



Northumberland County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 9 April 2024

Q3 Corporate Plan Performance Report

Report of Councillor(s) Cllr Richard Wearmouth, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Responsible Officer(s): Dr Helen Paterson, Chief Executive

1. **Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan**

- 1.1 **Achieving Value for Money** – The Council aims for continuous improvement and innovation in all its services to residents. This is underpinned by a clear understanding of the direction of travel for service performance.
- 1.2 **Tackling Inequalities** – Everything the Council does across its services can make a positive impact on tackling inequalities therefore it is important to track performance and understand which key performance indicators (KPIs) relate to tackling inequalities outcomes.
- 1.3 **Driving Economic Growth** – The Council's KPIs set out measures of economic growth.

2. **Purpose of report**

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of the progress against the Council's three Corporate Plan priorities using the Council's performance at the end of Quarter 3, 2023/24 (Q3).

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - a) Consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report.

4. **Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable**

5. **Background**

Performance reporting to Cabinet and other committees provides a valuable opportunity for Members to consider and comment on the performance of services across the Council, with a particular focus on progress against the three Corporate Plan priorities. This strengthens accountability between key decisions, allocation of resources, service outputs and the overall achievement of the three priorities of the Council.

The Council adopted the Corporate Plan at its Annual General Meeting on 17th May 2023. The Plan establishes three priorities for the Council, underpinned by our approach to tackling Climate Change. The Annual Council Achievements Report (reported to Council in March) sets out overall progress against the three priorities, alongside Annual Cabinet Member reports which provide an opportunity for Members to look further into the work of portfolios.

This report forms part of an updated approach to Corporate Plan performance reporting as follows:

- Regular directorate briefings with Cabinet Members;
- Executive Management Team;
- Strategic Leadership Team;
- Cabinet (quarterly reports);
- Scrutiny Chairs and Overview and Scrutiny Committees; and;
- Quarter 4, outturn report to Full Council in the summer period.

Monitoring our Priorities

The following sections set out performance summaries for each of the three Corporate Plan priorities for 2023/24. These summaries highlight key points on performance, both positive and including where targets have been missed at the end of Quarter 3 for 2023/24.

It is important to remember that many of our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are influenced by a range of external factors. For example, economic measures are a function of global issues beyond the control of our Economy and Regeneration Service. Equally, Looked After Children rates are impacted by a range of complex and long-term societal factors. Recovery from Covid continues to be an issue in some areas of service performance.

We have commenced work on developing a refreshed set of metrics which will report progress on each of the priorities, we want to be able to show progress towards achieving our outcomes in a holistic way, this will include rich data from Resident's survey, Staff survey and a range of KPI's. This work will involve members and officers to ensure we have fit for purpose measures and will produce a new performance reporting framework for 2024/25. This report presents the current KPI's.

Our Corporate Plan Vision:

Northumberland: Land of Great Opportunities. With world-class facilities to stunning landscapes, spectacular castles, picturesque coastal and market towns, we believe there's no better place to live and work. Our economy boasts a growing, internationally recognised offshore and renewable energy hub delivering clean and green growth. And, we have a strong manufacturing base, including in pharmaceuticals and life sciences. We are the largest and least densely populated local authority area in England. That makes for lots of communities with distinctive characteristics, heritage, functions and needs. We aim to build on all these strengths to ensure the county continues to be a land of great opportunities for current and future generations. To achieve this, Members and Council staff are focused on working together to deliver our three priorities:

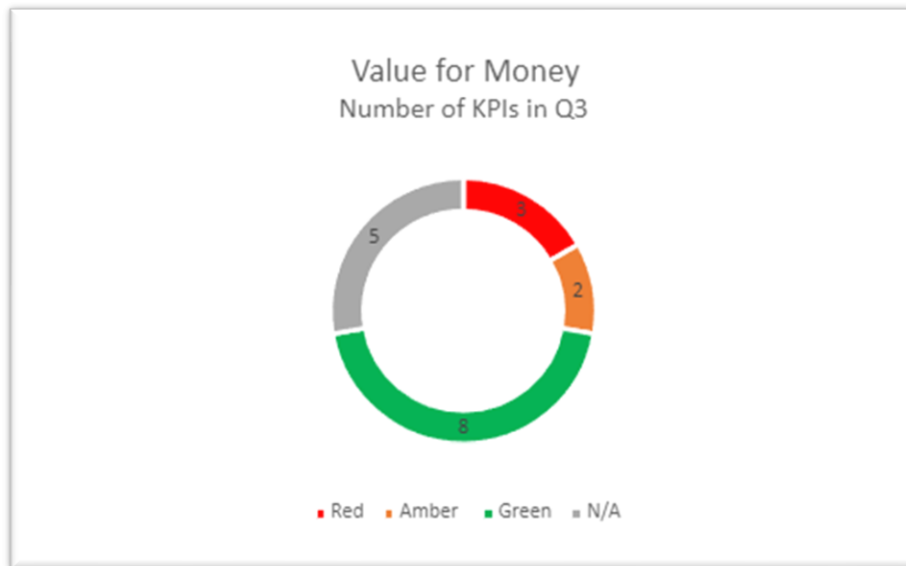
- (i) Achieving Value for Money.**
- (ii) Tackling Inequalities.**
- (iii) Driving Economic Growth.**

PRIORITY 1: Achieving Value for Money

We recognise we are funded by residents and businesses and are accountable to them for our spending decisions and the quality of services we deliver. We must ensure we are delivering Best Value through efficient, effective and accessible services that respond to and meet the needs and expectations of our residents. And, as one of the largest employers in the county, we can become a leading example for residents, communities and businesses on carbon neutral approaches.

Outcomes:

- Residents receive the best customer experience.
- We make the best spending decisions.
- Working better, more effectively
- Making a difference with digital



Summary of Q3 23/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
1	Complaints answered within timescale (%)	100	74.2	70.8	68.4	76.6	78.8
2	% calls answered	90	97.2	93.4	95.6	95.3	97.6
3	Average time to answer calls (seconds)	180	46	112	73	67	30
4	Local Suppliers (Number)	-	1,361	1,402	1,553	1,632	1,504
5	Value of Local Suppliers (£)	-	£72.7m	£92.3m	£122.6	£101.6	£98.9M
6	Suppliers trading with Council who are local (%)	-	40	38	39	42	39

7	Requisition Processed within 3 days (%)	80	97	97	98	97	99
8	% of the workforce who are apprentices (Annual)	2.3	-	4.1	-	-	-
9	Days lost to sickness (# per FTE / annum)	7.5	11.3	11.4	11.4	11.5	11.7
10	Mandatory Training completed (%)	85	88.2	91.5	90.3	90.8	90.9
11	Corporate Landlord Compliance (%)	98	100	100	100	95	100
12	Property statutory tests completed on time (%)	92	96.7	98.1	98.3	97.8	96.8
13	Council Tax – arrears retrieved (£m)	3.37	3.4	4.3	1.0	2.2	3.2
14	% of Council Tax collected	82	82.0	97.3	28.6	55.1	81.5
15	% of National Non-Domestic Rates collected	78.7	77.3	94.9	28.8	55.3	78.7
16	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	95.4	95.63	95.7	95.7	96.04
17	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	79.1	79.1	78.6	78.3	-

18	Service Desk calls resolved within SLA (%)	96.5	95.7	96.6	93.4	94.6	95.2
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NB: where data is annual, and reported in a previous quarter, the data and RAG will be duplicated in the current quarter's column.

Progress:

We know residents value being able to contact the Council quickly and conveniently to pay bills, ask questions, access services and resolve issues. Our Customer Services are getting more responsive.

In Q3 we delivered impressive performance with the ‘% of calls answered’, achieving an average of 97.6%. Even better, for ‘average time to answer calls’, the Team achieved an average for the year of 30 seconds. The Team continues to focus on enabling as many enquiries as possible to be answered at first point of contact from the customer, using performance monitoring data to drive improvement.

It’s important for small and medium business that orders and payments are processed efficiently when they supply the Council and, we are pleased to report the target for ‘requisitions processed within three days’ was achieved reporting performance of 99%.

For ‘Corporate Landlord Compliance’ – Performance improved in Q3 to 100% with all corporate buildings being fully compliant (21 out of 21 assessments were completed).

Focus on Improvement:

For ‘complaints answered within timescale (%)’, the Council missed its own demanding target of 100%, achieving 78.8%, whilst below target, it is better than the Q2 performance in the last financial year which was 76.6%. It should be noted that cases where an extension to the timescales has been authorised are not included. During Q3, a new case management system was implemented, and the data collected spans across two systems for this period. However, future data will be more robust with greater access to intelligence to assist with theme retrieval and trend analysis.

In ‘days lost to sickness’ we missed the target of 7.5 days per ‘full time equivalent’ (FTE). The target of 3.5% for ‘Percentage days lost to sickness absence (%)’ was also missed. To address this, services are scrutinising data and undertaking a focused approach to reducing absence.

When comparing sickness to the pre covid period, there has been an overall increase in sickness absence from 4.25% days lost to 5.26% and an increase from 9.4 to 11.7 average days per employee. The absences were split 71.5% short term absences and 28.5% long term. Of the days lost to sickness 20,007 (82%) were due to long term sickness and 4,378 (18%) due to short term sickness. This scale of increase is however a national trend and is not unique to the council.

The council currently offers a range of support including Online wellbeing portal for staff, Lead Health & Wellbeing Coordinator, Psychological Wellbeing Coordinator,

Health & Wellbeing Policy and use of Occupational Health. Further proposals to strengthen this offer are currently being considered, improving Occupational Health response times and reporting, internal Cognitive Behavioural Therapist service, Mental Health training and using focus group of specific role jobs to focus response to specific needs.

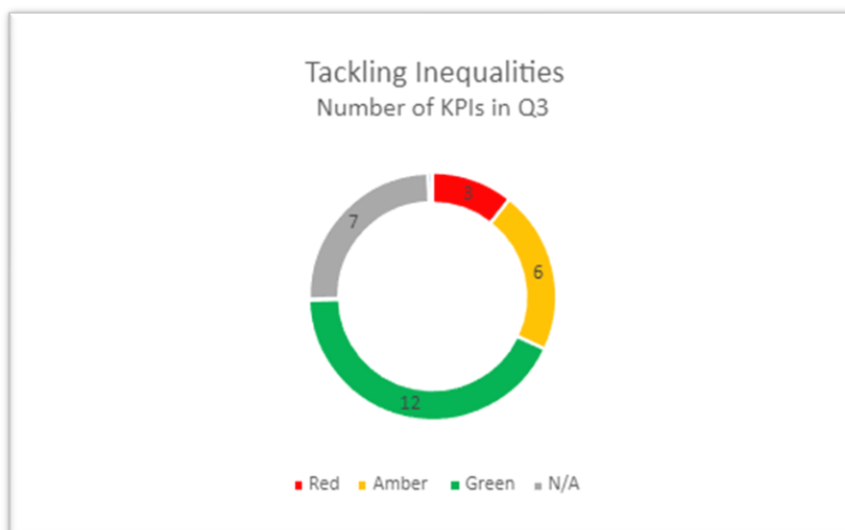
For 'Council Tax – arrears retrieved (£m)' - The arrears of £18.471m have reduced by £3.245m in total since 1 March 23. Overall arrears are £2.716m more than at the same point in time last year. Collections are still recovering following the Covid-19 pandemic and are further impacted by the ongoing cost of living crisis.

PRIORITY 2: Tackling Inequalities

We want to ensure people have fair access to the building blocks of a good life such as a decent income, a good-quality job, safe, affordable, and warm housing as well as good quality education and training opportunities. By tackling inequalities, we want to reduce the gap in experiences our residents have across health, education, employment, and social outcomes.

Outcomes:

- Empowered and resilient communities
- Children and Young people have the best start in life
- All adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability
- Residents have the building blocks of a good life



Summary of Q3 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
1	Number of referrals into NCT (#)	1,950 (150 per week)	3,044	3,182	2,363	2,276	2,203
2	Grant funding distributed to vulnerable households (£)	tbc	£1,100,479	£1,238,257	£421,962	£1,101,348	£1,619,03
3	Total awards to vulnerable households (#)	tbc	21,609	35,254	12,624	13,693	41,507
4	Number of Grants Awarded to Voluntary and Community organisations (#)	tbc	5	15	6	60	39
5	Total amount of funding provided to VCSE organisations (£)	tbc	£65,600	£200,000	£100,100	£301,167	£200,181
6	Pupils with good level of development at age 5 (%) Annual *	72	-	-	-	68.8	68.8
7	KS4 – average Attainment 8 score (%) Annual *	49	-	-	-	44.7	44.7
8	KS4 - average Progress 8 score (%) Annual *	-0.15	-	-	-	-0.20	-0.20
9	Pupils in good/ outstanding Primary schools (%)	89	88.3	94.2	94.0	95.0	97.9
10	Pupils in good/ outstanding Secondary schools (%)	75	79.2	84.0	83.7	83.9	83.6
11	16-17 yr-olds NEET or Not Known (%)	5.3	5.5	4.9	6.0	Q2 not reported	-
12	Women not smoking at time of delivery (%)	88	91.8 (Q3 latest data)	-	-	-	-
13	Breast feeding prevalence (%)	38	41.4	42.5	40.5	41.6 (Q1 latest data)	-
14	Height and weight recorded Year 6 (%) Annual	95	97.6	-	-	-	97.6
15	Reception age obesity (%) Annual	10	9.2	-	-	-	9.2

16	Year 6 obesity (%) Annual	21	21.8	-	-	-	21.8
17	Social Care related quality of life (score out of 24)	19.1	-	19.7	-	-	19.7
18	Care plans reviewed annually (%)	98.5	94.2	94.6	96.5	96.8	96.7
19	Effectiveness of Reablement/Rehabilitation (%)	88	92.1	90.8	90.6	93.4	91.2
20	Providers rated by CQC as outstanding or good (%)	84.3	84.8	88.2	86.7	89.5	88.0
21	Indicative personal budget (%)	95	92.1	94.1	91.6	92.2	92.1
22	Adults with learning disabilities living at home/with family (%)	83	84.9	86.1	86.3	86.8	86.7
23	Admissions to residential/nursing 18-64 (per 100k population)	12.5	8.7	14.2	12.5	12.0	11.4
24	Admissions to residential/nursing 65+ (per 100k population)	654.9	625.6	677.2	707.9	722.6	701.8
25	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	5	4.5	4.7	4.7	4.4	4.4
26	Successful treatments – alcohol (%)	32	26.6	28.7	29.98	32.7	31.4 (Oct latest data)
27	Successful treatments - non-opiates (%)	21	27.3	29.1	26.8	30.1	28.8 (Oct latest data)
28	Successful treatments – opiates (%)	3	3.5	3.5	3.1	3.5	3.1 (Oct latest data)

NB: where data is annual, and reported in a previous quarter, the data and RAG will be duplicated in the current quarter's column.

Progress:

The impressive number of referrals made to Communities Together, which outperformed the target by almost 200 as well as grants to vulnerable families (£1.6m at end of Q3) underlines the Council's firm commitment to support community resilience through challenging times. Beyond direct support to households, the Council is also helping voluntary and community organisations to lead positive change in communities – last quarter the Council gave over £200k to VCSE groups. The

Council is committed, through its Inequalities Plan, to continuing to build community resilience.

We are delighted to see more children and young people attending good or outstanding primary schools. This continues the improving trend over the last 2 years. The figure of 97.9% is 8% better than the national average and 10% more than the previous year. The hard work of school leaders, supported by the Local Authority School Improvement Team, means that inspection outcomes are the highest the county has seen.

For 'pupils in good / outstanding secondary schools' - we have seen a much-improved picture over the past year. Northumberland's latest figure of 83.6% means that 21% more learners are in 'good' or better schools compared to 2017. Inspection outcomes are currently 2% above the national average and 4% better than Q3 in the previous year.

We are proud of the strong performance in the measures for this outcome which are the result of hard work across teams in Childrens, Adults Services and Public Health, working closely with external providers and partners. These positive trends demonstrate our commitment to supporting healthier and more independent lives for our residents.

Focus on improvement:

'For Key Stage 4 Attainment' - we were pleased external examinations returned in 2022 for the first time since 2019. Teacher and centre assessed grades were used during the pandemic. Nationally, it was determined that grades would, overall, fall halfway between 2019 and 2021. Northumberland achieved 44.7, slightly below what was achieved in 2019, and below the national average of 46.2.

The collective score of GCSE performance is starting to recover post COVID- pre COVID Northumberland was beginning to perform much better against peer performance. The volatility of the two years of disrupted education has the potential to impact on performance across formal public examinations for some while. The progress children make from KS2-KS4 - pre Covid was in line with national average and has dropped since Covid, although is now starting to improve. This indicator will be volatile as we see children who performed very well at KS2 work through the academic years to KS4 having been impacted by the two years of disrupted education routine. It should be noted though that the 2023/24 KS2 results showed Northumberland 'bouncing back' the start of improvements that will take time to work through to the KS4 results.

There were 116 permanent care home admissions (65+) in Q3 which pushed this KPI into 'Red' and is improving on Q2 performance where there were 147 admissions. High numbers of admissions were anticipated due to the current pressures in the domiciliary care market where Members will be aware there is increasing difficulty commissioning and providing domiciliary care countywide. This has led to a slightly higher than normal number of admissions to care homes than would have been expected.

For 'Care plans reviewed annually (%)' – national guidance is that all care plans should be reviewed at least every twelve months. The outturn has reduced slightly since the previous quarter. Work continues in this area to assist in improvements in this metric.

For 'Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)' - The outturn is based on 39 out of 896 service users aged 18-64, with a learning disability known to adult social care in paid employment - often complex cases.

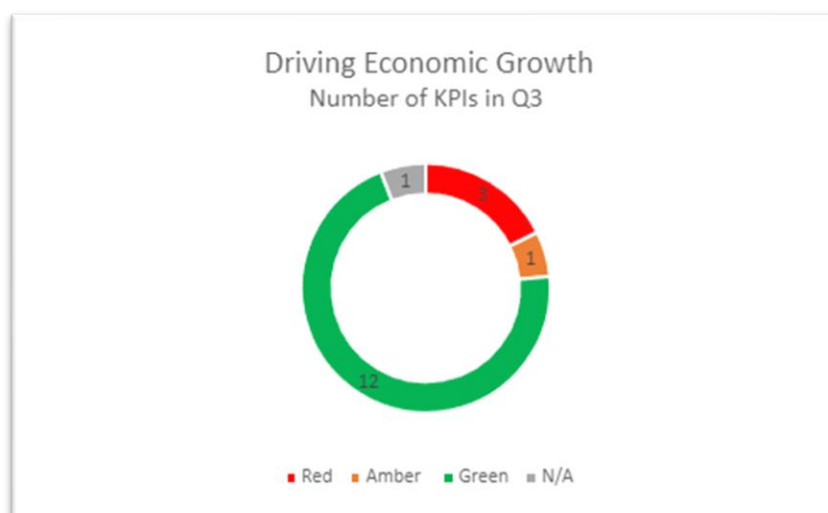
For 'Successful treatments - alcohol (%)' – the target was missed, and marginally down on Q2 performance. The service works with some of our most disadvantaged residents and continues to experience very high demand for alcohol treatment. Public Health continues to work closely with the service to identify ways of improving performance while ensuring patient safety and addressing inequality.

PRIORITY 3: Driving Economic Growth

We want to see everyone can benefit from a strong and sustainable economy. There are significant opportunities for growth right across our diverse and rich county and harnessing these opportunities will support our communities to thrive. We want Northumberland to be a great place to live with opportunities for all our residents, whether they live in our countryside or within one of our busy towns.

Outcomes:

- Thriving places and culture
- A diverse and resilient economy
- Skilled and aspirational people
- A connected county



Summary of Q3 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	Q3 22/23	Q4 22/23	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24
1	Street cleanliness - Detritus (% of areas surveyed)	8	6.6	-	6.5	-	3.4
2	Street cleanliness - Dog Fouling (% of areas surveyed)	1	0	-	0	-	0
3	Street Cleanliness - Litter (% of areas surveyed)	5	1.7	-	2.4	-	0.4
4	Green Flag status parks (#)	11	-	-	12	-	12
5	Fly tips removed in 3d (%)	95	98	98	98.6	98.3	98.4
6	Net additional homes (#) Annual	614	-	1592	-	-	1592
7	Net affordable homes provided (# pa) Annual	374	-	122	-	-	122
8	Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)	96	97.7	97.7	99.2	92.4	96.4
9	Time taken to answer the 999 call by Fire Control (%)	95	99	96.3	96.7	96.4	98.2
10	Accidental Dwelling Fires (#)	57	34	33	29	26	33
11	Deliberate Primary Fire (#)	66	24	22	38	33	26
12	Rogue Trader complaints and interventions (%)	95	100	100	100	100	100
13	Employment Rate (%)	75.7%	68.8	70.5	70.1	70.1	70.1
14	Weekly Pay – Residents *(£ Annual)	£659.90	-	£601.80	-	-	£652.10
15	Weekly Pay – Workers *(£ Annual)	£648.50	-	£573.30	-	-	£607.80
16	Availability of Superfast broadband (%)	95	95.4	95.63	95.7	95.7	96.04
17	Take up of Superfast broadband (%)	65	79.1	79.1	78.6	78.3	-

NB: where data is annual, and reported in a previous quarter, the data and RAG will be duplicated in the current quarter's column.

Progress:

We are pleased to report, performance across key measures show neighbourhoods are clean and tidy, where fly tipping issues are dealt with swiftly and more people have access to high-quality parks.

We are also proud of the role our excellent Fire and Rescue Service play in contributing to safe places and their key measures reflect a service which is making our neighbourhoods safe from harm, alongside our Public Protection teams.

We have met our targets on “Availability of Superfast broadband (%)” which shows a positive direction of travel in terms of ensuring our county is digitally connected.

For ‘Outcome of fire safety inspections expressed by action taken as a result of the inspection (%)’ - Inspections are identified in line with the risk-based inspection programme (RBIP), set by the service, targeting premises to identify and improve fire safety management and therefore a low expectation of reasonable standard premises has been set, the theory being that if all premises are at a reasonable standard then the RBIP is targeting the incorrect premises. Performance is being monitored.

Whilst there has been some improvement across key economic measures, these will continue to be shaped largely by challenging national and global economic trends over the past few years.

Currently, our quarterly performance reporting does not contain KPIs on skills and that is something we will put right in future Corporate Plan reporting.

Focus on improvement:

Whilst it was positive that we exceeded our target on net additional homes, we missed our target for ‘net affordable homes’ and this continues to be a key area of focus for improvement in the coming year.

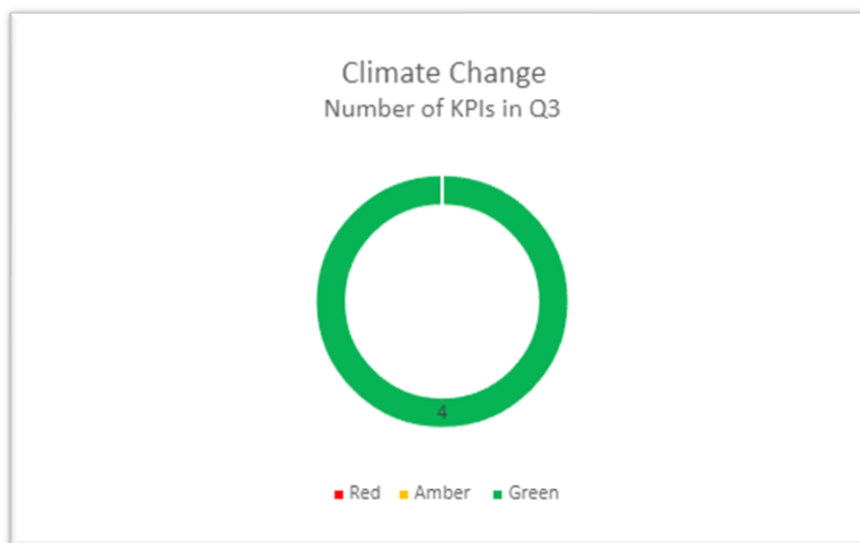
The measure “Net affordable homes provided” records a delivery of 122 new affordable homes against a target of 374. The delay to delivery is an attribute of the construction rate by private sector developers or “lag” and legal triggers. More than 1,400 affordable dwellings have currently been secured via Section 106 agreements that have not been completed. These are awaiting progress on construction sites, and the Council continually monitors progress. The geographic split of these secured, but not completed affordable homes is; South East 632, Central 419, North 263, West 79. These figures will constantly increase as new planning permissions are granted. Affordable Homes delivery from 2016-2023 equated to 16.5% of all housing completions (1,802 affordable homes out of a total 10,914 net additions of all housing), averaging 257 affordable homes pa over the past 7 years.

The employment rate is struggling to bounce back after the pandemic. Around 15k more people were in employment in Northumberland 10 years ago, this is partly explained by our changing population. Our working age population has contracted significantly and moved into the retirement cohort and younger population are not filling the gap. We continue to invest in the regeneration across the county whilst building new infrastructure which will support economic growth and a refresh of the Economic strategy for 2024-26 has been undertaken. This will ensure Northumberland County Council can successfully respond to the County’s priorities in developing partnerships and investment plans which will support growing the business base, supporting inclusive employment and deliver productive places.

PRIORITY: Climate Change

In achieving the three Corporate Priorities, we will ensure we pass a healthy, clean and sustainable environment to future generations. Each of our three Priorities has a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency. Climate Change threatens to disproportionately affect our poorest areas, and climate policies which are too burdensome for the poorest in society could have an unwelcome effect on

inequality. Net Zero is the growth opportunity of the 21st Century. Northumberland can get a huge boost from the low carbon economy, and we are already creating the foundations as we work to become carbon neutral.



Summary of Q3 2023/24 outturn:

	Measure	Target	21/22	22/23	23/24
1	Free Tree Planting Scheme (Number of Trees) Annual	15,000	13,578	14,328	15,750
2	Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual	250	300	303	-
3	NCC Carbon Dioxide Emission (tCO ₂) Biannual	15,636	11,405	10,399	11,810
4	NCC EV Fleet Replacement (# eligible vehicles) Annual	11	33	39	-

Progress:

For our 'Free Tree Planting Scheme - of the 15,750 saplings set aside for the scheme, some 7,250 were collected by those who applied (10,558). The 5,192 difference between ordered and applied for are being planted by GNF team, replanting from storm damage.

The difference between applied for and collected (3,308) were either handed out as spares to residents or used by LS.

For 'Kerbside Glass Collection Scheme (tonnes of glass) Annual' – some 302.658 tonnes of glass were collected in the second year of the glass collection recycling trial (November 2022 - October 2023).

6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

- 6.1 As Cabinet is recommended to consider progress against the three Corporate Priorities as summarised in this report, there are no other options to consider.

7. Implications

Policy	This report supports delivery of all three priorities of the Corporate Plan.
Finance and value for money	Value for money is a priority for the Council. This Report contains no direct financial implications. The ongoing delivery of the Corporate Plan involves individual actions that may have financial implications which would form separate reports as these arise
Legal	Whilst this report contains no immediate legal implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Corporate Plan may have legal implications, which would form separate reports as these arise.
Procurement	N/A
Human resources	N/A
Property	N/A
The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No Whilst this report contains no immediate equality implications, the delivery of the individual actions within the Corporate Plan may have equality implications, which would form separate impact assessments as these arise
Risk assessment	None at this stage
Crime and disorder	N/A
Customer considerations	N/A
Carbon reduction	Each of our three Priorities have an important a part to play in responding to the Climate Change Emergency.
Health and wellbeing	N/A
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

N/A

9. Links to other key reports already published

Corporate Plan 2023-26

Corporate Plan Achievements Report March 2024

10. Author and Contact Details

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