

Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 11 June 2019

210. Year End 2018/19 Performance Report including progress on the Strategic Plan Action Plan 2018-21

Dan Gascoyne, Chief Operating Officer, introduced this report alongside Councillor David King, Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources. He highlighted and explained those key performance indicators (KPIs) which had been rated 'red' (where targets were not met).

KPI K1H5 (Average time to re-let Council Homes) had not met its target due to the initial contractor for CBH not being able to meet its obligations. A new contractor was appointed on 12 April and the situation is improving. The Panel were informed that a low rate of void properties and a high proportion requiring significant work following long tenancies had increased the average time to re-let. Dan Gascoyne acknowledged the missed target but noted that this target had been met last year (when there had not been contractor problems). This would be discussed with Colchester Borough Homes but the intention was to keep a challenging target for this KPI.

KPI K1P1 (Processing of Planning Applications – Major) had not met target due to loss of experienced staff and a number of appeals and referrals to the Secretary of State. The small number of major applications meant that a delayed application has a significant effect on the KPI. Richard Block agreed to provide more detail regarding this after the meeting.

KPI K1R3 (Sickness Rates) have proven problematic but short-term illness figures are improving. Long-term illness remains difficult to reduce, but this is being overseen by assistant directors across the Council. The Waste and Zone Teams have been particularly hit by long-term sickness. Richard Block, Assistant Director – Environment, in particular is working to address this. Mitigating action includes changing workloads to suit capabilities, identifying drivers for long-term sickness and working with employees to get them back to work as soon as possible. Councillor King stressed the importance of heeding and responding to results of staff surveys and supporting Council staff. A member of the Panel noted that this KPI target is always missed and that this should be considered when setting the future target so that this provides a reasonable aspirational target which portfolio holders and management can work to achieve. Dan Gascoyne confirmed that this had changed from 7.5 days per employee to 9, but with the plan to gradually reduce this back to 7.5 days over the next three years.

A Panel member queried to what extent sick leave taken had resulted from the work carried out by officers in their day-to-day duties and asked for detail on work being carried out to identify where this is occurring. Councillor King agreed to provide written detail regarding this. Analysis of this is ongoing, service by service, and

certain service duties had already been identified as being more likely by their nature to have an effect on officer health. He informed the Panel that he would be reviewing this with Human Resources in coming weeks, but that CBC compared well to other public-sector employers. Richard Block underlined this point and reinforced the point that front-line staff working in hard conditions had fewer options for working flexibly or carrying out their duties whilst unwell.

KPI K1W1 (Residential Household Waste per household) is currently red but the rate of recycling is strong, with the Council third best performer in the region.

Councillor King noted that significant changes have been made in the style of presenting this performance data to improve clarity and understanding. The Council is performing well in comparison to other authorities against which it is benchmarked, and focus will be on the few under-target performance areas.

In response to questions, Richard Block explained that, regarding KPI K1W3 (Missed collections), each individual missed collection reported was counted as one report, irrespective of the number of properties which might be affected. There had been a spike in missed collections caused by a recent gastrointestinal illness which had caused some staffing difficulties. To mitigate future risks of this sort, Cabinet have approved work to improve the depot which will help increase hygiene and counter sickness issues.

The Panel noted strong performance in a range of KPIs, including rent collection, council tax collection, housing benefit claims processed, and affordable homes delivered.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The Panel noted the report;
- (b) Further information be provided by Councillor King , Portfolio Holder for Business and Resources, including a breakdown of sickness numbers and analysis carried out on sickness rates.
- (c) The Panel paid tribute to the work carried out by officers during 2018/19 which had led to overall good performance and successes.