

Slough Borough Council

Information needed	Details
Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	21 October 2024
Subject:	2024-25 Q1 Corporate Performance Report
Lead Member:	Cllr Mabu Shaik - Lead Member for Performance.
Chief Officer:	Will Tuckley - Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Sonia Khan - Director of Strategy, Change, and Resident Engagement
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	No
Exempt:	No
Decision Subject to Call In:	No
Appendices:	A - Corporate Performance Report 2024-25 Q1

1. Summary and Recommendations

The Council was set a Direction to improve evidence-based decision-making. One mechanism to achieve evidence-based decision-making is to implement a robust, transparent, and regular corporate performance reporting cycle. This corporate performance reporting cycle is a key component of the council's Performance Management Approach.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note and comment on the Council's current performance and mitigating actions as measured by the key performance indicators within the corporate management information report and scorecard.

Commissioner Review

Data accuracy is crucial for records to be used as a reliable source of information. Errors in data entry can lead to flawed insights, potentially causing the Council to make poor decisions. Where confidence in data quality is low this should be referenced in the report and mitigating actions to ensure that records and datasets meet criteria for reliability and trustworthiness be outlined, so that the report can be used to support decision-making, benchmarking and various other applications.

Commissioners are content for this report to be considered.

2. Report

- The latest quarterly report available for October Cabinet is the 2024-25 Q1 report which is included as Appendix A. This is the first reporting against a revised set of strategic performance indicators, defined through a joint review between Lead Members and Executive Directors, and which form the 2024/25 corporate balanced scorecard. The revised set of KPIs continue to align to the strategic priorities in the Corporate Plan 2023-2027, as well as providing insights on corporate health. The corporate performance data are now also available to view in Power BI, as part of a first phase of development of corporate and service dashboards.
- The council's performance framework embeds benchmarking as a tool for assurance and decision-making. The monthly performance report includes a benchmark, where available, for each KPI. The framework also reviews insights published by the Office of Local Government (OFLOG), as well as benchmarkable regulatory and statutory releases from council services, such as the recently published [Tenancy Satisfaction Measures](#).
- The council is also developing a set of Recovery Success Measures, that will drive the Phase 2 Recovery Plan. These will complement the existing performance framework and will be included in the Recovery Plan Update to Cabinet in November 2024.
- Further performance insight will become available during the autumn, The 2023/24 statutory service return benchmarks will be published by government departments in stages during October, November, and December. Insights from those publications will be reported to the respective Executive Director, Lead Members, CLT Assurance, and will also made available in future quarterly Cabinet reports. Alongside this, OFLOG is developing its [Local Authority Data Explorer](#) over time to present a rounded set of themes and metrics which best reflect the roles and responsibilities of local authorities and to benchmark local government performance.

Latest insights on corporate performance:

- Overall, at the end of Jul-24 the strategic performance picture remains variable with 30% (14) of the 47 key performance indicators (KPIs) performing either at or better than target, 4% (2) indicators are performing marginally worse than target, and 28% (13) indicators are performing below the red KPI threshold, and 34% (16) indicators are monitored for trends. A further 4% (2) are metrics in development:
 - Priority 2: Percentage of refuse bins collected on time
 - Corporate Health: Percentage of customer facing enquiry box emails responded to within 5 working days.
- Compared to the previous month or similar period from last year, performance has improved for 34% (16) of the 47 KPIs, remained the same for 21% (10) and declined for 28% (13). A further 13% (6) metrics with no previous trends and the remaining 4% (2) are metrics in development.
- Appendix A to this report summarises progress against the Council's priorities as presented in July 2024. The report includes:
 - Summary progress against the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan.

- Areas for recognition, where the council can learn from promising practice - trends that indicate the council is on track for delivering its objectives.
 - Areas of improvement – trends that indicate the council is improving although performance currently below agreed target.
 - Areas that require a continued focus on improvement - trends that indicate the council is not on track for delivering its strategic objectives.
- In Appendix A, pages 2 to 9 outline the performance scorecard trends against the 47 strategic KPIs, and the mitigating actions and action owners. Each action has an assigned Executive Director owner, who is accountable for the performance level, and who will assign responsibility for delivery to officers. Further, pages 15 to 23 include charts showing trends over time for each metric along with progress against target agreed.

Key areas of improvements:

- The business in year rate collection rate of 40.84% for Jul-24 is 1.39% better than in-year target of 39.45% and 1.41% better than the collection rate achieved this time last year of 39.43%. The council continues to take appropriate recovery action on those businesses that do not keep with their payments up to date.
- An improvement in the percentage of customer service calls answered to 86.1% (5.5k) and call waiting times to 5mins 53secs during Jul-24. To support further improvements, a service improvement plan introduced focussing on improving response time and customer service, to make it easier for residents to access advice and information.
- A continuous high level (100%, 258) of SBC emergency housing repairs completed within agreed timescale as well as a reduction in responsive repairs to action to lowest level (1,491) during Jul-24 which is now less than the average number of repair requests received in a month. However, housing repairs completed on time at 75%, although improving, remains below target of 95%. Housing repairs completed within one visit at 86% remains above target of 75% indicating Cardo remains consistent in completing straight forward repairs. Regular management meetings scheduled with senior management to discuss critical issues including complaints and to meet ongoing demand. Kitchen, bathrooms, windows, doors, door entry and roofing programmes are all in progress. External repairs, roofing and re-decoration projects started on Brammas Close/Spackmans Way estate, the second block on Maryside will commence in Aug-24. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) programme of work assessments started with works to commence Sept-24, property assessment for 300 EPC D or below properties are ongoing.
- A reduction in safeguarding concerns recorded resulting in an improvement in the percentage of safeguarding referrals that meet section 42 to 26.8% (26) during Q1 which is now more in line with the latest published national average for 2022/23 of 29.5%. The improved performance reflects changes in the safeguarding referral triage process. Safeguarding data regularly reviewed with trends and appropriate actions presented at monthly Adults Leadership Team and with Slough Safeguarding Partnership.

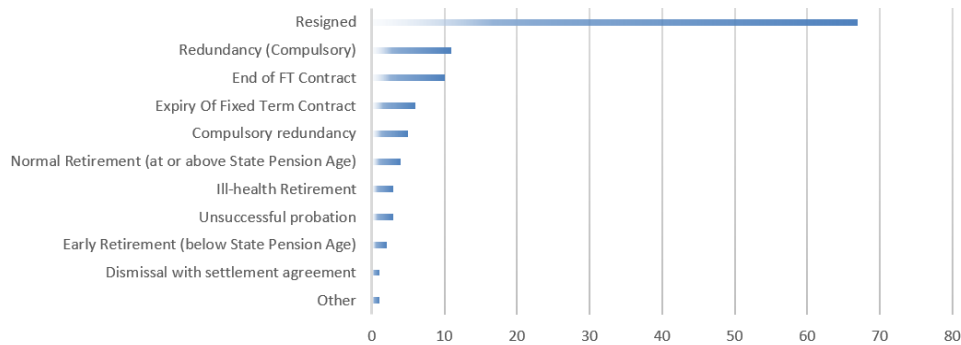
- At the end of Jun-24, a marginally lower level of 16–17-year-olds in Slough not in education, employment, or training (NEET) or whose activity is not known compared to nationally (Slough 5.2%, national average 5.3%, ranked 84th nationally). The September Guarantee is underway which runs through to October and involves tracking of all current year 11's and 12's to ensure that they have an offer of education or training for September. All NEET young people are offered practical support and guidance through 'face to face' information advice and guidance (IAG) positioned in community building across Slough as well as drop-in sessions and telephone support. All NEET are regularly contacted offering continued support and encouragement.
- An improvement in the number and proportion of children in external residential placements with 6.3% (13 children) during Jun-24 and remains better than target of 9.1% for the last 10 months. We have also seen cost reductions for children who continue to be placed in these types of placements. External Placement Panel review all children in external placements, targeting those specifically in residential care, identifying those that specifically can be placed in fostering placements.
- An improvement in the number and proportion of children with a repeat referral during Jun-24 at 18.0% (45 children), with performance improving beyond the target for the last 6 months. Re-referrals are continually tracked and monitored each month. Previous interventions are reviewed to explore whether the re-referral could have been avoided and to disseminate the learning. This is monitored through regular performance reports and reviewed by the internal Children's Improvement Group on a regular basis.

Key areas of improvement although performance below agreed target:

- An improvement in the recycling rate to 33.8% and a reduction in residual household waste collected to 1,810 tonnages during Jun-24. This is due to a combination of positive factors including seasonal increases in the collection of green waste, the current food waste recycling trial in five areas across the borough and our campaign running to promote the importance of recycling.
- An improvement in the number of voids reported, 107 standard voids reported at the end of Jul-24 of which 75 ready to re-let, with an average of 201 days taken to re-let 31 properties. This is an improvement from Oct-23 where we had 151 standard voids reported with an average of 200 days to re-let 6 properties. The number of voids and the re-let time will increase before improved performance occurs. A new Empty Homes Task Force established to review the whole voids process and the reporting of voids. The task force will meet fortnightly to monitor progress and continue to review process delivery. The initial meeting carried out a review of all current dwelling voids. Additional reporting requirements were identified to facilitate the letting of both adapted properties as well as those for designated age groups.
- An improvement is the staff turnover rate to 11.9% (rolling year to Jun-24) which is now in line with last published civil service average (2023 12.0%). All Executive Director and Director roles agreed as part of the Senior restructure recruited to with the majority now in post creating a more stable Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Work is underway to fill vacant Heads of Service positions. The Applicant Tracking System (Talos) is embedded in the business with the recruitment team offering a partnering approach to the business to fill gaps. Director and Heads of Service for HR are now in post and making improvements. New Chief Executive in place for the previous 4 months, talkabout sessions being held with staff to provide clarity on Slough's direction and financial

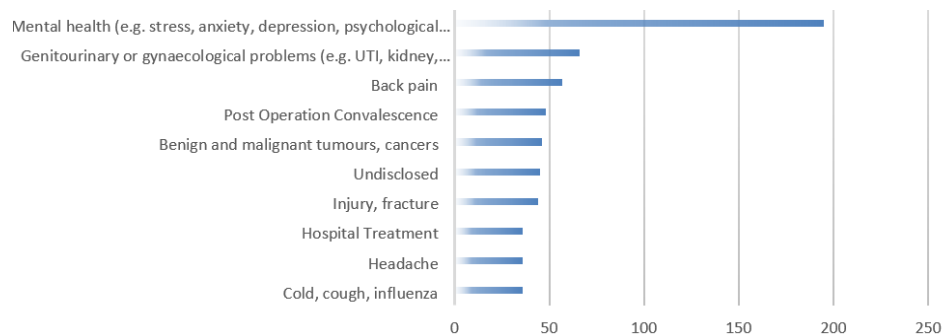
situation. Staff leaving are encouraged to have an exit interview. Work started to improve the format of exit interviews ensuring they are completed and analysed.

Staff turnover rate: reasons for leaving (rolling year to Jun-24)



- An improvement in the staff sickness absence rate per FTE employee to 8.2 days (rolling year to Jun-24) although marginally higher than the last published Civil Service average (2023 8.1 days). Methodology revised in line with best practice with previous quarters rate recalculated. Sickness absence policy being re-written to reduce bureaucracy and improve ease of use. This will be accompanied with a roll out plan for managers including robust training highlighting the importance of recording sickness on Agresso system. Following decision to migrate to a cloud based Agresso, project underway to review processes and procedures within system to make it easier for managers to record and change data. This should result in sickness recorded timely and accurately.

Top 10 reasons for staff sickness (rolling year to Jun-24)



- Following an agreement between DCS, Director of Education, and the DfE, the SEND service performance will be reported from a Case Tracker spreadsheet rather than the Capita One case management system for a short period of time. This will enable the Head of Service to manage the team to update Capita One to bring the data quality up to required standard. The figures presented this month show Capita One and Case Tracker sources, and from next month until December 2024, figures will only be reported from the Case Tracker. This is a specific decision recognising an issue and providing time for the issue to be corrected. The Case Tracker shows during Jul-24, 23 EHC Plans were finalised, of which 8.7% (2) were completed within the statutory 20 weeks' timeframe. These levels remain below target but are closer to target than the figures reported from the Capita One system.

Key areas that require a continued focus on improvement:

- Council tax in-year collection rate of 36.85% for Jul-24 is 0.98% lower than the collection rate achieved this period last year of 37.83% and 1.05% below in-year target of 37.90%. To improve collection rates the team continues to implement additional technology to automate high volume low value tasks to free up resources to focus on collection. We are live with technology that automates outbound text messages, emails and phone calls targeting accounts already in arrears, those that may move to this stage soon and those that might be entitled to Council Tax Reduction. The work to date has resulted in starting the new financial year with less work outstanding than previous years improving the resident's experience i.e.,30% reduction in council tax calls received. Collection is expected to improve as we progress through the remainder of the year.
- 79.3% (£9.669m) of £12.183m savings required in 2024/25 are forecast to be delivered, with £0.889m (7.2%) of savings reported as already being delivered. A £1m saving on Business Rates has been acknowledged as undeliverable in year, due to rules around Collection Fund accounting the success of the actions taken will show up in the 2025/26 financial year. Mitigating savings of £0.411m are being reported in Regeneration to make up for non-delivery against the original plan, and a further £94k of savings reported in Adults Services.
- Interim staffing costs increased to £6.341m during Q1 despite a reduction in the number of interim staff. There has been a reduction in lower paid roles and an increase in new placements at a higher level. Work underway with Matrix to provide greater insight including a dashboard of actual spend per quarter. An Agency Contract Officer recruited to the HR team to manage the Matrix contract and work with managers to reduce the reliance on interim workers and to ensure that we pay competitive rates. This will aid the reduction of spend over the coming quarters.
- A reduction in the percentage of staff equalities data recorded on Agresso as at the end of Jun-24 to 60.0%. This is likely caused by employees that have declared their data leaving and new employees joining that have not yet to make a declaration. The declaration pages on Agresso system due to be relaunched during Aug-24 following work undertaken to simplify the data collected and aligned to the ONS categories. Existing data recorded will be mapped to the new pages where possible however in the short term it is likely we will see a reduction in the declaration of data whilst employees are asked to go back into the system and declare their information. In the longer term it is expected this relaunch and simplification will increase declaration statistics going forward.

Breakdown of equalities data recorded on Agresso system: as at Jun-24

Diversity type	Stated	Prefer not to say	Not stated
Age	99.6%	0.0%	0.4%
Gender	99.7%	0.0%	0.3%
Ethnic	34.9%	0.0%	65.1%
Ethnic detailed	60.7%	0.0%	39.3%
Disability	18.9%	3.7%	77.3%
Religion	58.2%	4.6%	37.2%
Sexual orientation	48.2%	13.5%	38.3%

- From the recently published tenant satisfaction survey, 45.9% of tenants who responded were satisfied with the overall service provided by Slough Housing. This metric is one of 22 measures that housing will be held to account on by the regulator of Social Housing and we will be inspected in the future. As part of the Housing Service improvement plan, we are in the process of putting together a Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) workstream which will respond to all the 22 TSM published this month. Our resident's board and Lead Member will be involved in agreeing the actions needed to improve each of the metrics. We hope to recruit a programme manager to oversee this metric and get us ready for inspection.
- From the 2023 resident survey, 50% of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live and 25% said they trust Slough Council. A resident engagement and consultation working group is being established and has started reviewing areas that need to be in scope. This includes mapping, current engagement, and identifying stakeholders across the borough. The strategic communications and engagement programme director started end of Jul-24.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

- The strategic performance indicators are aligned to the priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan articulates a commitment to delivering financial prudence and demonstrating Best Value for residents, any monies needed to achieve improved performance must be funded within the council revenue budgets.
- A separate finance report will be presented to Cabinet quarterly that shows the financial performance of Slough Borough Council which clearly links with information in this report. It is imperative that financial discipline to deliver the Corporate Plan is maintained to ensure that a sustainable financial position is obtained and maintained.
- Separate commentary is provided on business rate and council tax collection rates where in-year collection fund assumptions has adverse implications for the following year's revenue budget.

Legal implications

- Whilst there is no statutory duty to report regularly to Cabinet on the Council's performance, as a best value authority under the Local Government Act 1999, the Council has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- Regular reporting of performance can assist the Council to demonstrate best value. The national best value framework guidance has now been published in full, following a consultation and a period where the guidance was in draft. The council now uses that national framework as a tool to consider further action.
- The Government has published best value guidance. This emphasises the need for local authorities to be open to challenge and support, including using performance indicators, benchmarking performance against other local authorities and operating in a transparent

manner. The guidance identifies seven best value themes. Under the theme of Service Delivery, local authority data is one of the means to identify whether services are being delivered efficiently and effectively and services should be benchmarked against comparable authorities. Performance should be regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered. Under the theme of Continuous Improvement, frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of improvement plans is identified as a characteristic of a well-functioning authority. Under the theme of Governance, it is recommended that performance management information measures actual outcomes effectively and is frequently interrogated to allow under performance to be addressed.

Risk management implications

- Mitigating actions are in place for strategic performance indicators where key performance trends require action. These actions are proposed by the responsible manager, and progress updates provided at Assurance CLT forum by the responsible Executive Director (or delegate).
- The monthly Assurance CLT forum considers finance, risk, and performance to ensure that the leadership team receive a rounded picture on the health of the organisation, to inform improvement actions.

Environmental implications

- Strategic performance indicators aligned to priority 3 of the corporate plan retains and expands upon environmental commitments under the following strategic objective *'reducing Slough's carbon footprint, promoting active travel and sustainable forms of transport, and taking action to prevent or minimise the impact of climate change'*.

Equality implications

- The Equality Act 2010 sets out duties for local authorities in relation to equalities, including the public sector equality duty, which requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. In relation to equality of opportunity, the legislation requires the Council to consider the need to remove or reduce disadvantage, meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life and other activities. Performance data can assist the Council to identify gaps in service and consider what action is required to address this.

4. Background Papers

None