

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S
REPORT TO CABINET**

06 February 2024

Report Title: Financial and Performance Review Report – Third Quarter 2023-24

Submitted by: Corporate Leadership Team

Portfolios: One Council, People & Partnerships, Finance, Town Centres & Growth

Ward(s) affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To provide Cabinet with the Financial and Performance Review report for the third quarter of 2023-24.

Recommendation

That Members note

1. The contents of the attached report and appendices, and continue to monitor and challenge the Council's service and financial performance for this period.

Reasons

The Financial and Performance Management monitoring reports provide information on a quarterly basis regarding the performance of individual council services and progress with delivery against our priorities, alongside related financial information on the organisation.

1. **Background**

- 1.1 This quarterly report provides Members with a detailed update on how the Council has performed during the third quarter of 2023/24 by presenting performance data and progress summary set within a financial context. The report provides broad financial information (Appendix A) and also details service performance (Appendix B) for the second quarter 2023/24.

2023-24 Revenue and Capital Budget Position

- 1.2 The Council approved a General Fund Revenue Budget of £16,856,730 on 15 February 2023. Further financial information is provided in Appendix A.

Performance

- 1.3 The Q3 report (April 2023 to December 2023) has been produced using new business intelligence tools in order to automate and improve the monitoring, analysis and reporting of Council performance. The indicators included are those agreed as part of the new Council Plan and reflect the priorities for the Borough. In addition to reporting on key performance indicators, the report also includes progress summaries for each priority action, detailing the progress with the delivery of planned activities.
- 1.4 Contextual performance information is provided (indicators without a target), not only to ensure the monitoring of the corporate activities of the Council, but also to inform Members,

businesses and residents of performance in their local area that the Council cannot directly control.

- 1.5 Any indicators failing to meet the set targets include a comment explaining why the indicator has not performed well, and what steps are being taken to ensure improvement in the future.
- 1.6 For this report a total of 45 indicators were monitored, 16 of these indicators were contextual and had no set target. Of the remaining 29 indicators the proportion of indicators which have met their target during this period stands at 72%, with the remaining 28% falling short of target. A small number of these 'off target' measures have more stretching targets this year, in line with benchmarking findings and council ambition but as it is still early in the year, it is hoped that these targets can be met as the year progresses. In terms of trend data, the proportion of indicators showing an improvement or maintenance of the previous year's performance stands at 53%.

2. Issues

- 2.1 There are 8 indicators off target this quarter, and officers consider that the performance against these indicators does not give rise to serious cause for concern at present (see commentaries provided in Appendix B). The management of each of the service areas concerned continue to monitor and take steps to deal with under achievement of targets where possible and/or appropriate. Key points to note where previously on target indicators have dropped below target are:
 - Positive action taken with regard to sickness absence management has meant that the turnover rate (**I1.14**) is higher than usual.
 - Health and Safety concerns led to the removal of a number of sweepers from the fleet which impacted on **I1.5b**. Sweepers are now back in service and addressing the backlog
 - **I3.5** shows a drop in customer satisfaction around J2 specifically around online booking. Work is already underway in terms of improving our digital capability in this area as part of One Council
- 2.2 Progress on delivery of planned activities is summarised for each priority with there being three amber rated projects/actions identified in Quarter 3. One being around the delivery of the £16m Kidsgrove Town Deal. The Railway Station project continues to experience issues with resolving ground conditions associated with historic mine works at the site. The project team continues to work finding a satisfactory resolution of these issues.

The second amber rated project/action being around increasing the Recycling rates in the borough. Whilst they are increasing it is much slower than hoped, and the council is not alone in this struggle, nationally rates have stagnated and in some cases fallen. Much of this is connected with the current cost of living crisis which has affected citizens spending power.

Finally the third amber rated project/action related to the successful resolution to the Walleys Quarry odour problem. Complaints of odour have significantly increased during this quarter with November and December reporting figures higher than the same months in 2022 and in the case of December higher than 2021. Work is continuing by the Environmental Protection team to manage odour assessments and review compliance; this is alongside continued inspections by the Environment Agency.

3. Proposal

3.1 That Members note the contents of the attached report and Appendices A and B and continue to monitor and challenge the Council's performance alongside its financial performance for the same period.

4. **Reasons for Proposed Solution**

4.1 To enable financial and performance information to be presented for continued scrutiny and encourage improvement within council delivery.

5. **Options Considered**

5.1 At this time it is felt there is no other option necessary for consideration, however the presentation of information is continually reviewed.

6. **Legal and Statutory Implications**

6.1 The Council has a duty to set targets for performance of a range of functions and needs to monitor these closely.

7. **Equality Impact Assessment**

7.1 Local authorities have a responsibility to meet the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010. The Act gives people the right not to be treated less favourably due to protected characteristics. There are no differential equality issues arising directly from this report.

8. **Financial and Resource Implications**

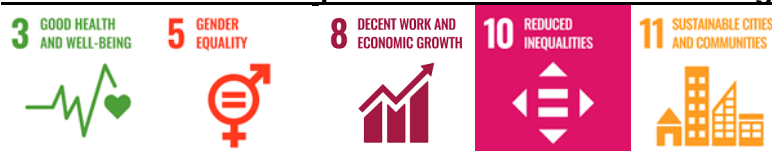
8.1 Any positive variance for the full year on the General Fund Revenue Account will enable that amount to be transferred to the Budget Support Fund and will be available in future years for use as the Council considers appropriate. Conversely, if there is an adverse variance, the amount required to cover this will have to be met from the Budget Support Fund.

9. **Major Risks**

9.1 The ongoing changing market conditions represents the greatest risk to the revenue budget, particularly with regard to the impact it may have upon income receivable in relation to services where customers may choose whether or not to use Council facilities or in the case of the waste/recycling service where the volume of recycled materials is liable to fluctuate. The impact of Covid 19 is still apparent in the reporting of this quarter, despite seeing improvements, impacting on many areas and the situation will continue to be monitored through the normal budget monitoring procedure.

9.2 The capital programme will require regular monitoring to identify any projects which are falling behind their planned completion dates. This will be carried out by the Capital Programme Review Group, which meets on a bi-monthly basis together with quarterly reports to Cabinet.

10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change Implications**





11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 Included on the Forward Plan

12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 N/A

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Financial information (Appendix A) and Performance Outturn (Appendix B)

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 Working papers held by officers responsible for calculating indicators.