



Northumberland

County Council

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 6TH FEBRUARY 2019

Communities & Place Performance Reporting

Report of Paul Johnston, Interim Executive Director, Place

Cabinet Member: Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet Member for Environment & Local Services; Councillor John Riddle, Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing & Resilience

Purpose of report

This report provides information about the operational performance of services that are within the scope of the “Communities and Place” Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report aims to provide assurance that action is being taken to mitigate the risk of underperformance and to address deteriorating trends.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members note the performance report and proposals for improvement.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the “Living” and “Enjoying” commitments within the Corporate Plan and provides information about some of the Council’s key “Success Measures”. Performance reporting is aligned to the Vision, Values and Operating Principles of the Council and “How” the Council operates:

Living - “We want you to feel safe, healthy, and cared for”

Enjoying - “We want you to love where you live”

Success Measures - “We want to make a difference”

How - “We want to be efficient, open and work for everyone”

Key issues

1. Satisfactory performance is being maintained across the range of services within the scope of the Communities and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee;
2. When compared against 2017/18 outturn, performance at the end of December 2018 has fallen back in 20 out of 66 measures, although eleven of these remain ahead of target.
3. Close monitoring and improvement planning are in place to address underperformance and/or arrest any decline in performance.
4. There is a particular focus on monitoring the effects of Universal Credit rollout and wider economic factors on rent arrears.

Background

The Council's corporate performance management arrangements include the corporate plan, service statements and a high-level performance framework reflecting national and local service priorities.

The performance framework is monitored and maintained by service managers, with performance updates entered as data is validated.

A series of Performance Scorecards exists to allow oversight at service and strategic levels and to support the work of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees. Periodic reviews of Performance Scorecards are undertaken by Overview & Scrutiny Committees and the Chair of the Communities & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee has requested information about a number of performance metrics where:

- performance is currently below the 2018/19 target and on a deteriorating trend; and
- performance is below 2017/18 outturn.

Communities & Place O&SC Performance Scorecard - Overview

There are sixty eight performance indicators that make up the Communities & Place Scorecard, drawn from the following range of services:

- Planning
- Housing & Public Protection
- Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service
- Neighbourhood Services
- Technical Services
- Corporate Health & Safety

These services represent the Planning, Housing & Resilience and Environment & Local Services cabinet member portfolios.

A copy of the latest (January 2019) scorecard is at Appendix 1. In summary, this shows:

	DoT	Perf	No.
Total number of indicators			68
Improving trend; Performance on or better than target	G	G	30
Improving trend, Performance worse than target	G	R	16
Deteriorating trend; Performance better than target	R	G	11
Deteriorating trend; Performance worse than target	R	R	9
Trend monitoring and target setting not appropriate	N/A	N/A	2

From the above table, it can be seen that performance is better than target in 41 out of 66 targeted indicators (62%) and is improving in 46 out of 66 (70%).

Conversely, 20 out of 66 indicators (29%) are reporting a drop in performance since the previous period including 9 (14%) where performance is also below target.

As requested by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Communities & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee, this report provides further detail on the 20 indicators where performance has declined. This includes 11 metrics where performance is currently better than target.

Each exception report provides a brief summary of the actions being taken, or proposed, to improve performance and/or halt any further deterioration.

Close performance monitoring is being maintained at Service and Executive Director levels, with targeted actions identified in a number of cases.

Particular focus is required on measure 25 (Current tenant arrears as a % of the annual rent debit) to monitor the effects of the rollout of Universal Credit and wider economic factors associated with EU exit.

The new Director of Planning takes up his post in February 2019 and will be tasked with reviewing planning procedures and performance as an early priority.

Performance Analysis - Exception Reports

Metric 1. % of major applications determined within 13* wks or within timescales agreed with the applicant (* unless EIA development) (Planning)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	70%	79.1%	R	G
Improvement Plan:				
Monitor. Slight drop in performance reflective of usual monthly variations; performance remains comfortably above target.				

Metric 6. % of planning applications determined under scheme of delegation (Planning)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	95%	94.2%	R	R
Improvement Plan:				
<p>Performance reflects increasing numbers of planning applications “called in” by Members for determination by Committee rather than under scheme of delegation. Committee referral can slow down the decision-making process and does not guarantee a better quality of decision. Servicing committees is resource-intensive, requiring a significantly greater amount of preparation time and choreography. Call-ins are not always requested based on sound planning reasons.</p> <p>Action: Director of Planning to work with LAC Planning Committee Chairs to minimise Member call-ins unless strong planning grounds exist. Remind Members of Scheme of Delegation requirements around call-in.</p>				

Metric 8. % of appeals allowed where the committee decision was contrary to Officer recommendation (Planning)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	N/A	100%	R	G
Improvement Plan:				
<p>There have been 2 planning appeals upheld since 1st April 2018. In each case Members had voted against officer recommendation. This reinforces the point made previously about the quality of decision-making. Appeals are very resource intensive and require a significant amount of officer effort to collate and present evidence. Appeal decisions against the Council often come with an award of costs.</p> <p>Action: Director of Planning to increase the frequency and quality of Member training and to collate “lessons learned” case studies to increase member knowledge.</p>				

Metric 9. % Enforcement Cases where there has been an agreed course of action within 13 weeks (Planning)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	60%	85.5%	R	G
Improvement Plan:				
<p>The enforcement service handles over 1,400 referrals in a year, including a number of long-running and intractable cases. As can be seen, the majority of cases are investigated and closed within the 13 week target. Planning enforcement is a discretionary activity and the Council seeks, as far as possible, to achieve resolution through negotiation and consensus rather than more formal action.</p> <p>Action: Director of Planning to undertake review of enforcement function and cases with a view to resolving long-running cases.</p>				

Metric 12. % of Homes for Northumberland homes with current gas certificates (Housing)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	100%	98.1%	R	R

Improvement Plan:

Of the 568 homes that were due for inspection, 557 were completed on time and appointments were booked for 10 at the time of data input which have now been carried out. Efforts continue to gain access to the remaining property and we will also continue to pursue tenants of difficult to access properties through working with Housing and Public Protection colleagues. Close monitoring to be maintained.

Metric 13. % of Solid Fuel Certificates Completed (Housing)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	100%	0	R*	R*

Improvement Plan:

Target and actual performance in December were both “zero” as no solid fuel services were due during the month of December. To date 100% of all inspections have been completed by the due date.

*The DoT and Performance status should both be Green.

Metric 17. % of street lighting faults attended within 4 working days (Local Services)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	92%	93.1%	R	G

Improvement Plan:

Monitor. 2,027 of the 2,178 faults to be reported were attended to within the 4-day standard. The number of faults being reported increases with the onset of dark nights. Performance remains better than the target of 92% and only marginally below the 2017/18 outturn of 93.5%. Performance is continuing to be closely monitored on a monthly basis.

Metric 25. Current tenant arrears as a % of the annual rent debit (Housing)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	2%	2.2%	R	R

Improvement Plan:

As this is an annual target the performance fluctuates during the year and it is therefore necessary to compare with the same period in the previous year which was 1.78%. A large element is attributed to the introduction of Universal Credit. As at 31 December 2018 125 tenants had made a new claim for UC and a further 100 were transferred over to the full service, which accounted for £76,000 of arrears being directly attributable to UC. Looking at the trends of the last three years, we are confident at this time that we will meet the overall target of 2%.

The Housing Service's rent income policy and enforcement procedures have been reviewed to reflect the changing payment frequency with Universal Credit so that new claimants in particular are given time to receive their payment and to provide them an opportunity to maintain regular arrangements for paying their rent. Officers work closely with individual tenants suffering hardship to maximise their income, assist in budgeting and support and encourage employability.

To enhance monitoring of the impact arising from UC, the Housing Service has introduced new reports to provide detailed information allowing us to analyse the impact of UC. It will analyse:

- The number of new claimants
- Waiting time for first payment
- Arrears breakdown
- Referral to employability coaches/projects
- Referral to Community Bank
- Referral to food banks
- Number of Alternative Payment Arrangements
- Court Actions

ACTIONS: Officers continue to work proactively with all tenants in arrears. They visit tenants in their homes and work with them to manage any arrears by offering appropriate advice and support, including signposting to partner organisations, for example, Northumbrian Citizens Advice Bureau for wider debt advice, Voices Northumberland, Learning Hives, Age UK and projects, for example, SILX Youth Project for people aged under 25. Close monitoring of the impacts of Universal Credit rollout will continue. Recognising the pressure on tenants arising from the impact of UC, the Housing service has reviewed its service provision and proposals are being developed to establish a bespoke Income Management Team and Support and Advice Officers will ensure tenants have maximum access to all relevant support and advice needed to manage their rent commitments and sustain their tenancies.

The service is also, through the North of Tyne Working Homes partnership, comprising local authorities and social housing providers working across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland, part of a major project to deliver the vision of an *Inclusive Economy* on behalf of the North of Tyne Combined Authority. A key feature is integration of employment support with tenancy management, using employment coaches and other support workers as part of housing management teams. Support will be tailored, based on accurate assessment of need, including a wide range of learning, skills development, job preparation, and job brokerage delivered across the partnership. In Northumberland The Housing Service is taking the operational lead and working in partnership with Bernicia and Karbon Homes. This will enable new and existing UC claimants to be signposted or referred to appropriate employability support to ensure provision meets their needs. From April 2019, Working Homes will support at least 1,650 residents over three years.

Metric 27. Deliberate Primary Fires in vehicles (NFRS)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	52	61	R	R

Improvement Plan:

Primary fires include fires in buildings and vehicles which are not derelict or involve casualties or rescues or five or more fire appliances. Performance is outside of target.

Whilst the numbers associated with this target are relatively small, (YTD target 52, YTD actual 61, and 17/18 YTD of 47), the increase in deliberate vehicle fires is a trend that NFRS has recognised and communicated, both throughout the service and with partner agencies; both directly and via the multi-agency Victim / Offender / Location (VOL) meetings. Intelligence from Northumbria Police suggests that a number of the incidents are believed to be related to “score settling” between criminals.

As one of the more difficult crimes to target due to the ease of access to vehicles and ease with which they can be set on fire, most are subject to a Level 2 fire investigation using more experienced trained personnel. Despite having joint fire investigation protocols established, the low numbers result in Northumbria Police currently not recognising deliberate fires in vehicles as a force priority unless the incident has been caught on CCTV. The majority of these incidents to date have occurred in the Pegswood (35) and West Hartford (19) station areas in the south east of the county. Northumbria Police are informed of all such incidents and invariably invited to participate in any subsequent investigation.

ACTIONS: Northumberland Fire and Rescue service will continue to work with partners, identifying any emerging trends and preventative opportunities to help prevent incidents of this nature from occurring. We are now starting the next round of Fire Investigation training to all operational crews with a focus on maximising the maintenance of chain of evidence and forensic evidence to improve the prospects of a successful Police investigation / prosecution.

The NFRS youth engagement strategy, which includes Princes Trust and Young Firefighters contains content relating to crime and the impact of fire related crime.

Metric 36. % of responses to Planning Consultations made within 21 days (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	75%	65.3%	R	R

Improvement Plan:

High levels of demand being seen, with the number of consultations significantly increased again this month. The Team continues to carry an environmental health officer post vacancy. An attempt to recruit has failed. As a result the performance continues to be below target. This has an impact on the timely determination of planning applications.

Action: Repeat recruitment exercise; consider other demand management / work practice measures.

Metric 39. Number of fixed penalty notices issued for offences under Dog Control Orders (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	N/A	7	R	G

Improvement Plan:

Number of FPNs issued in December is greater than November which reflects normal monthly variation. We continue to encourage dog owners to act responsibly and actively promote the green dog walker scheme. Monitor.

Metric 44. Number of private sector dwellings vacant for more than 6 months returned into occupation (Housing)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	13	7	R	R

Improvement Plan:

Since the introduction of the Homes England programme the team have concentrated on working to bring more problematic properties back into use. These tend to be more complicated cases and are more time consuming, but the work has resulted in some challenging issues for communities being resolved. Proactive work with owners to achieve 'quick wins' where we give the basic advice and assistance (such as the option of accreditation) to bring properties back into use continues, however fewer numbers have been achieved due to the change in focus to properties that create more issues and require increased officer time across all services. Additional factors also include Landlords response to full service roll-out of Universal Credit across the county with anecdotal information that landlords may be keeping properties empty for longer waiting for a tenant not in receipt of benefit, with few requiring support to bring properties back into use, rather that they are brought back in after 6 months has passed rather than before. Officers have also reported some properties are empty over 6 months where the owner intends to sell however the outcome of Brexit and the potential impact on the property market has meant they have remained empty over the 6-month period with no appetite for any intervention support or to bring the properties back into use. Whilst neither of these issues can be accurately quantified, the combination of factors including the focus on problematic properties has resulted in a reduced performance for this indicator.

Metric 45. Number of reported and recorded Hate Crimes (Community Safety)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	19	17	R	G

Improvement Plan:

There has been a slight increase in overall reported hate crime in 2018/2019 compared to 2017/2018. This is in part due to an increase in reporting linked to campaigns

promoting the reporting of hate crimes and hate incidents. However the number of crime and incidents are still low in comparison to other Local Authorities in the Northumbria Force area. Racist Hate continues to be the largest volume within hate crime followed by Homophobic and disability. Monitor, participate in Force-wide initiatives.

Metric 47. Total number of Public Protection Service Requests received (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	N/A	1,348	R	G

Improvement Plan:

This is a measure of demand that is used for service and resource management purposes. Monitor.

Metric 51. Percentage of dwelling fires with smoke alarm fitted (NFRS)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	75%	86.7%	R	G

Improvement Plan:

The target for this indicator has been significantly exceeded, (86.67%/75%), however the performance against 17/18 YTD is 1% lower. 91 out of the 105 dwelling fires attended having a smoke alarm fitted at the time of the incident.

At the end of 2017/18 88% of dwelling fires attended had a smoke alarm fitted at the time of the incident occurring compared to 58% five years ago at the end of 2012/13.

ACTIONS: NFRS will continue to promote the installation of smoke alarms within domestic premises through our education programmers, social media posts and premises specific “Safe and Wellbeing” visits. The importance of accurate data recording continues to be reiterated to personnel undertaking “Safe and Wellbeing”. Targeted visits are supported by partner referrals and underpinned by a risk modelling process.

Every incident where there is a record of ‘no smoke alarm fitted’ is challenged, which has the dual result in both improving performance and providing further education and guidance to Emergency Response personnel.

Metric 52. Percentage of food plan visits achieved against % expected in plan (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	84%	84%	R	G

Improvement Plan:

Planned inspections performance is on target although there is a high number of visits scheduled for Q4. Performance is being closely monitored.

Metric 53. Percentage of food premises with a hygiene rating of 3 and above (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	94.8%	98%	R	G
Improvement Plan:				
There has been a slight reduction in the overall number of premises with a rating of 3 stars and above but performance is better than both the North East Region (96.6%) and National (94.8%) averages. Monitor.				

Metric 54. Percentage of high priority food premises inspections completed in line with annual programme (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	68%	75%	R	G
Improvement Plan:				
We continue to perform ahead of target and expect to maintain overall performance at the level achieved in 2017/18. Monitor.				

Metric 55. Percentage of high risk animal health premises inspected and assessed (Public Protection)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	50%	49.4%	R	R
Improvement Plan:				
Slight underperformance at the end of Q3 is expected to be corrected by the year-end. Monitor.				

Metric 68 Workforce Accident Incident Rate (Neighbourhood Services)	Target	Perf	DoT	Perf
	3%	6.1%	R	R
Improvement Plan:				
There has been a focus on improving reporting of incidents, including 'near miss' incidents and threatening/violent behaviour incidents. In this context, an increase in the incident rate is entirely to be expected and is welcomed as a sign that our policy of increased awareness and reporting is proving effective. There were no significant injury/accidents within Neighbourhood Services during this period. All incidents/accidents are reviewed to identify causation factors and where possible preventative measures put in place to prevent reoccurrence. Close scrutiny of performance in this area is maintained by the Corporate Health & Safety Group, which includes Member representatives. Health & Safety is a standing agenda item in all service management meetings and working practices are kept under review.				

Implications

Policy	Supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan and reflects the service priorities of the Planning, Housing & Resilience and Environment & Local Services portfolios
Finance and value for money	Performance objectives reflect the cost and value associated with delivering high performing services. Service standards are considered affordable and achievable within the Council's existing resource allocation.
Legal	none
Procurement	none
Human Resources	none
Property	none
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/>	none
Risk Assessment	none
Crime & Disorder	none
Customer Consideration	The report reflects the Council's service commitments to its residents and our current performance against those commitments. Annual Service Statements for 2019/20 are in the course of preparation and will reflect customer and Council priorities, with service standards to be determined by affordability and value considerations.
Carbon reduction	none
Wards	All

Background papers:

The Communities & Place Overview & Scrutiny Committee Performance Scorecard can be viewed online at

<http://performance.northumberland.gov.uk/Public/Reports/OutturnReport.aspx?GroupID=52>.

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	initials
Monitoring Officer/Legal	
S151 Officer	AE
Relevant Executive Director	PJ
Chief Executive	
Portfolio Holder(s)	

Author and Contact Details

Paul Johnston
Interim Executive Director, Place
01670 620292
paul.johnston@northumberland.gov.uk