Council Performance & Budget Summary
November 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 (November 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.

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)	In line with previous months, the most significant financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Council remains pressure on income. The net overspend for the Council for the year is £3.9m, unchanged from last month. This represents c.21% of the annual budget. This is before the calculation of Central Government's Income Guarantee and Covid-19 general grant. After taking these grants into account, the latest Forecast Outturn for the General Fund is a net spend of £1.1m over budget. The forecast level of this support will be reviewed in December.
R	Average time to re-let dwellings (excluding temporary accommodation) (cumulative, April to March) (days)	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 fell slightly in November. The figure will remain high for the remainder of this year because of the long-term voids which were let at the end of lockdown. There were 29 outstanding voids at the end of November – 12 with the contractor for works, and 17 with the Lettings Team for letting. Of the 12 properties with the contractor, 6 became void on 30 November and are included in the figures. There were 24 lettings in September. Of the 17 properties that were with the Lettings Team awaiting allocation on 30 November: • 13 were 'general needs' properties, and • 4 were 'elderly designated' properties.

	Measure	Comments
A	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due	In November, there were 2,532 tenants with rent arrears (53% of all tenants). This number will reduce in December once the two ‘rent-free’ weeks have cleared the arrears of tenants who pay by direct debit. There has been a slight increase in the percentage of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) from 25.3% to 25.8%. This equates to 1,215 tenants in receipt of UC in October, compared to 1,239 in November. The current arrears balance for tenants in receipt of UC is £894,325. Since the pandemic began, the number of tenants paying rent by direct debit has fallen by 21%. Support to tenants continues to be provided as set out in previous reports. Changes to the process for legal action to enforce the collection of rent arrears have been announced by the government. A 6-month ‘Notice of Seeking Possession’ is now served instead of a 1-month Notice. A number of court referrals have been made since the courts re-opened in September, although none of the cases have as yet been listed. Priority is being given to cases involving anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and where landlords have not received rent for over a year. A report on rent arrears will be considered by the Planning, Resources, Housing and Commercial Scrutiny Committee in December.
A	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	There was a reduction in the average length of stay in temporary accommodation as 24 properties were let this month.
R	Percentage of planning applications not determined (within time limits or agreed timescale)	The backlog of applications awaiting validation remains however a strategy to deal with this issue is in place. Work programmes within the Technical Support Team have been adjusted to maximise the time this team spend validating applications. This, together with improvements to the performance of the planning application software (including a move to a new server during w/c 30 November) and support from planning officers to validate extra applications each week should see the backlog being addressed within 12 weeks. This length of time is similar to the period required for an external company to take over this task due to procurement and on-boarding. It is also a more cost-effective solution that gives planning officers additional experience of getting validation right first time to ensure a positive start to the applicant journey. Recruitment to the vacant posts in the Technical Support Team is underway.
R	Number of planning applications that have not been determined in time (at end of month)	The backlog of out of time planning applications is linked to the validation delay as this means that the consultation notification process is undertaken later, and planning officers get less time to consider the applications. In some instances, the consultation period expires after the statutory expiry date. Planning officers have a standard wording to introduce

	Measure	Comments
		themselves to the agent as the case officer and request a realistic extension to the application period. However not all customers will agree an extension of the determination time. It is planned to communicate the strategy for reducing the validation backlog at the professional planning agents forum in December to raise awareness of the planned response. It is hoped that this approach will support the extension requests made by officers.
A	Parking Penalty Charge Notices issued	During the November lockdown, Civil Enforcement Officers took a lighter approach to enforcement, focusing on major routes such as City Centre streets. They also prioritised dealing with dangerous, obstructive and anti-social parking such as blocking of driveways or parking on double-yellow lines near junctions. Residents from high demand Controlled Parking Zones were permitted to use nearby car parks for free as an overflow. In addition, the free parking period at Council car parks was extended by two hours. Residents could also buy an extra two books of visitor permits above the usual allowance. These measures were in force until the end of the lockdown on 2 December. The Council continues to offer car park concessions to critical care workers such as NHS staff and Covid-19 volunteers as well as health and social care workers.
A	Fly-tipping incidents	Although there was a reduction in fly-tipped waste during November, there was an increase in fly-tips of wood and furniture, and three incidents involving cannabis farm waste. The Council's contractor, Veolia, continues to operate the clean-up service as usual. There were no 'hotspot' areas this month. The Council will seek to prosecute offenders wherever possible when evidence is found. The Council offers a bulky waste collection service for large household items weighing less than 100kg. An average of 240 collections are made each month. Further information is available at: https://www.stalbans.gov.uk/bulky-items-collections

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) Parking Services restructure has been completed. Existing (transferred) CEOs are in post. The remaining six posts are being advertised externally. The closing date is 1 December. Interviews are to be held w/c 7 December. Offers will be made shortly afterwards. It is expected that CEOs will begin work during the period December 2020 to February 2021, subject to any notice periods. There are 14 posts (each at 1.15 FTE), equivalent to 16.1 FTE, in the organisation.
Staff and Unison consultation	G	B						
Posts advertised internally		B						
Existing (transferred) CEOs in post		B						
Remaining posts advertised externally			B					
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.

Contact: Thomas Wrench, National Management Trainee (Thomas.Wrench@stalbans.gov.uk)

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		Bigger or Smaller is Better	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Jul-20	Aug-20	Sep-20	Oct-20	Nov-20	TARGET
Finance	Forecast budget variance at the year end (General Fund for year in question)	Smaller	1.3%	-0.1%	-0.5%	-0.5%	1.6%	23.0%	25.0%	25.0%	19.0%	20.0%	17.0%	21.0%	21.0%	0.0%
Housing	Average time to re-let dwellings (excluding temporary accommodation) (cumulative, Apr-Mar) (days)	Smaller	61	74	69	69	63.5	60	71	81.2	78	80	88.75	87.8	84.6	26
	Number of voids over 26-day target (but below 90 days)	Smaller	19	13	21	29	21	18	27	16	20	10	5	12	12	Trend
	Number of voids over 3 months	Smaller	16	14	8	8	8	11	17	19	15	14	3	1	0	Trend
	Number of properties let	Bigger	29	17	17	13	23	12	15	23	18	25	19	29	24	Trend
	Void properties as a percentage of total stock	Smaller	0.95%	1.01%	1.01%	1.00%	0.74%	0.93%	1.10%	1.04%	0.92%	0.71%	0.81%	0.67%	0.60%	1%
	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due	Smaller	3.8%	3.6%	3.8%	4.1%	4.3%	4.5%	5.0%	5.1%	5.7%	5.6%	5.6%	5.3%	5.4%	5%†
	Percentage of tenants in receipt of Universal Credit	Smaller	15.8%	16.3%	16.6%	17.2%	17.7%	20.8%	22.5%	23.2%	23.9%	24.5%	24.8%	25.3%	25.8%	
	Number of households in temporary accommodation	Smaller	129	129	125	131	129	133	124	116	116	104	109	108	111	Trend
	Average time in temporary accommodation (weeks)	Smaller	29	29.9	29	27.2	28	30.7	32.5	33.6	30.5	32	31.4	30.5	28.8	Trend
	Percentage of repairs completed within target	Bigger	94%	94%	93%	94%	93%	95%	97%	92%	95%	93%	92%	100%	99%	95%
	Percentage of repairs completed at first visit	Bigger	89%	90%	88%	85%	89%	91%	95%	92%	94%	92%	89%	90%	90%	80%
	Total number of households in receipt of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax support		6,527	6,521	6,522	6,507	6,827	7,143	7,284	7,324	7,383	7,368	7,360	7,357	7,387	
	Days to process Housing Benefit new claims (12 month average)	Smaller	15.1	14.8	14.6	14.6	14.3	13.6	13.1	13.5	13.0	13.3	13.3	13.2	13.1	21
	Days to process Housing Benefit change in circumstances (12 month average)	Smaller	4.4	4.1	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.1	4.6	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.2	6
Planning & Building Control	Planning and Building Control applications received (including pre-app, trees and condition discharge)		393	340	445	418	391	327	304	451	456	402	448	446	494	
	Percentage of Council's planning decisions supported at appeal (cumulative 12 month)	Bigger	86%	87%	88%	88%	92%	76%	78%	80%	78%	80%	76%	73%	75%	66%
	Percentage of planning applications not determined (within time limits or agreed timescale)	Smaller	19%	13%	29%	21%	30%	18%	35%	28%	31%	24%	42%	40%	38%	25%
	Number of planning applications that have not been determined in time (at end of month)	Smaller	53	29	74	50	54	23	65	54	46	39	67	67	70	40
Community Services	Parking Penalty Charge Notices issued	Smaller	976	776	861	877	876	36	89	488	1,011	867	1,066	894	853	Trend
	Percentage of Parking Penalty Charge Notices paid three months previously	Bigger						81%	83%	75%	19%	64%	75%	81%	81%	TBD
	Number of spoiled Parking Penalty Charge Notices	Smaller						0	3	1	11	3	1	4	5	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%	0.59%	Less than 1%
	Parking Enforcement Officer deployed hours	Bigger						1,175	1,158	996	1,086	1,045	1,280	1,240	1,394	TBD
	Fly-tipping incidents (latest month data provisional)	Smaller	70	43	43	41	48	58	81	95	52	74	85	90	73	Year-on-year trend
	Number of missed waste collections per 100,000 (latest month data provisional)	Smaller	26	26	29	29	19	20	18	30	23	32	23	16	20	32
External	Claimant count	Smaller	1,405	1,410	1,410	1,500	1,465	2,440	3,765	3,650	3,735	3,830	3,780	3,635	3,575^	****

† 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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