

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
12 SEPTEMBER 2023**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN 2023-24 (QUARTER 1 UPDATE)

REPORT OF: REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: FINANCE AND IT

COUNCIL PRIORITY: PEOPLE FIRST, SUSTAINABILITY, A BRIGHTER FUTURE TOGETHER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents progress on delivering the Council Delivery Plan for 23-24 at the end of Quarter 1, which includes:

- Progress against the completion of Council projects and milestones
- Requests to change milestone dates.
- Commentary on progress made and any new issues, risks, or opportunities.
- The addition of new projects
- The setting of key Council projects

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Committee notes the progress against Council projects as set out in the Council Delivery Plan (Appendix A) including changes to milestones, performance indicators and risks, and makes any recommendations or comments to Cabinet.
- 2.2. That the Committee considers the presentation of the report for future meetings, especially in relation to milestones and project status, and makes any recommendations or comments to Cabinet.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The Council Delivery Plan (CDP) monitoring reports provide Cabinet with an opportunity to monitor progress against the key Council projects, and understand any new issues, risks or opportunities.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1. In developing the CDP, it was agreed that Cabinet would receive quarterly updates. The updates are also provided to Overview and Scrutiny Committee so that they can provide additional oversight and support to Cabinet.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1. Service Directors and Service Managers have provided updates on progress and will have made Executive Members (and Deputies) aware of progress made.
- 5.2. A draft of the Quarter 1 update was provided to Performance and Risk Management Group (PRMG) in August. The Group has a standing invite to the Executive Member for Finance and IT (has responsibility for performance monitoring), the Deputy Executive Member for Finance and IT, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) and the Chair of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR). Other members of O&S and FAR are also encouraged to attend when they are able to. PRMG were asked to comment on the content and format of the CDP Q1 update.
- 5.3. The CDP is reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and they are asked to provide comments and recommendations to Cabinet.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report contains a recommendation on a key Executive decision first notified on the Forward Plan on the 26 May 2023.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. The CDP brings together projects, risks and performance indicators together in one document. It was implemented in Spring 2022.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Appendix A provides an update on the progress made in delivering the Council Delivery Plan. Whilst it is labelled as a Quarter 1 update, it generally reflects the latest position at the time that the report was written (mid-August).
- 8.2 Proposed changes to plan milestone dates (23), the addition of new milestones (6) and new performance indicators (4) are highlighted in yellow.
- 8.3 The project completion percentage reflects the number of milestones that have been completed against the number of milestones that have been set. In general, the number of milestones that have been set will cover what is expected to be achieved in the current financial year (up to 31st March), but (for longer projects) will not be all the milestones up to ultimate completion.
- 8.4 The overall completion status of a project is measured against the current target completion date for current milestones. It does not reflect the ultimate completion date, and it is also updated as there are changes in milestone dates. For example, a project could have had an initial completion date of April 2023. Through changes to milestones that target completion date has now been agreed to be December 2023. The current status would therefore be a green arrow, even though the original target date had been missed. This was raised as something to be considered at PRMG, and it will be

considered how to incorporate the original target date to aid transparency, without having to go back through previous reports to see the agreed changes to milestone dates that have taken place.

- 8.5 At the last Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June, there was a discussion about whether there should be prioritisation within the Council Delivery Plan. This conversation was then continued at the PRMG meeting in August. This was linked to the resourcing risk (see below) and that there had been slippage in a number of milestone dates. Whilst there are reasons for changes in milestone dates and the project is still expected to be achieved, if any projects were a higher priority, then there should be an expectation that milestone dates should not move as much. Also, there are a large number of projects on the plan (with the potential for more to be added) so there should be a consideration of which ones are genuinely a priority, so that resources can be prioritised accordingly. Informal discussions with Cabinet members have started on this, and it is intended that this will be considered and presented alongside the Quarter 2 update (in December/January).
- 8.6 The Council Delivery Plan currently shows all the milestones for all the projects (unless a project has been completed/ removed). This was reasonable last year as it was the first year of the CDP. However, it now means that some projects now have a reasonably long list of completed milestones. Over time this will add to the length of the CDP report and eventually make it completely unwieldy. For current projects it is proposed that all milestones are retained on Pentana (the Council's Risk and Performance system that all Councillors can access), but that these are manually removed from the report after they have been presented as having been completed. This will help the readability of the overall CDP but does cause a minor issue with completion percentages. Currently it is easy to see the link between the completion percentages and the milestones. If there are 10 milestones and 6 have been completed, then it will show as 60% complete. If (for example) the 6 completed milestones are manually removed, then the report will show 4 incomplete milestones, but the completion percentage will still be 60%. This is why Cabinet (and Overview and Scrutiny) are asked to comment on this proposal.
- 8.7 At the Overview and Scrutiny meeting in June, it was requested that more detail was provided on the Resourcing risk. There has been a slight change to the risk in the CDP, but that has deliberately kept at a summary level. The following paragraphs provides a more detailed update.
- 8.8 The resourcing risk is made up of two parts. The first part is the number of projects in the Council Delivery Plan, and other work that sits outside the Council Delivery Plan. This makes up the demand on staff resources. The second part is the availability of staff to complete that workload, i.e., the supply.
- 8.9 The factors which affect the demand side are:
- New work/ projects (Member directed)- If Councillors are requesting new work to be completed then the resource implications of that need to be fully considered.
 - New work/ projects (Externally created). In general, this will be outside our control and require action to be taken. The main recent example is the

response and recovery work relating to the Baldock Industrial Estate fire (note: a project/ risk is being created in relation to this). This can also arise from things like changes in legislation and regulatory requirements (e.g., planning appeals).

- Removal of work/ projects, extending the target dates. This links to paragraph 8.5 above. At the moment this is being done on a reactionary basis. More formal work on prioritisation could help ensure that any reactionary changes are focused on the right work/ projects.

8.10 The factors that affect the supply side are:

- Staff retention- when staff leave it inevitably creates a gap in staff resource available to complete work.
- Staff recruitment- when a vacancy arises, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill posts. This particularly applies to roles such as legal, planning, environmental health and estates.
- Note that the above should be considered in relation to the lead service area, and also any support services that are required to deliver the project.
- The Council has been putting in place measures to make the Council a more attractive place to work, as well as looking at ways of widening our job advertising to attract more applicants to roles.
- During the Covid pandemic response and recovery (as well as in response to the delivery of previous key projects), services have been delivered by staff not taking all their leave and being given flexibility to take it over a longer period. This has resulted in large leave balances, and these need to be brought back to normal levels. But this requires a reduction in current workload to allow that leave to be taken.
- The staffing carry-forward (£300k) from last year has helped to create some additional short-term capacity. However, this does not work in areas where recruitment to roles is not actually possible.
- Agency staff and consultants can be used to fill posts in areas where full-time recruitment is not possible, but this comes at a high cost.
- Agency staff and consultants could (in theory) be used to create additional capacity, but this is unaffordable.

8.11 The intention is that the CDP reports provide an overview, as providing all the details on projects and risks would lead to a report that was too long. Requests can be made (especially by O&S) to look at individual projects in more detail (as per paragraphs 8.9 and 8.10 above). Any such request would be incorporated into the next monitoring report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The constitution determines the role of Cabinet as including: “To take decisions on resources and priorities, together with other stakeholders and partners in the local community, to deliver and implement the budget and policies decided by the Full Council. To monitor performance and risk in respect of the delivery of those policies and priorities” (paragraph 5.7.3) .

9.2 The constitution determines the role of Overview and Scrutiny as including: “To review performance against the Council’s agreed objectives/ priorities and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and/ or service area. To consider risks to the achievement of those objectives/ priorities. To make recommendations to Cabinet” (paragraph 6.2.7 (s)).

9.3 There are no specific legal implications arising from the CDP as a whole. However, there may be individual legal implications for some of the projects outlined. Any commissioning of work on new and existing projects will follow the standard legal requirements and those required by the Council’s internal standing orders, contained within the Constitution.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Where projects are linked to efficiencies or investments then these are included in the budget proposals and monitored through the quarterly finance reports.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Council Delivery Plan aims to support the risk management process by directly linking the risks to projects being undertaken. The aim of these proposals is to strengthen the link between performance and risk and make risks more current. This should provide an improved perspective of the risks that the Council faces.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

12.2 Performance reporting provides a means to monitor whether the Council is meeting the stated outcomes of the district priorities, its targets or delivering accessible and appropriated services to the Community to meet different people’s needs.

12.3 As projects progress, Equality Implications will be considered, and Equality Impact Assessments conducted where relevant.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Social Value Act and “go local” requirements do not apply to this report.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There will continue to be a need to align Council and Service objectives with available people resources to be able to achieve them. The Council Delivery Plan will help to make that link clearer, but as referenced above there is a need to prioritise to make that achievable.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no known Environmental impacts or requirements that apply to this report. However, a number of the projects to be monitored throughout the year are related to key environmental issues.
- 15.2 As projects progress, Environmental Implications will be considered, and Environmental Impact Assessments conducted where relevant.

16. APPENDICES

Appendix A – Council Delivery Plan 23-24 Q1 monitoring report.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None