



CAI.17 14/15

Challenge and Improvement
Committee

28th October 2014

D

Subject: Progress and Delivery Report – Services – 1st Period 2014/15

Report by:

Chief Operating Officer

Contact Officer:

Mark Sturgess – Chief Operating Officer.
01427 676687
Mark.sturgess@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Purpose / Summary:

The report is the first of the new style progress and delivery reporting which highlights the areas where services are “off target”, the reasons for this and the proposed rectifications. It gives councillors the opportunity to examine the reasons why performance is off track and seek assurance that the measures which have been put in place are sufficient to tackle the issues which have been identified with the service.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- 1) That councillors examine the areas where service performance is off target (set out in the appendix) and seek assurance from officers that the rectifications proposed will deal with the issues identified.**

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None arising from this report

Financial : FIN/72/15 As detailed within the report. Actual surpluses at the year end will be either earmarked for future investment or returned to the General Fund Working Balance, subject to approval from Policy and Resources Committee.

Staffing : None arising from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights : None arising from this report.

Risk Assessment : None arising from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : None arising from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes

No

Key Decision:

Yes

No

1. Background

- 1.1 Councillors have received progress and delivery reports since 2012. They have sought to give councillors information on how the Council is performing through its services, project delivery and finances. This has given councillors the opportunities to question officers on performance and ensure that any rectification measures proposed to remedy poor performance are sufficient to tackle the issues identified.
- 1.2 The process has been audited twice. The second audit in 2013 found (amongst other things) that the process was not being used effectively to drive service improvement and needed to be reviewed.
- 1.3 A Councillor working group was set up to examine how the progress and delivery system was working and to recommend changes to improve the system so that it clearly drove service and project improvements.
- 1.4 The Councillor working group came to a number of conclusions, including:
 - That reporting should be “by exception” with the full information being available to councillors through an appendix or other means.
 - That the report should be split between services and project reporting
 - That the measures should be reviewed to ensure that they are evidence based and that they adequately described service performance.
- 1.5 In order to address these requirements a full review of service measures was undertaken with the Heads of Service, monitoring of key service measures was undertaken monthly (reviewed through reports to the Corporate Management Team) and the Council’s Minerva computer system was fully utilised in order to collect performance information.

2. The report

- 2.1 This report is the first of the new style of progress and delivery reports and is for the first reporting period of 2014/15 which runs from April 2014 to August 2014. This report deals with services progress and delivery and will also contain the finance report for the first period.
- 2.2 It is a report “by exception” and only contains the off target measures for each service (the full performance information is available to councillors via the extra-net).
- 2.3 It is also the report which deals with service performance and finances (a separate report will deal with projects in line with the recommendations of the Councillor working group).

3. Financial Report

3.1 The current financial position of the Council (as at 31 August 2014) is that there is a budget surplus of £716k. This is made up of the following major variances:

- £400k additional planning fee income
- £167k additional government grants
- £40k income from the Police and Crime Commissioner through the secondment of a council officer
- £155k savings on employee costs
- £31k saving from bringing Disabled Facilities Grants back in house from shared service arrangements.

3.2 As Councillors will be aware there are still major financial challenges facing the council. The anticipated budget position for 2015/16 and 2016/17 is set out below:

- 2015/16 – budget shortfall of £1.543
- 2016/17 – budget shortfall of £2.288 (£745k in year)

4. Services Progress and Delivery – First Period 2014/15 – Highlights

4.1 Principally due to the improvement in the local economy the income the council receives in fees for processing planning application has significantly increased. This has also been reflected in an increase in the number of major planning applications received as they generate significantly larger fees.

4.2 The changes made to the council tax regime last year, due to changes in legislation have had an impact on the cost of delivering the council tax service. The changes last year meant that people who previously did not pay council tax received a bill. As these people did not normally pay council tax there has been an increase in the number of reminders and summonses sent out and this has added to the cost of the service. The service is working with new taxpayers for the coming year to help them get into the habit of paying council tax so that reminders and summonses are not required next year.

4.3 The youth unemployment rate in the District is still significantly higher than the national rate, although it has fallen in line with national trends. Work is underway to work with local providers to ensure that provision for those young people not in employment, education or training meets their needs in order to tackle this. This work includes: designing and implementing an intensive programme of support with partners and ensuring the path for young people into work, education or training is clear.

4.4 The Planning Enforcement service is being monitored as it has seen a significant increase in enforcement complaints being referred to it in the first reporting period. At present the workload is being monitored and

managed within the team should the workload continue to increase at this rate the manager of the service will look to deploy additional resources so that the service to the public is maintained.

4.5 Customer satisfaction with the “Choice Based Lettings” website is significantly below target. However as this is the first survey of this kind undertaken there needs to be thorough analysis of where the problems lie to see if changes are needed to address the issues.

4.6 Land Charges continues to present a service problem. The main issues are that land charges is in a competitive environment and is losing market share and the time taken to process a search is once again increasing (although not yet back to the levels experienced last year). This is a long term problem and its solution lies in the implementation of an automated system which will be less labour intensive and provided a robust solution allowing the council to achieve consistently high performance in this area. At present automation options are being tested and should be available for implementation in the New Year.

4.7 Finally the number of market stalls on a Saturday in Gainsborough’s market has fallen from a target of 30 to an average of 23 for the reporting period. The team responsible for the markets are working to introduce more events on Saturdays to increase footfall in the town and make it more attractive to market traders.

4.8 These are some of the highlights from the exceptions report; however it is open to Councillors to discuss any other aspect of service performance as they think necessary.

5. Conclusion

5.1 As stated at the beginning of this report this is the first of the new style progress and delivery reporting. It focuses (by exception) on those services which are off target and asks Councillors to ensure that where services are under performing the rectification measures set out will address the issues.

6. Appendix

6.1 The minute arising from the recent meeting of Prosperous Communities Committee, when they considered this report, is attached at Appendix 2.

Service	Baseline	Target	Actual for Period	Explanation	Rectification
Corporate					
Position against budget	See budget report	See budget report	See budget report	N/A	N/A
Staff absenteeism	7.47 days per FTE (2013/14)	3.15 days per FTE	2.95 days per FTE	The number of days lost per full time equivalent is better than the target for this period.	None necessary however this will need to be monitored carefully as sickness rates are usually higher over the winter.
Council Tax					
Cost of delivering the Council Tax service per property	£7.60	£7.50	£8.70	Increase in the number of reminders and summonses since the introduction of LCTS in 2013. Claimants who previously had no council tax liability now have to pay a minimum of 8.5% of their liability to pay.	Work with the new taxpayers to encourage them to pay their tax on time to avoid recovery proceedings taking place.
Cost of delivering the Council Tax Service	£211,390 (2013/14)		£151,090 (year to date)	Amount of properties per FTE.	Staff workloads are being monitored.
Strategic Growth					
Youth unemployment	9.0%	To reduce youth unemployment relative to the national rate	7.0%	The rate of youth unemployment in the District has reduced. It is still 3.1% above the national rate against a target of no more than 1.5% above the national rate	Work is underway with providers of services to the NEETS to continue to reduce this gap

Planning and Housing Enforcement					
Planning Enforcement – number of enforcement cases	231	96	137	The number of planning enforcement cases is above target	Manage within the service to ensure that the resources are available to meet demand
Home Choices					
Average time for a person in a band 1 house to be rehoused		56 days	78 days	Data quality issues are affecting this measure	Data quality issues to be resolved by next reporting period
Customer satisfaction with the choice based lettings website	80%	80%	60%	First survey undertaken and the findings are still to be analysed	Analyse findings and act on the issues re layout and availability
Housing and Council Tax Support					
Time taken to process a housing and council tax support claim from the customers perspective	6.5 days	5.5 days	9.5 days	Performance has slightly improved in period. The volume of claims is still causing a problem	Request for additional resources approved through CMT. Additional staff resources approved on 8 September 2014 – recruitment underway
Volume of housing and local council tax support claims waiting longer than 30 days for a decision	34	30	43	Number of claims coming through the system	Request for additional resources approved through CMT
Neighbourhoods and Development					
Land Charges – Market Share	68%	70%	65%	Market share increased during the reporting period.	Automation is being tested and should give users greater confidence in the system and lead to an increase in WL

					market share.
Land Charge – Time taken to process a search	31 days	10 days	12 days	The time taken to process a search is increasing and reached 19 days in august 2014. This has been caused by staff holidays and a member of staff leaving. The time is now decreasing	In the short term staff have been redeployed into the service. Longer term automation is being tested and should result in significantly better turnaround times and a more robust service.
Planning – Appeal success rate	20% allowed	20% allowed	33% allowed	Low volumes of appeals affect percentages	N/A
Planning – Invalid planning applications received	80%	60%	86%	Applicants not filling in application forms correctly or providing the correct information	Drop in session being offered to agents.
Percentage of “other” applications being determined within eight weeks (outside the main categories of minor or major)	80%	80%	72%	Volume of applications received means that this target has not been achieved in the period	Additional staff resources have been brought in
Building Control - Total Income received	£167,773 (income for 2013/14)	£90,280 (for period)	£78,766	Increased competition from Lincoln has affected income and market share. This has occurred in other councils. WL has loss less market share than others.	Short term marketing activity is taking place with local agents and the service is being more actively promoted. A longer term marketing plan is being prepared.
Building Control -	78%	83%	66%	As above	As above

Market Share					
Communities and Localism					
Investigated community safety reports	125	50	57	Summer always brings higher numbers of complaints due to light evenings and good weather	High number of patrols, monitoring taking place reviewing the position for next year.
Gainsborough Markets – Income received	£58,877		£25,248	Markets cancelled due to adverse weather conditions resulting in £2,500 of lost income	Programme promoting the markets is underway
Gainsborough Markets – Number of stalls on a Saturday	28	30	23	Two cancelled markets. Traders do not see the town as attractive due to empty shops	Working to provide additional events on a Saturday to encourage more visitors
Waste Collection					
Number of missed collections during reporting period	1893 (last year)	710	195	Results are always worse through the summer as a third more bins are collected.	Project continues to drive down missed bins overly.
Licensing					
Percentage of licensing applications processed with the Service Level Agreement	96.5%	100%	99%	Not significant variation	None necessary
Percentage of licensing applications that are referred to Committee	3.07%	0%	0.76%	Insignificant	None necessary

Appendix 2

Extract from Minutes of a Meeting of the Prosperous Communities Committee held on 14 October 2014

49 PROGRESS AND DELIVERY – PERIOD 1 - SERVICES (PRCC.25 14/15)

Members gave consideration to the first of the newly styled Progress and Delivery report, which highlighted the areas where services were “off target”, the reasons for this and the proposed rectifications. The report also provided Members with an opportunity to examine the reasons why performance was off track and seek assurance that the measures which have been put in place were sufficient to tackle the issues which have been identified with the service.

In presenting the report, Officers outlined how performance data assisted in managing services, giving the examples of Enforcement and Land Charges. Members sought and received assurance that the position in terms of Enforcement was being closely monitored. At present it had been deemed that the increased case load could be managed within service, however if the position became overwhelming, assurance was again given that additional resources would be drafted in. The rectification proposed was accepted.

With regard to Land Charges, all accepted that the current turnaround times were unacceptable. Officers advised that all agents had been contacted by the Chairman of the Planning Committee to advise of the delays and Members requested that customers be informed at the start of the process of the time it was likely to take to process a search. It was also noted that in the short term staff had been re-deployed into the service to assist with the back-log. The automated system was expected around Christmas 2014 and should result in significantly better turnaround times and a more robust service. However this was caveated with the fact that a number of dual runs would be required when the system was first installed. The rectification proposed was accepted, again with the need to monitor the service to ensure that the performance improves within a reasonable length of time.

Challenge was offered around the measures relating to Housing and Council Tax Support, with Members welcoming the additional resource which had been recently approved to assist the service performance. Officers indicated they would expect performance to be back on track by the next reporting period.

With regard to Gainsborough Markets, some Members were of the view that the rectification actions, detailed within the report, were not far reaching enough. In response, Officers outlined the other activities which were ongoing including feasibility studies around car boot markets, investigating additional signage leading into Gainsborough and closer working with the Town Centre Partnerships. Some Members were of the view it was time to radically review our approach to the Market, which was seen by some as a commercial venture. Furthermore, Members indicated in the future, it would be useful if it could be clarified when referring to income whether this was a net figure.

Finally, challenge was offered around Youth Unemployment and Members asked a number of questions to aide their understanding in how the Council helped deliver against this partner issue.

RESOLVED that having examined the areas where service performance is off target and having sought assurance from Officers, agreed that the rectifications proposed will deal with the issues identified.

Note: Councillor Dobbie arrived during consideration of the above item of business at 7.05 pm