

Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Six Monthly Performance Update

TITLE OF REPORT: Council Plan Delivery and Performance – Six Month update

REPORT OF: Mike Barker, Strategic Director, Corporate Services and Governance

Date: 28 November 2016

SUMMARY

This report is an assessment of the performance and delivery of the Council Plan 2015-2020 for the first six month period of 2016/2017.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

Corporate Resources

CHAIR:

Councillor John Eagle

VICE CHAIRS:

Councillor Paul Foy

Councillor Jonathan Wallace

ROLE AND REMIT OF THE COMMITTEE:

- The management of the Council's financial, human and physical resources
- Support for the democratic process;
- The involvement of local people and communities of Gateshead in the work of the Council
- Capacity building in communities, volunteering and resilience
- Matters relating to the Council's relationship with Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council including the Gateshead Offer
- Social inclusion, equalities and diversity; and
- The Council's arrangements for securing efficiency and money; and the development and operation of the Council's procurement strategy

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PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

Table 1 Corporate Performance				
Ref	Description	Year end performance 2015/16	6 month or latest performance	2020 Target
CP1	% Council Tax collected	95.4%	53.8%	96.5%
CP2	% of Business Rates collected	97.6%	55%	97%
CP3	% of undisputed invoices paid on time	87.16%	73.5%	95%
CP4	Speed of benefit claims (processing) – average time to process new claims & changes in circumstances (days)	7.95 days	10.2 days <i>(management target for 16/17 11 days)</i>	7.5 days
CP5	Staff sickness (days) (excluding schools)	9.19 days	9.81 days	8 days
CP6	% increase in transactions moved to digital (channel shift)	Baseline Year	Baseline Year	Baseline Year
CP7	% increase in online transactions	Baseline Year	Baseline Year	Baseline Year
CP8	Employee Engagement	68%	64%	TBC
CP9	Superfast Broadband Coverage	91.89%	93.02%	98.9%
Equality Objective: To increase levels of ambition and aspiration of vulnerable groups				
CP10	Ensure young people leaving care are supported to have an opportunity in the Council for an apprenticeship	New	Not yet available	<i>Dependent on detail of Government legislation</i>
Prosperous Gateshead				
PG16	Apprenticeships within the workforce	New	95 Apprenticeships	<i>Dependent on detail of Government legislation</i>
Live Love Gateshead				
LL1	Satisfaction – Gateshead as a place to live	64.5%	75.5%	80%

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CONTEXT

Social inclusion, equalities and diversity

Equality and Diversity

The Council continues to identify and monitor potential equalities impacts of budget proposals, and the mitigating actions taken to reduce or remove any adverse impact of budget decisions.

Equality impact assessments are being prepared in line with the budget proposals for 2017/18 to identify potential impact against protected characteristics.

This committee will be receiving a separate progress report on Equality Impact Assessments and the Council Plan on this agenda.

Support for the democratic process

Elections

Local elections took place across Gateshead in May 2016. The total turnout was 35.2% of the electorate. Of all the postal votes that were issued 67% were returned.

May 2016 also saw the Police and Crime Commissioner Election for the Northumbria Police Area. 32.1% of the electorate voted across the Northumbria Police area.

The EU referendum took place in June 2016. In Gateshead the turnout was 70.7% of the electorate, over 103,000 votes were cast.

Involvement of local people and communities of Gateshead in the work of the Council

Digital Consultation / Resident Involvement

36,000 residents now receive Gateshead Now. This is the Council's free regular email which enables residents to stay up to date with latest news, our services, important issues and what's on in the local area. It is a proactive and cost-effective way of keeping in touch with residents.

In addition to the readership of Gateshead now the Council has 14,000 followers on twitter and almost 10,000 likes on the Facebook page.

The Council currently has around 1400 members on the online resident panel ViewPoint. This allows residents to take part in online surveys about our services.

Residents Survey

The 2016 Residents Survey was developed using the council's online consultation system and distributed via email to our ViewPoint panel members. The panel has wide representation across all wards and across different age and ethnic groups.

The survey explored satisfaction with the local area, volunteering, satisfaction and trust in the council, and views, attitudes and behaviours relating to waste and recycling.

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A total of 928 online responses were received. The responses were weighted based on age, gender and ethnic group. Headline results are shown below;

Table 2: Key measures	2016 (%)	2015 (%)	2012 (%)
% Satisfied with their local area as a place to live	75.5	64.5	72.7
% Satisfied with the way that the council runs things	51.3	52.1	51.0
% Satisfied with value for money provided by the council	39.7	N/A	41.0
% Say council keeps residents well informed	67.3	N/A	67.0
% Agree they can influence decisions affecting their local area	33.2	N/A	31.0
% Who volunteer formally at least once a month	26.8	N/A	18.0
% Who volunteer informally at least once a month	32.4	N/A	34.0

Satisfaction in the local area

There has been a significant increase in the percentage of residents who are satisfied with their local area as a place to live from 64.5% in 2015 to 75.5% in 2016. Satisfaction is now also higher than it was in 2012 (72.7%).

Residents were asked what they feel is most important in making somewhere a good place to live, and what most needs improving in their local area. 'Good schools' and 'clean streets' area considered to be most important, followed by crime and anti-social behaviour.

Table 3: What is most important in making somewhere a good place to live, and what most needs improving in your local area?	2016		2012	
	Most important %	Needs improving %	Most important %	Needs improving %
Good schools	43.7	6.5	37	8
Clean streets	42.3	44.4	51	41
Level of crime	39.2	19.2	38	18
Level of anti-social behaviour	38.5	32.6	41	33
Parks and green spaces	36.7	20.4	25	25
Health services	34.7	9.4	41	11

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Affordable decent housing	34.3	16.8	35	20
Public transport	32.6	16.1	24	16
Good community spirit	29.2	14.9	12	14
Community facilities	28.3	18.1	21	8
Local shops	23.6	20.6	17	22
Access to good local jobs	22.2	17.3	21	33
Road and pavement repairs	18.4	50.7	20	45
Facilities and activities for young children	13.5	20.2	17	23
Level of traffic congestion	12.3	32.0	7	20
Facilities and activities for teenagers	11.6	32.1	13	27
None of these	0.3	1.5	-	1

Residents were asked if they think that **people in their local area usually get on well together**, and 91% said yes (always or most of the time). The wording of this question is different to that included in previous surveys. In 2012, 55% of residents agreed that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds got on well together. It is interesting to note the difference in response based on this change in wording.

Table 4: Do you think that people in your local area usually get on well together? 2016 (%)

Yes, always	7.1
Yes, most of the time	83.8
No, not often	7.4
No, never	1.6

Yes	91.0
No	9.0

Satisfaction with the council

Satisfaction with the way the council runs things has decreased very slightly from 52.1% in 2015 to 51.3% in 2016. However it is worth noting that dissatisfaction with the council has decreased slightly over this period from 28% to 27.3%.

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Table 5: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way the council runs things?	2016 (%)	2015 (%)	2012 (%)
Very satisfied	6.1	8.5	8
Fairly satisfied	45.3	43.6	43
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.4	19.9	20
Fairly dissatisfied	20.4	17.3	19
Very dissatisfied	7.0	10.7	10
Satisfied	51.3	52.1	51
Dissatisfied	27.3	28.0	29.0

There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of residents who agree that the council provides good value for money from 41% in 2012 to 39.7% in 2016.

Around two thirds of residents (67.3%) feel well informed about what the council does and the services it provides. This is largely unchanged from the 2012 figure of 67%.

Around a third of residents (33.2%) agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, a slight increase on the 2012 figure of 31%.

Six in ten residents are confident that the council will provide the best possible services it can within its available budget, and the best possible advice and information, dropping to five in ten for services that local people need and value.

Table 6: Confidence in the council	2016 (%)
% Who are confident that the council will provide.....	
..... the best possible services it can within its available budget	60.1
..... services that local people need and value	49.2
..... the best possible advice and information	60.1

Budget Consultation

The Council is required to agree a lawful budget each year and is now consulting with draft proposals, on the basis that the budget for 2017/18 needs to be decreased by approximately £22m. The public consultation runs from 8 November 2016 to 6 January 2017. The main method for people to give their views will be via the consultation portal accessed via the

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Council's website. In addition, engagement with key stakeholder groups will also be undertaken.

In order to communicate the Council's budget challenge as clearly and effectively as possible the communications team produced an [animation](#) which is now available on the Council's website.

Capacity building communities, volunteering and resilience

Population

Gateshead's population is projected to increase by 4,700 (+2.4%) over the 10 year period between 2014 and 2024. The overall rate of growth is similar to the previous 2012-based projection (+2.7%).

The main reason for the projected increase continues to be an ageing population. It is projected that by 2024 there will be an additional 5,100 people aged 65 or over (+13%). The 85+ age group is projected to increase at a faster rate (+35% by 2024) and is projected to more than double (+114%) to 9,700 by 2039.

Resilience

As reported to the committee in April, the focus of the Resilience and Emergency Planning Framework has been to continue to work in collaboration with partners and communities, increasing the capacity and capability to respond to future incidents.

GSP Review

A fundamental review of the Gateshead Strategic Partnership is taking place to ensure all activity is as joined up and as co-ordinated as possible to maximise our joint effort. Given the importance of partnership working, it is felt that it may be timely to review the effectiveness of the GSP to reinvigorate and improve effectiveness to help deliver the Council Plan and ultimately, Vision 2030.

Volunteering

Gateshead's fourth Volunteers' Month, took place in June. The aim of Volunteers Month was to:

- Celebrate the positive contribution made by existing volunteers
- Recruit more volunteers
- Enable local people to contribute to their community
- Confirm Gateshead's reputation as a national leader in volunteering

Throughout June, 101,170 hours were recorded on the volunteer totaliser which equates to £1.3m economic value. This is a 62% rise from last year.

£11,600 was allocated to 54 groups and organisations across Gateshead from the Volunteers' Month Grant Scheme. Various events were held during the month long activities.

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These ranged from community celebrations, Queens tea parties, training sessions and award ceremonies that gave recognition to the commitment made by Gateshead residents.

A celebratory event was held at the end of June in Trinity Square. Over 20 organisations took part in the event including, Citizens Advice Gateshead, Sight Service, Jazz NE and Age UK. Interactive volunteering opportunities were offered to local people on the date and the event was a great success. The Trinity Square management staff has informed the council that footfall for the day was 16,000, the highest footfall level of the month and for any event at Trinity Square.

The Residents Survey highlighted a significant increase in the percentage of residents who volunteer at least once a month in a formal way as part of a group, club or organisation from 18% in 2015 to 26.8% in 2016. Conversely there has been a slight reduction in informal volunteering (helping out someone who is not a relative) from 34% in 2012 to 32.6% in 2016.

The 2016 survey also asked if residents voluntarily help to improve their local area by litter picking, removing weeds etc. but not as part of a formal group. Around a fifth (19.6%) do so monthly, increasing to just under half (47.3%) who have done something to improve their local area less often.

The management of the Council's financial, human and physical resources

Customer Service Performance

Telephony performance in 2015/16 within the customer contact centre was as follows;

- Average wait to answer was 140 seconds
- Average abandonment rate was 40%

The customer contact centre receives around 250,00 calls per year and a significant number of calls to the civic centre (around 2 million per year) are not dealt with by the contact centre as these calls go direct to other extensions within the building.

Following a number of actions taken to improve performance, which included an increase and redeployment of Customer services Adviser resources together with a move to more automated channels and enhancements to the website to allow customer self service, performance for the first 6 months of 2016/17 resulted in by September 2016, average wait to answer of 28 seconds and average abandonment rate of 11.4%.

Council Tax Collection

At the end of the 2015/16 financial year 95.4% of all Council Tax had been successfully collected which equated to a £3m increase in cash terms from the previous year. The target for 2020 has been set at 96.5%.

The current rate of collection at **six month stage is 53.8%**. This is a slight improvement from the six month performance in 2015/16 which was 53.7%.

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Business Rates

The performance of business rate collection at the end of the 2015/16 financial year was 97.6% against the 2020 target of 97%.

At six month stage, 55% of business rates have been collected for the 2016/17 financial year.

Peer Challenge

The Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge on the authority. Peer Challenges are designed to support councils to take responsibility for their own improvement. The Corporate Peer Challenge looks at core parts of councils and provides a constructive, yet robust, challenge to the organisation that will help us identify areas for improvement. The Peer Challenge in Gateshead focussed on leadership, governance, corporate capacity and financial resilience. It was also requested that the 'Peer Reviewer' look at our approach to economic growth and prosperity, the work we are doing around how we work with the community (Achieving More Together), our use of digital solutions and how we look to generate income from trading and commercialisation.

A self-assessment was been produced and submitted to the Peer Challenge Team along with a number of supporting documents. Whilst on-site, the Peer Challenge Team met with Councillors and a variety of Officers to explore these themes further.

We are currently awaiting the outcome of the Peer Challenge.

Speed of processing benefit claims

Six month performance is 10.2 days, which is within the 2016/17 management target of **11 days**. Performance to date is an improvement on this stage last year. The introduction of national fraud and error initiatives are impacting on processing times through increased workload, but also more efficient ways of dealing with customers are being developed.

The ongoing uncertainty around the future rollout of Universal Credit in Gateshead and possible impact on performance has also made the 2020 target setting problematic, but it is anticipated that performance will improve year on year to bring levels within the 2020 target of 7.5 days.

Employee Engagement

Through the 2016 employee survey **64%** of employees said that the Council is a good place to work. This is down 4% on the baseline result from 2015.

However there were some positive trends that were highlighted in the survey as well. Some of the results are highlighted below

Question	2015	2016	Difference
Communication is good at the Council	33% agreed	37% agreed	+4%
I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to	54% agreed	57% agreed	+3%
There are opportunities for me to develop my	30% agreed	33% agreed	+3%

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career at the Council

I receive useful and constructive feedback from my manager	63% agreed	69% agreed	+6%
The people in my team cooperate to get the work done	82% agreed	87% agreed	+5%

There were challenges highlighted within the survey as well, including;

Question	2015	2016	Difference
I am confident with the way the Council is run	51% agreed	43% agreed	-8%
The Council is a good place to work	68% agreed	64% agreed	-4%
I feel proud to work for Gateshead Council	61% agreed	57% agreed	-4%
Customers are always a priority where I work	84% agreed	80% agreed	-4%

The full results and detail around what is happening to address some of the issues raised were included in an infographic document which can be accessed [here](#).

Workforce Plan

The Council's Workforce Plan sets out how some of the issues raised through the employee survey are being tackled. The plan is based on a number of themes – skills and behaviours, recruitment and retention, pay, reward and recognition, wellbeing and engagement and performance and change. There is a detailed delivery plan for each of the themes within the Workforce Plan. This is to ensure that the right things are put in place, in the right order and that effort is prioritised into activities that will make the most difference.

As set out in the recent case study that was considered by this committee in October, there has been a lot of progress against the delivery of the plan including;

- A new learning and development tool that gives managers and employees access to information on courses and other resources to support continued learning and development
- Development of a talent management and succession planning framework
- A revised grading structure to address the implementation of the National Living Wage
- Developing employee engagement plan to improve communication with employees and create new opportunities for employees to influence the work of the Council (further details below)
- Reviewing the Appraisal and Development process to include a performance management element
- Employee benefit scheme (including salary sacrifice schemes) to continually improve the benefits available to employees

Employee Forum

A new Council wide employee forum has been established as an opportunity for employees to come together from different services to influence and improve the way we work as an organisation. One of the objectives of the forum is to perform a 'deep dive' and get

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underneath the survey results to make improvements around issues raised such as communication, learning and development, managing change and flexible/agile working.

Summer Conference

The summer conference was held on 29 June 2016. The opportunity was taken to raise awareness of the change programme and the 4 workstreams to engage senior managers, increase buy in to change and facilitate a greater knowledge of and contribution to the change programme.

Over 95% of attendees rated the conference as either very good or good and 54% said that they now had a clearer understanding of how they / their teams could contribute to the change programme.

Digital Gateshead

Digital Gateshead is centred round “making it easy to access, benefit from and deliver good services”. Implementation began with Building Capacity (phase 1) in May 2016. This focused on solving problems that more obviously lent themselves to digital solutions, whilst further developing the technology we need. Phase 2 – Increasing Corporate Capability began in September 2016. This phase seeks to use digital means to solve more complex problems that require judgement rather than being solely transactional (such as getting a planning or benefits decision or engaging with social care).

Progress includes:

- Agreement of a new Digital Platform which will lead to improvements in our customer interface,
- The new and improved Councillor and Committees system went live on-line in August
- All existing online payments and balances moved to the council's new payment facility in August 2016. Work is now taking place to investigate the potential for delivering more payments electronically and increase the online sign up for direct debits
- A pilot trialling improved online forms, text reminders and Public-use PCs within Benefits reception went live in September 2016
- Free outdoor WiFi has been launched in the town centre and at the Quayside as part of GoDigital_WiFi, a partnership between Gateshead and Newcastle Councils with BT.

Sickness Absence

The average number of days of staff sickness at the end of the 2015/16 financial year was 9.19 days per employee / per year. The six month performance shows that this has increased slightly to 9.81 days per employee / per year. The target for 2020 is 8 days.

Sickness absence is being considered by this committee as a separate report on this agenda.

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Summary

Achievements	Areas for focus over the next 6 months
Satisfaction as a place to live	Continued focus on council tax and business rate collection to achieve 2020 targets
Delivery of the Workforce Plan including employee engagement activity and new learning and development framework	Successful LGA Peer Challenge to support continued improvement in Gateshead
Digital Gateshead new digital platform and improvements to online systems including improved online payment facility, free WIFI launched in Gateshead Town Centre and Quays	Continued roll out of the Digital Gateshead programme
1400 residents signed up to the Council's ViewPoint online system Annual Gateshead Volunteers Month hit 101,170 hours of volunteering - which equates to £1.3m economic value	Ongoing efforts to deliver the Workforce Plan , supporting learning and development, employee engagement and wellbeing including continuing to improve levels of Sickness Absence