

SWT Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 2nd December, 2020,
6.15 pm

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

[SWT VIRTUAL MEETING WEBCAST
LINK](#)

Members: Gwil Wren (Chair), Libby Lisgo (Vice-Chair), Ian Aldridge, Norman Cavill, Simon Coles, Dixie Darch, Habib Farbahi, Ed Firmin, John Hunt, Dave Mansell, Derek Perry, Phil Stone, Nick Thwaites, Danny Wedderkopp and Keith Wheatley

ADDENDUM

8. Corporate Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2020/21

(Pages 3 - 8)

This matter is the responsibility of Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources, Cllr Ross Henley.

The report provides an update on the council's performance for the first 6 months (April – September) of the 2020/21 financial year. The report includes information for a range of key performance indicators and also provides an update on progress against the council's annual plan commitments for the current year.



**JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by taking part in the Council Meeting during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Following Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will be live webcasting our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting](#) website.

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 2 clear working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting.

The Governance and Democracy Case Manager will take the details of your question or speech and will distribute them to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair will then invite you to speak at the beginning of the meeting under the agenda item Public Question Time, but speaking is limited to three minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group.

Please see below for Temporary Measures during Coronavirus Pandemic and the changes we are making to public participation:-

Due to the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will be answered by the Portfolio Holder or followed up with a written response.

Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Addendum to the Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 2, 2020/21

The purpose of this addendum is to provide more background information for Members in relation to the Complaints and Freedom of Information (FOI) Performance Indicators.

1. Complaints

- 1.1. The complaints KPI tracks the number of complaints responded to within the target response time of 10 working days. During quarters 1 and 2 we were significantly below target.
- 1.2. The indicator is a cumulative measure so the performance in the first half of the year will impact on overall performance across the year as a whole. We saw a significant spike in the overall number of complaints in the first quarter. Realistically therefore this indicator is likely to remain red all year, because, even if we were to answer all complaints within standard from now on, we are unlikely to receive complaints in sufficient volume to make up the lost ground.

Progress tracked by month

- 1.3. Consequently we are tracking progress month-by-month across a wider range of indicators and measures. These measures provide a more detailed and rounded picture of progress.
- 1.4. A summary of these additional month-by-month measures is contained in Appendix A which outlines:
 - The total number of complaints received;
 - The number overdue (i.e. not responded to within the 10 working day target); and
 - The average time taken to respond.
- 1.5. Analysis of these measures indicates a significant increase in the number of complaints in the period from May through to August. Our average response times increased during this period, which had a knock on detrimental effect on the numbers of overdue complaints.
- 1.6. We believe the increase in complaints is in part seasonal (e.g. garden waste collection issues). It also results from a significant number of complaints in connection with other waste issues resulting from the move to a new service provider during lockdown and delays delivering new bins. We have worked closely with the Waste Partnership and the new service provider to resolve these issues. The level of missed collections and complaints are now greatly reduced, the new contractor is performing within contractual requirements relating to complaints and at a level better than the previous contractor.
- 1.7. The good news is that the numbers of complaints we are receiving has declined sharply, our average processing times have improved significantly (12 days at the end of October) and the numbers of overdue complaints has declined. This is reflective of the increased focus on complaints during the last three months. However, there is still much work to be done.

The Complaints Review

- 1.8. We instigated a review of the complaints process over the summer in view of the poor month 4 (quarter 1) results. This review examined all aspects of the process.
- 1.9. The review identified a number of factors, which were influencing the low performance figures including:
- The impact of increases in volumes of complaints
 - Cultural factors & a lack of priority being given to complaints
 - Procedural problems and 'log jams'
 - Our not having a two stage process as required by the Housing Ombudsman and preferred by the Local Govt. Ombudsman
 - Software issues with the process and form used
 - A lack of clarity as to which teams do what & consequently where complaints need to be directed to in the organisation leading to delays
 - Training requirements
 - The impact of Covid upon resourcing

The Improvement Plan

- 1.10. The Complaints Review identified actions required to improve our approach to complaints and performance against target. These actions are now in progress and include:
- Working with services to prioritise complaints and to change the cultural attitude to complaints
 - Bringing in additional resourcing in the short term to ensure we can quickly finalise and issue responses to complaints once the data is provided by services
 - Developing a new complaints process which:
 - Enables services to respond directly to customers thereby speeding up the response time; and
 - Building in a second stage review process for customers who are unhappy with the initial response – this follows Ombudsman guidelines
 - Implementing changes to the complaints software to enable and support the new process
 - Providing training & guidance for the staff in services who will be responding to complaints
 - These changes free-up the time of the complaints officer to focus more on analysis to identify trends and areas for improvement
- 1.11. We are in the process of implementing these actions in order to drive improvement. However, as outlined above, there are a significant number of issues that need to be addressed so implementing these changes will not happen overnight.

2. Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs)

- 2.1. We are required by law to respond to Freedom of Information Requests within 20 working days. For very detailed requests we are allowed a further 20 working days.
- 2.2. The Information Commissioner has relaxed their enforcement of the statutory timescales this year in response to Covid 19 and in recognition that the priority for local government is around assisting in the national response to the crisis.

Progress tracked by month

- 2.3. We are tracking progress against our performance in responding to FOI requests month-by-month. This analysis is detailed in Appendix B.
- 2.4. Appendix B details the overall number of FOIs received month-by-month and maps this against the numbers overdue (i.e. outside of the 20 working day response timeline) and the average response time in days. Overall volumes per month are low in comparison to the numbers for other service requests, but individual FOIs can be complex and time consuming.
- 2.5. The data in Appendix B indicates that the number of requests reduced through the first national lockdown in the Spring, but picked up over the course of the Summer. Our average response times were higher throughout the Spring and Summer, which largely reflects the fact that our priorities throughout that period were on Covid response actions.
- 2.6. The numbers of cases overdue peaked in September, but have improved together with our average response times since then.

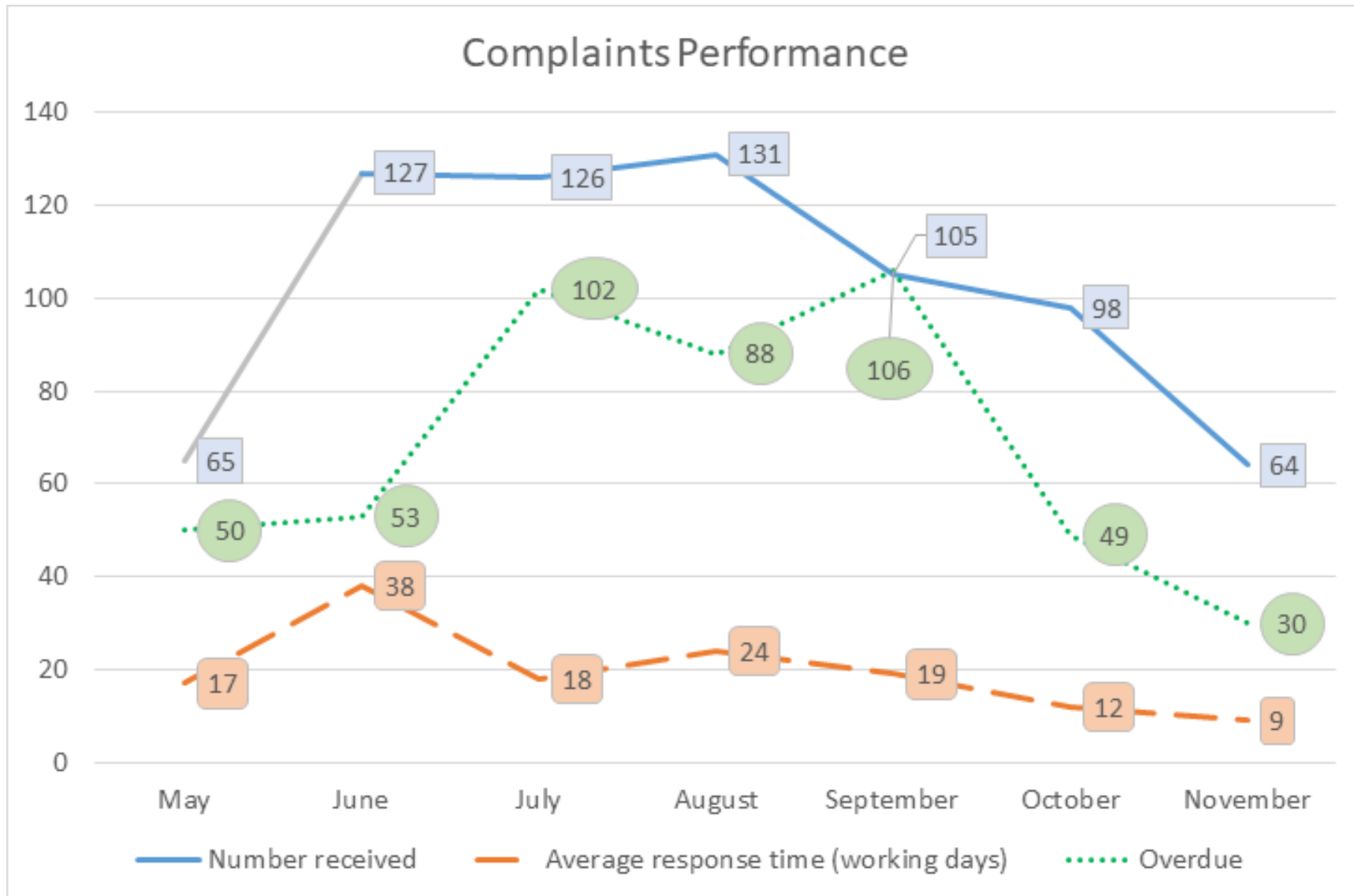
Process improvements

- 2.7. We are keeping our FOI response times under close review and actions are being taken to improvement performance. Specifically we are:
 - Regularly contacting services to chase-up responses
 - Providing service managers with a weekly update of outstanding cases
 - Reviewing the computer software process to ensure that requests are being properly targeted
 - Developing training to be rolled out to staff responsible for responding to FOIs

APPENDIX A - Complaints volumes and performance month-by-month

Complaints Performance

Page 6



APPENDIX B - FOIs volumes and performance month-by-month

FOI Performance

Page 7

