

# NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL



## CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO FINANCE, ASSETS AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

27 March 2025

**Report Title:** Financial and Performance Review Report – Third Quarter 2024/25

**Submitted by:** Corporate Leadership Team

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

**Ward(s) affected:** All

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
To provide the Committee with the Financial and Performance Review Report for 2024-25 (Quarter Three).	
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>	
<b>That (Committee):</b> note the contents of the attached report and appendices and continue to monitor and challenge the Council's service and financial performance for this period.	
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>	
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 quarter by presenting performance data and progress summaries set within a financial context. The report provides broad financial information (Appendix A) and also details service performance (Appendix B) for the period to the end of quarter three in 2024/25.
- 1.2 The Council approved a General Fund Revenue Budget of £17,046,150 on 14 February 2024. Further financial information is provided in Appendix A.

### 2. **Performance**

- 2.1 The Q3 report (April 2024 to December 2024) has been produced using 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.
- 2.2 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.

- 2.3** 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.
- 2.4** For this report a total of 49 indicators were monitored, 20 of these indicators were contextual and had no set target. Of these contextual measures that had historic trend data available, 54% showed an improvement or maintenance when compared to the previous year's performance. Of the remaining 29 indicators, the proportion which have met their target during this period stands at 65%, with the remaining 35% falling short of target. 30% of off target measures this quarter show a positive trend when comparing to the same time period of the previous financial year. It must also be noted that a small number of these 'off target' measures have more stretching targets this year, in line with benchmarking findings and council ambition. In terms of trend data overall, with measures where there is comparable data, the proportion of indicators showing an improvement or maintenance of the previous year's performance stands at 47%.
- 2.5** Three project/actions have been classified as completed by their respective owners this quarter

### **3. Issues**

- 3.1** There are ten indicators 'off target' this quarter and officers do not feel that these give rise to serious cause for concern at present (see commentaries in Appendix B). The management of each of the service areas concerned continue to monitor and take steps to address performance improvement where feasible and appropriate.
- 3.2** Progress on delivery of planned activities is summarised for each priority with two activities/actions being amber rated in Quarter Three; both are associated with priority two.
- 3.3** The first action flagged as amber is the Walleys Quarry odour issue. Comments by the action owner are listed below;

#### LEGAL ACTION

On 29 July 2024 the Secretary of State Environment, Food and Rural Affairs responded to the Leader's request for permission to prosecute Walleys Quarry Ltd under statutory nuisance legislation. The Secretary of State granted consent for a prosecution to proceed.

On 30 September the Chief Executive provided an update stating; "there are very few precedents for taking legal action against an operator regulated by a Government agency, so there is a great deal of legal advice and preparation involved, however I believe we will be ready to take the next step by the end of October".

The work involved in preparing legal proceedings continued into November and as the legal submission was being drafted the EA served a Closure Notice on Walleys Quarry Ltd on 28 November. This in effect required the operator to stop taking waste into the site from 29 November and to take steps to initiate closure of the site as specified in the Schedule to the Notice.

On 6 December Walleys Quarry Ltd appealed against the Closure Notice to the Planning Inspectorate. Interested Parties have until 13 January 2024 to make representations on this appeal. The appeal process does not suspend the Closure Notice.

#### COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

This action is in line with the Committee of Inquiry Report which looked at the impact on local communities from the Walleys Quarry landfill operation and recommend that the EA serve a Closure Notice to commence the process of the site being closed.

#### COMPLAINTS

Odour complaints in October to December have seen a significant upturn from the previous quarter with complaints reaching over 1,000 complaints in the months of November and December.

- 3.4** The second action flagged as amber and not progressing as expected is the Delivery the £16m Kidsgrove Town Deal, where some issues have continued regarding the delivery of the railway station project. The Town Deal Board has resolved to pause and review the Shared Service Hub project with a view to delivering a revised scheme. The Board is scheduled to meet at the end of January 2025 to decide on the preferred way forward and progress accordingly. Issues around the railway station project and insurance for a Coal Authority permit for ground investigations are close to resolution.

#### **4. Recommendation**

- 4.1** That the Committee note the contents of the report and Appendices and continue to monitor and challenge the Council's performance alongside its financial performance for the same period.

#### **5. Reasons**

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

#### **6. Options Considered**

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

#### **7. Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1** The Council has a Best Value duty to provide value for money services.

#### **8. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1** There are no differential equality issues arising directly from this report

#### **9. Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1** 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.

#### **10. Major Risks & Mitigation**

- 10.1** 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.

**10.2** 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.

**11. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**



**12. One Council**

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

One Commercial Council

*We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

The Council captures key performance data for its commercial income streams, informing service design and opportunities for increased revenue generation.

One Digital Council

*We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.*

The performance metrics capture the digital customer journey and level of transactions both made and where digital processes have saved customers from requiring complex interventions.

One Green Council

*We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle.*

The sustainability indicators measure progress against the Council's net zero ambitions.

**13. Key Decision Information**

**13.1** This is not a key decision.

**14. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

14.1 Not relevant

15. **List of Appendices**

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

16. **Background Papers**

16.1 Working papers held by officers responsible for calculating indicators.