

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	19 January 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	2025-26 Q2 Corporate Performance Report
<b>Lead Member:</b>	Cllr Mabu Shaik - Lead Member for Performance
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Will Tuckley - Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Sonia Khan - Director of Strategy, Change, and Resident Engagement
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision Subject to Call In:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	A - Corporate Performance Scorecard 2025-26 Q2 B - Corporate Performance Dashboard 2025-26 Q2 C - Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2025 summary

### 1. Summary and Recommendations

This quarterly corporate performance report is a core part of the Council's performance management framework. It supports the administration in identifying and addressing areas of underperformance that have the greatest impact on residents. The importance of strengthening this approach has been highlighted by feedback from external auditors, the Annual Governance Statement, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and MHCLG Commissioners. Recent external scrutiny including two Ofsted interventions into children's social care services (April-May 2024) and the Area SEND inspection (July 2025) has reinforced the need for continued improvement and transparency. This report provides the second update under the refreshed corporate performance framework for the 2025/26 budget year, demonstrating our commitment to accountability and progress against key priorities.

### Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note and review the council's current performance as presented through the key performance indicators in the corporate performance report, scorecard and dashboard. This includes acknowledging any performance issues raised and the mitigating actions being taken by relevant services to address them.

## Commissioner Review

This report is outside the scope for pre-publication commissioner review; please check the [Commissioners' instruction 5 to CLT to sign off papers](#) for further details.

### 2. Report

- This is the second quarterly report to Cabinet presenting progress against the key strategic indicators from the 2025/26 corporate performance scorecard. These indicators are aligned with the strategic priorities set out in the [Corporate Plan 2023-2027](#), and are designed to support service improvement, drive recovery, and focus on outcomes that matter most to residents. Insights are drawn from a range of sources including feedback from residents, Members, tenants and staff as well as complaints data. This report forms part of the Council's broader corporate assurance model complementing regular reporting on risk, finance, and audit.
- The council's performance framework uses benchmarking as a key tool for assurance and informed decision-making. Each performance report includes relevant benchmarks for key performance indicators (KPIs), drawing from regulatory and statutory data published by government departments.
- The [Local Government Outcomes Framework \(LGOF\)](#) is a new national framework for councils in England, announced by the Deputy Prime Minister at the Local Government Association (LGA) conference in July 2025. It is designed to shift accountability from process-based reporting to outcome-focused performance, empowering councils to lead on delivering key priorities for their communities. The framework sets out 15 priority outcomes that central government expects to work with local authorities to achieve. These outcomes are supported by a set of standardised metrics, drawn from existing public data sources, to track progress and enable meaningful comparisons across councils. Following a public consultation that ran until September 2025, the final version of the framework is expected to be published in December 2025, with implementation planned for April 2026. The LGOF will form part of a wider reform agenda aimed at reducing bureaucratic burdens, increasing local flexibility, and improving service delivery and resident outcomes. We will ensure our outcome-based reporting aligns fully with the LGOF embedding its principles into our corporate performance framework to strengthen transparency and comparability.
- The latest update of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was published in October 2025 marking the first refresh since 2019. This national dataset provides a comprehensive view of relative deprivation across England's small geographic areas known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). The IMD 2025 combines seven standalone indices (e.g. income, employment, health, education) into a single weighted measure offering a robust tool for understanding local inequalities. These insights are critical for targeting resources, shaping policy and improving service delivery in Slough. There are 84 LSOAs in Slough. The Indices of Deprivation (IoD) group these LSOAs into deciles, where 1 represents the 10% most deprived nationally and 10 the 10% least deprived. The table below shows the number of LSOAs in Slough that fall into each decile for the different domains that comprise the IoD.

Domain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>IMD 2025</b>	0	8	18	21	15	11	5	2	3	1
<b>Income</b>	2	17	23	19	9	7	5	1	1	0
<b>Employment</b>	0	0	11	18	16	19	10	4	4	2
<b>Education, Skills and Training</b>	0	11	22	19	12	8	5	3	4	0
<b>Health Deprivation and Disability</b>	0	0	3	3	10	18	10	17	16	7
<b>Crime</b>	8	11	17	14	18	9	3	3	1	0
<b>Barriers to Housing and Services</b>	29	36	9	6	2	1	1	0	0	0
<b>Living Environment</b>	0	2	4	11	13	17	14	11	7	5
<b>Income Deprivation Affecting Children</b>	2	7	20	25	12	8	7	2	1	0
<b>Income Deprivation Affecting Older People</b>	5	21	20	12	11	8	3	3	1	0

The data reveals a mixed picture across the borough, while some areas have seen improvements, others notably Cippenham and Farnham, have experienced increased deprivation. Refer to Appendix C for latest charts and ward level maps.

The methodology used to calculate the IMD and the underlying data has changed since 2019, therefore the figures are not directly comparable. However, key findings include:

#### **IMD 2025 overall:**

- 26 of Slough's 84 LSOAs now fall within the 30% most deprived nationally, up from 22 in 2019.
- 8 LSOAs are within the 20% most deprived nationally.

#### **Barriers to housing and services:**

- 29 of Slough's LSOAs rank in the 10% most deprived nationally.
- 66 LSOAs fall in the 20% most deprived nationally.
- Only 2 LSOAs are above the national average for this domain.

#### **Income Deprivation**

- 2 of Slough's LSOAs rank in the 10% most deprived nationally.
- 19 LSOAs fall in the 20% most deprived nationally.
- Compared to 2019 IMD, 26.3% increase in the number of LSOAs in the 30% most deprived nationally.
- For Income Deprivation Affecting Children increased by 28.3%.

#### **Health Deprivation and Disability**

- The percentage of LSOAs that are above the national average for the Health Deprivation and Disability Domain has increased by 56.6% compared to 2019 IMD.

The council will use these updated insights to strengthen its strategic planning, enhance its evidence base and ensure services are responsive to the lived experiences of Slough's communities.

- The Evidence-Based Decision-Making workstream supporting the Council's Improvement and Recovery Plan continues to drive improvements in how Slough Borough Council uses data and evidence to inform decisions. Recent progress includes:
  - Embedding a refreshed quarterly corporate performance reporting cycle across services. This integrated and structured approach will help to embed best practice and develop a culture of continuous improvement. In areas of underperformance, root causes were explored, emerging risks and trends flagged, and opportunities for cross-team collaboration identified.

- Developing a forward plan to support performance review discussions at CLT with a focus on cross-cutting themes and opportunities for collaboration across services, with communities and partners.
- A refreshed corporate planning process is underway with directorate storyboards being finalised to align service planning and enable a more integrated approach.
- Research is underway to identify best practice from other councils to embed a more insight-driven approach to service improvement and strengthen cross-service collaboration, including the use of both quantitative and qualitative data.
- The council's approach to resident engagement and strategic partnership working is also being refreshed, which will enable partners and residents to help shape service improvements.
- There has also been progress in improving underpinning systems, data quality across statutory data sets and analytical capability, including the development of Power BI dashboards to enable more integrated analysis across multiple data sources.

## Latest insights on corporate performance

- At the end of Sept-25, the strategic performance picture remains variable. Of the 36 key performance indicators (KPIs) in the corporate performance scorecard:
  - 42% (15) are performing either at or better than target
  - 8% (3) are marginally worse than target
  - 25% (9) are performing below the red threshold
  - 22% (8) are monitored for trend analysis
  - 3% (1) is in development:
    - Corporate Health: Measurement of financial resilience
- In terms of reporting frequency, 12 KPIs are reported annually, 8 quarterly, 1 by school term and the remaining 15 follow monthly trends which are reported at the end of each quarter.
- Seven KPIs saw changes in their RAG status compared to the previous quarter:
  - Priority 1: Percentage of 16–17-year-olds not in education, employment and training (NEET) or whose activity is not known improved from **amber** to **green**.
  - Priority 2: Percentage of safeguarding referrals that meet section 42 improved from **red** to **green**.
  - Priority 2: Smoking prevalence in adults (18+) - self reported smokers in the Annual Population Survey (APS) improved from **amber** to **green**.
  - Priority 3: Number of homeless cases prevented changed from **green** to **red**.
  - Corporate Health: Percentage of suppliers paid within 30 days improved from **amber** to **green**.
  - Corporate Health: Resident survey - percentage of Slough respondents said that they were very or fairly satisfied with the way Slough Borough Council runs things improved from **red** to **amber**.
  - Corporate Health: Resident survey - percentage of Slough respondents said that they trust Slough Council a great deal or a fair amount improved from **red** to **amber**.

- Compared to the previous quarter or similar period from last year, performance has improved for 36% (13) of the 36 KPIs, remained the same for 25% (9) and declined for 31% (11). A further 6% (2) are metrics with no previous trends and the remaining 3% (1) metric is in development.
- Further details are provided in the appendices:
  - Appendix A outlines the corporate performance scorecard highlighting latest performance across the 36 strategic KPIs along with associated mitigating actions and named action owners. Each KPI is assigned to an Executive Director who is accountable for performance and delegates delivery to relevant officers.
  - Appendix B details the corporate performance dashboard with trend charts for each metric showing progress over time and performance against targets.

## **Areas of improvements**

### **Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive**

- Slough Child and Family Wellbeing Service saw a positive trend in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development across all five domains at age 2–2.5 years. At the end of Q2 2025/26, 88.6% (304 children) achieved a good level of development showing a slight improvement from 88.2% (488 children) in Q1. This remains well above both the last published national average of 81.4% and the South-East regional average of 81.3% for 2024/25. In contrast, there was a reduction in the proportion of children receiving a 2–2.5-year review with 60.4% (346 children) in Q2, down from 86.6% (588 children) in Q1. To improve engagement the service has adopted a personalised approach directly contacting families and offering flexible review appointments. A reminder system has also been introduced sending two follow-up texts after the initial review letter to encourage attendance. Planned improvements include expanding access through a centrally located, family-friendly venue and offering sessions outside standard working hours to better accommodate parents' schedules. This work aligns with the Department for Education's strategy to improve child development which aims for 75% of five-year-olds in England to achieve a good level of development by 2028. In Slough, Public Health is working in partnership with Early Years and the Children's Centre to develop a local plan focused on parenting programmes and nurturing care. The ambition is to further increase the percentage of children achieving a good level of development across all five domains by age 2–2.5 years.
- The proportion of care-experienced young people aged 19–21 in education, employment or training remains strong at 56.3% (67) in September 2025. This reflects continued support from the virtual school which engages directly with all young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) as well as personal advisors. The overall cohort has grown by 23% since September 2024 increasing from 91 to 112 young people. In December, the CISC T&F group reported recommendations to CISC.

### **Priority 2: A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives**

- In Q1 2025/26, Slough achieved strong performance in NHS Health Checks, exceeding both national and South-East regional averages. A total of 6.6% (2,923) of the eligible population aged 40–74 were offered a check, compared to 6.3% nationally and 5.2% in the South-East. Of those offered, 3.5% (1,527) received a check, outperforming the national average of 2.1% and the regional average of 1.9%. The uptake rate was also significantly higher, with 52% of those offered a check going on to receive one, compared to 33% nationally and 36% regionally. To build on this progress targeted engagement is

underway with GP practices that have lower uptake rates such as Crosby House Surgery and Orchard Medical Centre. These practices are being supported with tailored data and performance packs to identify areas for improvement. A community of practice forum is being established to share best practice and address common challenges. To reduce health inequalities community-based NHS Health Checks are being delivered by our commissioned Integrated Health and Wellbeing Service in underserved areas such as Upton Lea, Elliman and Langley Meads wards. Slough also continues to collaborate regionally through the South-East NHS Health Check Network sharing learning to improve service quality and reach. These combined efforts aim to embed a more proactive and inclusive approach to prevention ensuring that all communities can access and benefit from NHS Health Checks.

- Slough has made notable progress in reducing adult smoking prevalence. In the 2024 Annual Population Survey (APS), the proportion of self-reported smokers aged 18 and over improved to 6.8% from 7.8% in 2023. This places Slough below both the national average (10.4%) and the South-East regional average (9.4%), highlighting a significant local achievement in tobacco control. However, smoking prevalence varies across the borough. Rates are notably low in areas such as Langley Foxborough, Haymill and Langley St Mary's while prevalence persists in areas such as Baylis & Salt Hill, Herschel Park and Upton Lea. To maintain progress and raise awareness of local cessation support, outreach clinics are running on Wednesdays and Saturdays in Upton Lea and targeted outreach has taken place during Salt Hill Park Community Youth Detachment Fun Days. These place-based initiatives complement several broader targeted initiatives including a Stoptober campaign which ran throughout October and featured multilingual campaigns, radio adverts, community engagement, and visible advertising material across key public spaces to reach a broad audience. Alongside this, the Slough Breathe Easy Workshop was held and brought together key stakeholders to co-design innovative and community-led approaches to reducing smoking. Together, these initiatives support the Slough Tobacco Control Network's strategic action plan and reinforce the borough's efforts and commitment to achieve its Smokefree 2030 vision. Slough's active involvement in the Southeast Smokefree Alliance further strengthens its regional collaboration and knowledge-sharing in tackling tobacco-related harm.
- The percentage of eligible adults managing their care via a direct payment remains strong with 32.0% (443) in Q2 similar to Q1 31.9% (443) and continues to exceed both the last published national average of 25.5% and the South-East regional average of 25% for 2023/24. This reflects the council's strong commitment to personalisation and choice in care delivery. Performance is reviewed monthly at DLT and subject to quarterly review at the South-East ADASS user group enabling ongoing monitoring of our long-term client cohort and benchmarking against our regional peers. Delivering approximately a third of our service packages via Direct Payment demonstrates our commitment to personalisation and self-directed support.
- In Q2, the proportion of safeguarding referrals progressing to Section 42 enquiries improved significantly, rising from 23.2% (33 referrals) in Q1 to 31.6% (43 referrals) in Q2. This improvement moves performance above the last published national average of 28.7% (2023/24). This positive trend demonstrates enhanced processes to determine risk and any required actions while ensuring the adult's views and wishes are central to decision-making. Work has been undertaken to review data quality and to continue raising awareness of Adult Safeguarding responsibilities as set out within the Care Act. Safeguarding data and trends are being presented to the Safeguarding Partnership to support collaborative improvement. National Adult Safeguarding Week (17th November)

will feature a number of planned events aimed at raising awareness among professionals and the wider community, reinforcing our commitment to safeguarding adults at risk.

### **Priority 3: A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough**

- Emergency housing repairs performance remained strong in September with 100% (472) completed within the agreed timescale. Additionally, 84.4% (1,254) of all housing repairs were completed in a single visit exceeding the target of 75% and demonstrating continued efficiency in handling straightforward jobs. However, the percentage of repairs completed on time reduced from 89.9% in August to 79.5% in September. This reduction is due to Cardo's efforts to clear older repair orders and adapt to recent changes in their IT system. These factors will be reviewed at the next strategic management board meeting at the end of October. There was a notable reduction in outstanding repairs (Aug-25 1,715; Sept-25 1,368) with a target to reduce this further to 1,100 by the end of the financial year. While stage 1 complaints rose slightly from 29 in August to 31 in September, this was mainly driven by issues related to communication delays, lack of information and inconsistent or unclear messaging provided to residents. Stage 2 complaints showed improvements, decreasing from 7 to 4 over the same period indicating better resolution at the initial stage and fewer escalations. Voids turnaround times are also improving following a dip over the summer which was linked to Cardo's management and system changes. Meanwhile, the Decent Homes planned programme continues to progress well, the 2025/26 roofing works have been fully completed. Wave 2.2 is now 80% complete and 30 properties in Wave 3 are scheduled to begin in November.
- Slough maintained 100% performance on major planning applications in Q1, exceeding both the national average (91.3%) and South-East average (92.0%). This reflects strong service delivery and effective case management. Performance on non-major applications dipped to 74.2%, falling below national (91.5%) and regional (92.4%) benchmarks, though it remains above target. The decline is due to staffing pressures from a recruitment freeze and maternity leave, resulting in high caseloads. The service is prioritising early case reviews, timely site visits, and reducing reliance on time extensions. Weekly management meetings continue to monitor performance, and officers attend panel sessions and major case meetings for support and quality assurance. Caseloads for officers handling complex cases are being reviewed and additional support is being provided to help manage workloads. Interim staffing support is in place and recruitment planning is underway. Early signs of recovery are evident in Q2 as vacant posts are filled. Complaint levels remain stable. Key themes include delayed responses due to high caseloads and disagreement with decisions. A revised Statement of Community Involvement will help manage expectations and formal appeal channels remain available.

### **Corporate Health**

- Slough is on track to meet its target of a 12% (£1.315m) reduction in business rate arrears by the end of the budget year. At the end of September 2025, the council has already achieved a 12.62% (£1.384m) reduction when adjusted to exclude changes in rateable value. However, arrears fluctuate month on month. The Council continues to take firm action to recover outstanding debts including passing cases with liability orders to enforcement agents. To strengthen its approach, Slough will soon begin initiating bankruptcy and liquidation proceedings against persistently non-paying businesses. These escalated measures aim to tackle long-term arrears and reinforce the importance of financial compliance as part of a robust recovery strategy.

- Slough is also progressing towards its target of a 12% (£3.011m) reduction in council tax arrears by the end of the budget year with a 7.13% (£1.790m) reduction achieved by the end of September 2025. Recovery efforts are being enhanced through a planned assessment of the propensity to pay across all outstanding accounts enabling the council to prioritise cases with the highest likelihood of successful collection. In addition to existing recovery methods, three new enforcement measures are being prepared: placing charging orders on properties where the resident is the legal owner, initiating bankruptcy proceedings for significant and persistent non-payment and applying for committal to prison in cases of wilful refusal or culpable neglect. These actions aim to ensure fairness, accountability, and improved collection outcomes.
- In September, 83.1% (4,708) of invoices were paid within 30 days exceeding target of 80%. Year-to-date performance stands at 77.2%. We have been working closely with services to ensure purchase orders are raised before services are delivered and have informed suppliers that invoices without a quoted purchase order will be returned. Additionally, suppliers have been instructed to send invoices directly to the Accounts Payable team to minimise payment delays. The positive impact of these actions is reflected in an 11.6% increase in Q2 compared to Q1.

## **Areas of improvement although performance below agreed target**

### **Priority 3: A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough**

- The 2025 resident engagement survey shows strong improvements in public perception of Slough Borough Council. Trust in the council rose from 25% in 2023 to 49% in 2025 now just below the national average of 50%. Satisfaction with how the council runs things also increased from 30% to 48% replacing the previous measure about satisfaction with the local area. These results are encouraging especially as trust in councils nationally declined from 59% to 50% for the same period. As the survey method changed from phone interviews to face-to-face interviews, comparisons over time should be made with care. The council has introduced a new Resident Engagement Framework alongside governance processes to improve how we communicate and work with residents, which is expected to drive further improvements in trust and satisfaction.
- During September, the average re-let time for HRA standard voids was 48 days to re-let 44 properties, an improvement from 73 days (37 properties) in August, though still falling short of the target of 35 days. This positive trend reflects progress; however, delays remain due to several operational factors. Extended turnaround times have been driven by a higher volume of voids managed by contractor Cardo compounded by staffing shortages within their subcontractor team. Additionally, the introduction of a stricter three-step verification process involving multiple staff members has increased wait times before properties are ready to let. While this process strengthens quality assurance it has delayed tenancy sign-ups. To address these challenges, a weekly task force chaired by senior housing leaders remains in place to drive down re-let times. This group brings together Neighbourhood Officers, Allocations Officers, Repairs and Cardo to ensure timely nominations and coordinated action. The Director of Housing also reviews progress regularly and provides additional oversight when needed. Further improvement actions include prioritising properties moving into capital works to ensure they are ready to let, increasing pre-void notifications to give repair teams earlier visibility of upcoming vacancies, and offering properties to prospective tenants before the official ready-to-let date to minimise delays. These measures are expected to accelerate progress toward the 35-day target.

- The number of homeless cases prevented improved from 4 in August to 9 in September, though this remains below the monthly target of 12 or more. Year-to-date, there have been 56 preventions, 32 in Q1 and 24 in Q2. Lower performance in Q2 was largely due to delayed case progression and limited availability in the Private Rented Sector (PRS). Case closures showed strong performance in July and September but dipped in August due to staffing constraints. PRS procurement saw limited growth in Q2 however new sourcing strategies are now in place to expand housing options and improve conversion rates. A continued focus on early intervention and PRS engagement is expected to improve performance and move closer to target in the coming months.

## **Corporate Health**

- The staff turnover rate remains relatively stable with a slight increase from 9.7% (rolling year to June 2025) to 9.9% (rolling year to September 2025). This includes 8.2% due to voluntary resignations and 1.7% from employer-initiated departures. The current rate aligns with the benchmark for a healthy turnover rate at 10%. Across the council, five out of seven directorates remain below the healthy turnover threshold indicating overall stability in workforce retention. HR continues to encourage exit interviews for all departing staff, with feedback highlighting organisational culture as a contributing factor in some resignations. These insights are actively informing ongoing efforts to strengthen workplace culture and inclusivity.
- The recording of staff equalities data on Agresso remains broadly stable, with a slight change from 59.6% in June 2025 to 58.1% in September 2025, while approximately 66% of staff have completed all required declaration fields. To improve data completeness and accuracy, HR Learning & Development has embedded equalities awareness into the corporate induction and the LEAD Programme launched in January 2025. Additionally, the appointment of an Employee Experience & Wellbeing Lead in September 2025 will provide dedicated leadership to drive improvements in declaration rates and strengthen engagement across the workforce.
- Sickness absence has remained consistent with a marginal increase from 9.3 days (rolling year to June 2025) to 9.5 days (rolling year to Sept-25). HR business partners and HR Case Officer are working closely with services to ensure consistent and effective management of sickness absence. To support this, the Sickness Absence Policy is being rewritten and launch in November to reduce bureaucracy and improve clarity making it more user-friendly for both managers and staff.

## **Areas that require a continued focus on improvement**

### **Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive**

- In 2024/25 National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) reports that 25.4% (585) of Year 6 children in Slough were classified as obese including severely obese, remaining significantly above the national (22.2%) and South-East regional (19.2%) averages. Although this reflects a slight improvement from 25.7% (605) in the previous year, the change is not statistically significant. Among Reception-aged children, 11.2% (220) were classified as obese including severely obese, also above national (10.5%) and South-East regional (9.4%) rates. This rate is unchanged from last year suggesting a potential slowing of the trend for Slough, whereas the prevalence for both the National and Sough- East regional rate increased over the same time period. These figures highlight the ongoing need for targeted action. Slough Public Health is working to implement a range of improvement measures which are collectively considered under our Whole System Approach to promoting healthy weight. This workstream relies on

continued cross sector collaboration and community engagement which are essential to achieving meaningful and sustained progress. The Whole System Approach encompasses four subgroup areas including Children and Young People, Healthy Eating Environments, Pathways to healthy weight and Physical Activity and Active travel. Priorities under the children and young people's workstream include promoting healthier school environments, increasing access to physical activity opportunities, supporting families with nutrition education and addressing broader environmental and socioeconomic factors that contribute to obesity.

- In September, 35.0% (7 of 20) of EHC plans due that month were issued within the statutory 20-week timeframe, a notable improvement from 12.1% (4 of 33) in August. Using the Department for Education (DfE) metric which includes all EHC plans completed in the month regardless of their due date, 25.0% (7 out of 28) met the statutory deadline. While this is a decrease from 57.1% (4 out of 7) in August, it reflects a higher volume of plans being issued overall. Progress has been supported by reducing the backlog of overdue assessments from 93 in April to 59 in September despite continued demand with 28 new requests received. However, challenges persist due to staff turnover, recruitment challenges and the transition to a new case management system which have slowed momentum. To address this, new team managers have been appointed and recruitment is underway for interim SEND officers alongside a campaign for permanent staff. The leadership team is focused on streamlining systems and improving productivity in the next quarter. The previous quarter saw a rise in complex complaints mainly linked to historic annual review failures and communication gaps. Complaints increased at the start of the school year, with Stage 1 rising from 4 in August to 6 in September, and Stage 2 from 1 to 4, compounded by staffing shortages. In response, the service has strengthened complaint handling processes, recruited a Complaints and Tribunals Coordinator and introduced improvements such as early resolution, better decision recording and enhanced communication with families. Though the historical legacy of issues remains a challenge. Annual review backlog clearance continues with these actions aimed at restoring compliance, reducing complaints, and sustaining improvements in timeliness.

### **Priority 3: A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough**

- Tenant satisfaction with the overall service provided by Slough housing remains in the lower quartile nationally. Latest results for 2024/25 show 45.1%, significantly below the national average of 72.3% and the Southern LA ALMO benchmark of 70.4%, highlighting the need for sustained improvement. Despite the overall score, there are positive trends in specific areas. Satisfaction with repairs completion increased from 52% to 53%, listening to residents improved from 35% to 37% and communal area maintenance rose from 50% to 53%. These gains are partly due to the transition from Osborne to Cardo Group and operational efficiencies delivered through the Slough NEC housing system. Key improvement actions are underway. Following a C3 judgement from the Regulator of Social Housing, a comprehensive service improvement plan has been implemented with regular progress reviews with the regulator. A resident involvement team has been recruited to strengthen engagement, and a complaints task force is driving faster response times and embedding learning. The Slough NEC housing system rollout continues to improve query handling and service delivery. Looking ahead, 2025/26 tenant satisfaction measure surveys are being conducted quarterly by MEL Research providing more timely feedback to inform actions. Results from Q2 will be reported shortly.
- The household recycling rate for quarter 2 (2025/26) averaged 22.7% showing a slight improvement compared to 22.3% for the same period last year. While performance

remains below the borough's long-term target of 40%, the year-on-year increase is encouraging. Monthly figures show some fluctuation: 22.3% in July (down from 24.1% last year), 23.2% in August (up from 21.0%) and 22.5% in September (up from 21.8%). A key factor affecting overall performance has been the significant drop in green waste tonnages over the summer due to prolonged hot and dry weather which reduced garden growth. As green waste typically accounts for around 20% of total recycling, this seasonal impact has had a direct effect on the rate. The Sustainability Officers recruited in October 2025 are now fully active and undergoing induction. They have joined flat collection rounds to identify issues such as contamination and misuse of communal bins. In addition, they are developing resident recycling surveys, launching a school education programme and planning community outreach through places of worship to boost recycling participation and awareness. The borough-wide food waste rollout, scheduled between November 2025 and April 2026, is expected to deliver a measurable uplift in recycling rates. Recruitment for the Waste Minimisation Lead Officer is ongoing with interviews planned for November to strengthen delivery of the Waste Minimisation Plan.

## **Corporate Health**

- Customer services continue to face significant operational pressures. During Q2, the team answered approximately 4,100 calls per month. While overall call volumes remain similar to last year, council tax-related calls have increased by 20% over the first two quarters. Additionally, the volume of council tax recovery actions has risen by 44% resulting in more complex and longer calls. Average wait times during September was 18 mins 19 sec and increases on debt recovery days which impacts other service lines. Staff are cross-skilled to help manage demand. Customer access point usage has increased by 25% compared to the same period last year, rising from 4,243 to 5,688 visits between April and September. The team now operates from five hubs including Observatory House. Email and e-form contact has also grown by 13.6%, from 6,842 to 7,919 requiring additional resource to manage the workload some of which is transactional but not yet digitised, pulling staff away from phone lines. Since April 2025, customer services have taken on additional responsibilities including logging 1,332 new enquiries via the corporate complaints inbox and managing 1,436 bookings for community centres and pitch hire. The team is also operating with reduced capacity overall due to the implementation of savings. A mitigation action plan is in place and is being closely monitored to manage increased demand and maintain service delivery. The team is progressing plans to transform the service, working closely with other services and partners and this is ultimately what will be needed to improve customer experience, improving responsiveness and resolution.
- Stage 1 complaints increased from 79 in August to 109 in September. Of these, 66.1% were responded to on time with an average response time of 8.3 working days and 56.6% were partially or fully upheld. Stage 2 complaints also rose from 23 to 28 over the same period, with 25.0% responded to on time, an average response time of 15.1 working days and 62.5% partially or fully upheld, largely due to delays in communication, objections to decisions and quality of work. To address these challenges, the council continues to strengthen its complaint handling by aligning with the Joint Complaint Handling Code from both the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Self-assessments have been published on the Council's website and the 2024/25 Annual Complaints Report has been presented to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee. Operational improvements are helping reduce overdue complaints including weekly case reminders to managers and continued Housing Complaints Task Force meetings. These have led to a reduction in overdue cases particularly in Housing Register and Temporary Accommodation. Staff now follow

updated complaint handling guidance, use revised templates and complete Ombudsman training. A “How to Complain” video has also been published to improve resident understanding. Further improvements are being delivered through the Council’s wider Improvement and Recovery Programme.

### **3. Implications of the Recommendation**

#### *Financial implications*

- The strategic performance indicators are directly aligned with the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan. This plan reinforces the Council’s commitment to financial prudence and delivering Best Value for residents. Any additional funding required to improve performance must be sourced from within existing council revenue budgets.
- A separate quarterly finance report will be presented to Cabinet detailing Slough Borough Council’s financial performance and complementing the insights provided in this report. Maintaining strong financial discipline is essential to delivering the Corporate Plan and ensuring the Council achieves and sustains a stable financial position. On 17 November 2025, the Quarter 2 position showed a significant overspend on the General Fund revenue budget of £17.5, along with further mitigations to address the financial position.
- The quarterly corporate performance report highlights several areas with both direct and indirect financial implications for the Council, underscoring the importance of aligning performance with sound financial management.

#### *Legal implications*

- Whilst there is no statutory requirement to report performance to Cabinet regularly, the Council, as a best value authority under the Local Government Act 1999, has a legal duty to secure continuous improvement in how its functions are exercised, with regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- Regular performance reporting supports the Council in demonstrating Best Value. The national Best Value Framework, now finalised following consultation, is used by the Council to guide further improvement actions.
- The Government’s Best Value guidance encourages local authorities to be open to challenge and support. It promotes the use of performance indicators, benchmarking and transparency. Key themes include:
  - Service Delivery: using data to assess service efficiency and benchmarking against comparable authorities.
  - Continuous Improvement: regular monitoring, performance reporting and updating of improvement plans.
  - Governance: ensuring performance data measures outcomes effectively and is used to address underperformance.

#### *Risk management implications*

- Mitigating actions are in place for strategic performance indicators where trends show early signs of concern. These actions are proposed by the responsible service lead and monitored through quarterly performance reviews at Assurance CLT forum led by the relevant Executive Director (or their delegate). Targeted deep dive sessions are also

held with service leads at CLT and Corporate & Service Improvement Board. This approach ensures that emerging issues are identified early enabling timely intervention and maintaining oversight of key risks.

- The Assurance CLT forum provides a comprehensive view of the organisation's health by reviewing finance, risk and performance together supporting informed decision-making and improvement planning.

#### *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 stainable forms of transport and taking action to prevent or minimise the impact of climate change*'.

#### *Equality implications*

- Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council must have due regard to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people with and without protected characteristics.
- The Council is required to consider how to reduce disadvantage, meet the needs of protected groups and encourage their participation in public life. As set out in the council's Equality Plan 2025-27, having a robust evidence base and proactively monitoring performance data is key to ensuring the council meets its statutory equality objectives and tackles inequality.

#### **4. Background Papers**

None