	3	1	4	TBD
	Percentage of spoiled Parking Penalty Charge Notices against the total number of Notices issued	Smaller							0.00%	3.37%	0.20%	1.09%	0.35%	0.79%	0.45%	Less than 1%
	Parking Enforcement Officer deployed hours	Bigger							1,175	1,158	996	1,086	1,045	1,280	1,240	TBD
	Fly-tipping incidents (latest month data provisional)	Smaller	69	70	43	43	41	48	58	81	95	52	74	85	90	Year-on-year trend
	Number of missed waste collections per 100,000 (latest month data provisional)	Smaller	26	26	26	29	29	19	20	18	30	23	32	23	16	32
External	Claimant count	Smaller	1,400	1,405	1,410	1,410	1,500	1,465	2,440	3,765	3,650	3,735	3,830	3,780	3,635^	****

† Quarterly target to reflect seasonal variation.

^ Data subject to ONS revisions.

****ONS Experimental Indicator – may not accurately reflect labour market.

TBD: Indicator static target or trend to be determined.

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