

Date of issue: Friday, 5 January 2024

MEETING:	CABINET	
	Councillor Smith	Leader of the Council – Improvement & Recovery, Performance, Governance and Young Futures
	Councillor Chahal	Deputy Leader of the Council – Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits
	Councillor I. Ahmed	Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning
	Councillor Bedi	Education and Children’s Services
	Councillor Kelly	Highways, Housing and Transport
	Councillor Manku	Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces
	Councillor Muvvala	Customer Service, Resident Engagement, Digital, Data & Technology
	Councillor Wright	Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities
DATE AND TIME:	MONDAY, 15TH JANUARY, 2024 AT 6.30 PM	
VENUE:	COUNCIL CHAMBER - OBSERVATORY HOUSE, 25 WINDSOR ROAD, SL1 2EL	
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	NICHOLAS PONTONE	07749 709 868

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



STEPHEN BROWN
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART I

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
	Apologies for absence.		
1.	Declarations of Interest	-	-
	<i>All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 9 and Appendix B of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed.</i>		
2.	Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th December 2023	1 - 12	-
3.	Quarterly Improvement & Recovery Progress Report	13 - 48	All
4.	Corporate Performance Report - October 2023	49 - 80	All
5.	HRA Rents and Services Charges for 2024/25	81 - 90	All
6.	Procurement of a managed IT cloud-based back-up and disaster recovery solution	91 - 96	All
7.	References from Scrutiny		All

Press and Public

Attendance and accessibility: You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before any items in the Part II agenda are considered. For those hard of hearing an Induction Loop System is available in the Council Chamber.

Webcasting and recording: The public part of the meeting will be filmed by the Council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the Council's website. The footage will remain on our website for 12 months. A copy of the recording will also be retained in accordance with the Council's data retention policy. By entering the meeting room and using the public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings.

In addition, the law allows members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record or tweet the proceedings at public meetings. Anyone proposing to do so is requested to advise the Democratic Services Officer before the start of the meeting. Filming or recording must be overt and persons filming should not move around the meeting room whilst filming nor should they obstruct proceedings or the public from viewing the meeting. The use of flash photography, additional lighting or any non hand held devices, including tripods, will not be allowed unless this has been discussed with the Democratic Services Officer.

Emergency procedures: The fire alarm is a continuous siren. If the alarm sounds Immediately vacate the premises by the nearest available exit at either the front or rear of the Chamber and proceed to the assembly point: The pavement of the service road outside of Westminster House, 31 Windsor Road.

Key decisions shown in bold.

Cabinet – Meeting held on Monday, 18th December, 2023.

Present:- Councillors Smith (Chair), Chahal (Vice-Chair), I. Ahmed, Bedi, Manku, Muvvala and Wright

Also present:- Councillors Iftakhar and Tomar

Apologies for Absence:- Councillor Kelly

PART 1

69. Declarations of Interest

No interests were declared.

70. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th November 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November 2023 be approved as a correct record.

71. Budget Management Quarter 2 2023/24

The Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits introduced a report that set out the forecast position of the Council for the 2023/24 financial year as at the end of the second quarter to 30th September 2023.

The forecast overspend at the end of the second quarter was £8.2m, which was a significant increase from the £5.3m at the end of quarter one. The Lead Member stated that whilst the current administration had not set the budget for 2023/24 the Cabinet was committed to owning it and a significant amount of work was taking place to deliver the savings programme. The legacy of poor record keeping, delays in closing prior years accounts and the historic failure to fully utilise the accounting system meant that it remained challenging to present reliable financial information. However, the work being undertaken to address these issues was summarised as was the process of 'Star Chambers' to seek to identify further in-year savings.

Two of the main areas of overspend were in adult social care and temporary accommodation, both of which had been reviewed at the end of November by the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that many other local authorities faced pressures in these areas. The Lead Member commented that the budget inherited for temporary accommodation had been totally inadequate. The Cabinet discussed the reasons for the overspend, including significant demand and cost pressures given the current housing market conditions, and the measures being taken to address the overspend. Assurance was sought that the use of hotels for temporary accommodation was minimised and the Executive Director responsible for housing confirmed

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that it was only used as emergency accommodation in very specific circumstances, for example families with young children.

At the conclusion of the discussion the report was noted.

Resolved – That the following be noted:

- (a) The Council's forecast overspend at the end of Quarter 2 was £8.2m, up considerably from £5.3m at the end of Quarter 1. The risk was therefore high that without significant reductions in spend over the remainder of the financial year, the Council would be unable to balance its budget within the Capitalisation Direction.
- (b) Service revenue budgets were forecast to overspend by £15.6m in 2023/24. There were Corporate underspends in respect of interest costs and receipts (£5.7m) and the Corporate Contingency budget (£5.4m) totalling £11.1m. However, the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) was showing an overspend of £3.7m. Service and Corporate budgets combined were showing an overspend of £8.2m.
- (c) If drastic reductions were not made in the remainder of the financial year, the Council would be unable to balance its budget within the current Capitalisation Direction.
- (d) Medium Term Financial Strategy Savings (MTFS) of £20.5m were expected to be delivered in 2023/24 against planned savings of £22.4m.
- (e) That the Capital programme was forecast to underspend in 2023/24 by £25.5m. Requests for slippage would require separate authorisation and are assumed here for the sake of clarity. A formal request for approval would form part of the Q3 Budget Management report to Cabinet in February.

72. **General Fund Revenue Budget 2024-25, and Medium Term Financial Strategy 24/25 to 27/28**

The Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenue & Benefits introduced a report that set out the draft revenue budget proposals for 2024/25, the draft Medium Term Finance Strategy (MTFS) for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and the Council Tax base for 2024/25.

A supplementary agenda was considered that included a revised Appendix C and an additional recommendation (d) relating to the Council Tax base breakdown for parishes. This was noted and agreed.

The budget proposals had been developed following service reviews, savings proposals, assessments of pressures and growth in each directorate and a series of 'Star Chambers'. The Cabinet thanked the finance team, executive directors and the finance commissioner for the significant amount of work that

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had gone in to developing a draft budget and MTFS as a basis for consultation.

It was recognised that the Council remained in a very challenging financial position and there were significant risks that would need to be carefully monitored and managed. The Local Government Finance Settlement had been published earlier in the day and the finance team would be assessing the impacts of any of the assumptions in the Council's financial model. The Lead Member summarised some of the key headlines in the draft budget which included a proposal for a Council Tax rise of 4.99% and additional resources for adult social care, temporary accommodation and customer services. The draft budget was balanced by utilising one-off smoothing reserves and also required exceptional financial support through the Capitalisation Direction. The use of one-off resources in the smoothing reserve meant that there was an underlying gap to carry forward to future years and work was taking place to identify further savings which could be delivered on top of those included in the draft budget.

The Leader of the Council updated the Cabinet on a letter he had received from the local government minister, Simon Hoare MP, earlier in the afternoon that stated that Slough, and some of the other councils in receipt of exceptional financial support, were being advised by the Government to set a higher Council Tax than the 4.99% included in the draft budget. The Government was taking the necessary steps to raise the cap that would normally trigger a local referendum to enable this. A meeting had been arranged to discuss this matter with the Minister and the Leader highlighted that he would use the opportunity to set out the rationale for the draft budget as proposed with a 4.99% rise. The issue would then be carefully considered as the budget was finalised in early 2024 prior to consideration by Cabinet in February and Council in early March.

The Cabinet discussed various aspects of the draft budget, including the additional funding for adult social care, and how the adult social care precept which had by raised in each of the previous years had been used given the apparent funding gap for the service. At the conclusion of the discussion it was agreed that the draft budget was a sound basis for consultation and the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the draft budget proposals for 2024/25 be agreed as the basis for consultation with the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee and other interested parties.
- (b) That the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2027/28 be agreed as the basis for consultation with the Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee and other interested parties.

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- (c) That the Council Tax Base be set at 44,358.44 (Band D equivalents) for 2024/25 as outlined in Appendix C in the supplementary agenda be agreed.
- (d) Noted that the Council Tax base is broken down as follows between local parishes and the rest of Slough:

Area	Band D Equivalent Dwellings CTB1	Band D Equivalent Dwellings Budget	Increase
Parish of Britwell	855	855	0
Parish of Colnbrook with Poyle	1,867.60	1,867.60	0
Parish of Wexham	1,425.10	1,425.10	0
Slough (unparished)	39,628.60	40,658.80	0
Council Tax Base	43,776.30	44,806.50	1,030.20

73. Slough Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28

The Lead Member for Adult Social Care, Mental Health & Learning Disabilities introduced a report that sought approval of the Slough Learning Disability Strategy 2023-2028.

The strategy set out how the Council, working with its partners, would seek to reduce health inequalities for adults with learning disabilities so that more people could live a good quality of life as independently as possible within the local community. It highlighted the ambitions to further join up services, with health and social care professionals working together in an integrated way to identify solutions that improved lives.

The strategy was supported by an action plan and delivery would be overseen by a Steering Group that included people with learning disabilities, family members and the Co-production Network as well as Council officers and partners. The Cabinet particularly welcomed the fact the strategy had been developed with the direct involvement of service users and agreed their continued involvement was important. The Executive Director, Adult Services commented that this was one of a number of strategies coming forward that all sought to put people at the centre of the service. This approach was endorsed by Lead Members who commented that resident and service user engagement was a key priority for the administration.

The Cabinet noted the Commissioners comments, specifically that future reports should include information on both the outcomes achieved and effective use of public money. It was proposed and agreed that a progress report be brought back to Cabinet annually.

After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed the recommendation to approve the strategy and thanked all those involved in its development.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Slough Adult Learning Disability Strategy 2023-28 set out at Appendix 2 be approved.
- (b) That it be noted that a report would be brought back to Cabinet annually setting out the progress against the Action Plan and recommending any amendments to the Strategy.

74. Services to support those experiencing domestic abuse

The Lead Member for Community Cohesion, Public Health, Public Protection, Leisure and Planning introduced a report on the services that the Council commissioned for victims/survivors of domestic abuse and the wider partnership support in Slough. This included the important role of independent domestic violence advocacy services, and it was recommended that a short term extension be agreed with the current provider, Hestia, pending a more detailed review of provision.

Officers highlighted the relatively high levels of demand for such services in Slough and the short extension would provide the opportunity for a review.

The current contract would be extended by one year to 31st December 2024 with a view to the recommissioning of a new service from 1st January 2025. The extension would be on the current agreed contractual rate. A further report would be provided to Cabinet in March 2024, together with a Safer Accommodation Strategy.

The Cabinet approved the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That the work taking place in respect of domestic abuse, the council's statutory responsibilities and a summary of an overarching needs assessment completed earlier this year be noted.
- (b) That it be agreed to extend the period of the existing contract for domestic abuse service by Hestia for one year until 31st December 2024, as part of a wider strategic approach to domestic abuse at the same value as the current agreed contractual rate.
- (c) That it be agreed that officers bring a further report to Cabinet in March 2024 to provide an update on progress, together with a completed Safer Accommodation Strategy and other linked strategies to enable a decision on further recommissioning of the independent domestic violence advocacy (IDVA) service to commence on 1st January 2025.

75. Approval of annual Business and Improvement Plan for Slough Children First Limited (SCF)

The Lead Member for Education and Children's Services introduced a report that sought approval of the Slough Children First (SCF) Business and Improvement Plan for 2024 to 2025. The background to the company and current status of the business plan was summarised.

The plan was a crucial document that set out the company's strategic priorities and financial strategy. It governed how SCF conducted its business, and it was not permitted to enter into transactions, agreements or contracts unless they were in accordance with the plan. The Cabinet welcomed the fact that for the first time the plan focused on improvement as well as the financial aspects of a business plan.

The Executive Director of Children's Services/Chief Executive of SCF highlighted the importance of developing good quality social care services for children whilst achieving best value. The Cabinet was being asked to approve an amended suite of contractual key performance indicators which focused on areas such as workforce strategy, ensuring effective participation of children and young people and financial performance, in addition to some existing indicators around quality of practice.

The Cabinet was also asked to note that the contract sum of 2024/25 would be considered and approved as part of the Council's budget setting process and that it had been agreed by the Strategic Commissioning Group that the requirement for SCF to submit an annual report for 2022/23 be waived to enable the new leadership of the company to focus on future performance.

The Cabinet approved the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) That the SCF's Business and Improvement Plan for 2024 to 2025 as at Appendix A to the report be approved.
- (b) That the amended contractual key performance indicators at Appendix B be approved and delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services, to make minor amendments to these indicators, including agreeing changes to the measures.
- (c) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Children's Services, to make amendments to the Articles of Association in relation to the board composition, quorum and reserved matters.
- (d) That it be noted that the contract sum for 2024/25 would be considered and approved as part of the Council's budget setting process.

- (e) Note that it has been agreed that SCF would not submit an Annual Report for 2022/23.

76. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Update

The Lead Member for Education and Children's Services introduced the quarterly update report on the progress on the key actions taken to address the priorities identified by Ofsted and the CQC in their inspection report on SEND services in Slough in 2021.

It was noted that significant progress had been made since the Department for Education (DfE) monitoring visit in July 2023 and the first full monitoring report for the Safety Valve Agreement / High Needs Deficit Recovery Plan was completed in September. The Executive Director of Children's Services gave a verbal update on the most recent DfE monitoring visit which took place in November. Feedback was awaited but it was considered to have gone well with the service on the cusp of making significant improvements. One of the key measures that Cabinet was monitoring was the number of Education, Health and Care plans completed and it was noted that there had been an increase each month since July with further acceleration of progress expecting in the coming months.

Members of the Cabinet welcomed the progress being made to date and asked questions about the key performance indicators and access to educational psychologists.

It was recommended that the formal quarterly updates be provided to Cabinet for the remainder of the municipal year with future updates beyond that outside of formal Cabinet meetings. This was agreed.

Resolved – That the progress be noted and that it be agreed to continue receiving quarterly updates for the remainder of this municipal year.

77. Housing Resident Involvement Strategy

The Cabinet considered a report that sought approval of the newly developed Housing Resident Involvement Strategy to ensure meaningful opportunities for more tenants and leaseholders to influence housing services, policies and strategies that impacted on them. It was also required to ensure compliance with the new Consumer Standards from 2024.

The strategy had been developed in partnership with the Resident Board and shaped by feedback from other residents through survey responses and drop-in sessions. The consultation feedback was summarised and noted. The strategy highlighted the importance of a culture that embedded resident involvement, which was a principle welcomed by the Cabinet. The Executive Director, Regeneration, Housing and Environment explained how the strategy fitted into the wider set of improvement being made to the Council's housing services. The key aspects of the strategy were outlined and Lead Members

asked for more detail about how the new strategy would improve communication and engagement with residents. It was highlighted that additional staff would be recruited to focus on resident engagement, from within the existing budget, and this team would lead on a number of projects and means of communication to improve engagement and the responsiveness of housing services.

A Member asked whether the service could be provided to private sector tenants in the future. In response, it was noted that the service was funded from the Housing Revenue Account which could only be used for services for Council tenants and leaseholders.

At the conclusion of the discussion the strategy was welcomed and approved by the Cabinet.

Resolved –

- (a) That the Housing Resident Involvement Strategy as at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.
- (b) That it be agreed to receive an annual report on the implementation of the strategy.

78. Options Appraisal re Procurement of the repairs maintenance and investment (RMI) Contract

The Cabinet considered a report that set out the various options and approaches to the re-procurement of the Repairs, Maintenance and Investment (RMI) contract for housing. The Council needed to procure a new RMI service to ensure improvements to the overall service offer, delivering a more responsive and customer orientated service.

Various procurement and contract options were available and a specialist consultancy had been brought in to carry out the detailed options appraisal which meant the Council had received a professional and independent view on the process and market considerations. The Executive Director Regeneration, Housing and Environment outlined main options which included a three-year extension with the existing contractor; procurement of a single integrated contract or a variant which separately procured for specialist works; or a more traditional multi-contract approach with selective internalisation of customer services. The latter option was recommended, subject to a soft market testing exercise, as it would provide a more balanced approach, spread risk and provided greater flexibility.

The current RMI contract would expire in 2024 and a four-month extension to 31st March 2025 with the existing provider was recommended to align the contract period to the Council's financial year and avoid a handover to a new provider over a Christmas period. This would ensure a smoother transition to the new arrangements and was agreed by Cabinet.

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The Cabinet welcomed the proposed approach and agreed the recommendations with a further report to Cabinet scheduled for November 2024.

Resolved –

- (a) That a short extension period of 4 months from December 2024 to 31 March 2025 to the current provider be approved.
- (b) That a soft market testing exercise to inform the procurement methodology for the future procurement of services be approved.
- (c) That delegated authority be given to the Executive Director of Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Highways, Housing and Transport, to determine the procurement route to secure best value and commence procurement, noting that a future report will be brought back to Cabinet in November 2024 to award any contracts.

79. Procurement of Replacement Fleet Vehicles

The Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces introduced a report that set out the preferred medium term options for the sourcing of essential vehicles for the Direct Services Organisation (DSO) to undertake grounds and highway maintenance, and street cleansing services. The Council had a statutory duty to provide such services.

The Council currently leased all its vehicles for these purposes and a Leader's Urgent Action decision was taken on 30th October 2023 to approve a 12-month lease agreement and provide time for officers to seek medium term options to deliver savings and reduce revenue pressures. The proposed approach was to review all its fleet to determine the number of vehicles required and then proceed with the incumbent or other providers to seek to purchase second-hand vehicles to reduce the revenue leasing costs.

After due consideration, the Cabinet agreed the recommendations.

Resolved –

- (a) Approved the procurement of a replacement fleet of vehicles for use within the Environment directorate in the following order of priority:
 - (i) outright purchase of second-hand vehicles capable of suitable adaptation and deemed available for a minimum of five years;
 - (ii) outright purchase of new vehicles deemed available for a minimum of five years;
 - (iii) procurement by lease for a maximum period of five years
- (b) Delegated authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for

Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces, Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits and the Executive Director Finance & Commercial, the procurement and award of contract for acquisition of fleet vehicles in line with recommendation a) and for procurement and award of contract for associated maintenance, ensuring value for money is secured when selected the most appropriate method;

- (c) Delegated authority to the Executive Director for Regeneration, Housing and Environment, in consultation with the Lead Member for Finance, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits, Lead Member for Environment, Environmental Services and Open Spaces and the Executive Director, Finance & Commercial, the procurement and award of contract for the Fleet Management Routing software system.
- (d) Approved that the capital programme be amended to include acquisition of the DSO fleet with funding being from DfT grant and where possible specific programme grants to where possible preserve the more adaptable DfT grant funding for other critical purposes. The programme to be profiled across 2023/24 and 2024/25 as appropriate to available second hand vehicles balancing the need to come within revenue budget.

80. Estate Strategy - Phase 1

The Cabinet considered a report that sought approval for the proposed conceptual model of a Phase I Estate Strategy and to agree to SBCs continued occupation of Observatory House. An initial report had been provided to Cabinet in September and the Lead Member and Executive Director summarised the rationale for and key aspects of Phase I of the strategy.

The Estate Strategy Phase I was a high-level conceptual framework about how the Council would better manage its portfolio of assets in the future. It was aligned to the asset disposal strategy. No decisions were sought in Phase I about individual buildings with the exception of Observatory House and the Council's continued occupation as its 'central' building was recommended. The proposal was for it to become a central Public Services Centre with back office services to be centralised in Observatory House and a customer access point be created. A full report and outline business case would be presented to Cabinet in March 2024.

The Cabinet discussed the report in detail and particularly considered the options for working with community organisations and stakeholders. Options for several specific buildings were raised, including The Curve, and it was reiterated that decisions on individual buildings would be for future phases of the strategy.

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An elector question had been submitted by Mr W Strutton on the adequacy of the property insurance for assets covered by the Estate Strategy given the statement made by a Lead Member at a recent full Council meeting that the bus station had been 'under-insured'. The Lead Member responsible for Council assets responded to the question and a supplementary question. Assurance was provided that work had been undertaken to correct any instances of under-insurance and the Estate Strategy would help the Council strengthen the management of its assets in future by improving the data available on which take such operational decisions such as insurance coverage.

At the conclusion of the discussion the recommendations were agreed.

Resolved –

- (a) That the proposed conceptual model (Phase I) for the Operational and Community Estate be approved to enable the development of Phase II of the strategy. The model was described in detail in the report.
- (b) That SBC's continued occupation of Observatory House as its 'Central' building be approved. Back office services would be centralised in Observatory House and a customer access point would also be created. The basis of this occupation would be set out in a separate Cabinet report that would contain an Outline Business Case. This would be presented to Cabinet in March 2024.

(During consideration of the report the Cabinet agreed to extend the meeting beyond the guillotine of 9.00pm to complete the business for the meeting).

81. References from Scrutiny

There were no references from scrutiny.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 9.02 pm)

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	15 January 2024
Subject:	Quarterly Improvement and Recovery progress report
Lead Member:	Councillor Dexter Smith, Leader of the Council
Chief Officer:	Stephen Brown
Contact Officer:	Sarah Hayward
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix A – Report to November 2023 Improvement and Recovery Board (IRB)

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report provides the quarterly update to Cabinet on progress being made by the Council against the Secretary of State Directions issued in December 2021, and the overall council recovery plan.

Recommendations:

- 1.2 Cabinet is requested to:
- a) Note and comment on the progress made by the Council since the previous report in addressing the Directions of the Secretary of State;
 - b) Agree to the next steps to deliver improvement as set out in the action plans and other workstreams that have been developed to address the Directions.

Reason

- 1.3 The then Cabinet agreed on 21 November 2022 to receive quarterly updates from the councils Improvement and Recovery Board chaired by government commissioners.
- 1.4 Information from the most recent Improvement and Recovery Boards is attached as Appendix A.
- 1.5 Formal meetings with Commissioners continue monthly in the form of the Improvement and Recovery Board. Quarterly updates will continue to be brought to Scrutiny and Cabinet setting out the detail of the issues reported on

at these progress meetings along with additional areas of focus and activity as required by Commissioners. Other Scrutiny and Cabinet reports will also reference progress and agendas and decisions will strongly link to improvement and recovery activity.

- 1.6 In the past year regular reporting on improvement and recovery has been embedded in the Cabinet forward plan. The council's scrutiny programme is also focussed much more tightly on improvement and recovery.
- 1.7 Consideration has also been given to how best to involve all councillors in recovery. Regular discussion at full council is now programmed with the first debate taking place in November 2023. A summary of the discussion is set out below:

Members received a report which provided an update on progress being made by the council against the Secretary of State Directions issued in December 2021, and the overall council recovery plan. The Mayor invited the Lead Commissioner, Gavin Jones, to address the meeting.

Mr Jones stated that council had made progress in a number of key areas and demonstrated a commitment to improvement. However, the scale of problems facing the council was significant and more demonstrable and sustained improvement was required and that there needed to be a quickening of pace in delivery of change.

The financial position of the council remained fragile, in a challenging financial environment, and the key challenge for the council was how it balanced operational recovery whilst addressing the ministerial directions against financial sustainability. Although the senior leadership team had provided some stability, successful recruitment to the new structure, to introduce new capability and increase capacity, was vital to the continued rebuilding of the organisation. The gap in capability was limiting the speed in which the council had made progress.

It was stated that the council had managed an all-out election very effectively resulting in a change in administration, with new and inexperienced members on board. Although member training had been provided, it was strongly encouraged that there was continuous development and learning opportunities for all members to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Recent improvement in audit actions being completed and routinely actioned upon was noted.

A key part of financial recovery was a successful asset disposal programme to generate capital receipts and this continued to be on track. However, phase 2 of the disposals was likely to pose a greater challenge, as it transitioned to the operational estate and in view of the current market and economic conditions meant that this would be challenging.

It was highlighted that although financial recovery and sustainability was critical, the challenge for the council was that it did so in a manner that ensured it continued to provide services to meet the needs of its most vulnerable residents of the borough.

In the ensuing question and answer session, Members asked a range of questions and replies were given by the Commissioner. Questions from

Members included the risks posed by un-closed accounts and outstanding audit actions from previous years; progress on the culture change programme within the council; the costs of the senior management restructure; the medium term financial outlook; and governance issues specifically regarding the council companies and the audit and corporate governance committee.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Commissioner for his attendance and providing an update to the meeting. It was noted that there would be six monthly updates to council meetings on the progress of the council's journey to recovery and improvement.

- 1.8 This report and the appendix set out the progress made to date and the next steps to deliver change against the journey to recovery and improvement.

Commissioner Review

"The commissioners have reviewed this report and have no specific comments to make."

2. Report

Introduction

- 2.1 As previously reported Members are aware the Council received a formal direction from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made under s.15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999, including a direction that prescribed functions are to be exercised by Commissioners; and the appointment of Commissioners from 1 December 2021.
- 2.2 The Council took a number of steps, including approving a new Corporate Plan in May 2022 that set out its strategy for improvement. This was refreshed in September 2023.
- 2.3 Commissioners have recognised that there is now a more holistic approach to reporting progress against the various action plans in place to address the Directions and this is presented in the reports attached to the Improvement and Recovery Board.
- 2.4 The Commissioners' have written three reports to the Secretary of State to date, the most recent of these being published on 14 September 2023 with a parliamentary statement and accompanying letter to the council – all documents can be found on the government website here [Intervention at Slough Borough Council - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/press-releases/2023/09/14/slough-borough-council-intervention).

3 Background

- 3.1 It was agreed by Cabinet in November 2022 that regular public reporting on the Council's ongoing response to Government intervention was essential to ensure transparency and accountability.
- 3.2 These reports are submitted to Scrutiny Committee first to provide the opportunity for comment to Cabinet.
- 3.3 It is now two years since Commissioners were appointed by the Secretary of State. During that time the Council has had the opportunity to discuss with Commissioners the extent of the challenges it faces.

- 3.4 Commissioners' submit regular reports to the Secretary of State, the latest of which was published on 14 September. The letter to the Chief Executive from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities commented that:

The report notes that this has been a period of change for the Council, with a refreshed Commissioner Team in place and a change in political leadership. The report highlights that the intervention is now at a pivot point. The Council is demonstrating commitment to improvement and has achieved a number of successes, such as a stable corporate leadership team, a successful move to all out elections and an improvement in report quality and financial oversight.

However, the report also acknowledges that the scale of the challenges facing Slough remains significant and that the Council needs to demonstrate a commitment to accelerating the pace of transformation, provide more evidence of further implementation of changes and demonstrate greater grip on the financial position. The report also identifies a number of specific priorities, such as strengthening capacity within the management tier, implementing a robust performance management system, building on culture change work and producing a Medium-Term Financial Plan for the coming years.

In his Written Ministerial Statement the Minister notes that he is pleased to see evidence for cautious optimism, whilst acknowledging the significant scale of the challenges still facing the Council, and that following the changes at Slough in recent months this is an excellent opportunity for the Council to make substantial progress towards resolving its Best Value failure.

- 3.5 The appendix to this report presents an overview of the workstreams in place to address each of the Directions and how these have been reported to Commissioners.
- 3.6 The report is taken to scrutiny, cabinet and council to ensure members are playing a full role in the council's recovery. For each report the most up-to-date IRB paper is attached.
- 3.7 Work is currently underway to address the issues identified in the Commissioner's most recent report and prepare for their next letter which will effectively be the second annual report.

4 Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

- 4.1 Overall, navigating these financial implications requires judicious budget management to ensure successful plan implementation while maintaining financial stability.
- 4.2 The report on Government intervention highlights financial implications: reallocating resources or securing additional funds for improvement plans, increased costs for monitoring and reporting transparency, substantial investments for action plans addressing culture change, and public engagement. Addressing management capacity may require hiring and restructuring expenses. Developing a Medium-Term Financial Plan, initiating positive dialogue, and meeting Scrutiny Committee requests entail additional costs, necessitating careful budget evaluation for effective implementation without significantly impacting operational finances.

Legal implications

4.3 On 1 December 2021 the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made statutory directions requiring the Council to take prescribed actions and that certain functions be exercised from this date by appointed Commissioners, acting jointly or severally. The directions were extended on 1 September 2022. The directions were made under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999 due to the Council having failed to comply with its best value duty. The general duty of best value is set out in section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 and requires local authorities to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”. This requires consideration of overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision. There is also a duty to consult when deciding how to fulfil the best value duty.

4.4 Annex A of the directions set out the action the Council is required to take. Annex C sets out the functions to be exercised by the Commissioners. This includes functions associated with governance and scrutiny of strategic decisions, requirements for the proper administration of financial affairs, functions associated with the oversight of collection of revenues and benefits and appointment of the three statutory governance officers and the scrutiny officer, as well as functions to define the officer structure at a senior level, determine recruitment processes and recruit relevant staff to these positions. The Explanatory Memorandum to this Direction confirms that in practice most decisions are expected to be taken by the Council, however the Directions are designed to give the Commissioners the power to tackle weaknesses identified to ensure the Council is better equipped to meet the best value requirements. Cabinet should have regard to the advice and comments of the Commissioners contained in this report.

Risk management implications

4.5 The table below sets the key risks

Risk	Summary	Mitigations
Financial	Failure to deliver financial sustainability	Financial action plan, Capitalisation Directive and immediate to long-term savings plans
Legal	Failure to address the Directions and demonstrate compliance with the Council’s best value duties or other legal duties leading to increased legal challenges to decision-making and further statutory intervention.	Appointment of new interim Monitoring Officer to bolster capacity at senior management level. Recruitment of interim support for governance and scrutiny. A whole system approach, focusing on the basics of local government governance and decision making, including training and development and involvement of legal services at an earlier stage of policy formulation.

Risk	Summary	Mitigations
Reputational	Failure to meet the requirements contained in the Directions leading to further intervention from Government	A more comprehensive and corporate approach has been developed building on lessons learned over the past year to provide greater confidence in the Council's journey and direction of travel

Environmental Implications

4.6 There are no direct environmental implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

Equality implications

4.7 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

Procurement implications

4.8 One of the Directions includes specific reference to the procurement and contract management function and this is detailed in the Appendix.

Workforce implications

4.9 Any future changes to the workforce will be subject to full statutory processes and consultation.

Property implications

4.10 The Council has developed an Asset Disposal Strategy and this has been approved by Cabinet.

5 Background Papers

5.1 None.

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Strategy and Improvement

Improvement and Recovery Board

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Progress Report
23-Nov-23

Report Owner: Sarah Hayward, ED Strategy and Improvement
Report Author: Strategy and Improvement Team



Headline Commentary

- Member behaviours addressed with re-drafted protocol – report included on agenda from Sarah Wilson.
- Positive response to adverts for initial Director roles for new senior management structure. Closing date 23 November. Planned interviews and potential offers before the end of the calendar year.
- All councils now submit a detailed record of all adult social care clients to DHSC (Client Level Data). Our quality report from DHSC was rated as Excellent and ranked in the top tier of council responses for data quality.
- DfE review undertaken and SEND written statement of action produced. Sue Butcher will provide a verbal update as agreed at the last meeting.
- Collation of evidence to inform Commissioners second annual report underway. Discussion required at IRB to agree requirements to evidence 'closing the gap'.
- Work to develop operating model initiated further to discussion leading up to and at last IRB. Session with Leader and Deputy Leader being arranged.
- Data Centre Move executed successfully over weekend of 11 and 12 November.



Directions Progress Summary

Ref	Direction	CLT Lead (Strategic)	SLT Lead (Operational)	Member (Political)	Target Completion of Current Phase	RAG		Commentary / Progress
						Curr.	Trend	
1	Functional Capability Assessment	Sarah Hayward	Dean Tyler		01-Dec-22		=	14/10 - Service plans have been completed, which will address gaps in capability. These are continuing to be iterated to ensure coherence across services and alignment with the corporate plan. SLT will act as the governance body for the service planning. Next steps are to develop reporting arrangements for monitoring progress in delivery, and ensure lessons for next year are captured.
2	Avoid Poor Governance or Financial Mismanagement	Adele Taylor	Ruth Hodson/ Thomas Mulloy	Leader / Cabinet Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets	31-Mar-24		=	14/11 - Update provided to RTB. Q2 report rescheduled to December Finance Board. 11/10 - Action plan agreed, monitoring to be included in the finance board going forwards. 10/08 - Action plan overview discussed with Commissioner and Lead Member. Paper will go to cabinet in September.
3a Page 23	Financial Sustainability Action Plan	Adele Taylor	Ruth Hodson/ Thomas Mulloy	Leader / Cabinet Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets	31-Mar-24		▼	14/11 - Update provided to RTB. Q2 report rescheduled to December Finance Board. 11/10 - MTFS development underway ahead of draft budget to be considered at December cabinet. Still a gap identified hence reducing the RAG status until next review meetings are undertaken in the coming 2 months before the cabinet paper. All processes and steps in place.
3b	Democratic Governance Action Plan	Stephen Taylor	Alexander Polak	Leader	31-Mar-24		=	16/11 - - New streamlined Member/officer protocol in development. - Various improvements to cabinet office processes and support including e.g. allocation of lead support officers to cabinet members, stronger demand-led agenda items for LM&Ds; the Leader has been consulted and is content with LM&Ds as it currently stands however we anticipate this continuing to evolve. - On the recruitment of the permanent monitoring officer and succession planning, an advert has been posted, interviews expected before end of November. - Increased community engagement in the work of scrutiny is a stated ambition of the new scrutiny chair and is a live consideration in the scoping of all T&F groups. However, this priority will be picked up in earnest in the second, third and fourth years of this administration, allowing time for the new scrutiny chair, members and committee to learn and develop their approach in the first year.






Directions Progress Summary

Ref	Direction	CLT Lead (Strategic)	SLT Lead (Operational)	Member (Political)	Target Completion of Current Phase	RAG		Commentary / Progress
						Curr.	Trend	
3c	Scrutiny Action Plan	Stephen Taylor	Alexander Polak	Chair, Overview & Scrutiny Committee	31-Mar-24		=	<p>17/10 - Draft work programme now agreed, ASC T&F is preparing its final report for November, reports published for 24 October meeting with a clear focus on drivers of the council's improvement. A workshop-style pre-meeting has taken place for the first time, representing progress in members' development as a committee although not all members attended.</p> <p>11/09 – Permanent scrutiny officer position has been filled with immediate effect and they led the first meeting of the Adult Social Care Task & Finish Group on 06/09; a scope was agreed by the group. Reports for the 26/09 Scrutiny Committee meeting were submitted on time last week, and Commissioner Curran praised the revised draft work programme, having seen an advance copy.</p>
3d Page 24	Internal Audit Action Plan	Adele Taylor	Satbachan Seehra	Cabinet Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets	31-Mar-24		=	<p>10/10 - High rated actions are being given priority and are reviewed monthly by DLT's and Executive Directors. Responses from management on audit actions/audit reports are closely monitored and delays are escalated to the Executive Director - Finance and Commercial.</p> <p>08/09 - All outstanding audit actions and reports were discussed with the representative Associate Directors and Heads of Department at the Risk and Audit Board that was held on 5th September 2023. This will be a recurring theme in future meetings. The next meeting will be held on the 6th December 2023.</p>

Directions Progress Summary

Ref	Direction	CLT Lead (Strategic)	SLT Lead (Operational)	Member (Political)	Target Completion of Current Phase	RAG		Commentary / Progress
						Curr.	Trend	
3e	Procurement and Contract Management Action Plan	Adele Taylor	Clare Priest	Lead Member for Financial Oversight, Council Assets, Procurement and Revenues & Benefits	31-Mar-24		=	<p>01/11 Attended SME event at Arbour park and further opportunity to engage with SME's is taking place on 15 November which has been organised by Natwest. Confirmed as one of two local authorities piloting contract management process mapping with local partnerships, this is taking place on 28 November. Outcomes from the session will inform the work of developing improved contract management procedures. Commercial strategy has been drafted. Reported to Corporate Improvement Scrutiny Committee on 24 October on improvements in service.</p> <p>04/10 - Improvement plan to implement recommendations from process mapping exercise is live, which includes improvements to processes and procedures. Work to develop a contract management framework and refresh of the commercial strategy has commenced. Successfully recruited a procurement category manager, a further round of recruitment will be undertaken to recruit to the 2 remaining posts. Social value pilot underway and work with SME's has commenced, working with the economic development team on an event in October. Reporting to October Corporate Improvement Scrutiny committee.</p>
3f	Information Technology Action Plan	Sarah Hayward	Simon SharkeyWoods	Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Procurement & Performance	31-Mar-24		▲	<p>14/11 - Data Centre Move executed successfully and as of Monday morning only two issues were remaining. They were connectivity to the public services network (PSN) and a failure of our security access system. Both were resolved by the end of the working day on Monday 13th November.</p> <p>06/11 - November ICT&D Update Cabinet report has been signed off by all stakeholders, including the Commissioners and will be discussed at the meeting on the 20th November. ICT&D will be undertaking an annual review of the ICT&D Strategy in Q1 2024 and the updated version taken to Cabinet so that the new administration of the Council can take full ownership of the direction of travel. To support the annual review and with agreement of the commissioners, an LGA peer review will be undertaken around ICT&D and this will be a useful input for the updated strategy. The data centre move project has identified a number of risks since the last update but through good engagement across the Council the team has managed to maintain the envisaged timeline and the work will take place across the weekend of the 10th - 12th November. Progress on provisioning better, more reliable end-user devices has been good and the team is still on track to begin releasing devices to staff to the new standard in the New Year.</p>

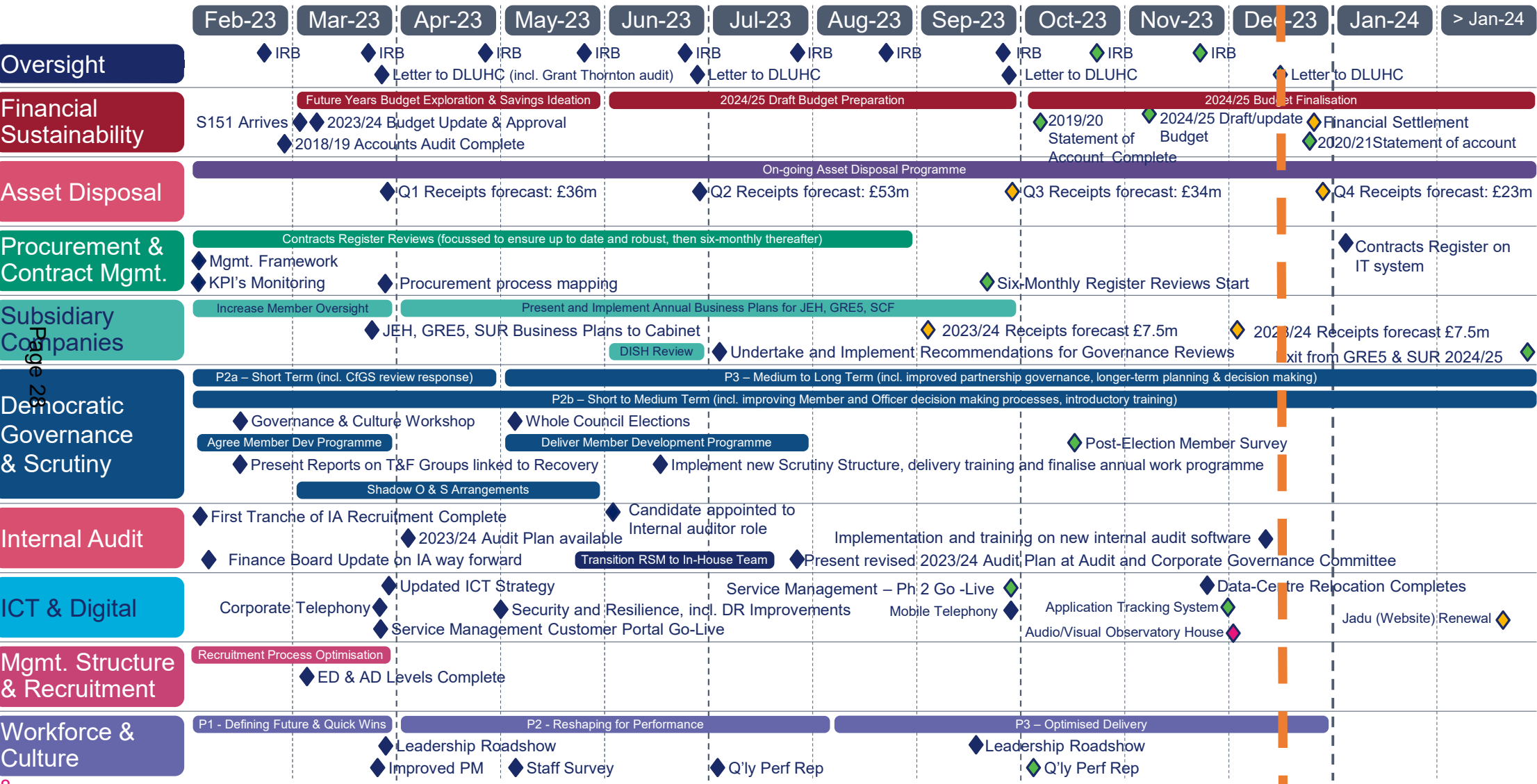
Directions Progress Summary

Ref	Direction	CLT Lead (Strategic)	SLT Lead (Operational)	Member (Political)	Target Completion of Current Phase	RAG		Commentary / Progress
						Curr.	Trend	
3g	Suitable Officer Structure and Scheme of Delegation	Stephen Brown	Sarah Wilson (MO)	Leader	01-Oct-22		=	Please see direction 8.
4	Improvement Plan Monthly Reporting	Sarah Hayward	Andrew Merritt Morling/ Deemple Brain	Leader	31-Mar-24		=	<p>16/11 Discussing with the Directors how the Corporate Plan can be strategically implemented across their service and link in with Service plans</p> <p>10/10 Improvement plan monthly reporting has been implemented for a year. Reporting will be refreshed upon agreement of the assurance framework.</p>
5	Culture Change	Stephen Brown	Sarah Hayward	Leader	31-Mar-24		▲	<p>16/11 CLT workshop planned for 22 Nov with LGA Facilitators. Workshops taking place throughout November/mid December with staff on cultural challenges. Hybrid working policy implemented and lessons learned to be performed</p> <p>10/10 - Next CLT workshop now been targeted for November with external facilitation being lined up. Refresh of headline plans progressing well.</p>
6	Subsidiary Company Review	Adele Taylor / Sarah Wilson	Mark Halligan	Cabinet Member for Financial Oversight & Council Assets	31-Mar-24		▲	<p>16/11 - Update to RTB on Slough Urban Renewal, James Elliman Homes, DISH, GRE5. SUR is a Joint Venture.</p> <p>- SUR scope is under review, and land asset sales underway - update report to Cabinet in September.</p> <p>- GRE5 - update report to Cabinet in September. Work underway to make building safe.</p> <p>- JEH and DISH. Working through Director roles due to staff leaving. Companies House changes underway.</p> <p>- Next paper planned to go to March Cabinet.</p>
7	Evidence Based Decision Making	Sarah Hayward	Dean Tyler	Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Procurement & Performance	31-Mar-24		▲	<p>08/11 - Feedback from DHSC programme lead that new Adult statutory return rated as 'Excellent'.</p> <p>October - Performance Management Workspace now live. First iterations of Power BI reporting dashboards developed.</p> <p>22/09 - Business case approved for interim additional data analyst capacity in Adult Social Care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.</p>

Directions Progress Summary

Ref	Direction	CLT Lead (Strategic)	SLT Lead (Operational)	Member (Political)	Target Completion of Current Phase	RAG		Commentary / Progress
						Curr.	Trend	
8	Senior Officer Structure and Recruitment	Commissioners	Stephen Brown		31-Mar-23	C	=	<p>13/04 - Now considered BAU, however a restructure at the AD and levels immediate below is about to get underway.</p> <p>03/02 - ED for Strategy and Improvement has been appointed. This was the last remaining vacancy in CLT.</p>
SEND	DfE Issued SEND Direction	Sue Butcher	Neil Hoskinson	Cabinet Member for Education, Children's Services, Lifelong Skills and Governance	31-Mar-24 (FOR REVIEW)	A	▲	<p>13/11 - DfE Formal Review of the intervention took place in Observatory House. DfE and Commissioner provided positive feedback on progress, whilst noting there is further improvement required over the next few months.</p> <p>10/09 - Draft SEND action plan reorganises the actions in the 7 priorities in the Written Statement of Action into 5 workstreams to mitigate against silo working.</p>

Recovery Plan on a Page – Updated December 2023



Note, RAG Status against individual milestones does not represent overall service status

Finance Improvement Action plan

- Presentation is different style as per agreed at September 2023 Finance board – highlight RAG status and progress in dashboard style and exception reporting
- The action plan remains a living, breathing document and will be closely linked to outcomes of internal audits during the year
- This report considers progress against those actions where work is underway and/or deadline for completion is imminent.
- Project support resources identified to support the oversight of the improvement action plan delivery, to be in place ahead of the next reporting cycle

Reporting by exception

Completion of statement of accounts – Green to Red

- The plan for completion of statement of accounts is well underway and will be discussed with GT once further national framework is confirmed in Nov 23 instead as originally planned Oct 23
- Earliest set of unqualified accounts likely now to be 2023/24 now instead of 2022/23 due to government proposing a backstop where any accounts including 2022/23 will be issued a disclaimer opinion

Financial budget monitoring and reporting – Green to Amber

- The Quarter 2 report was due to be presented in November Finance Board and this will now be presented in December

Reporting by exception

Treasury Management - Green to Amber

- Both 22/23 outturn and Q1 23/24 reports have now been delayed to the next Audit & Corporate Governance Committee, rather than on 22nd Nov.

Deep Dive Projects – Green to Amber

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This project is currently an Amber as no completion dates have been assigned for these projects

Asset Disposals – Forward Month

The priorities for the Asset Disposal Programme over the next month include:

- Secure the approvals necessary to move forward with transactions from the HRA
- Seek clarity on the approach to appropriating assets from HRA to GF in connection with the disposal programme, so that the GF secures some financial benefit from the disposal of assets currently within the HRA.
- Develop Cabinet report to seek some portfolio wide delegations for the HRA (non-residential) stock
- Progress review of Net Book Values of pipeline sales.
- Seek to launch sites where revised Net Book Values align to anticipated capital receipts.
- Complete October auction sales and prepare sites for future auctions.
- Continued identification of further disposal opportunities.
- Finalise reports for December Cabinet on the Estate Strategy and Observatory House business case.

Internal Audit Actions Report

November 2023

Update on Internal Audit Actions

21/22 internal audits:

- Actions completed as at end of October number 238 or 73% of the total due. A concerted effort is being made by CLT to close the remaining 89 actions or 27% that are overdue.

22/23 internal audits:

- Page 34
- 225 actions have been raised for 2022/23. As of end of October 2023, 59 actions or 26% are overdue and 97 or 43% complete. 69 actions or 31% are not due.

23/24 internal audits:

- 4 audit reports have been finalised with 5 audit reports are in draft status. 66 actions have been raised for 2023/24. 8 actions or 12% are overdue and 27 actions or 41% are not due. 22 or 33% of actions have not been allocated.

23/24 Internal Audit Plan Update

- Four audits have been finalised, with five audits in management review.

Status	Name of Review	Classification	Total Number of Findings		
			High	Medium	Low
Draft	Follow Up	Little Progress	2	3	4
Draft	Cash Collection and Management	Minimal Assurance	2	4	1
Draft	Matrix	Minimal Assurance	2	5	1
Finalised	Adult Safeguarding	Partial Assurance	2	4	1
Draft	Schools Audit - St Bernard's	Partial Assurance	1	6	3
Finalised	Schools Audit - Wexham	Reasonable Assurance	0	1	2
Finalised	Enrolment, School Places and Attendance	Reasonable Assurance	2	4	2
Q1 Total			11	27	14
Finalised	Council Tax	Reasonable Assurance	0	7	1
Draft	Travel and Expenses	Minimal Assurance	3	2	1
Q2 Total			3	9	2

Update on Internal Audit Actions

As of 31 October 2023

Total 21/22				
Totals	Total	High	Medium	Low
Not Due	0	0	0	0
Overdue	89	3	53	33
Complete	238	52	105	81
Not Allocated	0	0	0	0
Totals	327	55	158	114

The number of overdue audit actions has decreased from 98 to 89 since prior month.

As of 3 October 2023

Total 21/22				
Totals	Total	High	Medium	Low
Not Due	0	0	0	0
Overdue	98	9	55	34
Complete	229	46	103	80
Not Allocated	0	0	0	0
Totals	327	55	158	114

The overdue actions are recommendations not being implemented by their due dates, due to factors such as (but not limited to) resourcing.

Update on Internal Audit Actions

As of 31 October 2023

Total 22/23				
Totals	Total	High	Medium	Low
Not Due	69	15	40	14
Overdue	59	18	27	14
Complete	97	21	50	26
Not Allocated	0	0	0	0
Totals	225	54	117	54

The number of overdue audit actions has decreased from 60 to 59, since prior month.

As of 3 October 2023

Total 22/23				
Totals	Total	High	Medium	Low
Not Due	75	17	41	17
Overdue	60	18	30	12
Complete	90	19	46	25
Not Allocated	0	0	0	0
Totals	225	54	117	54

The overdue actions are due to recommendations not being implemented by their due dates.

Update on Internal Audit Actions

As of 31 October 2023

Total 23/24				
Totals	Total	High	Medium	Low
Not Due	27	4	16	7
Overdue	8	1	4	3
Complete	9	3	5	1
Not Allocated	22	6	11	5
Totals	66	14	36	16

The number of overdue audit actions has increased from 7 to 8, since prior month.

The overdue actions are due to recommendations not being implemented by their due dates.

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As of 3 October 2023

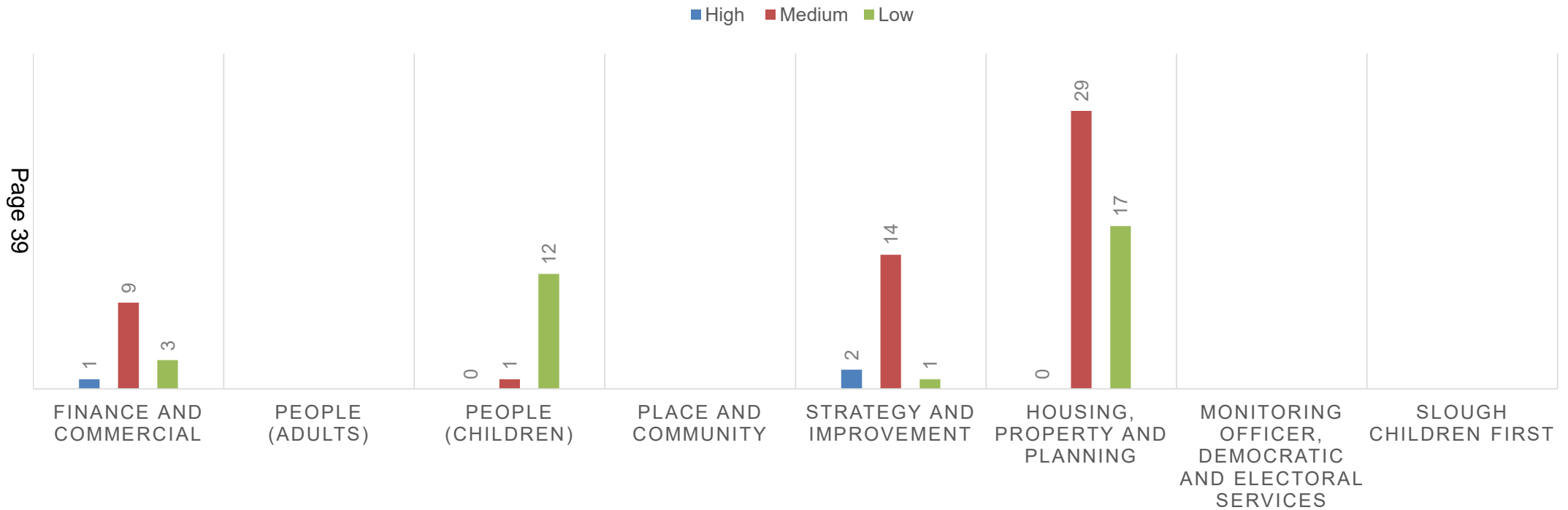
Total 23/24				
Totals	Total	High	Medium	Low
Not Due	14	4	5	5
Overdue	7	0	4	3
Complete	0	0	0	0
Not Allocated	46	11	27	8
Totals	67	15	36	16

22 actions have not been allocated, down from 46, due to two additional audit reports having been finalised since prior month.

Internal Audit Actions By Directorate

As of 31 October 2023

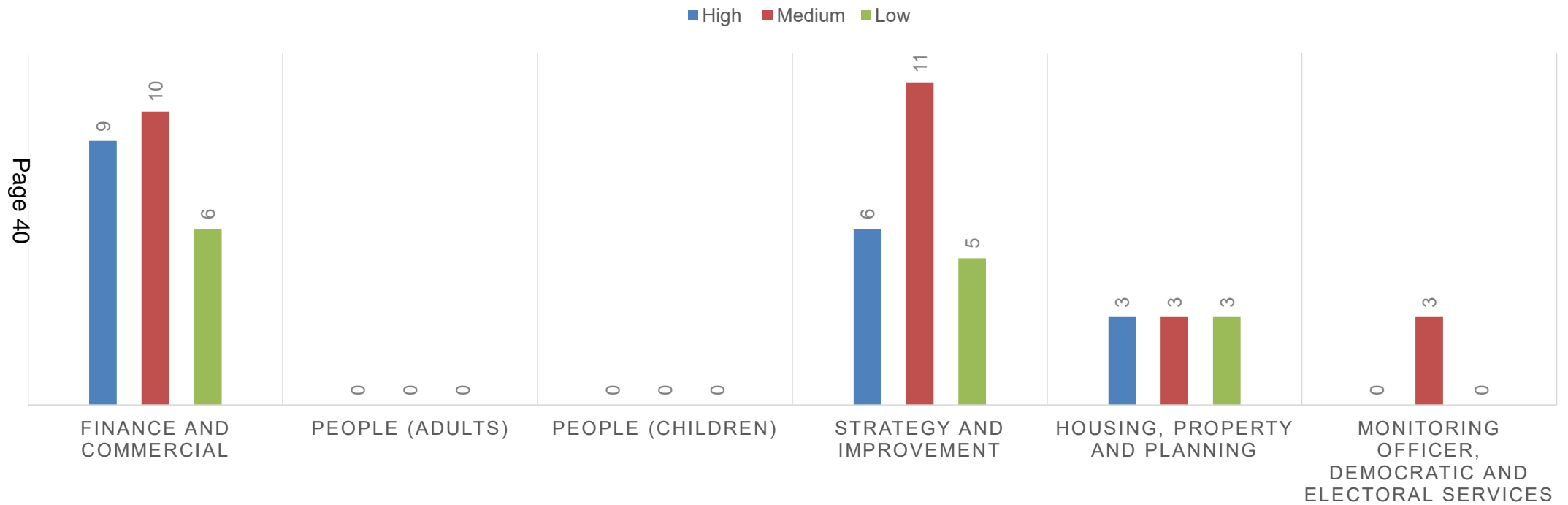
2021/22 OVERDUE AUDIT ACTIONS BY DIRECTORATE



Internal Audit Actions By Directorate

As of 31 October 2023

2022/23 OVERDUE AUDIT ACTIONS BY DIRECTORATE

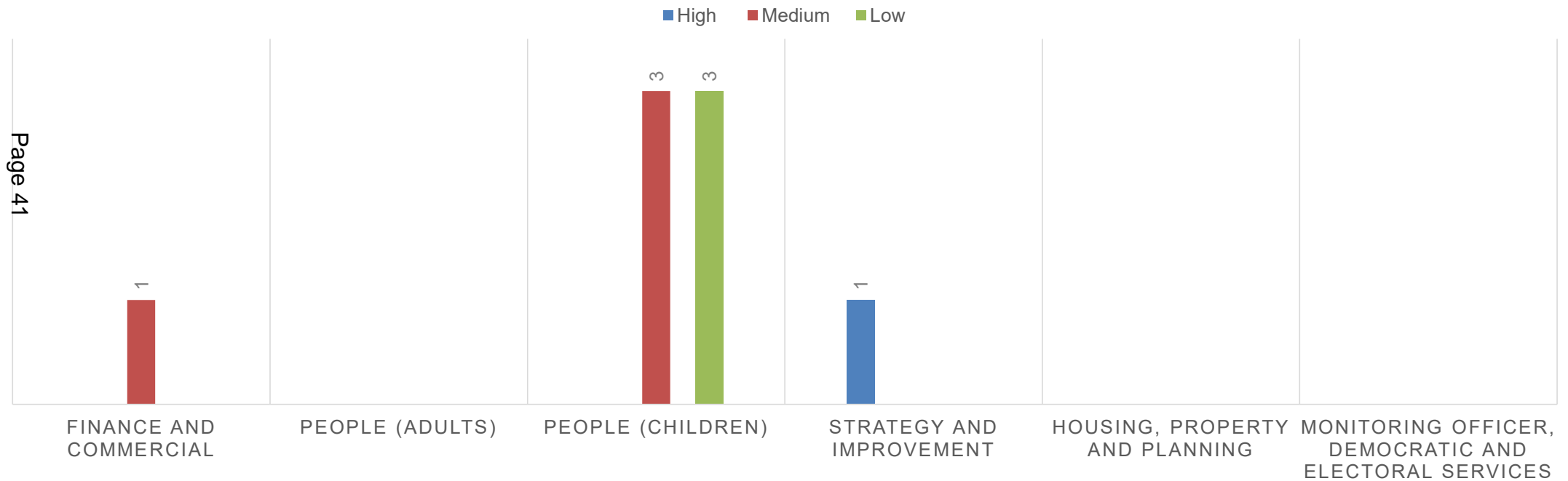


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Internal Audit Actions By Directorate

As of 31 October 2023

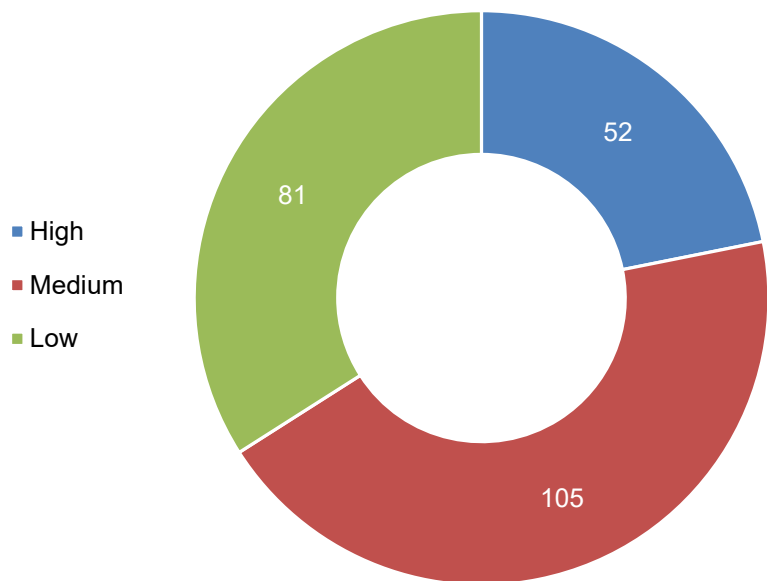
2023/24 OVERDUE AUDIT ACTIONS BY DIRECTORATE



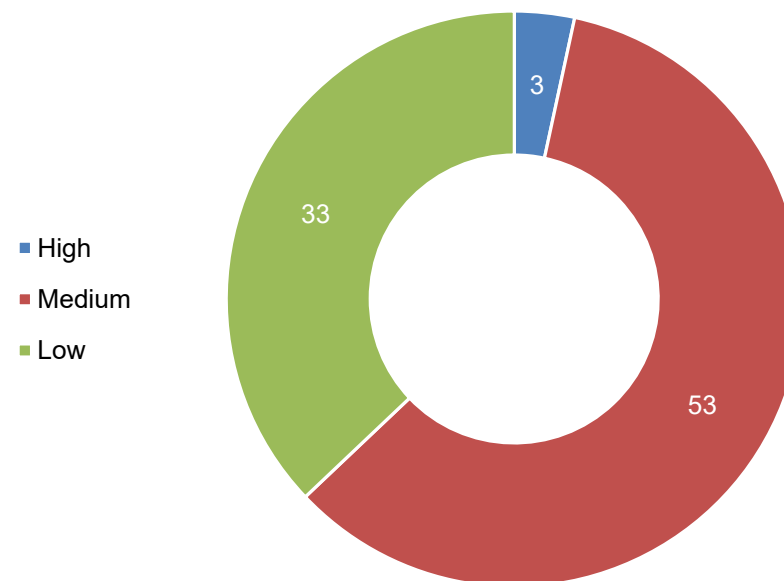
Internal Audit Actions 2021/22

As of 31 October 2023

2021/22 COMPLETED Audit Actions



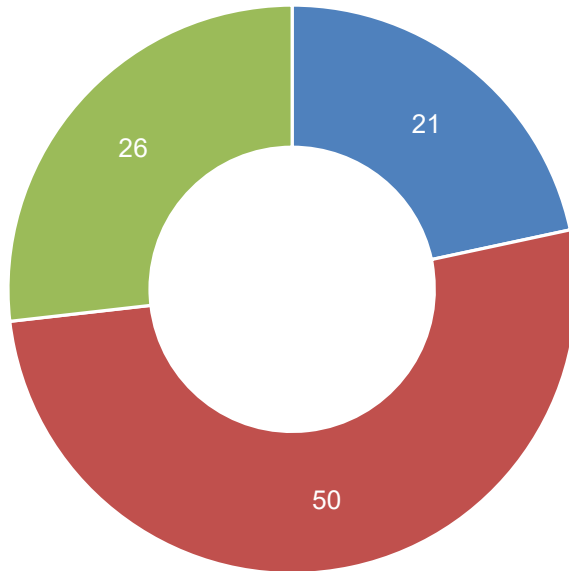
2021/22 OVERDUE Audit Actions



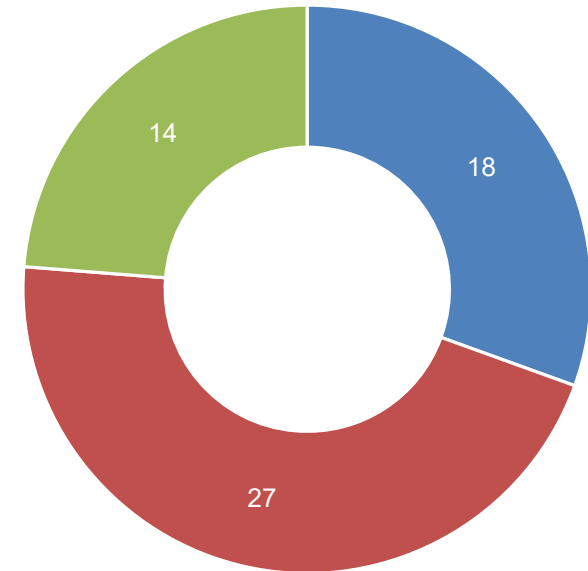
Internal Audit Actions 2022/23

As of 31 October 2023

2022/23 COMPLETED Audit Actions



2022/23 OVERDUE Audit Actions



1. Contracts register is being used as a business-as-usual tool in forward planning procurement activity, this includes consideration of longer-term procurement activity required for high value, high risk contracts. Meetings with Executive Directors and their management teams to commence in November.
2. Utilising existing IT systems for the contract register – options for the implementation on Agresso commenced in July 2023 and currently looking at either pursuing the Agresso option or using Microsoft Office tools, with support from SBC's IT team
3. The training programme on the council's contract procedure rules continues. 126 staff have been trained to date. Further date scheduled on 8 November 2023.
4. Continue to build a permanent in-house team. Further round of recruitment successfully appointed one procurement category manager, working with HR colleagues to find creative ways to attract candidates which has had a wide reach for further recruitment rounds.
5. Reported to October Corporate Improvement Scrutiny committee, to update on improvements, including implementation of the recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group on contract management
6. Confirmed as one of two councils on local partnerships contract management process mapping pilot

Further key development activities

1. Implement the contracts register on IT system – by January 2024 (options appraisal in progress)
2. Develop a framework to ensure there is a co-ordinated and consistent approach to contract management.– from January 2023.
3. Tiering and risk assessment of contracts and contract management plans for high risk contracts – by March 2024
4. Process mapping procurement – implement improvements to processes and procedures including making best use of automated tools– By March 2024
5. Establishment of Contract Management Assurance Board to drive best practice in contract management – December 2023
6. Ensure KPI's are meaningful and monitored effectively – from January 2023.
7. Programme of continuous contracts register reviews to ensure the council is getting the best value for money – from September 2023 and six monthly thereafter, this will include improvements to reporting.
8. Develop a commercial strategy to replace the procurement and contract management strategy and implement actions throughout the 2023/24 financial year.
9. Pilot a social value policy and engage with SME's- from August 2023
10. Direction deep dive on procurement and contract management to the October Corporate Improvement Scrutiny committee

The ICT & Digital Team Strategy and Plan

The ICT & Digital strategy adopted by the Council in March is our reference point for improvement work. The table below covers the three key themes and the recent against each:

Theme	Recent activities
Improving the reliability of technology services and transforming the way support is provided for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first phase of testing of the new end-user devices has started with the ICT&D team and work is still on schedule. This will mean that the new approach for device provision will commence for staff across the Council in the New Year. • With the agreement of Commissioners, an LGA peer review will be undertaken on the current state of ICT at Slough. This will be a useful input to the annual review of the ICT&D strategy that will be completed in the New Year and submitted to Cabinet. • Following a number of risk conversations with departments across Slough, the date for the data centre move has been held and works will begin at 4pm on Friday 10th November and run throughout the weekend. There are some significant risks, but additional mitigations have been worked up to lower the impact on live services.
Resetting the council’s approach to the way residents access services and increasing the volume of interactions through lower cost digital channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The upgrade of our core digital platform, Jadu, has been completed and the impact to digital interactions has been minimal. Changes to the site that enhance our ability to offer translation for residents who may not have English as a first language have now commenced. • Work to progress more extensive use of the CRM element of Jadu (CXM) by all departments has begun. Increasing the data flowing into CXM will ultimately provide a single customer view and enable the Customer Services team to deal with more queries at first point of contact.
Supporting the exploitation of data more effectively so that the council can prioritise precious resources to have the most impact for residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trial of a data integration and presentation layer to help with improved reporting and analysis, focusing on Housing continues. • The discussions about roles and responsibilities for managing platforms and data in departments are including an increased focus on data. Increasing each department's ability to serve their own needs for business-as-usual activity will enable central teams to focus on more strategic advanced analytics.

1. Leadership Workshop (CLT) with LGA taking place on 22nd Nov.
2. Further activities taking place to review the lessons learned from the Hybrid working roll out.
3. Staff workshops will take place throughout Nov/Dec to address the cultural issues identified through the staff surveys and to build this into a single action plan.
4. Staff roadshow implemented on 30th October raised a number of concerns that are being answered by CLT and cascaded to staff.
5. Members and cabinet development programme being rolled out and further sessions being planned
6. HR Improvements are being reviewed and further actions to transform the service in line with the TOM and strategic objectives are being identified

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	15 January 2023
Subject:	Corporate Performance Report – October 2023
Lead Member:	Cllr Dexter Smith – Leader of the Council
Chief Officer:	Sarah Hayward Executive Director, Strategy & Transformation
Contact Officer:	Dean Tyler Associate Director, Strategy
	Dave Hounsell Group Manager, Programmes, Performance & Strategy
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	No
Exempt:	No
Decision Subject To Call In:	No
Appendices:	A - Corporate Performance Report – October 2023

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1. The Council was set a Direction to improve evidence-based decision-making. One mechanism to achieve evidence-based decision-making is to implement a robust, transparent, and regular corporate performance reporting cycle. This corporate performance reporting cycle is a key component of the council's Performance Management Approach and is underpinned by an emerging corporate Data Strategy.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

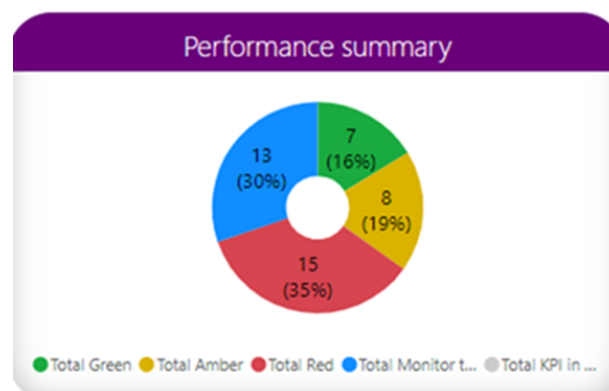
- Note and comment on the Council's current performance and mitigating actions as measured by the key performance indicators within the corporate management information report and scorecard.

Commissioner Review

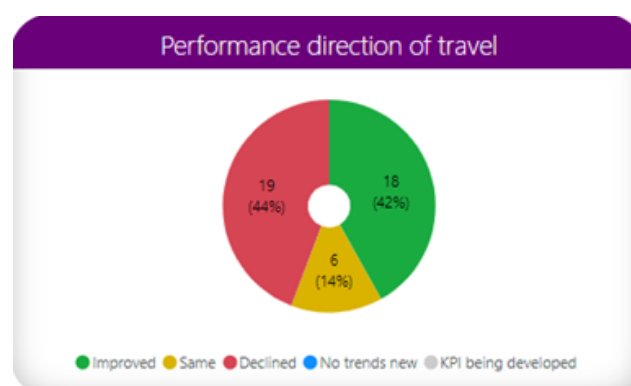
No specific comments from Commissioners.

2. Report

- 2.1. This is the second report to Cabinet on the key performance indicators from the 2023/24 corporate management information scorecard aligned to the strategic priorities in the new Corporate Plan.
- 2.2. During October a mid-year refresh of the current set of metrics in the corporate performance scorecard was carried out to include a more focussed set of metrics. The number of metrics in the revised corporate performance scorecard reduced from 59 to 43 with two new metrics added. Metrics removed from the scorecard will continue to be reviewed regularly at directorate level reporting.
- 2.3. The corporate performance scorecard will be kept under review and amended as appropriate to meet the corporate priorities of the Council. They will also be reviewed to take account of the role of the Office of Local Government (Oflog). At present there is a limited number of published performance metrics and some of these are historic. However, it is expected that over time this dataset will increase. In the meantime, the Council will make use of other performance datasets, including LG Inform and CIPFA benchmarking to ensure it has comparable performance data.
- 2.4. Overall, for Oct-23 the strategic performance picture remains variable. 16% (7) of the 43 key performance indicators (KPIs) are performing either at or better than target. 19% (8) indicators are performing marginally worse than target, and 35% (15) indicators are performing below the red KPI threshold. A further 30% (13) indicators are monitored for trends.



- 2.5. Compared to the previous month, performance has improved for 42% (18) of the 43 KPIs, remained the same for 14% (6) and declined for 44% (19).



- 2.6. Appendix A of the corporate performance report summarises progress against the Council's priorities as presented in October 2023. The report includes:
- Summary progress against the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan.
 - Areas that require a continued focus on improvement, the mitigating actions and owners assigned - trends that indicate the council is not on track for delivering its strategic objectives (refer to pages 8 to 9).
 - Areas of improvement – trends that indicate the council is improving although performance currently below agreed target (refer to pages 10 to 13).
 - Areas for recognition, where the council can learn from promising practice - trends that indicate the council is on track for delivering its objectives (refer to pages 13 to 14).
- 2.7. In Appendix A, pages 2 to 7 outline the performance trends against the 43 strategic KPIs, and the mitigating actions and action owners. Each action has an assigned Executive Director owner, who is accountable for the performance level, and who will assign responsibility for delivery to officers. Further, pages 17 to 24 include charts showing trends over time for each metric along with progress against target agreed.
- 2.8. Key areas of improvements:
- The average processing time for new housing benefit claims improving month on month to 28.67 days during Oct-23, a reduction of 1.41 days from the previous month however remains above the national average of 20 days. The year-to-date average processing time for new claims of 45.41 days improved by 2.42 days.
 - Continuous improvements in the average time taken to process change in circumstances to existing housing benefit claims. At 6.83 days during Oct-23, this remains below target of 9 days and a reduction of 1.23 days from the previous month. The year-to-date average processing time for changes of 15.42 days is a reduction of 1.31 days from the previous month. The Council has made a significant investment in automation, and a detailed improvement plan is in place to implement this which will remedy existing issues and help to improve processing times to an acceptable and sustainable level by the end of the financial year.
 - Improvement in call centre wait times during Oct-23 to 09 mins 01 seconds and calls answered at 71.1%, with a reduction in calls received (14.3k) although performance remains above target. The Customer Services Improvement project team have been working on service improvements including telephone interactive voice response messages and video development for our website and digital channels.
 - An improvement in adults aged between 40-74 offered a health check and higher than regional and national average. During 2023/24 Q1, 6.6% (2,565) eligible population offered an NHS health check in Slough, an improvement from Q4 of 2.7% (1,100) and above the national average of 5.6% and South-

East average of 4.3%. The service has been using data from performance dashboards to map health checks offered at GP practice level to contribute to improvements and share best practise using universal offer combined with a more targeted approach.

- Major and non-major planning applications decisions made within timescale during 2023/24 Q1 remain consistently high. Performance trends actively monitored at management meetings focussing on identifying service improvements actions to issue decisions within timescale including regularly reviewing applications with officers, timely site visits to assess planning applications and where necessary seek amendments to developments early in the process.

2.9. Key areas that require a continued focus on improvement:

- An increase in the number of standard housing voids and in the average number of days to re-let voids. 151 standard housing voids reported at the end of Oct-23, with an average of 200 days taken to re-let 6 properties. The number of voids and the re-let time will increase before improved performance occurs. Performance regularly reviewed at housing management meetings to address issues and risks. A minimum level of lettings agreed with allocations staff until fully automated lettings process is in place. This will enable the return to normal levels of operation and void processes by the end of Dec-23.
- There is a relative low level of take-up of free early years education or childcare for eligible 2-year-olds. Slough's summer 2023 take-up rate was 54.5%, which is below the target of 65%, and below the national average of 74%. An Early Years strategy in development with partners and stakeholders to create a clear vision and how we intend to achieve our objectives.
- The number of anti-social behaviour and environmental related service requests open for more than 90 days increased from 49 during Sept-23 to 79 during Oct-23. All cases reviewed each month and appropriate action taken. Teams continue to work with Communications and Direct Services Operations (DSO) team to target hotspots for household fly-tipping and are building legal cases for enforcement. Noise nuisance cases can take 4 or 5 months to resolve. Complex cases require investigation and officers to take formal legal action, cases closed at the completion of formal action. This is not necessarily a negative as it's about reaching the right outcome and as our enforcement teams take a more robust stance, we may see an increase in the number of cases taking longer than 90 days.
- Compared to similar period last year, a decrease in the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting and remains well below the 40% target. Recycling rates cyclically decline during the winter months due to a reduction in green waste, however the rate in Slough remains low in all seasons. Slough recently increased the types of plastic that are recyclable. Residents can now recycle loose plastic in their red recycling bins. This should reduce the number of bins rejected due to contamination resulting in an increase in recyclables.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1. Financial implications

- The key performance indicators from the corporate management information scorecard are aligned to the priorities in the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan articulates a commitment to delivering financial prudence and demonstrating Best Value for residents, any monies needed to achieve improved performance must be funded within the council revenue budgets.
- A separate finance report is presented to Cabinet quarterly that shows the financial performance of Slough Borough Council but clearly links with information in this report

3.2. Legal implications

- Whilst there is no statutory duty to report regularly to Cabinet on the Council's performance, as a best value authority under the Local Government Act 1999, the Council has a statutory duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. Regular reporting of performance can assist the Council to demonstrate best value.
- The Council's Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 was approved by Audit and Corporate Governance Committee in July 2023. This included a number of actions, including an action to improve the systems in place for managing performance. This stated that the Council must ensure basic systems and controls are in place to ensure that performance is managed, and risk appropriately identified, reported and monitored. Performance data should measure the quality of services for users, use of resources and value for money. Performance indicators should be set drawing on sector wide data sets from various organisations including the Local Government Association and CIPFA.
- The Government has published draft best value guidance which identifies seven best value themes. Under the theme of Service Delivery, local authority data is one of the means to identify whether services are being delivered efficiently and effectively and services should be benchmarked against comparable authorities. Performance should be regularly reported to the public to ensure that citizens are informed of the quality of services being delivered. Under the theme of Continuous Improvement, frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of improvement plans is identified as a characteristic of a well-functioning authority. Under the theme of Governance, it is recommended that performance management information measures actual outcomes effectively and is frequently interrogated to allow under performance to be addressed.

3.3. Risk management implications

- Mitigating actions are in place for strategic performance indicators where key performance trends require action. These actions are proposed by the responsible manager, and updates are monitored at the monthly CLT Assurance forum.

- The monthly CLT Assurance forum considers finance, risk, and performance to ensure that the leadership team receive a rounded picture on the health of the organisation, to inform improvement actions.

3.4. *Environmental implications*

- Strategic performance indicators aligned to priority 3 of the corporate plan retains and expands upon environmental commitments under the following strategic objective '*reducing Slough's carbon footprint, promoting active travel and sustainable forms of transport, and taking action to prevent or minimise the impact of climate change*'.

3.5. *Equality implications*

- The Equality Act 2010 sets out duties for local authorities in relation to equalities, including the public sector equality duty, which requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. In relation to equality of opportunity, the legislation requires the Council to consider the need to remove or reduce disadvantage, meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life and other activities. Performance data can assist the Council to identify gaps in service and consider what action is required to address this.

4. Background Papers

None

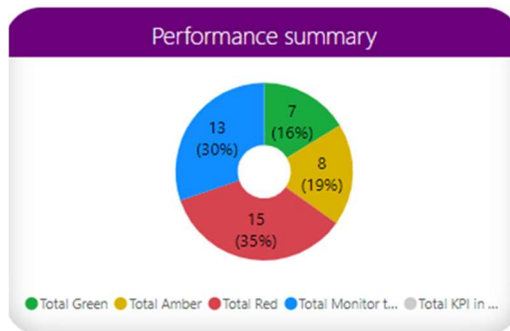
Corporate Performance Report: as at end of Oct-2023

Data and Insight Team

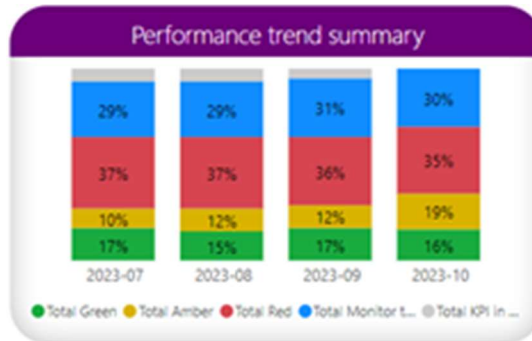
Strategic performance position

The latest position of the Council’s key performance indicators at the end of Oct 2023 shows a mixed picture: however, there are key movements within indicator trends. Of the 43 indicators reported:

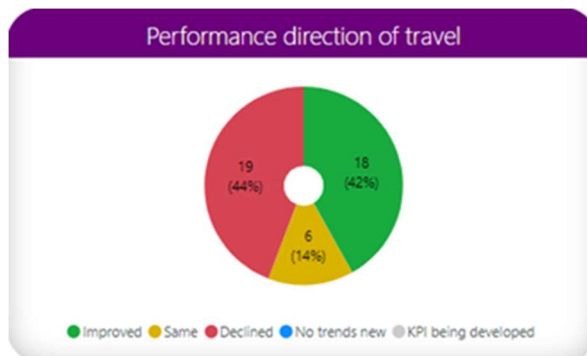
- 16% (7 indicators) rated overall as **Green**,
- 19% (8 indicators) rated as **Amber**,
- 35% (15 indicators) rated overall as **Red** and
- 30% (13 indicators) where the metric monitored for trends (**blue**).



Mixed overall performance compared to the previous month with changes to RAG status for 6 key performance metrics from priority 1 and corporate health.



Compared to last month or similar period from previous year, performance has improved (↑) for 42% (18) of the 43 KPIs, remained the same (→↔) for 14% (6) and declined (↓) for 44% (19).



Corporate Management Information Scorecard 2023/24

Outcome	Performance Measure	Good to be	Frequency	Previous update	Previous Performance	Performance direction of travel	Latest update	Latest Performance	Target	Mitigating actions	ED Lead	Comparison
Priority 1 A borough for children and young people to	Number of new EHC plans issued	High	Monthly	Sep-23	R 27	↔	Oct-23	R 27	>=35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft EHC plans quality assured within the new assessment framework prior to issuing. Contracts secured for independent Education Psychologists to fill shortage. Training delivered to SEND team in collation of good quality panel submissions. Case Officer training provided to ensure high quality information presented to panel, to streamline panel decisions and allow for recording of more detailed decisions and rational. All newly agreed assessments prioritised for allocation to ensure timeliness going forward. Live Case Tracker implemented to ensure clarity and consistency of process recording to run concurrently with Capita allowing for clearer accountability and cross validation of data. 	ED for Children's Services	Slough Mar-22 173 Mar-23 145
	Percentage of new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks including exceptions	High	Monthly	Sep-23	R 11.1% (3)	↑	Oct-23	R 40.7% (11)	>=national average		ED for Children's Services	2022 Slough 11.4% National 47.7% South East 44.8% CIPFA NN 53.6%
	Percentage of eligible 2 year olds receiving 15 hours of free early years education or childcare	High	Termly	Spring 2023	R 55.9%	↓	Summer 2023	R 54.5%	>=65%	An Early Years strategy in development with partners and stakeholders to create a clear vision and how we intend to achieve our objectives. There is a specific programme of work which aims to increase the participation work including: Sufficient affordable, quality, and inclusive early years and childcare places for all children in Slough no matter what their needs are. Families understand the services available to them and how they can access these. Targeted marketing and communications using information provided from DWP. Raising awareness of the benefits of early education. Brokerage support for identified families, breaking down barriers to participation. Increasing the market capacity, offering business and workforce development support. A targeted approach to raising awareness of funding entitlements with key partners and stakeholders.	ED for Children's Services	Summer 2023 Slough 54% National 74% Ranking National 138/140 South East 18/19 SN Group 10/10
	Pupil exclusions in Slough schools as a percentage of school population	Low	Termly	Spring 2023	Mon 0.06% (22)	↑	Summer 2023	Mon 0.04% (13)	Metric in place to monitor trends	The rate has been rising in Slough in line with national data following the Covid lockdown. A new Preventing Exclusions Strategy in development to identify pupils at risk and provide early interventions.	ED for Children's Services	2021/22 Slough 0.08 (25) National 0.08 South East 0.04 SN average 0.06
	Children Missing from Education (CME) as a percentage of school population	Low	Termly	Autumn 2022	Mon 0.20% (66)	↓	Spring 2023	Mon 0.26% (90)	Metric in place to monitor trends	Implementation of a multi-agency approach to support vulnerable children missing education (CME) and children absent from school/children missing in education (CMIE). Training service partners on attendance procedures. Implementation of multi-agency meeting/forums. Adopting the RBWM toolkit and disseminating the ERSA programme/strategies across Slough schools and LA practitioners including social care, early help, admissions, SEND. Develop a cohesive understanding of behaviour and how it links to persistent absence and safeguarding/CE and SEND. Develop and implement 'Team Around the School' systems for better understanding of blockages/issues to poor attendance.	ED for Children's Services	Spring 2023 Slough 0.26% South East 0.13% Ranking South East 17/18

Corporate Management Information Scorecard 2023/24

Outcome	Performance Measure	Good to be	Frequency	Previous update	Previous Performance		Performance direction of travel	Latest update	Latest Performance		Target	Mitigating actions	ED Lead	Comparison
thrive	Percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training	High	Monthly	Aug-23	A	47.2% (42)	↑	Sep-23	A	48.9% (45)	>=52%	Virtual school meet with all young people who are NEET as well as personal advisors. A number of NEET are new to the country (12) and have a September destination for employment which are not yet counted.	ED for Children's Services	2021/22 Slough 52.0% National 55.0% South East 57.0% SN average 55.9%
	Rate per 10,000 of children receiving targeted early help	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	Mon	138.1 (603)	↓	Sep-23	Mon	138.6 (605)	Metric in place to monitor trends	Children open to the service have been reviewed and those that no longer require services have been closed. We expect this to increase as a result of children from the Assessment and Intervention and Safeguarding and Support services to step down which will be identified through the Child in Need Forum.	ED for Children's Services	external benchmarking not available (project starting this year which will hopefully make benchmarking available)
	Percentage of children looked after in external foster care placements	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	R	37.8% (87)	↓	Sep-23	R	38.7% (89)	<=34%	External Placement Panel review all children in external placements, targeting those specifically in residential care, identifying those that specifically can be placed in fostering placements. This process takes time as sourcing a suitable home for children will need to be completed and appropriately matched based on their needs. The number of children is relatively stable however the overall number of children in care has been decreasing which is primarily causing the percentage increase.	ED for Children's Services	external benchmarking not available
	Percentage of children and young people in external residential placements	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	R	10.4% (24)	↑	Sep-23	A	9.1% (21)	<=9.1%	External Placement Panel review all children in external placements, targeting those specifically in residential care, identifying those that specifically can be placed in fostering placements. This process takes time as sourcing a suitable home for children will need to be completed and appropriately matched based on their needs.	ED for Children's Services	external benchmarking not available
	Rate per 10,000 of Children Looked After (CLA)	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	Mon	52.7 (230)	↔	Sep-23	Mon	52.7 (230)	Metric in place to monitor trends	Due to a recent decrease in CLA numbers we are currently below statistical neighbours. CLT is cited when rate increases especially as a result of the National Transfer Scheme or an increase in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.	ED for Children's Services	2021/22 Slough 53.0% National 70.0% South East 56.0% SN average 58.7%
	Percentage of referrals to children's social care within 12 months of earlier referral	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	G	21.5% (47)	↓	Sep-23	R	30.6% (86)	<=22.0%	Re-referrals are continually tracked and monitored each month. Previous interventions are reviewed to explore whether the re-referral could have been avoided and to disseminate the learning. This is reviewed by the Head of Service, Team Manager and the Allocated Worker. The front door is the subject of a 'deep dive' at the next Getting to Good Board as requested by the DfE Commissioner.	ED for Children's Services	2021/22 Slough 21.5% National 21.5% South East 25.9% SN average 21.2%
	Percentage of children aged 2.5 years who received a 2-2.5 year child development review	High	Quarterly	Q3 2022-23	G	82.8% (452)	↑	Q4 2022-23	G	94.1% (524)	>= national average	An agreement and streamline process in place with Solutions4Health analytical team to submit child development and health visiting metrics to the national portal in line with DHSC guidelines with support from CYP PH team. The next submission for 2023/24 Q1 & Q2 deadline is 24-Nov-23.	ED for Children's Services / Director of Public Health and Public Protection	2021/22 Slough 85.8% National 74.0% South East 76.9% CIPFA NN 71.6%
	Proportion of children obese including severely obese at Year 6	Low	Annual	2019/20	R	24.9% (595)	↓	2021/22	R	28.4% (660)	>= national average	Public Health Team are reviewing current integrated wellness service to move weight management service into upcoming recommissioned Healthy Child Programme (HCP) contract. Arrangements underway for whole school approach and whole system's approach to weight management and healthy eating.	ED for Children's Services / Director of Public Health and Public Protection	2021/22 Slough 28.4% National 23.4% South East 20.0%

Corporate Management Information Scorecard 2023/24

Outcome	Performance Measure	Good to be	Frequency	Previous update	Previous Performance	Performance direction of travel	Latest update	Latest Performance	Target	Mitigating actions	ED Lead	Comparison
Priority 2 A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives	Percentage of new clients who received short-term services, where no further request was made for ongoing support	High	Annual	2020	A 77.1%	↑	2021	G 79.6%	>=national average	2022/23 performance level will be available from 20-Oct-23. Final quality assurance stage in process.	ED for Adults Services	2021 Slough 79.6% National 74.9% South East 74.1%
	Percentage of safeguarding referrals that meet section 42	High	Quarterly	Q1 2023-24	Mon 9.7% (31)	↑	Q2 2023-24	Mon 12.0% (37)	Metric in place to monitor trends	Safeguarding data regularly reviewed by Interim Head of Adult Safeguarding and Analyst to identify trends and actions identified. Trends and appropriate actions presented at monthly Adults Leadership Team. Safeguarding trends reviewed at Slough Safeguarding Partnership (sub-group) with accompanying narrative.	ED for Adults Services	Slough 2019/20 11.6% (230) 2020/21 16.4% (240) 2021/22 13.5% (195) 2022/23 12.3% (165)
	Percentage of eligible adults managing their care via a direct payment	High	Quarterly	Q1 2023-24	Mon 25.2% (317)	↑	Q2 2023-24	Mon 26.6% (325)	Metric in place to monitor trends	This metric measures the volume of support provided by the Local Authority to empower local people to self-direct their own care and support. Performance is reviewed monthly at DLT and is also subject to quarterly review at the South-East ADASS user group. This enables ongoing monitoring of our long-term client cohort at the end of each reporting period and benchmarked against the South East ADASS group.	ED for Adults Services	2023/24 Q2 SE ADASS group Ranked 6/16 26.6% 2023 ASCOF Ranked 36/152 SN Group 3/19 Slough 31.6% National 26.2% South East 25.9%
	Percentage of care homes in the borough with a Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating of either good or outstanding	High	Quarterly	Q1 2023-24	Mon 64.3% (9)	↔	Q2 2023-24	Mon 64.3% (9)	Metric in place to monitor trends	Quality Assurance team working with safeguarding, health and where appropriate other local authorities to support providers in overseeing quality improvement action plans.	ED for Adults Services	
	Number of anti-social behaviour and environmental related service requests open for more than 90 days	Low	Monthly	Sep-23	R 49	↓	Oct-23	R 79	<=36	All cases are reviewed each month and appropriate action taken. Teams continue to work with Comms and DSO to target hotspots for household fly-tipping and building legal cases for enforcement. Complex cases require investigation and officers to take formal legal action, cases are closed at the completion of formal action. This is not necessarily a negative as it's about reaching the right outcome and as our enforcement teams take a more robust stance, we may see an increase in the number of cases taking longer than 90 days.	Director of Law & Governance	Slough Mar-22 271 Mar-23 36
	Percentage of NHS health checks offered to the total eligible population in the quarter	High	Quarterly	Q4 2022-23	R 2.7% (1,100)	↑	Q1 2023-24	G 6.6% (2,565)	>= South East region average	1:1 visits of GP practices delivering NHS health checks in Slough to understand barriers and opportunities to improve delivery. Use of data from performance dashboards to map health checks offered at GP practice level to contribute to improvements and share best practise using universal offer combined with a more targeted approach. Liaising with Solutions4Health to better understand their health check offer and exploring opportunities to supplement GP offer and encourage outreach.	ED for Adults Services / Director of Public Health and Public Protection	2023/24 Q1 National 5.6% South East 4.3% CIPFA NN 5.9%

	Average re-let time in days for standard voids	Initially high before performance starts to improve	Monthly	Sep-23	R 191 days (7)	↑	Oct-23	R 200 days (6)	<=35 days	Performance regularly reviewed at housing management meetings to address issues and risks. The Housing NEC allocations module requires further adjustments to the selection process to enable a fully automated system approach to lettings. Meeting held on the 22-Nov-23 to clarify final adjustments which are now with the project team for implementation. In the meantime, a new Allocations Manager in post and a work around in place to take account of the further IT work to select applicants. A minimum level of lettings agreed with allocations staff until fully automated lettings process is in place. This will enable the return to normal levels of operation and void processes by the end of Dec-23.	ED for Regeneration, Housing and Environment	Slough 2021/22 89 days 2022/23 80 days
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Corporate Management Information Scorecard 2023/24

Outcome	Performance Measure	Good to be	Frequency	Previous update	Previous Performance		Performance direction of travel	Latest update	Latest Performance		Target	Mitigating actions	ED Lead	Comparison
Priority 3 A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough	Percentage of SBC housing repairs completed within agreed timescale	High	Monthly	Sep-23	R	66.7% (1,147)	↑	Oct-23	R	67.6% (1,431)	>=95%	Regular management meetings scheduled with senior management to discuss critical issues including complaints. Proposals in discussion to introduce a new approach to working smarter to reduce response times.	ED for Regeneration, Housing and Environment	Slough Mar-22 63.1% Mar-23 70.0%
	Percentage of decisions made on major planning application within 13 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant	High	Quarterly	Q4 2022-23	G	100% (1)	↔	Q1 2023-24	G	100% (5)	>=65%	Performance trends actively monitored at management meetings focussing on identifying service improvements to improve service.	ED for Regeneration, Housing and Environment	2023/24 Q1 National 89.5% South East 91.4%
	Percentage of decisions made on non-major planning application within 8 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant	High	Quarterly	Q4 2022-23	G	79.3% (111)	↑	Q1 2023-24	G	81.6% (120)	>=75%		ED for Regeneration, Housing and Environment	2023/24 Q1 National 88.2% South East 91.1%
	Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling, or composting	High	Monthly	Sep-22	R	27.3%	↓	Sep-23	R	22.8%	>=40% by Mar-23	Campaign running to promote the importance of recycling waste and materials. Messages include the need to optimise recycling to conserve space in residents general waste bins. A policy change during-Sept-23 where residents can now recycle nearly all types of loose plastic in the household red recycling bins whereas previously only plastic bottles could be recycled. As a result we are already seeing a reduction in the number of bins rejected at recycling centre.	ED for Regeneration, Housing and Environment	2021/22 Slough 26.7% National: 42.5% South East: 46.4% CIPFA NN: 38.8%
	Missed refuse bin collection per 100,000	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	R	38	↓	Sep-23	R	43	<=30	Guidance on the council's website on how to prevent a rejected bin collection due to overloading or contamination. Online form to report a missed bin collection. An oversight & variation log created to tackle persistent problems or repeat occurrences. This is shared weekly with team to highlight hotspots and problem areas and for confirmation that the appropriate action has been completed.	ED for Regeneration, Housing and Environment	

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Business rates collection rate	High	Monthly	YTD to Oct-22	G	65.30%	↔	YTD to Oct-23	A	65.30%	Oct-23 65.50% End of year 98.85%	The council continues to take appropriate recovery action on those businesses that do not keep their payments up to date.	ED for Finance and Commercial	2022/23 Slough 98.7% National 96.8 Unitary Authorities 97.1%
Council tax collection rate	High	Monthly	YTD to Oct-22	G	Adjusted 63.80%	↓	YTD to Oct-23	A	63.78%	Adjusted target Oct-23 64.15% End of year 94.60%	Targets for the remainder of this year and collection rates from last year adjusted to remove the impact of the 2.05% effect of the Energy Support Fund payments made in Sept-22. To improve collection rates, the team are implementing additional technology that will automate high volume, low value tasks, to free up resources to focus on collection. Automations including email indexing went live at the beginning of Sep-23 and the programme is due to run until the end of this year. The next automation to go live is Direct Debits, Refunds and Moves-in/Moves out. The newly expanded Council Tax Support scheme to provide additional support to more than 9,000 households currently in receipt and for those making a new application was introduced from Apr-23.	ED for Finance and Commercial	2022/23 Slough 95.7% National 96.0% Unitary Authorities 96.2%
Average time taken to process new housing benefit claims	Low	Monthly	Sep-23	R	30.08 days	↑	Oct-23	R	28.67 days	<=20 days	The Council has made a significant investment in automation, a detailed improvement plan is in place which will remedy existing issues and help to improve processing times to an acceptable and sustainable level by the end of the financial year.	ED for Finance and Commercial	2022/23 Slough 35 days National 20 days South East 21 days
Average time taken to process change in circumstances to existing housing benefit claims	Low	Monthly	Sep-23	G	8.06 days	↑	Oct-23	G	6.83 days	<=9 days	DWP visited in Sept-23 to review and advise on any further improvement steps the council may wish to consider making.	ED for Finance and Commercial	2022/23 Slough 13 days National 8 days South East 8 days

Corporate Management Information Scorecard 2023/24

Outcome	Performance Measure	Good to be	Frequency	Previous update	Previous Performance		Performance direction of travel	Latest update	Latest Performance		Target	Mitigating actions	ED Lead	Comparison
Corporate Health	Percentage of high priority audit actions overdue from 2021/22	Low	Quarterly	Jun-23	R	21.8% (12)	↑	Sep-23	R	16.4% (9)	0% by Mar-24	The overdue actions shared with each department for Department Leadership Teams (DLTs) to consider current position and respond. This will improve over time with the interventions in place.	ED for Finance and Commercial	
	Percentage of high priority audit actions overdue from 2022/23	Low	Quarterly	Jun-23	R	35.3% (18)	↑	Sep-23	R	20.4% (11)	0% by Mar-24	Progress is being made on closing actions on the tracker. Evidence of actions completed is obtained and quality assured by Internal Audit Manager and retained for use in follow up audits.	ED for Finance and Commercial	
	Variance between revenue budget and full year forecast	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	A	3.4% (£5.1m)	↓	Sep-23	A	4.1% (£6.1m)	0%	Risks are actively monitored and reported to Finance Board. The predominant theme emerging is one of unrealisable income targets being reported, some of which date back to previous years. There are service pressures leading to overspends where expenditure is greater than budgeted for.	ED for Finance and Commercial	
	Percentage of total savings for 2023/24 on track to be delivered by Mar-24	High	Monthly	Aug-23	A	90.0% (£20.2m)	↑	Sep-23	A	91.4% (£20.5m)	100%	Risks are actively monitored and reported to Finance Board. Services with support from finance are exploring potential mitigations and alternative in-year savings proposals and will report on those through future budget monitoring reports.	ED for Finance and Commercial	
	Percentage of contract exemptions RAG rated as Red	Low	Monthly	Sep-23	G	0% (nil)	↔	Oct-23	G	0% (nil)	0%	Meetings with Executive Directors and their management teams to review the contract register and procurement pipelines, to ensure there is forward planning to continue to prevent Red and Amber exemptions. Head of Commercial Services is working with the Procurement Officer to streamline reporting for the meetings.	ED for Finance and Commercial	
	Percentage of customer service calls answered	High	Monthly	Oct-22	G	80.6% (11.2k)	↓	Oct-23	A	71.1% (10.1k)	>=75%	Improvement project team working on the following service improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone Interactive Voice Response (IVR), changes to IVR approved, business case signed off and awaiting on supplier to implement changes to the IVR platform. • IVR messages have been recorded in readiness for the IVR implementation. 	ED for Strategy & Transformation	Slough average 2021/22 49.9% 2022/23 69.9%
	Average time taken to answer customer services calls	Low	Monthly	Oct-22	G	05min 10sec	↓	Oct-23	R	09min 01sec	<=8 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video development for our website and digital channels in progress with comms team, school admission videos rolled out. • Scan Station promotion poster in development which will be displayed at council access points. • Bus Pass phase 2 online module explored and developed in readiness for annual renewals during March-24 • Templates for emails/e-forms responses reviewed and updated, work stream now closed. 	ED for Strategy & Transformation	Slough average 20/21 09min33sec 21/22 12min51sec 22/23 08min32 sec
Percentage of stage 1 complaints partially or fully upheld	Low	Monthly	Aug-23	G	58.7% (27)	↓	Sep-23	A	67.4% (31)	<=67%	Quarterly service quality check meetings continue to take place focussing on identifying service improvements to improve service. The new 2 stage corporate complaints process and improved complaints webpage launched in Aug-23. Revised stage 1 & 2 complaints templates created in line with the new process, including pointers to refer to and learning actions/outcomes resulting in improvements in the quality of responses issued.	ED for Strategy & Transformation	Slough 2021/22 71.5% 2022/23 73.7%	

Corporate Management Information Scorecard 2023/24

Outcome	Performance Measure	Good to be	Frequency	Previous update	Previous Performance		Performance direction of travel	Latest update	Latest Performance		Target	Mitigating actions	ED Lead	Comparison
Page 61	Percentage of IT service desk tickets resolved at first point of contact	High	Monthly	Sep-23	Mon	69.3%	↓	Oct-23	Mon	66.0%	Metric in place to monitor trends	New service desk processes continue to be reviewed and improved each month. Onboarding further services on Astro including Digital & TDA which is likely have an impact on the number of tickets raised. An increase in the usage of the Astro Support Hub which will see less tickets being re-opened. Review of SLA timeframes in the system as these do not reflect the standard operating procedures.	ED for Strategy & Transformation	
	Percentage of IT service desk tickets resolved within SLA	High	Monthly	Sep-23	Mon	94.0%	↓	Oct-23	Mon	93.3%	Metric in place to monitor trends		ED for Strategy & Transformation	
	Interim staffing costs (£)	Low	Quarterly	Q1 2023-24	Mon	£5.5m	↓	Q2 2023-24	Mon	£5.9m	Metric in place to monitor trends	Reporting released one month in arrears. Work underway with Matrix to provide greater insight. We will look to develop this workstream with new enhanced reporting moving into Q4.	ED for Strategy & Transformation	
	Percentage of staff equalities data recorded on Agresso	High	Quarterly	Jun-23	Mon	67.4%	↓	Sep-23	Mon	64.3%	Metric in place to monitor trends	HR carrying out critical workstream reviews through the culture change programme. The staff network groups have recently produced a video showing staff how to complete equalities data on Agresso which is available on InSite. All staff user emails sent out alongside staff communication via the intranet to get people engaged with the changes.	ED for Strategy & Transformation	
	Staff turnover rate	Low	Quarterly	Rolling year to Jun-23	Mon	18.9%	↓	Rolling year to Sept-23	Mon	19.6%	Metric in place to monitor trends	Refresh of internal communications and engagement e.g., Staff Roadshows. Recruitment redesign workshop held as part of the council's recovery programme. New Applicant Tracking System in testing phase with users. Recruitment of director team and heads of service to stabilise workforce, improve engagement, embedding of culture change. Restructure of teams, job design, workforce planning activities to bring top talent into the organisation. Re-invigoration of exit interviews to understand reasons for leaving.	ED for Strategy & Transformation	Civil Service 2020 10.3% 2021 8.4% 2022 13.6%
Number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE employee	Initially high to address under reporting	Quarterly	Rolling year to Jun-23	Mon	3.8	↑	Rolling year to Sept-23	Mon	3.9	Metric in place to monitor trends	This is likely to be under-reported. HR/OD encouraging timely and accurate reporting by working with management teams and through staff communications. Project underway to improve Agresso capability which is a barrier to under-reporting of absence. Sickness absence policy being re-written with a view to reducing bureaucracy and improving ease of use. This will be accompanied with a roll out plan for managers including robust training highlighting the importance of recording sickness on Agresso.	ED for Strategy & Transformation	Civil Service 2019 7.0 2020 7.4 2021 6.1 2022 7.9	

Areas that require a continued focus on improvement:

- **Increase in the number of void and in the average number of days to re-let standard voids:**
 - Performance regularly reviewed at housing management meetings to address issues and risks.
 - The Housing NEC allocations module requires further adjustments to the selection process to enable a fully automated system approach to lettings. Final adjustments are with the project team for implementation.
 - In the meantime, a new Allocations Manager in post and a work around in place. A minimum level of lettings agreed with allocations staff until fully automated lettings process is in place. This will enable the return to normal levels of operation and void processes by the end of Dec-23.
 - Additional temporary Housing Officer resources applied to speed up lettings process and to complete early sign up of tenants. Up until Mar-24, 60% of all new lettings will be allocated to Temporary Accommodation (TA) occupants to reduce the use and costs of TA. This will be reviewed in Apr-24 to set new level of lettings to TA occupants from Ready to Let (RTL) council dwellings.
- **An increase in referrals and the percentage of referrals to children's social care within 12 months of earlier referral:**
 - There was a substantial increase in the number and proportion of children with a repeat referral during Sept-23 (30.6%). We tend to see an increase during in this period due to children returning to schools following the summer holidays.
 - During Sept-23 there were 8 large sibling groups (4+ children) and 10 sibling groups of three that returned to us within 12 months of their previous referral starting.
 - Re-referrals continually tracked and monitored each month.
 - Previous interventions reviewed to explore whether the re-referral could have been avoided and to disseminate the learning. These are reviewed by the Head of Service, Team Manager, and the Allocated Worker. The front door is the subject of a 'deep dive' at the next Getting to Good Board as requested by the DfE Commissioner.
- **There is a relative low level of take-up of free early years education or childcare for eligible 2-year-olds:**
 - Slough's summer 2023 take-up rate was 54.5%, which is below the target of 65%, and well below the national average of 74%. Ranked 138th nationally and the second lowest rate in South-East region and lowest in Statistical Neighbour group.
 - An Early Years strategy in development with partners and stakeholders to create a clear vision and how we intend to achieve our objectives. There is a specific programme of work which aims to increase the participation work including:
 - Sufficient affordable, quality, and inclusive early years and childcare places for all children in Slough no matter what their needs are.
 - Families understand the services available to them and how they can access these.
 - Targeted marketing and communications using information provided from DWP.
 - Raising awareness of the benefits of early education.
 - Brokerage support for identified families, breaking down barriers to participation.

- Increasing the market capacity, offering business and workforce development support.
 - A targeted approach to raising awareness of funding entitlements with key partners and stakeholders.
- **Number of anti-social behaviour and environmental related service requests open for more than 90 days on the increase:**
 - All cases reviewed each month and appropriate action taken. Teams continue to work with Communications and Direct Services Operations (DSO) team to target hotspots for household fly-tipping and are building legal cases for enforcement. Noise nuisance cases can take 4 or 5 months to resolve.
 - Complex cases require investigation and officers to take formal legal action, cases closed at the completion of formal action. This is not necessarily a negative as it's about reaching the right outcome and as our enforcement teams take a more robust stance, we may see an increase in the number of cases taking longer than 90 days.
- **Compared to similar period last year, a decrease in the percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting and remains well below the 40% target:**
 - Recycling rates cyclically decline during the winter months due to a reduction in green waste, however the rate in Slough remains low in all seasons.
 - We recently increased acceptable materials for recycling. The main source of contamination appeared to be the wrong types of plastics. We now accept plastic food trays etc. This should reduce the number of bins rejected due to contamination resulting in an increase in recyclables.
 - Green waste recycling volumes are seasonal therefore we see a reduction in tonnages collect. Volumes increase as the weather improves and people start tending to their gardens.

An increase in missed refuse bin collection per 100,000 and remains above target:

- Refuse bin collection rates declined last month from 38 missed per 100,000 to 43 during Oct-23 and remains above target of 30. This is based over a 5-week period compared to 4 from the previous month.
- The waste collection team is being more robust in rejecting bins that are overloaded or are contaminated. Residents have been recording these as missed but should be referred to as rejected as they do not meet criteria for collection.

Areas of improvement although performance below agreed target:

- **Continuous improvements in reducing the average time taken to process new housing benefit claims and changes in circumstances, with new claims now taking 29 days (target 20) and changes 7 days (target 9):**
 - The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Improvement Team have provided their detailed feedback following their visit from 26th to 29th Sept-23. We are working through their recommendations with a view to adding them to our improvement plan. A session with the DWP and the whole team arranged so that they can present their findings, which include many positive comments and strengths in our delivery.
 - Outstanding work volumes continue to remain in a positive position with 960 outstanding at the end of October.
 - The oldest item of work is 11-days old for new and changes.
 - The in-month speed of processing for new claims is 28.67 days, a reduction of 1.41 days from the previous month. The year-to-date average processing time for new claims of 45.41 days improved by 2.42 days.
 - The in-month speed of processing for changes is 6.83 days, which remains below the target of 9-days target and a reduction of 1.23 days from the previous month. The year-to-date average processing time for changes of 15.42 days is reduction of 1.31 days from the previous month.
 - The Council has made a significant investment in automation, and a detailed improvement plan is in place to implement this which will remedy existing issues and help to improve processing times to an acceptable and sustainable level by the end of the financial year. The next major milestone in the project is 08-Nov-23, with the next process to be automated live at the end of the month.
- **Improvement in the number of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plans finalised within timescale at 41.7% although remains below target:**
 - An improvement in the number of EHC plans completed within timescale, with 27 EHC Plans finalised during Oct-23, of which 40.7% (11) finalised within the statutory 20 weeks' timeframe however rate remains below target.
 - SEN EHCP target changed from 50 to 35 based on service learning.
 - SEN Team actively reducing backlog of late running EHC needs assessments.
 - Draft EHC plans quality assured within the new assessment framework prior to issuing.
 - Contracts secured for independent Education Psychologists to fill shortage.
 - Training delivered to SEND team in collation of good quality panel submissions.
 - Case Officer training provided to ensure high quality information presented to panel, to streamline panel decisions and to allow recording of more detailed decisions and rational.
 - Business Support Officers (BSO) allocated to maintain clear records of panel decisions and to ensure improved coordination of advice requests and to inform high quality decision letters. Case officers to access decisions from single location to provide improved communication of decisions to stakeholders.
 - All newly agreed assessments prioritised for allocation to ensure timeliness going forward.
 - SEND BSO allocated to work with PEP to ensure coordination of backlog cases which require EP assessment. Data tracker and Capita system cross checked against pupil files to identify priority order for outstanding EP assessments.
 - Live Case Tracker implemented to ensure clarity and consistency of process recording to run concurrently with Capita allowing for clearer accountability and cross validation of data.

- Capita training program completed with all SEND 0-25 officers and Business Support Officers to ensure all fields completed to promote better data output and reporting.
 - All SEND 0-25 Officers involved in weekly training developing quality of EHC plan writing, including writing effective and appropriate outcomes.
 - Draft standard operating procedures manual for internal staff and professionals in place. This includes clear indication of roles and responsibilities built into Standard Operating Procedures for consistency of process and accountability.
 - Phone system and duty rota overhauled and improved to ensure lines are available for schools and families, and messages responded to promptly. The response target brought in line with the wider education department communication charter response target of 5 working days.
- **An improvement in the percentage of children and young people in external residential placements:**
 - A reduction in the number and proportion of children in external residential placements, with 9.1% (21 children) during Sept-23.
 - This is the lowest rate over the last 12 months, with the rate at its peak during Apr-23 at 12.3% (31 children).
 - We have also seen cost reductions for children who continue to be placed in these types of placements.
 - External Placement Panel review all children in external placements, targeting those specifically in residential care, identifying those that specifically can be placed in fostering placements.
 - This process takes time as sourcing a suitable home for children will need to be completed and appropriately matched based on their needs.
- **An improvement in housing repairs due for action however the proportion of housing repairs completed on time remains far below the target of 95%:**
 - An improvement in the number of housing repairs due for action during Oct-23 however there remains over 2,450 responsive repairs to action.
 - Housing repairs completed within timescale at 68% (1,431) remains a major issue for responsive repairs service and well below target of 95%. The high number of damp & mould cases continues to impact the service.
 - Repairs successfully completed in one visit at 85% (1,431 repairs) remains consistently above target of 75%.
 - The number of complaints outstanding is reducing week on week as more cases resolved.
 - Regular management meetings scheduled with senior management to discuss critical issues including complaints. Proposals in discussion to introduce a new approach to working smarter to reduce response times.
 - An average turnaround of 26 days for void delivered in the month which is higher than last month due to voids requiring more work.
 - The refurbishment of the first 3 de-designated blocks at Kennedy House and Allington Court have now completed.
 - Redwood House has the final external decorations to complete and some guttering works.
 - Work has started on the next refurbishment at Apsley House. The door and window replacement programme and door entry system replacement programmes continue to progress well. Most of the re-roofing programme completed with some capacity left for any urgent replacements needed during the winter.

- The large block roof replacements at Church Street Chalvey completed. Darvills Lane is well underway and Maryside and Chichester Court are due to commence soon.
- **An improvement in the council tax in-year collection rate, 0.52% ahead of this time last year although 0.37% below the revised in-year target for Oct-23:**
 - The council tax in-year collection rate of 63.78% for Oct-23 is 0.52% ahead of the collection rate achieved this time last year however 0.37% below the Oct-23 target of 64.15%.
 - Targets for the remainder of this year and collection rates from last year adjusted to remove the impact of the 2.05% effect of the Energy Support Fund payments made in Sept-22.
 - To improve collection rates, the team are implementing additional technology that will automate high volume, low value tasks, which will free up resources to focus on collection. Automations including email indexing went live at the beginning of Sep-23 and the programme is due to run until the end of this year. The next automation to go live is Direct Debits, Refunds and Moves-in/Moves out is currently being tested.
 - In addition, the service has invested in technology that will automate outbound text messages, emails and phone calls targeted at accounts already in arrears and those that may move to this stage soon.
 - We have started a project to target almost 3,000 council tax accounts owing a total of £2.8m that have not made any payment so far this year. This will help to drive up the in-year collection.
 - The eventual collection rate remains above 99.6% which is a positive position to be in.
 - We are currently reviewing the Council Tax Support scheme for 2024/25.
- **A reduction in high priority audit actions overdue, with 16.4% (9) from audits in 2021/22 and 20.4% (11) from audits in 2022/23:**
 - 37 internal audit reports issued in 2021/22 (29 assurance and 8 advisory). All internal audit reports have now been finalised (including follow up audits). The overdue actions shared with each department for Department Leadership Teams (DLTs) to consider current position and respond. Work will continue with DLT's to reduce these numbers.
 - 28 reports have now been finalised for 2022/23. Progress made on closing actions on the tracker. Evidence of actions completed obtained and quality assured by Internal Audit Manager and retained for use in follow up audits.
 - 2 reports finalised for 2023/24. A further 5 reports at draft status subject to further discussion and 4 audits currently at fieldwork stage.
 - We are expecting to see the number of actions from prior years to continue to reduce over the coming months with the additional focus from our management teams.
- **Customer Services: an improvement in the percentage of calls answered and call waiting times although remains above target:**
 - An increase in customer service calls answered during Oct-23 at 71.1% (10,135) however performance remains below the current target of 75%. There was a decrease in calls received compared to the previous month and similar period last year.
 - The average call wait time reduced to 9mins 01 secs, however above target of under 8mins.
 - Customer Services Improvement project team have been working on the following service improvements:
 - Telephone Interactive Voice Response (IVR), changes to IVR approved, business case signed off and awaiting on supplier to implement changes to the IVR platform. Once

changes made, UAT testing will be carried before switching over to the live platform on 01-Dec-23.

- IVR messages recorded in readiness for the IVR implementation.
- Video development for our website and digital channels in progress with comms team, school admission videos rolled out.
- Scan Station promotion poster in development to be displayed at all council access points.
- Bus Pass phase 2 online module explored and developed in readiness for annual renewals during March-24
- Templates for emails/e-forms responses reviewed and updated, work stream now closed.

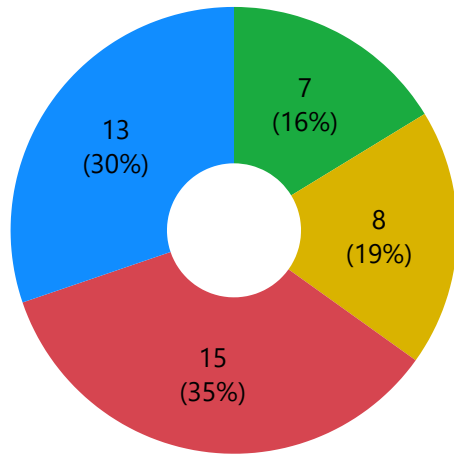
Positive trends:

- **An improvement in adults aged between 40-74 offered a health check and higher than regional and national average. 6.6% (2,565) eligible adults offered NHS health checks during Q1 2023/24:**
 - During Q1, 6.6% (2,565) eligible population offered an NHS health check in Slough, an improvement from the previous quarter of 2.7% (1,100) and above the national average of 5.6% and South-East average of 4.3%.
 - 1:1 visits of GP practices delivering NHS health checks in Slough to understand barriers and opportunities to improve delivery.
 - Use of data from performance dashboards to map health checks offered at GP practice level to contribute to improvements and share best practise using universal offer combined with a more targeted approach.
 - Liaising with Solutions4Health to better understand their health check offer and exploring opportunities to supplement GP offer and encourage outreach.
- **Major and non-major planning applications decisions made within timescale remain high:**
 - The number and percentage of major and non-major planning application decisions made within timescales continues to remain high.
 - The percentage of major planning applications decisions made within timescale remains above the national and South-East regional averages.
 - Non-major applications decisions for Q1 improved to 82% and above target however the overall rate remains below the national and South-East regional average.
 - Performance trends actively monitored at management meetings focussing on identifying service improvements to improve service.
- **An improvement in the proportion of eligible adults managing their care independently via a direct payment:**
 - At the end of Q2 26.6% (325) of eligible adults managing their care independently via a direct payment.
 - Ranked 6th out of 16 LAs in the South-East Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) group.
 - This is a result of sustained efforts to promote personal choice and independence for people requiring care in the borough.

- **No contract exemptions submitted to procurement review board:**
 - Exemptions to the council's contract procedure rules shows where good and sufficient reason demonstrated.
 - Red: Whilst the exemption is not in breach of the council's contract procedure rules, better forward planning could have resulted in a competitive process being undertaken. A competitive process must be undertaken before the contract term ends.
 - Amber: Whilst the rationale for the exemption given is good and sufficient, forward planning could have resulted in a competitive process undertaken, and should be undertaken before the contract term ends
 - Green: The rationale for the exemption given is good and sufficient and an exemption is fully justified.
 - During Oct-23, no contract exemptions submitted to procurement review board.
 - Meetings with Executive Directors and their management teams to review the contract register and procurement pipelines, to ensure there is forward planning to continue to prevent Red and Amber exemptions.
 - Head of Commercial Services is working with the Procurement Officer to streamline reporting for the meetings.

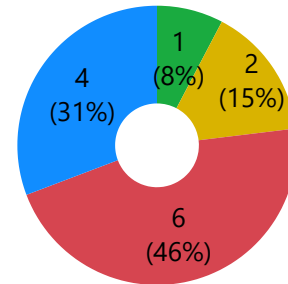
Summary

Performance summary



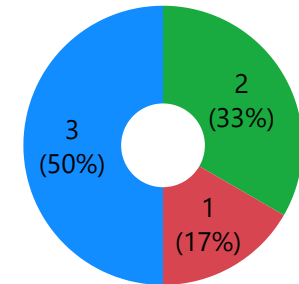
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Priority 1



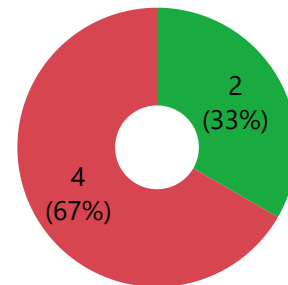
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Priority 2



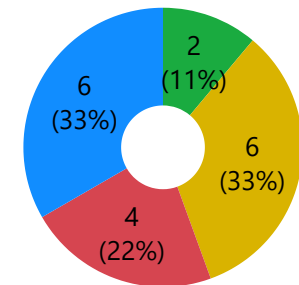
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Priority 3



● P3 Green ● P3 Amber ● P3 Red ● P3 Monitor trends ● P3 KPI in develop...

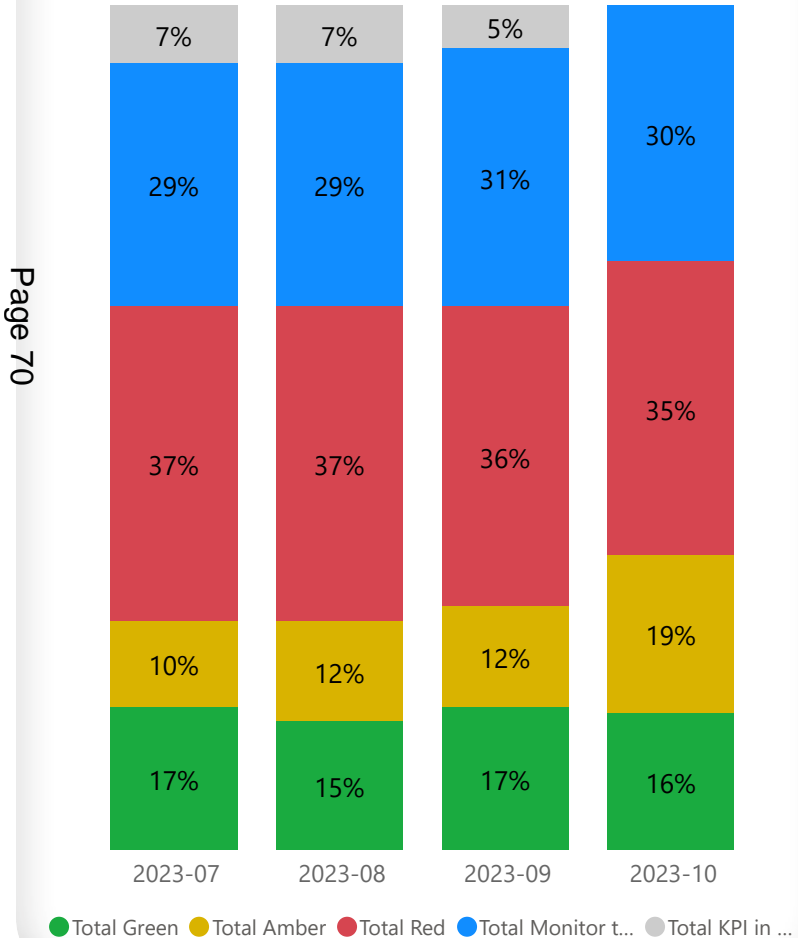
Corporate Health



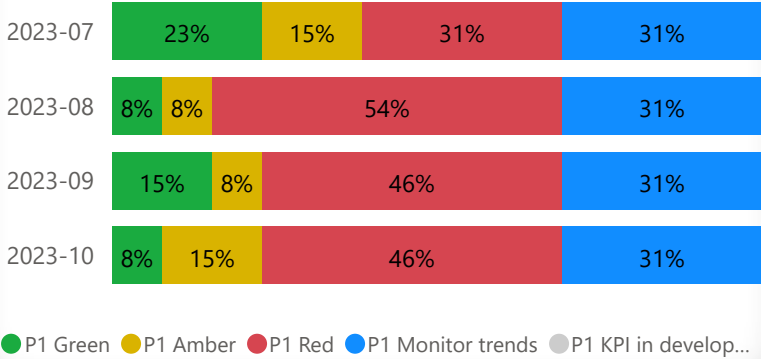
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Progress

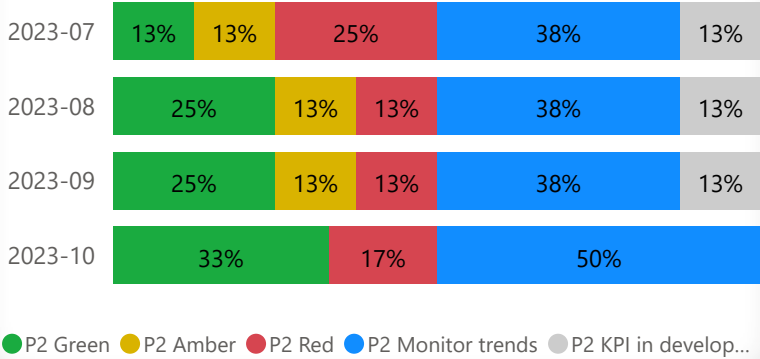
Performance trend summary



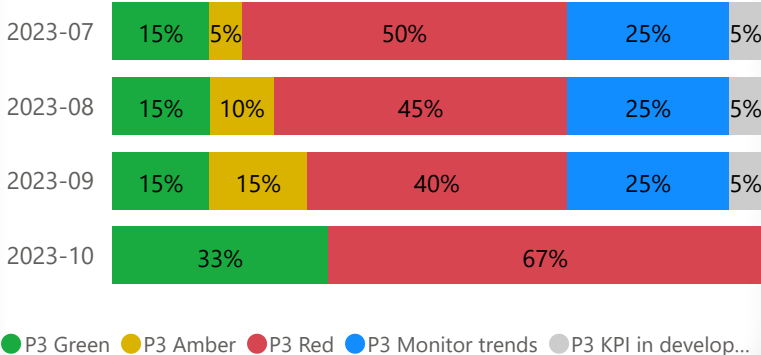
Priority 1



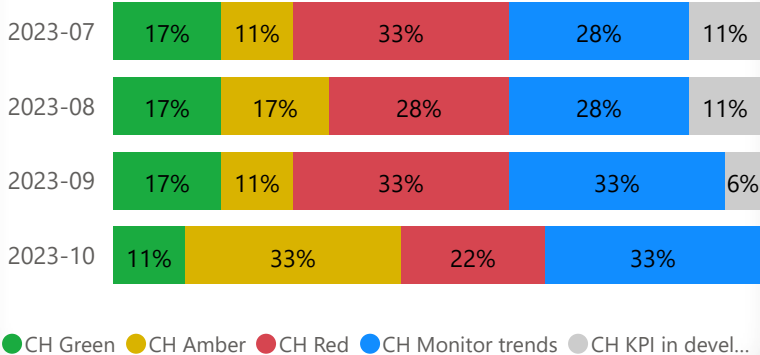
Priority 2



Priority 3

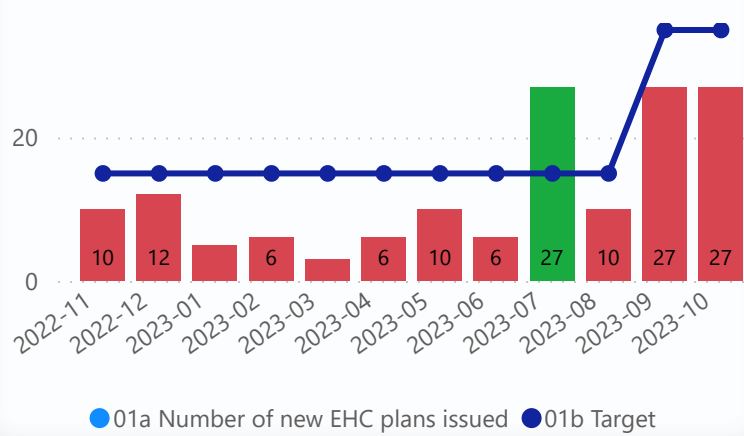


Corporate Health

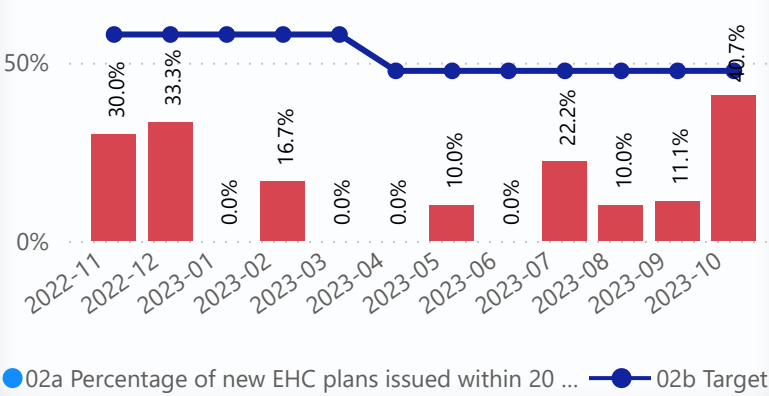


Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive

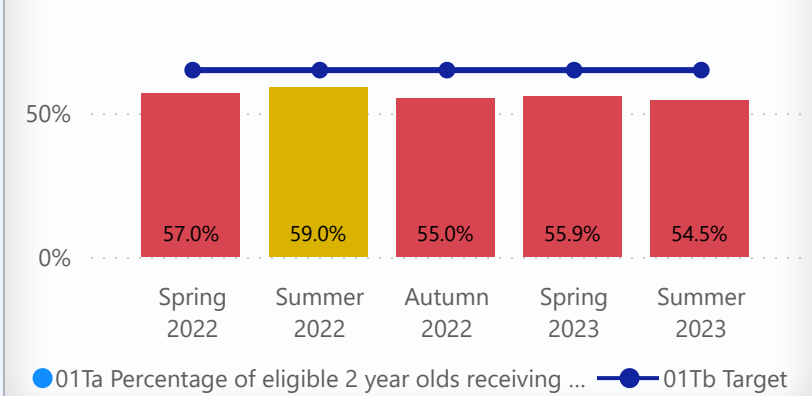
Number of EHC plans issued



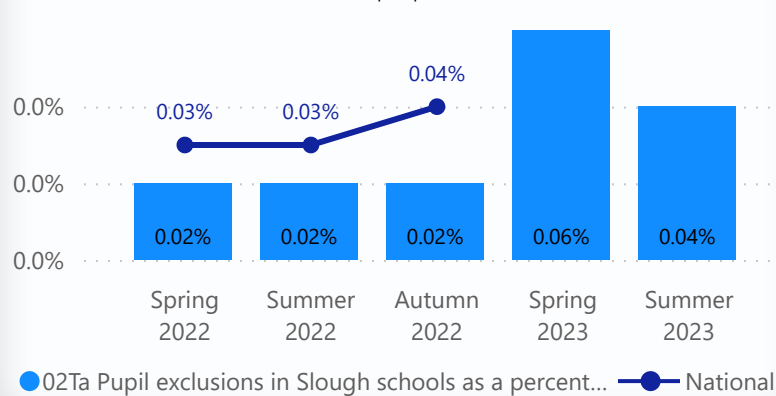
Percentage of new EHC plans issued within 20 weeks including exceptions



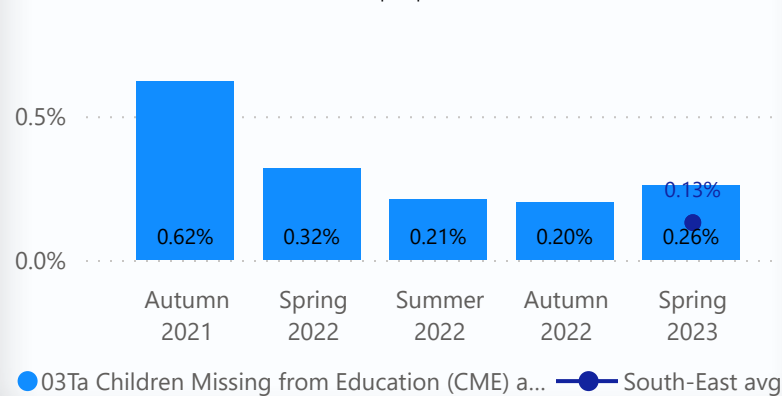
Percentage of eligible 2 year olds receiving 15 hours of free early years education or childcare



Pupil exclusions in Slough schools as a percentage of school population

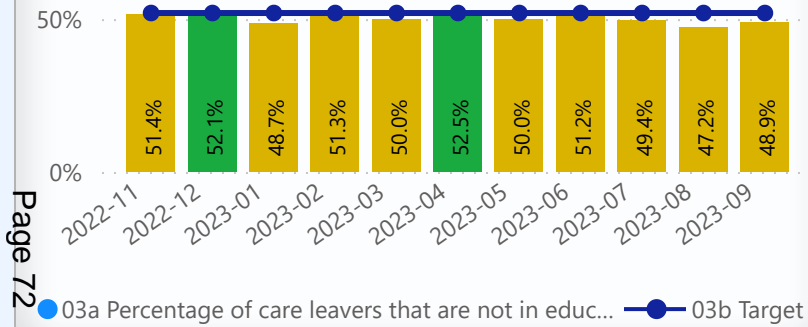


Children Missing from Education (CME) as a percentage of school population

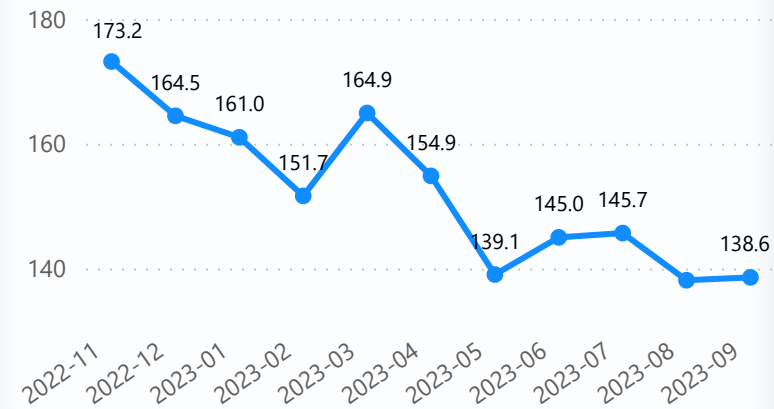


Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive

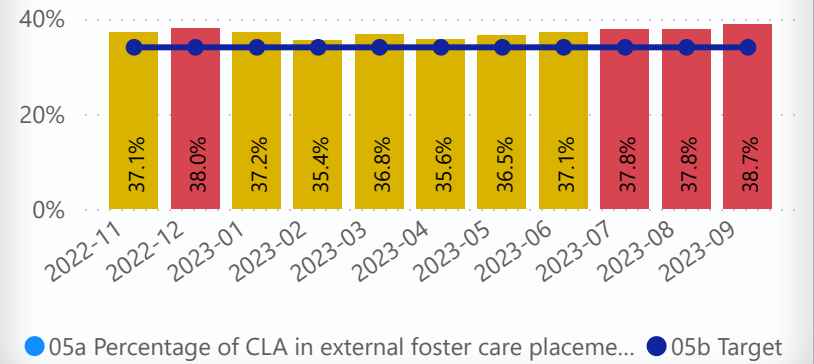
Percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training



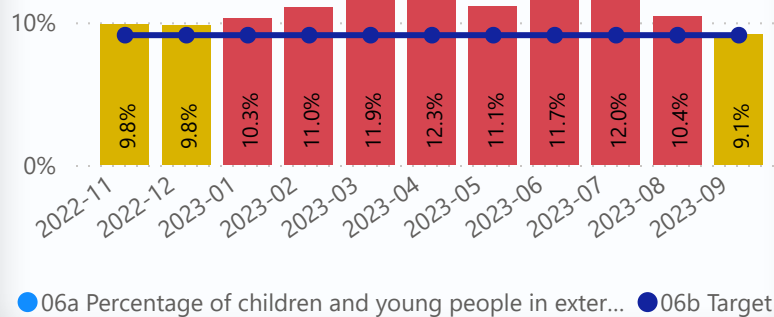
Rate per 10,000 of children receiving targeted early help



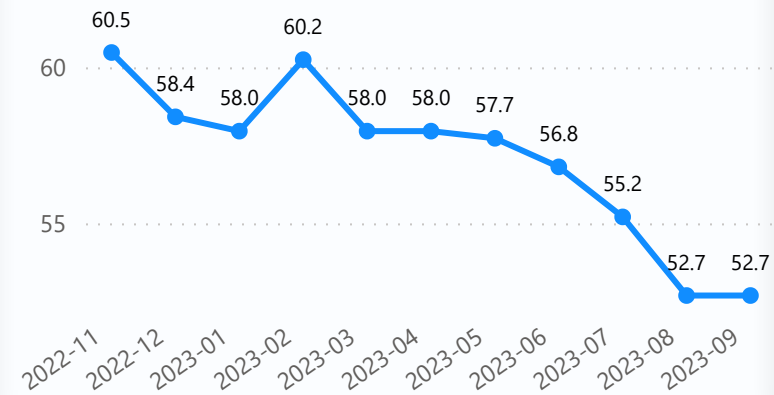
Percentage of children looked after in external foster care placements



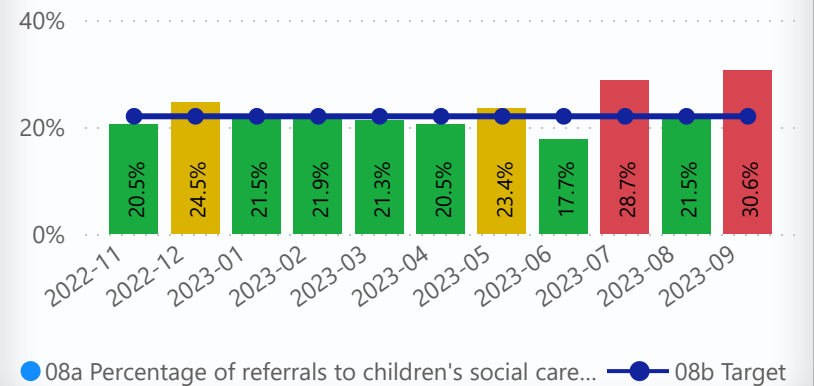
Percentage of children and young people in external residential placements



Rate per 10,000 of Children Looked After (CLA)

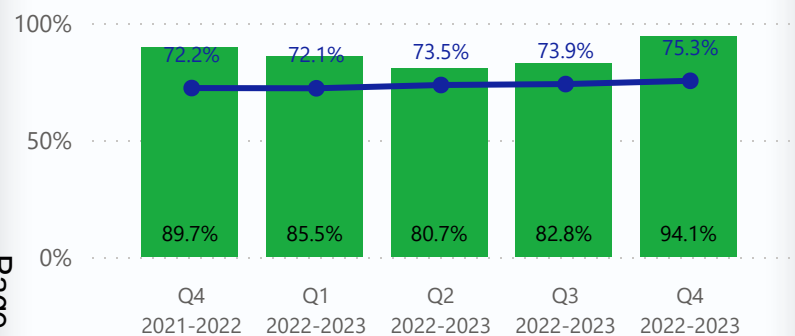


Percentage of referrals to children's social care within 12 months of earlier referral

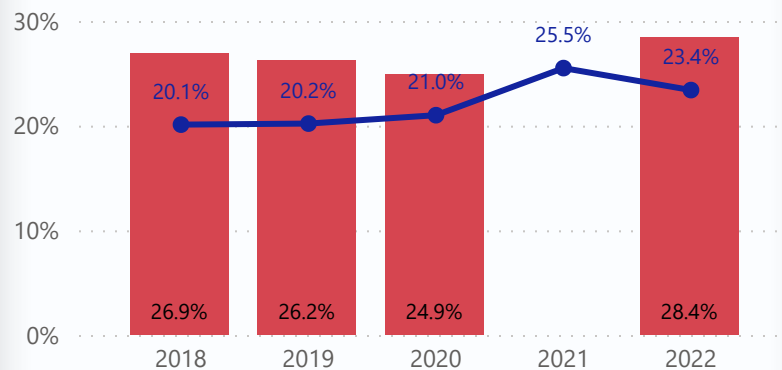


Priority 1: A borough for children and young people to thrive

Percentage of children aged 2.5 years who received a 2 to 2.5 year child development review

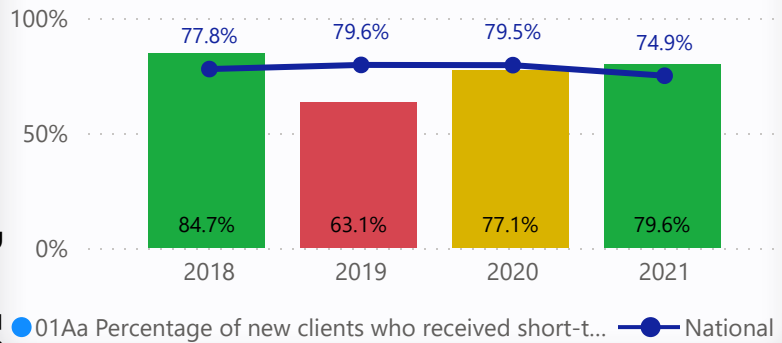


Proportion of children obese or severely obese in Year 6

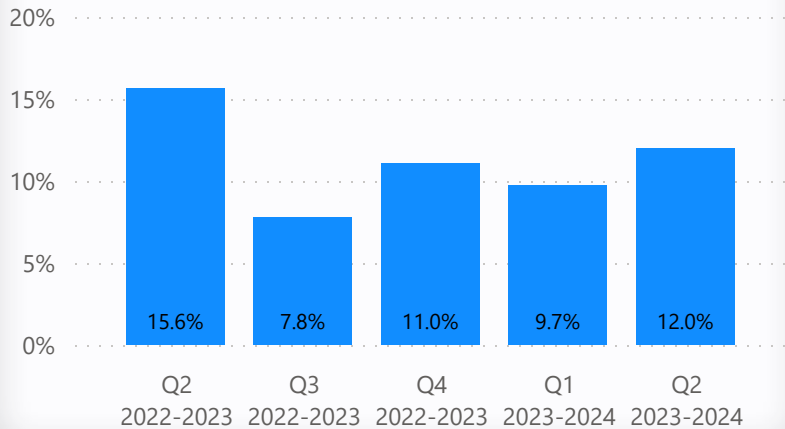


Priority 2: A town where residents can live healthier, safer and more independent lives

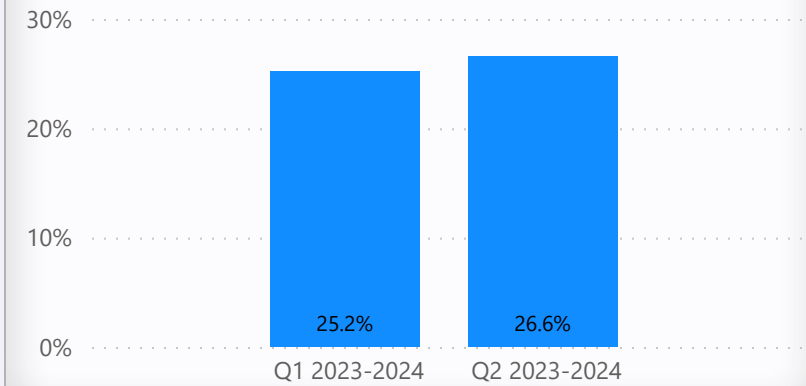
Percentage of new clients who received short-term services, where no further request was made for ongoing support



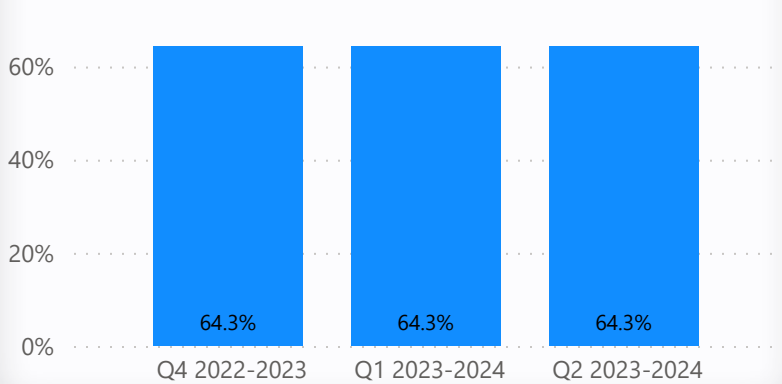
Percentage of safeguarding referrals that meet section 42



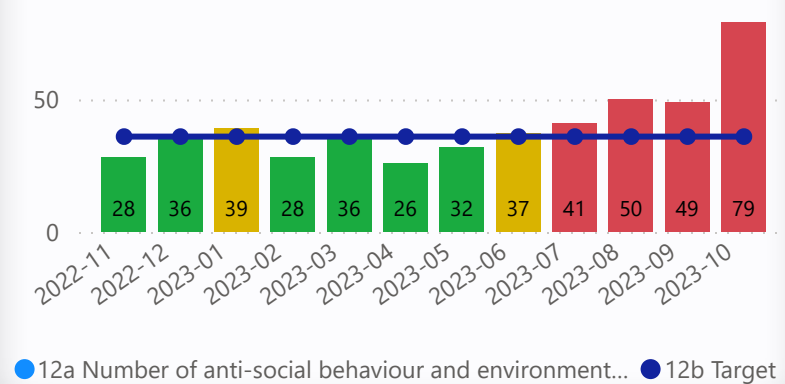
Percentage of eligible adults managing their care via a direct payment



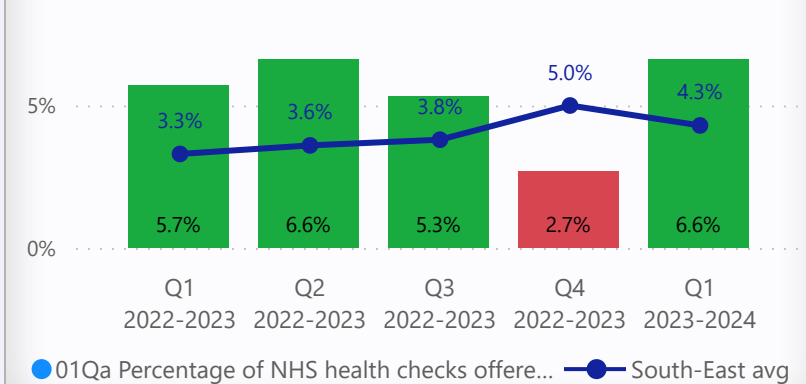
Percentage of care homes in the borough with a Care Quality Commission (CQC) rating of good or outstanding



Number of anti-social behaviour and environmental related service requests open for more than 90 days



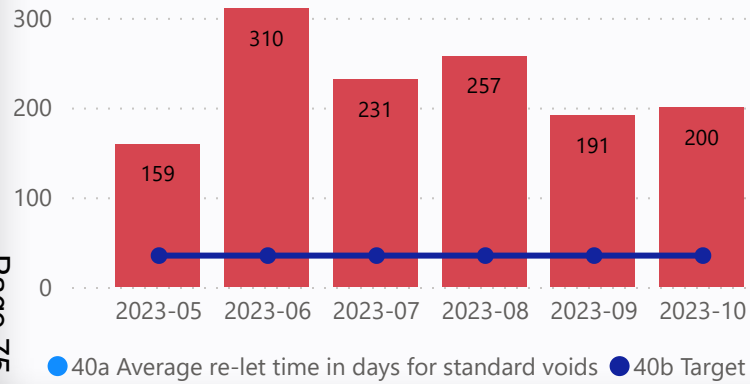
Percentage of NHS health checks offered to the total eligible population



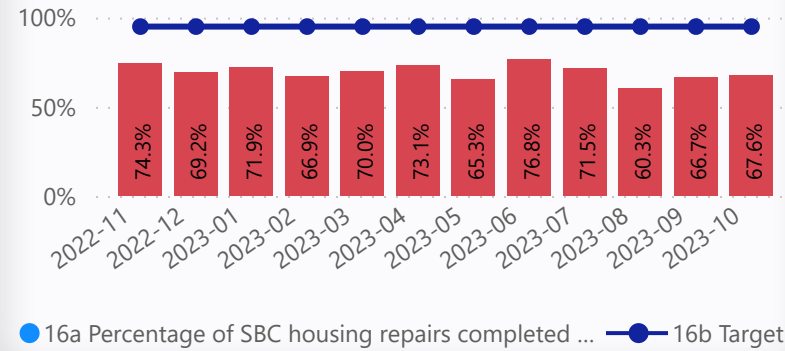
Priority 3: A cleaner, healthier and more prosperous Slough

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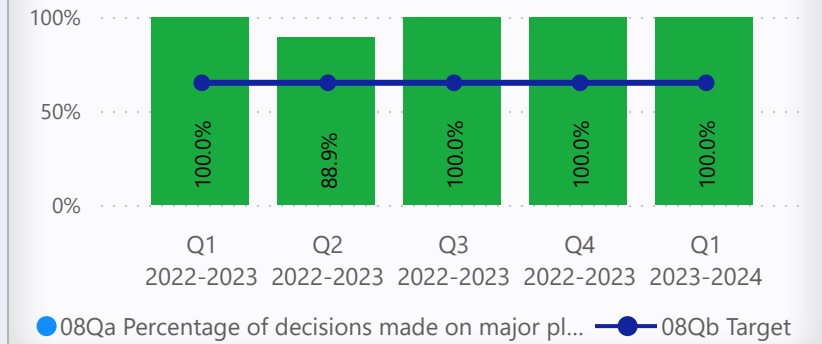
Average re-let time in days for standard voids



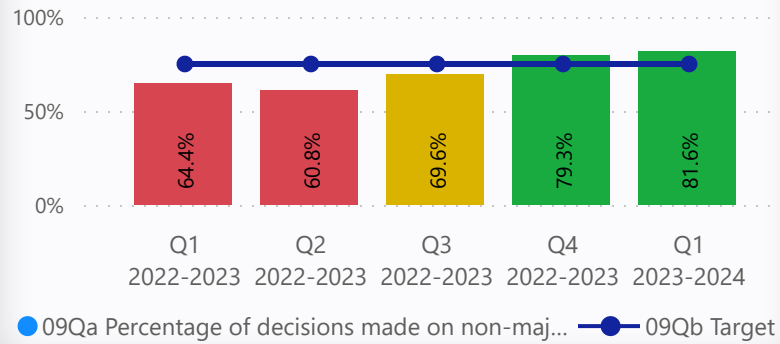
Percentage of SBC housing repairs completed within agreed timescale



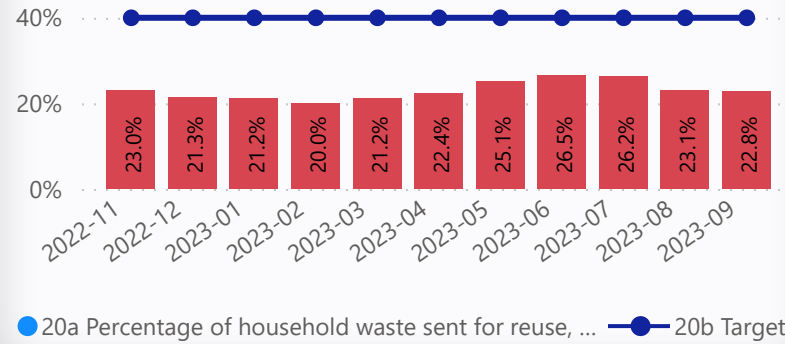
Percentage of decisions made on major planning applications within 13 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant



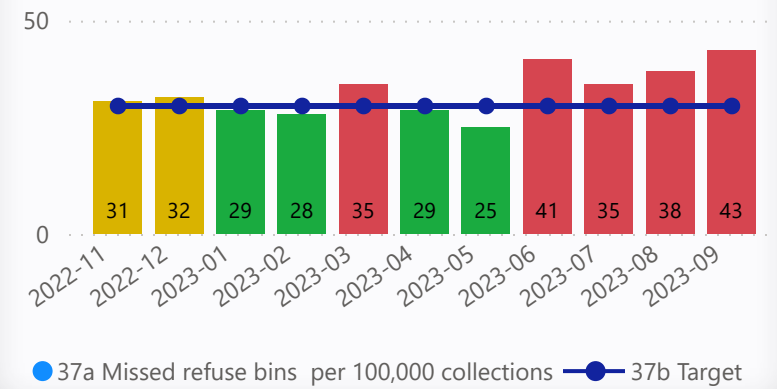
Percentage of decisions made on non major-planning applications within 8 weeks or timescale agreed with applicant



Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting

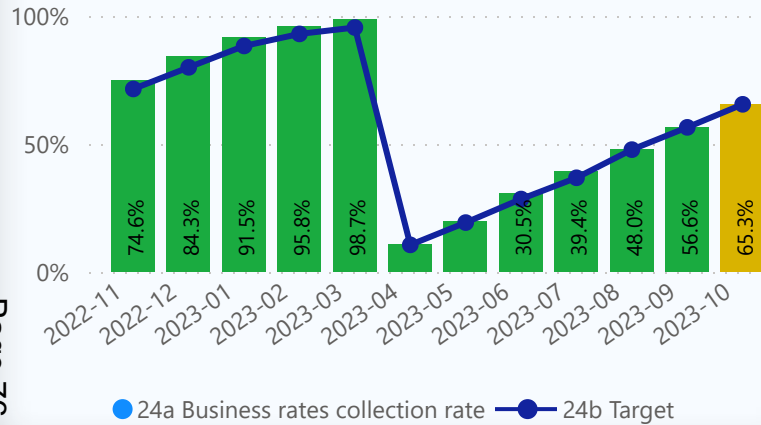


Missed refuse bin collection per 100,000

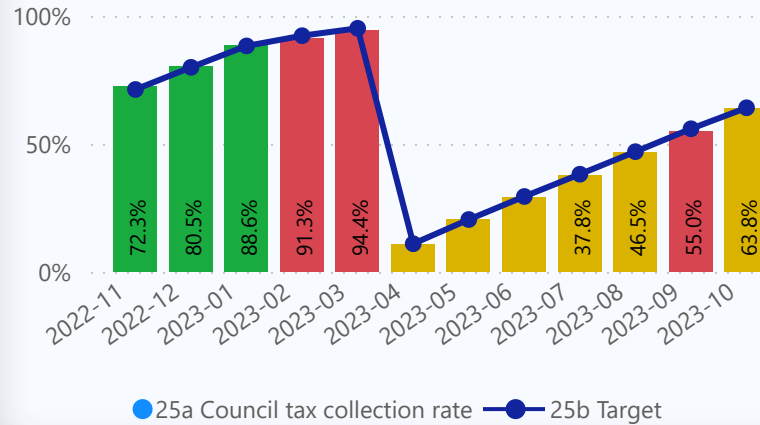


Corporate Health

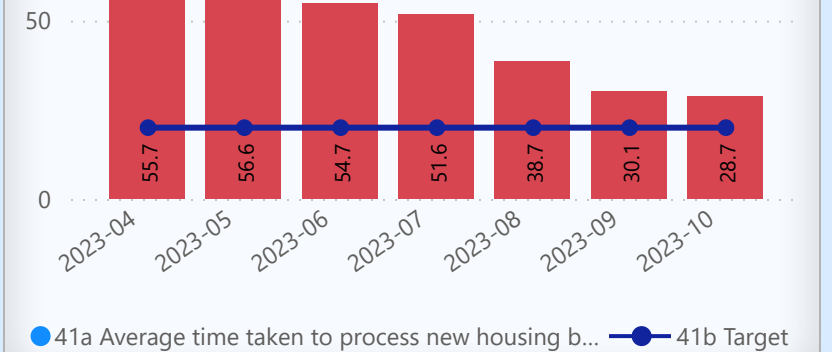
Business rates in year collection rate



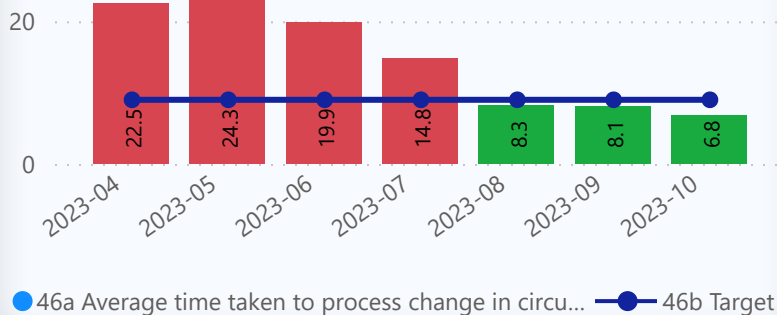
Council tax in year collection rate



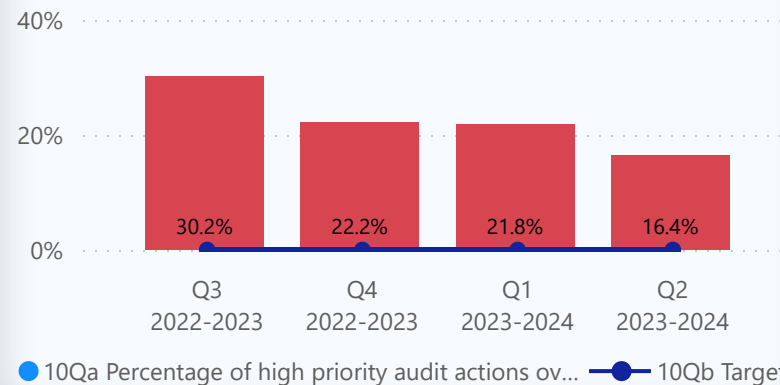
Average time (days) taken to process new housing benefit claims



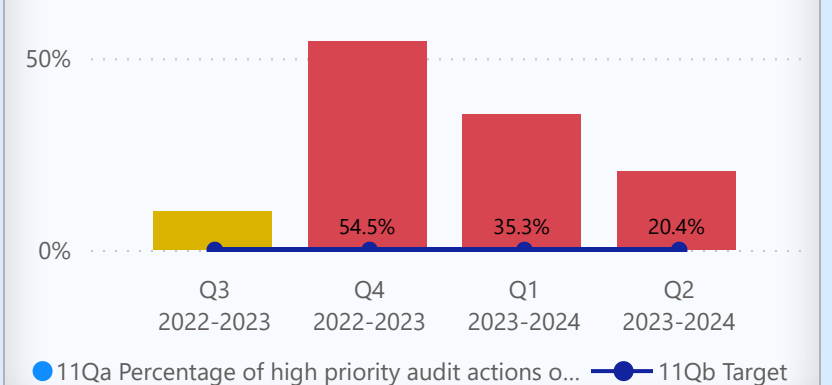
Average time (days) taken to process change in circumstances to existing housing benefit claims



Percentage of high priority audit actions overdue from 2021/22

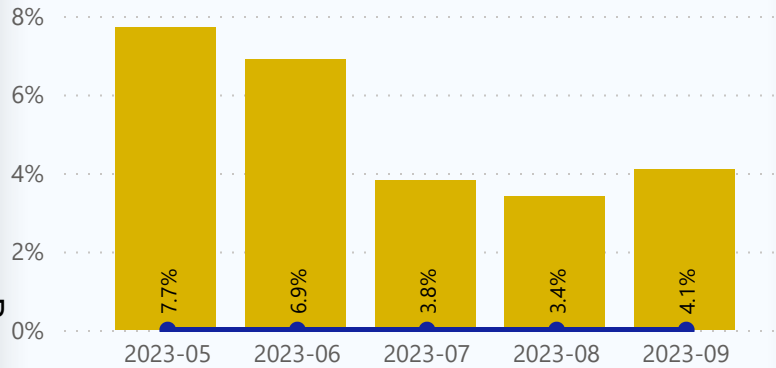


Percentage of high priority audit actions overdue from 2022/23



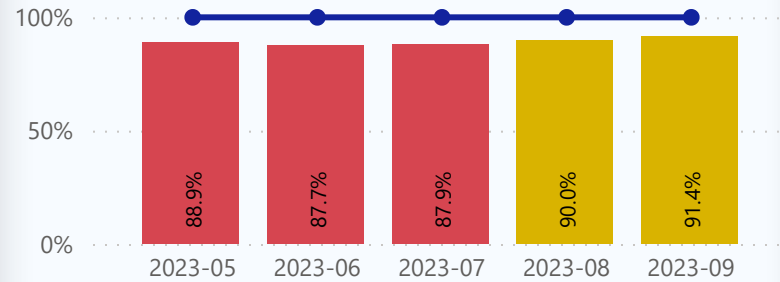
Corporate Health

Variance between revenue budget and full year forecast



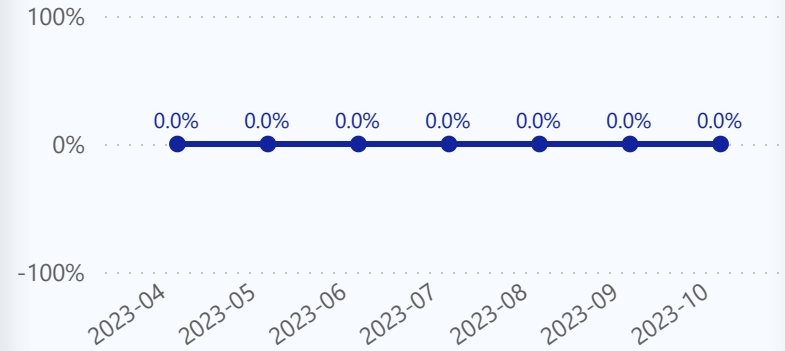
36a Variance between revenue budget and full year forecast 36b Target

Percentage of total savings for 2023-24 on track to be delivered



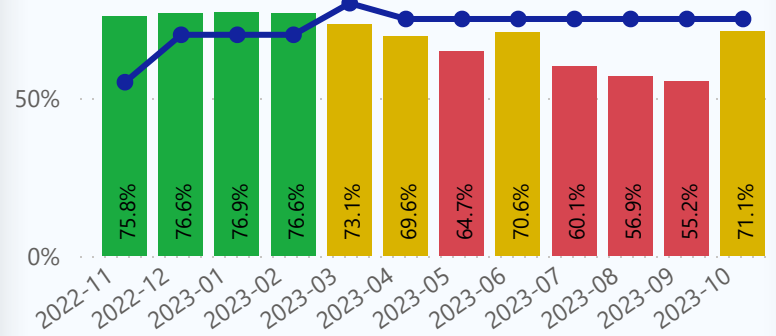
29a Percentage of total savings on track to be delivered 29b Target

Percentage of contract exemptions RAG rated as red



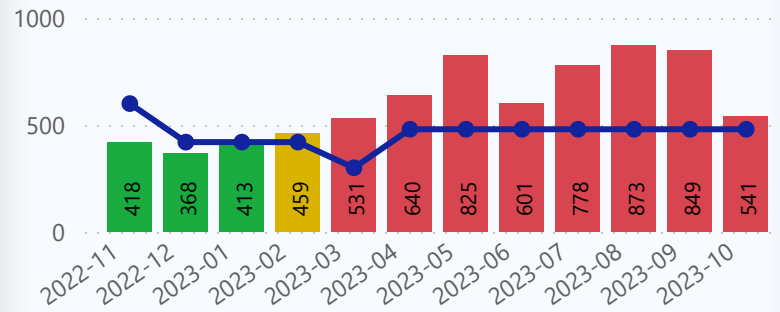
27a Percentage of contract exemptions RAG rated as red 27b Target

Percentage of customer service calls answered



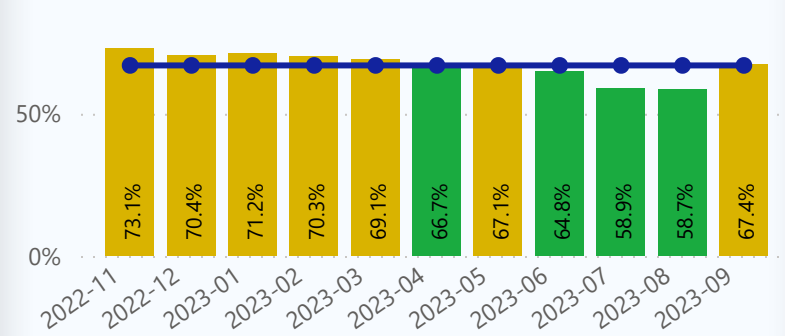
30a Percentage of customer service calls answered 30b Target

Average number of seconds taken to answer customer service calls



31b Average time taken to answer customer service calls 31c Target

Percentage of complaints partially or fully upheld

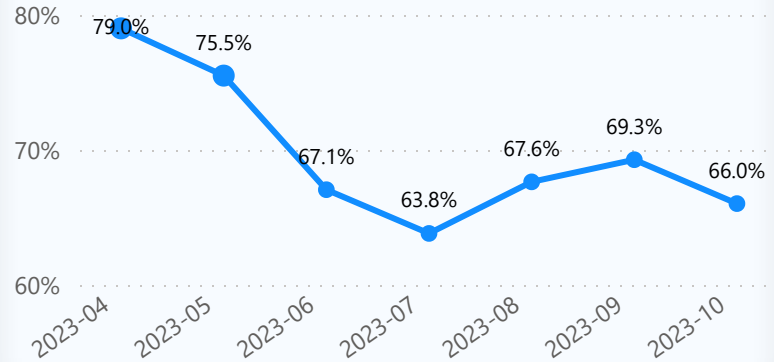


32a Percentage of stage 1 complaints partially or fully upheld 32b Target

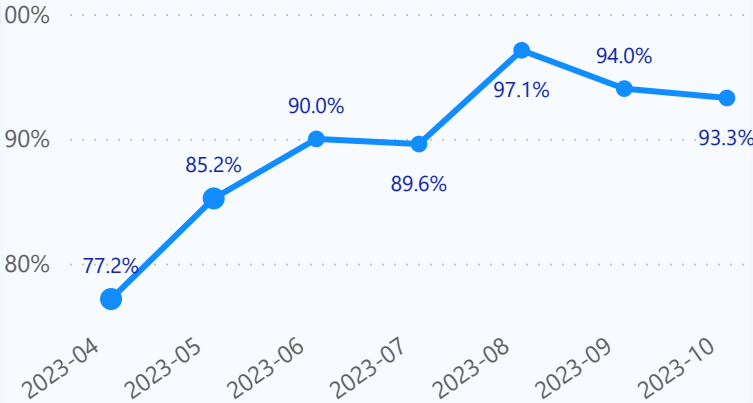
Corporate Health

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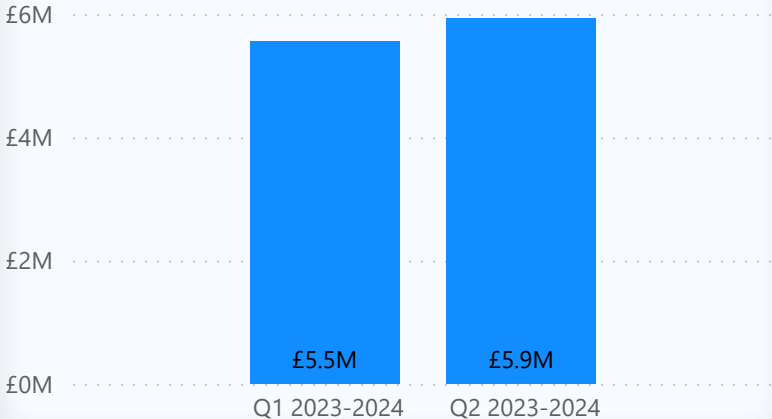
Percentage of IT service desk tickets resolved at first point of contact



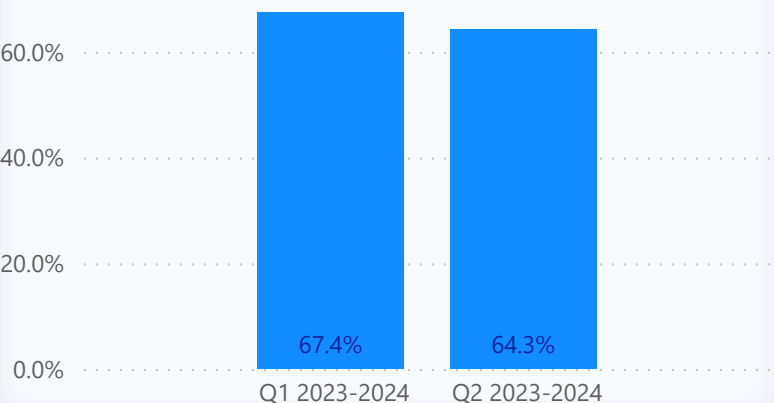
Percentage of IT service desk tickets resolved within SLA



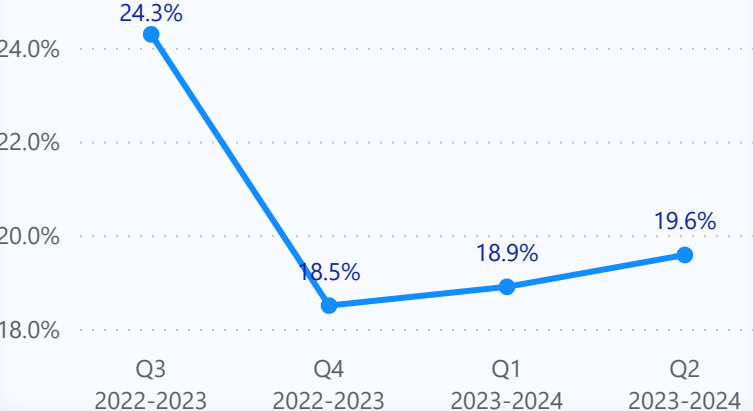
Interim staffing costs (£)



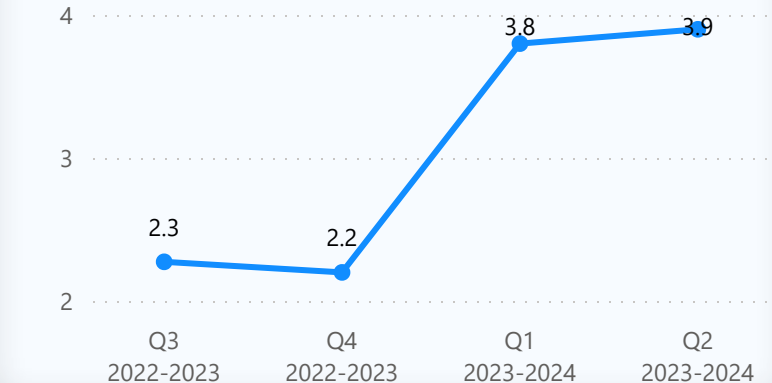
Percentage of staff equalities data recorded on Agresso



Staff turnover rate (rolling 12 months)



Number of working days lost due to sickness absence per FTE employee (rolling 12 months)



Performance Indicator Key

Metric updates this month:

For indicators where the updates are released in the later in the month, these will be reported in the following months report i.e., October figures reported in the November report.

Performance against target:

Where possible the latest monthly performance is compared with an assigned target or a benchmark. Indicators are colour-coded as follows:

RAG status	Description
Green	Performance is in line with or above in-year target or benchmark
Amber	Performance has not been met but is within 10% (unless otherwise stated) of in-year target or benchmark
Red	Performance has not been met and is more than 10% (unless otherwise stated) off in-year target or benchmark
Blue	Metric in place to monitor trends
Grey	Metric is being developed

Performance indicators are RAG rated as amber if performance is within 10% and red if more than 10% off in-year target or benchmark except for:

- Collection rates for council tax and business rates: these are RAG rated as amber if performance is within 0.5% and red if more than 0.5% off in-year target.
- Total number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation at the end of the month: RAG rated as amber if performance is within 5% and red if more than 5% off in-year target.
- Children's social care indicators: these are as per agreed with Slough Children's First.

Performance direction of travel:

The *direction* of the arrows shows if performance has improved, declined, or been maintained relative to the previous month, quarter, or year.

- ↑ performance improved.
- ↔ performance remained the same.
- ↓ performance declined.

For example, for overall NEET rate indicator where good performance is low:

- A decline in the NEET rate would have an upwards arrow ↑ as performance has improved in the right direction.
- An increase in the NEET rate would have a downwards arrow ↓ as performance has declined.

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Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	15 th January 2024
Subject:	HRA Rents and Services Charges for 2024/25
Lead Member:	Councillor Paul Kelly, Highways, Housing and Transport
Chief Officer:	Patrick Hayes, Executive Director, Regeneration, Housing & Environment, and Adele Taylor, Executive Director, Finance & Commercial
Contact Officer:	Chris Stratford, Assistant Director, Housing Ruth Hudson, Director, Financial Management
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	YES
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject to Call In:	YES
Appendices:	None

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1 This report sets out in the main the proposed changes to social housing rents and service charges for 2024/25. This includes approval for the proposed increases to both Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwelling rents, affordable housing rents, garage rents and tenant service charges from 1st April 2024.
- 1.2 A dwelling rent increase of 7.7% is proposed for 2024/25, plus 7.7% for non-dwelling rents and service charges based on the September CPI plus 1%, government rent formula direction.

Recommendations:

- 1.3 Cabinet is recommended to approve:
- Social & affordable housing dwelling rent increase of 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with current national rent setting formula.
 - Tenant service charges increase of 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with inflation and support the proposal to recover the additional costs currently being incurred by the HRA in respect of actual costs of services and income received.

- c) Garage rents for council & private tenants and leaseholders increase of 7.7% from 1st April 2024 in line with inflation.
- d) Note that the HRA 30yr Business Plan & medium term revenue & capital budgets for 2024/25 will be considered by cabinet in February 2024.

Reason:

- 1.4 The HRA is a ringfenced account for Local Authority Housing under Section 74 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The local authority as a social housing landlord is required to set HRA rents and budgets for each financial year. It is also required by law to give each tenant at least 28 days' statutory notice of any revised changes to their rents and service charges.
- 1.5 The report seeks the approval needed to set HRA tenant rents and service charges for the financial year 2024/25 and thereby facilitate the issuing of the necessary statutory notices.
- 1.6 The proposed dwelling rent increase reflects current rent regulation which allows actual rents to increase by a maximum of CPI+1%. The proposed other rents, service & charges increases do not fall within the scope of the rent regulation and as such the proposals are to enable the council to move towards full recovery of the cost of providing these additional services to tenants & leaseholders.

Commissioner Review

- 1.7 "Rent setting must be seen in the context of the statutory duty to set a balanced HRA budget. The HRA is reliant on the rental income from its tenants and leaseholders to provide Housing Management Services and make other improvements required to the stock because of legislative and proposed changes on, fire safety works, building safety compliance and the damp and mould. These services and improvements are wholly funded by the HRA and as such, the HRA must be financially viable on a long-term basis."
- 1.8 "Decisions relating to increases to rent & service charges have a direct impact on the Housing Management and improvement services that can be provided. Given the current financial uncertainty for the medium term, it will be important that the council can continue to provide services needed by the most vulnerable tenants, by ensuring that the HRA is funded accordingly and work to ensure that tenants and leaseholder are advised of all options available to them to mitigate financial insecurity which may be experienced as a result of the increase in rent and tenants service charges."

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The HRA derives its income from dwelling rents, service charges and income from garages, shops, and land. These incomes are ring fenced and used to pay for all landlord services to council tenants and leaseholders.
- 2.2 Service charges and heating costs are set at levels that aim to recover the cost of providing services to tenants in their homes and to the blocks and estates where they live. The council does not aim to profit from these services and charges are reviewed periodically to reflect the actual cost of providing these services.

- 2.3 The provision of high-quality affordable homes and housing management services to tenants will improve the strength and sustainability of communities. Through an annual 30-year HRA Business Plan the council is committed to ensuring the HRA is managed judiciously and sensibly to allow the council to manage, maintain and invest in its housing stock.
- 2.4 The proposals support the delivery of outcomes 1 & 2 of the 2022-2025 Corporate Plan by setting rents & service charges with a view to maximising all available rental income streams and maintaining the asset value of the HRA by building financial stability and providing good quality, well maintained and managed homes.

3. Background

- 3.1 The council is a local social housing authority provider of social housing. It is a contractual term within the council's periodic tenancy agreements and licences that rents and charges are reviewed on an annual basis with new rents starting normally from the first Monday in April.
- 3.2 The regulation of rents in the social housing sector has undergone significant reform since 2002, when the regulation of rent-restructuring was launched. This regulation has set the criteria by which social housing rents are to be calculated, and which aimed to harmonise local authority and housing association rents so that tenants in similar-sized properties in the same area paid broadly similar rents.
- 3.3 The rent regulation was then revised limiting social housing rent increase to the consumer price index (CPI) + 1%. The revised arrangement was to run for 10 years from 2015/16, to give social landlords certainty of approach to aid financial planning. However, the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 introduced a four-year period of 1% rent reduction from 2015/16 to 2019/20. After which, the original rent regime of CPI + 1% was resumed from 2020/21 for the period up to 2024/25.
- 3.4 Last year, due to exceptional economic circumstances rent increases were restricted to a maximum of 7% as CPI was exceptionally high at 11%. It is expected that, as set out in the DLUHC's rent cap consultation response last year, maximum permitted social housing rent increases will again return to CPI+1% for 2024/25 and continue thereafter until amended. It is therefore recommended that rents are increased in line with the current regime of CPI + 1% to continue to maintain the delivery of good quality accommodation and effective services to tenants especially given the ongoing inflationary pressures on most service expenditure. As before, rents for relet and void properties would continue to be set at the maximum rate possible.
- 3.5 It should be noted that because the government directed that rents be limited to 7% last year and inflation was significantly higher than the prescribed level the HRA incurred a significant reduction in available funds in that year and over the 30-year cycle because of that decision. It should be particularly noted by Cabinet that failure to implement the full year recommended rise of 7.7% for 24/25 will similarly reduce funding to the HRA in year and over the full 30-year plan. This will inevitably lead to shortfalls in investment capacity and the ability to maintain stock in a reasonable condition.
- 3.6 The council continues to invest in damp and mould inspections and remedial works following the recent national fatality and requirements for landlords to have a robust process and plans in place for manage damp and mould issues in their stock,

decarbonisation work and other ongoing investment to improve the stock. The HRA budget and BP will include as far as possible affordable investment to cover these and other emerging issues as they become known.

- 3.7 Service charges are set to cover the cost of those services that are only provided to a proportion of tenants and leaseholders and are often connected with communal facilities. The council has historically applied a percentage-based uplift to service charge costs to reflect the increasing costs of providing services. Actual costs are periodically reviewed and compared to the annual charges to ensure good progress is made towards full recovery of costs. Costs of delivering services to tenants & leaseholders continue to rise at an above-inflation rate, particularly energy.
- 3.8 It is recognised therefore that service charge income does not cover such chargeable costs due to cost-of-living pressures especially in the context of such things such as electricity and gas charges which have risen sharply over the last three years. It is intended that as inflation falls to lower levels to recover the impact on service charges over several years thus keeping the burden to service charge customers to the minimum.
- 3.9 The council's new housing management system went live in October 2022 and all council and leaseholder service charge administration will eventually be delivered through the new housing system, including charge application, billing, and income collection. It is anticipated that service charge levels will then be harmonised for tenants and leaseholders (except for leaseholder-specific cost and administration charges) by April 2024. The implementation of the new system continues to be challenging but progress is being made as full implementation of all its functionalities is anticipated by end of the financial year. It is likely however that carry forward funding plus additional HRA funds will be required to complete full implementation including the acquisition of new modules such as Asset Management software will be required during 24/25. The Project Board has presented its proposals for funding to meet these requirements, and these will be included in the final HRA estimates for 24/25.
- 3.10 Once fully implemented the new IT system will bring significant efficiencies as to how the council implements its rent and service charge changes. It will enable the council to provide greater detail on service charge calculation to all tenants and leaseholders and will support the comprehensive review of service charge setting processes from 2024/25 onwards.

Options considered

- 3.11 The current social housing rent regulations permits social housing rents to increase by a maximum of CPI+1%. The September CPI is 6.7% resulting in a maximum permitted increase of 7.7%. The regulations exist to protect tenants and ensure social housing continue to be affordable for especially vulnerable tenants. The council will continue to ensure via the 30year HRA business plan that the management, maintenance, and improvement of the social housing stock is sustainable in the medium and long term. It is therefore recommended that dwelling rents should increase by 7.7%, the maximum permissible.
- 3.12 The level of variation of service and other charges are at the council's discretion and are not governed by regulations. However, the council chooses to set these charges reasonably and only at levels required to recover the cost of providing the additional services to tenants and leaseholders. Historically, these charges have increased in

line with rent at CPI+1%. It is therefore recommended that non dwelling rents and service charges increase by 7.7%. See comments in paragraph 3.5 above.

- 3.13 Alternative options considered include freezing rents and increases at a lower rate. None of these were considered viable and as such not recommended as they do not maintain the necessary level of funding to provide resources to maintain the overall sustainability of the HRA and allow investment objectives contained in the HRA Business Plan.

4. Dwelling Rents

- 4.1 It is expected that the maximum permitted social housing rent increases will return to CPI+1% for 2024/25 following last year’s government intervention to cap rent increases. As a result, it is proposed that social dwelling rent is increased by 7.7%. This is the maximum increase allowed by the current rent regulation and calculated at CPI + 1%, where the September CPI is 6.7%. The council continues to exercise its discretion under the rent restructuring regulation to set rents for re-lets (both new tenants and transfers) up to formula target rent.
- 4.2 Table 1 below set out the average increases per week per bedroom sizes. On average dwelling rents will therefore increase from £117.58 per week currently to £126.62 per week from 1st April 2024, representing on average a £9.04 per week. This equates to an additional gross rent of £2.76m per annum, resulting in an estimated annual gross dwelling rent of £38.61m in 2024/25 compared to £35.85m last year. Of the current 5,864 properties, 195 are currently void reflecting a void rate of 3.3%.

Table 1 - Average HRA dwelling rent by bedroom size

Bedroom size	Stock numbers	2023/24 average weekly rent £	2024/25 average weekly rent £	2024/25 average weekly Increase £
0	248	88.27	95.06	6.79
1	2,096	100.97	108.74	7.77
2	1,548	121.67	131.03	9.36
3	1,788	134.13	144.45	10.32
4	148	146.99	158.30	11.31
5	33	166.98	179.84	12.86
>5	3	163.39	175.97	12.58
Total	5,864	117.58	126.62	9.04

- 4.3 Considering the ongoing national cost of living and economic crisis any rent increase is still likely to put considerable pressure on tenant’s household income. However, on average about 67% of the council’s social housing tenants are in receipt of housing benefit (HB) or the housing element of Universal Credit (UC) and so will also benefit from a similarly increase to HB/UC and as such should not be disproportionately affected by the rent increase. Members are however reminded that social housing rents remain below the comparable Local Housing Allowance which means those on HB/UC can qualify for the appropriate increase in benefit cover. Those tenants that however do not qualify for HB/UC will have to meet the full cost of any rent increase approved by Cabinet, these tenants should they be impacted by financial stress will be directed to those agencies able to provide financial advice.

5. Service Charges

- 5.1 The council operates two service charge calculation regimes for tenants and leaseholders. Tenants' charges are based on fixed service charges, which is set at the start of the rent year and the council can neither attempt to recover any undercharge, nor is required to refund any overcharge. However, checks are conducted periodically to ensure costs are being recovered from both tenants and leaseholders.
- 5.2 The council aims to set service charges reasonably and only at levels to ensure recovery of the cost of providing those additional services to relevant tenants. Services currently provided and charged for include communal heating and lighting, caretaking & cleaning, block maintenance, and grounds maintenance.
- 5.3 The council have reviewed the costs of services provided to both tenants & leaseholders and at present is not recovering its costs from council tenants. The shortfall is mainly because of very high energy costs in the last 2 years. As energy tariffs are expected to fall from October 2023 although because of previous rises well above inflation and recovered through service charges still means a gap exists between income and costs., it is anticipated that the relevant service costs may also reduce significantly in the coming months. The fully recovery of costs will be phased over several years to ensure the charges remain affordable to tenants.
- 5.4 It is therefore proposed to increase service charges by 7.7%, the rate of September inflation plus 1%. This will be sufficient to begin to close the income shortfall over the recovery. Table 2 below sets out the average tenant service charges per week.

Table 2 – Average Charges per week

Description	Tenant numbers	2023/24 average weekly charges £	2024/25 average weekly charges £	2024/25 average weekly Increase £
Heating	169	14.26	15.36	1.10
Service Charge Administration	2,760	1.37	1.47	0.11
Communal Estate and Cleaning	2,602	6.50	7.00	0.50
Communal Health and Safety	2,318	2.31	2.48	0.18
Communal Heat and Lighting	2,419	1.25	1.35	0.10
Average	2,769	11.37	12.24	0.88

- 5.5 The average weekly tenant service charges will therefore increase to £12.24 per week per tenant from £11.37 per week currently representing a £0.88 increase per week. These charges are covered by housing benefit where relevant. This will generate a gross additional income of £0.126m per annum, resulting in an estimated annual gross income of £1.76m in 2024/25 compared to £1.64m last year. Of the current 2,769 properties currently charged, 147 are currently void reflecting a void rate of 5.3%.
- 5.6 The shortfall in service charge income recovered against actual costs incurred is estimated to be £2.3m cumulative at the end of 2024/25. This gap in recovery has been primarily caused because of significant above inflation costs associated with energy and insurance premiums. Now that overall inflation is beginning to fall and

stabilise, it is intended that from 2025/26 service charge rises will be set in line with directed rent increases plus an estimated £2 per week to reduce the deficit on service charges enabling the current deficit to be recovered over a four-year period. Clearly it is essential to regularise the position in respect of service charges as any deficit is met by the HRA and associated costs covered by all tenants who do not necessarily receive the services being provided. The situation will of course be monitored carefully and any adjustments to the recovery amount applied notified to members in future Housing Rents and service charge reports.

- 5.7 Leaseholder service charges are based on a variable service charge regime. This enables the council to attempt to recover any undercharge to ensure income and expenditure is neutral. It does mean that if the council has overcharged in any given year, it must either refund the overcharged amount or offset the credit from future years' charges. Leasehold service charges are calculated, and invoices issued twice a year. The first invoice is based on an estimated charges for the new year. The second charge is based on re-calculated charge based on actual spend for the prior year. The charges recovered from leaseholders is based on actual costs and will not be impacted by the proposed increases above.
- 5.8 It is intended that by April 2025, service charge levels will be harmonised for tenants and leaseholders ensuring that there is consistency in the level of service charges applied to residents. Leaseholders will continue to pay tenure-specific buildings insurance and leasehold administration charges. Once the new housing management system is fully implemented significant efficiencies as to how the council implements its rent and service charge will change. It will enable the council to provide greater detail on service charge calculation to all tenants and leaseholders and will support the comprehensive review of service charge setting processes in 2024/25.
- 5.9 In addition to recovering service costs from Leaseholders the council also recovers the costs of administering the leasehold service from the leaseholders. The management fee is a flat rate added to the cost of services to cover the preparation of estimates and actual costs, billing consultation on repairs and improvement works and estate management. At the end of each financial year, the actual cost is determined, and an appropriate adjustment made to the charge. The aim is to ensure that the service provided to the leaseholders are cost neutral to the HRA. The service is recoverable fully from leaseholders and it is unlawful for the HRA tenants to subsidise it. The current leasehold of the management fee is under review to ensure it is sufficient to cover the cost of administering the service.

6. Garage Rents

- 6.1 It is proposed that Garages Rent increased by 7.7%, in line with proposals for service charge increase. The average weekly council tenant charges will therefore increase to £11.53 per week per tenant from £10.70 per week currently representing a £0.83p per week increase. This will generate a gross additional income of £0.66m per annum, resulting in an estimated annual gross income of £0.940m in 2024/25 compared to £0.872m last year. Of the current 1,567 garages, 1,028 or 66% are currently void.
- 6.2 Most garages are run down and/or dilapidated and not fit to be used without significant investment and an appropriate estates strategy to deal with these assets and sites will emerge during 2024. A long-term garage strategy is being considered as part of a new Estates Strategy which will investigate a range of options for

achieving income both capital and revenue to the council. This will be commissioned in 24/25 and recommendations made later in that financial year. In the meantime, housing officers will identify and arrange through the council’s contractor to complete any essential H&S works to keep sites safe.

Table 3 – Average Garage rents by Tenant type

Type	Number of Stock	2023/24 Average weekly rent £	2024/25 Average weekly rent £	Average weekly Increase £
Occupied	539	11.93	12.85	0.92
Void	1,028	10.06	10.84	0.78
Total	1,567	10.70	11.53	0.83

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The proposals are robust, in line with current social housing rent regime and will help ensure that the council prepares a viable 30yrs Business Plan and sets an affordable medium-term budget.
- 7.2 The financial impact of the proposal is reflected throughout the report. The proposed rental increase for the housing stock and garages is expected to generate an additional gross rent of £2.95m per annum per annum. However, as these properties are part of the HRA they cannot be used to off-set GF savings targets as per the draft budget paper that was considered by Cabinet on the 18th of December.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Whilst a preliminary notice under Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985 is not required for periodic secure tenancies, the council is required to issue a Notice giving details of the proposed changes to rent and service charges (if any) and the date upon which those changes are to take effect. The council will issue Notice of changes to rent and service charges (if any) giving no less than four weeks’ notice of the change. The change of rent and service charges is not considered a housing management matter, the changing of which would require a consultation process to take place. Consequently, Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, which deals with consultation on housing management, does not apply.
- 8.2 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (the “1989 Act”) requires the council to maintain a ring-fenced budget for its housing stock related income and expenditure, known as the Housing Revenue Account. Section 76 of the 1989 Act requires the council during the months of January and February to formulate proposals which satisfy the requirements of this section relating to the income of the authority for the following year from rents and other charges and the expenditure in respect of the repair, maintenance, supervision, and management of such properties.
- 8.3 Compliance with the Rent Standard 2023 will be required under the Regulator of Social Housing’s regulatory framework. Data used to calculate rental income based on the new Rent Standard arises from the original rent restructuring review dataset and there is an auditable trail of rent charges from 2002 to date.

- 8.4 The timetable for implementation of the rent review allows for the requirement to issue four weeks' notice of review in line with the terms and conditions of the council's various tenancy and occupancy agreements.
- 8.5 The Policy statement on rents for social housing (updated 14 December 2022) states the following on setting of service charges:
- “2.35 In addition to their rent, tenants may also pay service charges. Rents are generally taken to include all charges associated with the occupation of a property, such as maintenance and general housing management services. Service charges usually reflect additional services which may not be provided to every tenant, or which may be connected with communal facilities rather than being particular to the occupation of a dwelling. Service charges are subject to separate legal requirements and are limited to covering the cost of providing the services.
- 2.36 Registered providers are expected to set reasonable and transparent service charges which reflect the service being provided to tenants. Tenants should be supplied with clear information on how service charges are set. In the case of social rent properties, providers are expected to identify service charges separately from the rent charge.
- 2.37 Service charges are not governed by the same factors as rent. However, registered providers should endeavour to keep increases for service charges within the limit on rent changes, of CPI (as at September in the previous year +1 percentage point (or 7% in 2023-24), to help keep charges affordable.
- 2.38 Where new or extended services are introduced, and an additional charge may need to be made, registered providers should consult with tenants.”
- 9.6 Pursuant to Part 3.5 of the council's Constitution, the making of key decisions is a function for the Cabinet. Article 13 of the Constitution defines a key decision as a decision like to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area of two or more wards of the Borough. A decision is “significant” includes decisions involving receipt of an amount in excess of £1 million for capital expenditure or £500,000 for revenue expenditure.

9. Risk management implications

- 9.1 The issuing of rent review notices in late February/early March 2024 and implementation of the rent review on the first Monday in April will ensure the rent review is actioned correctly and within prescribed timescales to deliver the projected increased rental stream income.
- 9.2 There are no other risk management implications.

10. Environmental implications

None.

11. Equality implications

11.1 Pursuant to the Equality Act 2010 (the “2010 Act”), the Council, in the exercise of its functions, has to have due regard to (i) eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the 2010 Act; (ii) advancing equality of opportunity between those with a relevant protected characteristic and those without; and (iii) fostering good relations between those with a relevant protected characteristic and those without. The relevant protected characteristics are age, race, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but to a limited extent.

11.2 When making decisions, the Council must take account of the equality duty and in particular any potential impact on protected groups.

12. Procurement implications

None.

13. Workforce implications

None.

14. Property implications

None.

15. Background Papers

None.

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	15 th January 2024
Subject:	Procurement of a managed IT cloud-based back-up and disaster recovery solution
Lead Member:	Councillor Chandra Muvvala, Cabinet member for customer service, resident engagement, digital, data and technology.
Chief Officer:	Sarah Hayward, Executive director, strategy and improvement
Contact Officer:	Simon Sharkey Woods, Associate director, chief digital and information officer
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	YES as it is likely to result in the council incurring expenditure in excess of £500,000.00
Exempt:	No
Decision Subject To Call In:	Yes
Appendices:	None

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1. In 2022, three audits of the council's cyber security and resilience capability highlighted that should the council undergo a cyber-attack, the risk of loss of service or data would be high. One area identified as needing urgent updating was the council's IT back-up and disaster recovery capability.
- 1.2. Officers have considered several options to address this risk, and the preferred option that most closely meets the council's needs is to engage a specialist partner to provide a managed service. This approach provides a solution that can scale to the council's needs, is designed and managed by the supplier, and run on reputable cloud platforms such as Microsoft's Azure or Amazon Web Services.
- 1.3. To achieve this, the council will undertake a procurement exercise using an existing Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement to identify an appropriate provider and contract with the supplier for a maximum period of four years, with an initial period of three years, and the option to extend the contract for a further year. The likely cost of the service is in the region of £1.3m to £1.5m over the duration of the contract term (four years)

Recommendations:

- 1.4. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - a) Approve the commencement of a procurement exercise using an existing Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement for the provision of a cloud-based IT back-up and disaster recovery solution by a specialist service provider;
 and,

- b) Delegate the decision to award and enter into the contract to the Executive Director of Strategy and Improvement in consultation with the Cabinet Member for customer service, resident engagement, digital, data and technology.

Commissioner Review

No specific comments. Commissioners are fully supportive of the approach.

2. Report

Introductory paragraph

- 2.1. This report outlines the requirement to carry out a procurement exercise to contract with a reputable supplier for the provision of a cloud-based IT back-up and disaster recovery solution.
- 2.2. Partnering with a supplier for a secure, scalable, and flexible back-up and disaster recovery solution will enhance the council's cyber security and resilience capability, reducing the impact of a data breach following a cyber-attack and strengthen the council's business continuity capability.

Options considered

- 2.3. The council's high-level requirements for a back-up and disaster recovery solution are:
 - A secure cloud-based backup and disaster recovery solution with an assured high level of operational performance.
 - A flexible solution which can scale to the council's changing needs.
 - A solution which meets (and exceeds) the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) cloud security standards.
 - Data is secured within EEA based data centres, preferably UK data centres.
 - A solution that maintains the integrity of the council's data and provides a replicated copy of the council's systems in a public cloud with the ability to recover to on-premises or run in the cloud as required.
 - A solution which can provide and guarantee the appropriate Recovery Point Objective (RPO) and Recovery Time Objective (RTO) for council systems in the event of an incident.
- 2.4. Based on these requirements, three options have been considered:
 - a) Procure an externally managed back-up and disaster recovery service – **recommended**.

Using the council's requirements, summarised above, a competitive procurement exercise will be undertaken using an existing framework agreement.

This will allow the council to select an appropriate partner that can meet the council's requirements with a value for money solution.

It is expected that the contract will be for an initial three-year period and include the option to extend the contract for a further year.

- b) Implement an in-house back-up and disaster recovery solutions – not recommended

This option was the council's original preferred solution. The council would buy separate cloud-based back-up and disaster recovery solutions and manage the

service through internal resource. However, market research and the recent experiences of other local authorities have highlighted that this option is:

- i. Resource intensive – the council would need to employ additional resource to manage the solution;
 - ii. Typically, total cost of ownership is more expensive than a managed solution; and,
 - iii. Requires additional on premises infrastructure to support management of the solution, at a time where the council is seeking to reduce its IT infrastructure footprint.
- c) Do nothing – not recommended.

The cyber security audits highlighted an urgent need to improve the council’s cyber security resilience and disaster recovery capability. ‘Doing Nothing’ does not address these issues.

2.5. The table below outlines the key stages in the process:

Activity	Date
Requirements gathering	Complete
Undertake market research with service providers and other councils	Complete
Prepare tender documentation	December 2023
Cabinet approval to proceed	January 2024
Issue tender	January 2024
Clarification and evaluation of tender returns	February 2024
Award contract	March 2024
Implement chosen solution	TBC

2.6. The evaluation panel will consist of key members of the ICT&D service, supported by procurement and finance as required.

3. Background

- 3.1. The council’s cyber-security capability was assessed three times in 2022. Two assessments were undertaken as part of the council’s internal audit function and a third assessment by the Department of Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC).
- 3.2. Across all three audits, 33 recommended actions were identified to bring the council’s cyber security capability up to an acceptable standard. These actions were grouped into ten projects which are in various stages of delivery through the modernisation programme.
- 3.3. Two recommendations covered the council’s back-up and disaster recovery capability. The audits outlined a risk to the council that unless it updated its back-up and disaster recovery capability there was an increasing risk that should the council experience a cyber-attack, a loss of access to IT applications or a loss of data was likely.
- 3.4. The council’s recent move to the ARK data centre facilities is providing better security, resilience, flexibility and availability, thereby improving the council’s cyber resilience. However, the decision to move to the new data centre was predominantly an economic one, it did not address the issues outlined in the audits. It was cheaper

and the 'pay-as-you-go' consumption model aligned to the council's future expectation that more of the council's infrastructure is cloud-based.

- 3.5. In 2022 the council's contract for external procurement expertise expired and the service was brought in-house. During this time the necessary strategic expertise to run a complex technology procurement was lost. Whilst draft specifications for both the back-up and disaster recovery services were prepared it was not possible to progress the procurements without procurement subject matter expertise, especially in developing a robust commercial model.
- 3.6. In September 2023 an interim resource, with recent expertise in procuring cloud-based back-up and disaster recovery solutions, was brought into the modernisation programme to deliver five complex IT procurements – back-up, disaster recovery, council-wide wi-fi refresh, security incident and event monitoring, and review and updating of audio-visual capability in Observatory House.
- 3.7. Research was undertaken into the technology solutions available which included: discussing the direction of travel for cloud-based solutions, the pros and cons of a council-managed versus externally managed solution and the recent experiences of other local authorities.
- 3.8. The research findings support the recommendation to seek an external partner to deliver this service on behalf of the council.

Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

- 3.9. The current estimate for the cost of these services is in the region of £1.3m – £1.5m over 4 years. This has been factored into the conversations taking place around the medium-term financial strategy and growth has been factored into the draft budget for 2024/25 which will be presented to Cabinet on the 18th December and finalised in March 2024. The Associate Director Chief Digital & Information Officer has been clear that the risk versus cost business case is compelling and that this is an important investment for Slough to prevent severe operational difficulties in the future. However until a decision is made on the final budget for 2024/25, whilst procurement activity can take place, a contract cannot be awarded until budget has been approved.
- 3.10. From a financial perspective, the necessary groundwork has been laid out within the budgetary framework to support this initiative. The allocated funds have been earmarked to cater precisely to this strategic endeavour, ensuring that the implementation of these services remains on track without compromising other essential financial commitments.
- 3.11. Furthermore, it's imperative to recognise that this allocation isn't solely about immediate expenditures; rather, it's an investment in our future operational efficiency. It is anticipated that long-term benefits, including improved service delivery, streamlined processes, and potential cost efficiencies that align with our overarching financial goals may be achieved. It will be important that cost efficiencies are identified as soon as possible and it cannot be assumed that these can be used within the service, given the need to identify further actions to increase the council's financial sustainability these will need to be considered at a corporate level in future budget setting processes over the medium term of the council.
- 3.12. Moving forward, diligent monitoring and evaluation of the project implementation will be in place. This includes rigorous financial oversight to measure the return on investment and ensure that the expected outcomes and efficiencies are realised as

planned. The relevant members of the finance team will need to be involved in the monitoring process.

Legal implications

- 3.13. The UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 place a statutory obligation on the council to keep data securely by means of appropriate technical and organisational measures. This requires the council to consider things like risk analysis, organisational policies, and physical and technical measures. The measures must ensure the ‘confidentiality, integrity and availability’ of the council’s systems and services and the personal data processed within them. The measures must also enable the council to restore access and availability to personal data in a timely manner in the event of a physical or technical incident and must ensure that the council has appropriate processes in place to test the effectiveness of the measures and undertake any required improvements. The council can consider the state of the art and costs of implementation when deciding what measures to take – but they must be appropriate both to the council’s circumstances and the risk the processing poses.
- 3.14. Failure to implement an appropriate solution may place the council at risk of breaching this obligation.
- 3.15. The procurement strategy outlined in this report is compliant with The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR). Regulation 33 of the PCR provides for and regulates the compliant use of Framework Agreements. The Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement G-cloud 13 RM1557.13 is current, the council is identified as a potential call-off party, and the services required are in scope and within budget under the Framework Agreement, so the council can lawfully call-off the services from the Framework in accordance with the Framework rules. The proposed procurement route is also compliant with the council’s Contract Procedure Rules set out in the council’s constitution.
- 3.16. Any call-off contract can initially last for a maximum of up to 36 months, with the option to extend once by up to 12 months but the council must specify this in the initial contract terms. Legal advice should be sought on the contract terms.

Risk management implications

- 3.17. The table below details the four main risks within the project:

Status	Risk description	Mitigation
Amber	Cost of service is greater than expected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review service requirements and identify any services which are driving costs upwards.
Green	Insufficient interest from the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mature marketplace and call off from a framework will support supplier involvement
Amber	Delay in completing procurement process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A project plan will be developed and proactively managed.
Green	Procurement result is challenged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The procurement will follow the terms and conditions of further competition for the framework. A standstill period may be enacted to allow supplier response. All information, including evaluation reports will be retained.

Status	Risk description	Mitigation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal and procurement advice will be sought and followed throughout the procurement process

Environmental implications

3.18. None.

Equality implications

3.19. None.

Procurement implications

3.20. The application will be procured from a Crown Commercial Service's framework agreement – G-cloud 13 RM1557.13. The procurement will follow the standard call-off procedures for the framework:

- A set of requirements/ specification is developed.
- A split between price and quality is agreed by the project team – mostly likely weighted in favour of quality on this occasion.
- A key word search undertaken, shortlisting appropriate service offerings.
- A detailed review of the requirements against each vendors' service description is undertaken.
- The vendors' standard pricing is evaluated against the council's requirements.
- Any areas of uncertainty are followed up through clarification questions.
- The successful vendor is chosen.
- A call off contract based on the framework's standard terms and conditions and the vendor's contract are signed.

3.21. Evaluation of the service description will be undertaken by panel drawn from ICT&D, procurement (external resource) and finance as required.

3.22. The contract will be for an initial three-year period with the option to extend the contract for a year. The likely contract value will be between £1.3-£1.5m over the full term of the contract (four years).

3.23. The project implementation costs will be met from the modernisation programme budget and the annual cost of service will be met from existing budget available within the service area.

3.24. The chosen procurement strategy is appropriate and complies with the council's Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Workforce implications

3.25. None.

Property implications

3.26. None.

4. Background Papers

4.1. None.