

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Executive – 20 July 2022

### Corporate Performance Report, Outturn and Quarter 4 2021/22

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Benet Allen.

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#### 1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

This paper provides an update on the council's performance for the 2021/22 financial year. The report includes information for a range of key performance indicators and provides an update on progress against the council's annual plan commitments for the year. The report also includes the key business risks for the council.

Given the breadth of information contained in the report, it is unlikely that all questions can be answered at the meeting. It would be helpful if any detailed questions could be submitted in advance.

#### 2. Recommendations

Members are asked to note the Council's performance report for 2021/22.

#### 3. Risk Assessment

Failure to regularly monitor performance could lead to the council not delivering on some of its corporate priorities or key services.

#### 4. Background and Full details of the Report

As part of the Council's commitment to transparency and accountability this report provides an update on performance. The Covid pandemic and economic climate continue to have an impact and the Council's response to these issues is being achieved in addition to the regular day-to-day responsibilities. In addition services are increasingly having to focus on the transition to the new unitary council from 1 April 2023.

Specifically, the report provides:

- A progress update against the actions to deliver the Council's Annual Plan at the end of the first six months of the financial year
- The position in respect of our key performance indicators at the end of the financial year; and
- A summary of the Council's key business risks and issues together with the current status of the actions being taken to respond to them.

## 4.1 Summary of Performance

The Council's Corporate Strategy contains four priority strategic themes. Each year the Council produces a plan (the Annual Plan) to identify actions to assist in the delivery of the four strategic priorities. The plan for this year identifies 31 actions.

Progress against a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) is reported quarterly. These KPI's are used to monitor progress in delivering key services and to enable us to quickly identify and rectify any problem areas. These indicators are also linked to one of the four corporate priorities to indicate how they support the delivery of the Corporate Strategy.

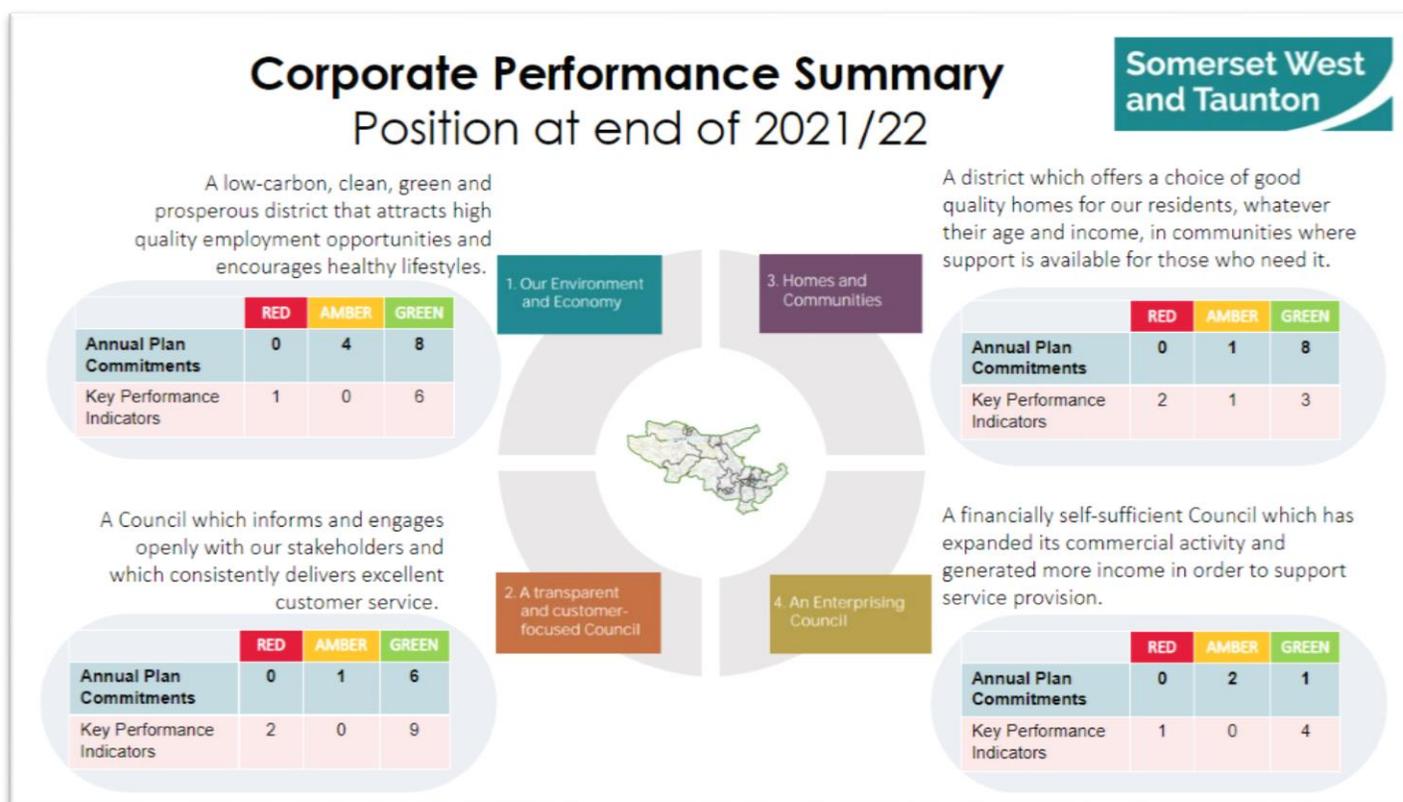
The graphic below provides an overview of performance for the end of the 2021/22 financial year for the 31 commitments in the Annual Plan and our Key Performance Indicators.

Each commitment has been rated as either Red, Amber or Green to indicate whether we are on schedule.

Full details of the progress to date against each of the KPIs and the Annual Plan actions can be found in appendices 1 & 2 below.

In summary this indicates that of the 31 Annual Plan commitments, 23 are Green, 8 are Amber, and none are Red.

Of the Key Performance indicators, 22 are Green, 1 is Amber and 6 are Red.



## 4.2 Key Performance Indicators

The table in Appendix 1 includes the councils Key Performance Indicators and shows how the council has performed during 2021/22. The table includes a “direction of travel” arrow to show whether performance has improved, worsened, or stayed the same, since the end of Quarter 3.

For the majority of indicators, the target has either been met or, in many cases, has been exceeded. Overall, there are 6 ‘Red’ and 1 ‘Amber’ indicators, which are being monitored closely. More information is provided below regarding the red and amber indicators:

### ***Percentage of complaints responded to in 10 working days:***

The percentage of complaints responded to in 10 days for the year is 78%, which is below the target of 90%.

As mentioned in the Quarter 3 report, the reasons for this are varied and are summarised below:

- *Increased numbers of complaints* - the number of complaints received continue to be significantly higher than in the previous financial years. Higher volumes of complaints present challenges in some areas in being able to respond within the target time.
- *Complexity* - we are continuing to receive a greater number of more complex complaints. These take longer to investigate and respond to and often cannot be responded to within target. Where this is the case officers are under instruction to contact the complainant and agree a new realistic deadline for response.
- *Capacity* - the increased volumes and complexity are highlighting capacity problems in some areas around having enough sufficiently skilled officers to respond to complaints.
- *Customer expectations* - customer expectations are increasing resulting in a growth in the number of complaints being registered. This is a sector wide trend across local government. The Housing Ombudsman is reporting a 230% increase in the complaints reported for the period April to June 2021 from the same period in the previous year.
- *Local service-related issues* – we have recommenced normal recovery and enforcement activity in respect of Council Tax, Business Rates and Miscellaneous Income debts. In addition, we have recently launched a project to target a backlog of previous year Council Tax and Business Rate debts. There were also problems with waste collection in the earlier part of the financial year. All of this has acted to increase complaints.

We are actively taking steps to improve our performance on response times, and these remain significantly better than in the previous financial year. These steps include:

- Refining and re-writing elements of the IT software (Firmstep) that manages the complaints process to make the routing of complaints easier. These changes are currently being tested and will be rolled out shortly.
- Training is being delivered across the organisation to both build capacity and improve the quality of responses to complaints.
- Over 70 staff within the Housing Directorate have received specific complaints training from the Housing Quality Network which has focussed on improving the quality of responses. In addition, all Housing staff have completed refresher customer care training to ensure customers are treated with fairness and respect.
- A complaints dashboard is being developed to improve the quality of feedback and trend analysis for individual areas.
- Learning from complaints and complaint trends are driving new work. In Housing, for example, a working group is looking at damp and mould issues, and deep dive activity is being undertaken with other authorities to compare performance and share good practice.
- Our complaints lead continues to work closely with services to resolve issues and to ensure we can issue responses as quickly as possible. Localised reporting in some directorates has also started in detail, for example weekly follow up on cases within Housing.

We are actively monitoring the workload in this area together with response times and implementing improvements. However, we are conscious that demand will continue to grow particularly in view of the anticipated impact of the fuel price increase and inflation all of which will continue to make this a challenging target.

### ***Average call wait times:***

Detailed commentary is included in Appendix 1a.

### ***% of planning appeals that have had the decision overturned***

The number of planning appeals is generally low (there have been 45 in the past 12 months), and because of the low numbers, it only takes a few appeals to have a big impact on the percentage. Of the 45 appeals, 20 have had the decision overturned by the Planning Inspectorate.

### ***Number of families in B&B over 6 weeks (position at the end of the quarter)***

At the end of March there was one family that had been in B&B for more than 6 weeks. This was a mis-understanding by the team, as for recording purposes the definition of families includes individuals who do not have children but who are pregnant and expecting. The family were moved as soon as this was realised and training has been provided to the team for the correct definition of families. A monitoring process is also now in place for families that have been in B&B for 4 weeks so that they can be found alternative temporary accommodation before the 6 week deadline.

### ***Average re-let times.***

The average re-let time for council properties was 54.7 days, which exceeded our target of 44 days. While performance for October and November was above the target, for December both Minor and Major voids have shown a reduction in turnaround times. The average target was achieved in March and recent months have continued to show an improvement, which is encouraging.

This has been a challenging time for void management and all Housing Providers across Somerset have struggled with increasing void times. Common factors include scarcity of key tradespeople (such as electricians), both in-house and through external contractors, many of whom have been attracted to other work such as Hinkley; Refocussing trades staff to clear repairs backlogs built up during the pandemic; lack of availability of some materials, which inevitably holds up work. For SWT, we have also noted a higher proportion of Major Voids (compared to Minor Voids) which skews our turnaround times higher. That said, we are progressing against our plan to improve void turnaround times. The plan includes:

- Strengthening our approach with departing tenants to ensure they leave the property clean and tidy
- Providing decoration packs for non-disabled tenants, rather than undertaking full redecoration to let the property quicker
- Investigating how we streamline the asbestos process to reduce delays due to surveys and works
- Implementation of the voids module on Open Housing which will allow improved performance management of the overall voids process
- Look to undertake major capital works as part of the capital programme where possible, after the tenant moves in, rather than during the void. This will also be more cost effective through economies of scale.
- Explore voids inspections and scheduling software that can lead to a more efficient inspection and scheduling of trades staff into the properties and flag up capacity issues to allow earlier resolution.

The 44 day target was set in December 2020 and was based on Quarter 2 Housemark metrics that showed a median performance of 44.5 days for District Councils that held housing stock at that time. Housemark data now shows District Council average void turnaround time has increased to 49.8 days by Quarter 4 of 2020/21. Reasons for this increase across the sector are described above.

The Housing Management team monitors wider metrics to give a rounded view of performance with respect to voids. The Pulse data for March 2022 places us in the top quartile for the indicators “Proportion of dwellings vacant, but available to let”, and ‘Proportion of social homes let”, so our performance overall does give confidence that although improvement is required, we are not significantly out of step with other Housing Providers.

### ***Completion of emergency housing repairs in 24 hours.***

The target is to complete 100% of emergency repairs within 24 hours and a total of 2809 repairs have been undertaken in the past year. Over the past 3 months 100% of emergency repairs have been completed within 24 hours. The performance of 99.9%

for the year is due to one emergency repair in quarter 2 that took 15 minutes longer to complete than the 24 hour target.

### ***Forecast budget variance for General Fund.***

Detailed commentary for this indicator is provided in the finance outturn report.

#### **4.3 Risk Management update**

As outlined in the separate report on Risk Management in May 2021, the quarterly Corporate Performance Reports will include an update on the key business risks and issues for the Council.

Processes are in place within each directorate to regularly review existing and identify any new risks and issues. As new risks or issues are identified they are included on the risk register or issues log and mitigations are identified and planned. A target date is set as to when the mitigations should be in place, and a lead officer is appointed.

The risks are all scored based on their probability and potential impact. The Risk Scoring Matrix used to score the risks is attached at Appendix 3. Risks with a higher score are likely to have a more detailed mitigation plan. Issues are things which have already happened, so they are not scored in the same way as risks, but they have a RAG status which relates to the severity of the issue.

As of the end of March there were 3 Key Business Risks (with a score of 15 or higher) on the risk register which are shown in Appendix 4.

As of the end of March the Corporate Issues Log contained 3 Issues which are shown in Appendix 5.

Appendices 4 and 5 provide a summary of the key risk or issue together with the current status of the development and delivery of any mitigation plans required to address them.

The risk register and issues log are updated as necessary and new risks/issues can be added at any point. They are routinely reviewed each month through the regular cycle of meetings. The lead officer is responsible for updating the risk register with progress made regarding mitigations, and this is reported back to Directorate performance meetings, and to the Corporate Performance Board where SMT review the key risks monthly

## **5. Links to Corporate Strategy**

This performance report provides an update on Corporate Performance which is fundamental to the implementation of the Corporate Strategy.

## **6. Finance / Resource Implications**

The detailed financial position is available in a separate budget monitoring report.

