

<b>Report To:</b>	<b>CABINET</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 JANUARY 2025</b>
<b>Heading:</b>	<b>CORPORATE PLAN DELIVERY – QUARTER 2 2024/25</b>
<b>Executive Lead Member:</b>	<b>LEADER</b>
<b>Ward/s:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Subject to Call-In:</b>	<b>YES</b>

## **Purpose of Report**

This report presents to Cabinet progress updates regarding delivery of the new Corporate Plan 2023-2027 and the April to September 2024 performance position against the associated Corporate Performance Scorecard.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- 1. For Cabinet to consider and proactively review the levels of delivery achieved against the Corporate Plan Priorities.**
- 2. For Cabinet to consider and proactively review the levels of performance achieved against the Corporate Scorecard as of September 2024.**

## **Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

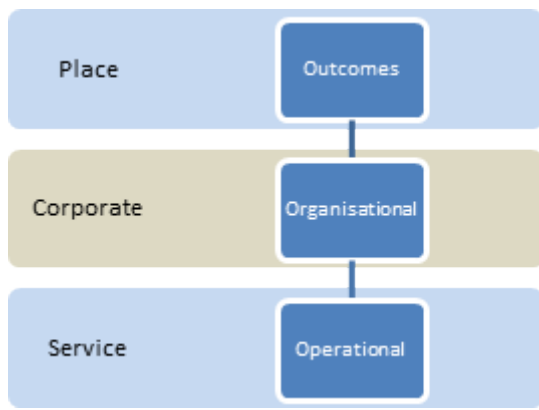
The Council's ambitions for the next four years are clearly identified in a set of revised and updated Corporate Priorities which are presented in the Corporate Plan. These have been developed by Cabinet.

The Corporate Plan sits above a wider strategic context which includes the Corporate Project Management Framework, Corporate Performance Indicators and a range of strategic documents relating to the Council and its services. The Corporate Plan aligns to the Council's overarching Strategic Direction.

Our priorities for the future, as identified in the Corporate Plan, have been translated and cascaded into specific projects and initiatives, the successful delivery of which is being monitored through our Performance and Strategic Planning Framework, into Service Plans to facilitate focussed delivery.

The Council remains ambitious, and as such, the Corporate Plan captures and reflects our ongoing ambitions for the next four years.

Our performance framework incorporates performance scorecards on three separate levels as indicated below.



The Council regularly engages with the Local Government Association (LGA) sector led improvement offer, for independent evaluation of the organisation, most recently (January 2023) a peer review of housing was completed. Key recommendations from the LGA support work have been integrated into the refresh of the Corporate Plan and Strategic Direction. A follow-up Corporate Peer Challenge was undertaken between 4-7 June 2024. The Council was congratulated on its achievements. The published report states the Council has a good, ambitious Corporate Plan with clear outcomes, which sets out an exciting path for the Ashfield District, commends the Council on its strong financial position and recognises the delivery of good, solid services generally to local people.

Through the Council's Policy and Performance Function, a specific focus is placed on continually improving the Council's approach to performance and improvement in line with the updated best value guidance and evidencing the Council's journey from 'Good to Great' and our ambition for excellence across all services.

The Council's strong performance framework incorporates inputs, outputs, and outcomes, directly aligned to the Corporate Plan. This has been reviewed and enhanced, following the approval of the Corporate Plan 2023- 2027, and in line with Best Value expectations and benchmarking dataset measurement. The revised Corporate Scorecard incorporates both place level measures and corporate delivery measures.

On 16<sup>th</sup> December 2024, the Government released its English Devolution White Paper which outlines their proposed approach to reorganising the structures within Local Government. This involves Combined Authority's, County Councils, City Councils, District and Borough Councils. The Government's proposals involve expansion of Combined Authority's across all England's regions underpinned by Unitary authorities (replacing County Councils and District councils). Whilst the Government's expectations are considered further, and proposals for Nottinghamshire are developed, it is important that the Council continues to monitor performance and deliver against its Corporate Priorities. Ashfield District Council, in common with the other Nottinghamshire Districts

and Boroughs are very proud of and fully committed to the vast range of services delivered effectively and efficiently at a localised level based on identified community needs.

## **Alternative Options Considered**

To consider and adopt different key priorities and themes within the review of the Corporate Plan and Strategic Direction. The proposed priorities, themes and actions best capture and reflect the future strategic direction of the Council.

## **Detailed Information**

The Council's Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027 was approved by Cabinet and endorsed by Full Council in September 2023. Our Council Plan sets out what we want to achieve in the next four years. Our ambition is to be 'Great' across all our services and to look forwards. Our 6 priorities have been developed based on knowledge and understanding of the needs of Ashfield residents and businesses.

The Corporate Plan sits above a wider strategic context which includes the Corporate Project Management Framework, Corporate Performance Framework and a range of strategic documents relating to the organisation and its services.

The Corporate Plan progress is monitored through both the effectiveness of successful delivery of key projects and initiatives and performance achieved against the Corporate Scorecard.

The Corporate Performance Scorecard has been developed alongside the delivery plan to help us monitor the progress of achieving our ambitions. Our scorecard is split into 2 sections, Delivery and Living In Ashfield. The Living in Ashfield indicators provide contextual data of Ashfield as a place. The Delivery indicators are used to track our performance against the Council's key priorities.

This report details progress against delivery of the new Corporate Plan, to date, and the April to September 2024 quarter 2 performance position against the associated Corporate Performance Scorecard 'Delivery' key performance measures.

The Council is keen to understand performance against relevant peer groups, to drive our ambition to deliver great services.

## **Overall Position**

Overall, the corporate scorecard position of corporate 'delivery' measures for April to September 2024 indicates the following positive position: -

- 78% of measures achieving or exceeding target, or within 10% variance of target.
- 92% of measures indicating an improved position compared to the same period in the previous year, or within 5% of previous year's performance levels.

Specific deliverables to date in 2024/2025 are: -

## Health and Happiness:

### Best Start

- Increasing access to leisure services and activities for children, and young people - a range of free activities have been delivered including weekly Learn to Ride and Bike Maintenance sessions at Sutton Lawn, and weekly free Parks Tennis takes place at Sutton Lawn.
- 18 schools and 5 performing arts schools across the District participated within the Christmas light switch on events within all three town centres.

### Living Well

- Delivery of our Outdoor Sports Transformation Programme through progress of Kirkby and Sutton Lawn Sports Hubs – work due to start on site in the early part of 2025.
- £1.6m social value has been delivered through the Leisure Operating Contract during the first six-months of the financial year.
- Hucknall Leisure Centre won the UK Active Midlands Centre of the Year.
- 14% more tenants have been assisted with welfare and money management advice from April to September 2024 (579) compared to April to September 2023 (507), significantly exceeding target.

### Ageing Well

- A successful MSK (Muscular Skeletal) waiting well event was held at Kirkby Leisure Centre in September 2024 with over 200 residents accessing support and advice.
- Ashfield District Council has achieved the Carers Accreditation through Nottinghamshire Carers Association.

### Health Inequalities

- Coordinating and influencing organisations and service providers in Leamington, Coxmoor, Broomhill/Butler's Hill.
  - Coxmoor – A new resident's action group has been successfully established.
  - Broomhill/Butler's Hill – is leading the way in integrating the Building Blocks of Health into its delivery plan. 2 successful 'health heart's events have been delivered.
  - Leamington – £101,000 has been secured through Sport England. A Playzone is proposed for Cowpasture Recreation ground. 'Tuesdays together' continues to happen in partnership with Ashfield Voluntary Action (AVA). A Community Wellbeing Event was delivered at Leamington Primary Academy.
- 9 groups have received litter picking packs to help keep their neighbourhood tidy.

### KEY SUCCESSES

- 870,000 attendances at the Council's Leisure Centres between April and September 2024 nearly 82,000 increase (10%) compared to attendances over the same period 2023/24 and nearly 50% increase since 2021/2022.
- 18 groups have been supported with a grant, totalling £20,350 as part of the UKSPF Green Social Prescribing and Walking/Cycling Fund
- The Council is working with the Football Foundation to install 5 Playzones in the District.
- A development grant of £101,000 of Sport England funding has been secured for

## Homes and Housing:

### Housing Development

- 6 new properties have been acquired and added to the housing stock following a successful bid for MHCLG funding under the Local Authority Housing Fund Scheme
- On site at Central Avenue, Hardwick Lane, Mill Close and Brierley Road, delivering 60 new family homes at these sites.
- Energy efficiency of new homes is improving. Latest homes included SPV, electric car charging points, etc, with an ongoing priority to maximise carbon reduction measures in each new home.

### KEY SUCCESSES

- The Council's Housing Acquisitions and Development Programme continues to deliver with sites in development providing 60 new family homes and 3 additional sites in the pipeline that could eventually deliver a further 110 properties.
- Tenant satisfaction feedback is well above Housemark benchmark averages.
- As of 30 September 2024, only 1.52% of Local Authority housing stock is assessed as non-decent, which is well below national averages and a significant reduction from 2.54% at the same point in 2023.
- 366 applicants have been prevented from becoming homeless between April and September 2024 – 38% more than same period last year.

### Tackling Disrepair and Poor Housing Conditions

- The Council have utilised a wider range of powers to take enforcement action against non-compliant landlords. The number of civil penalty fines has increased with proceeds from this being reinvested in the Environmental Health service.
- A new Private Sector Enforcement Policy has been published that clearly sets out actions and expectations with regards to disrepair in the private sector. There is a specific section relating to damp and mould.
- The Council was successful in bidding for MHCLG Healthy Homes Funding to review and improve the service we offer to residents and landlords who are experiencing damp and mould in their homes. An action plan to deliver on this is being implemented.
- An officer to deal with the issue of empty homes has been employed, their focus being bringing properties back into use and where possible making them available for residents in housing need.

### Suitable and appropriate housing

- Whilst awaiting the outcome of the Awaabs Law consultation, we continue to review processes and capacity in preparation of the new requirements. The tenant's handbook now contains information on damp and mould and is on the Council's website. Training is also being provided to frontline employees that visit tenants' homes on what to advise and action should they identify damp and mould as part of their everyday duties.
- Most carbon monoxide alarms have now been installed, there is just 1 remaining in a difficult to access property. Legal action may ultimately be considered to ensure the Council meets its statutory requirements.
- Preparations have been completed for a countywide private sector stock condition survey.

### Reduce and prevent homelessness.

- A review of temporary accommodation needs has been completed. An additional 20 self-contained flats have been made available for use as temporary accommodation, reducing the Council's need to use unsuitable and expensive bed and breakfast type accommodation and ensuring homeless households have the support they need.
- We continue to work in partnership with other Nottinghamshire Districts and statutory agencies to deliver a range of measures under the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)

Programme aimed at eliminating street homelessness. Nearing the final quarter of the 3-year RSI programme. All interventions operational and working effectively.

- The Landlord Forum has been successfully reinvigorated with positive engagement with landlords in the selective licensing area. Our intention is to engage further as extra funding is received under the healthy homes programme. The Landlord Forum and training for landlords is ongoing, and well attended.

#### Compliance with Social Housing Regulatory Act

- A significant amount of preparation has been made in advance of a potential inspection, including improvements to data and review of policies. A plan is in place for potential inspection.
- The new Consumer Standards have been reviewed and a gap analysis has been undertaken. An action plan is being developed to bolster compliance with the standards.
- The Complaints and Compliments Policy and Housing Complaints Procedure have been reviewed in line with the revised Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. A self-assessment against the code and complaints performance report have been submitted to the Ombudsman, to demonstrate compliance with the statutory Code.

#### Customer Focus

- The Regulator has recently published all results; analysis against the rest of the sector shows a broadly positive position.
- 2023/24 Housemark annual performance benchmarking feedback again shows service provision/value for money is good in social housing provision, for example, Quartile 1 performance on management costs; current tenant arrears; rent lost through void properties; emergency and non-emergency repairs completed within timescales.

### **Economic Growth and Place:**

#### Businesses and Investment

- Over 100 businesses are currently receiving support through Ashfield Accelerator to develop new skills and expertise, to launch new products or secure investment. The Accelerator grant (grants of up to 30k available) has supported companies to purchase new machinery or put in place processes that will lead to innovation and increased business efficiency.
- 82 businesses are being supported to produce a decarbonisation plan for their business and assist them towards net zero, and 50 businesses are being supported to develop global trading opportunities (importing and exporting).
- The Council entered a Tail Spend arrangement for the ordering of low value/high volume goods. The tail spend data up until October 2024 indicates 33% of the spend has been within the local region, establishing a benchmark for

#### **KEY SUCCESSES**

- Footfall across all three town centres between April and October 2024 has increased by 5% (9,791,180) when compared to April to October 2023 (9,529,849).
- A significant number of events have been delivered to date this year attracting over 36,000 visitors.
- Regeneration projects continue to be successfully delivered - 14 and 9-11 Low Street, High Pavement House, Kings Mill Leisure Building and Planetarium projects have been completed.
- Processing of planning applications showed significant improvement compared to the previous year, well above national standards with 90% of minor applications and 99% of other applications processed within the required 8 weeks, and on average 80% of Major planning applications processed within 13 weeks.



future improvements in reducing carbon footprint through our procurement activity.

### Infrastructure and Connectivity

- The Local Plan has progressed in accordance with milestones. On 29th April 2024 the Council submitted its Local Plan and supporting documents to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for independent examination. The first week of hearings has been completed with two weeks scheduled for January 2025.

### Regeneration

- Our regeneration programme continues to deliver with the renovation of Portland Square and Fox Street public realm well underway and due for completion in spring 2025 and plans now agreed for the development of West Kirkby Gateway and North Kirkby Gateway schemes. Land acquisition is at an advanced stage to support the delivery of multiple projects across the programme. The Cornerstone Theatre refurbishment at Sutton Academy is also well underway with the launch of the new facilities due to take place in spring 2025.
- Planning approval has been secured for the programme's flagship project ADMC (Automated Distribution and Manufacturing Centre). The project has been progressed to RIBA stage 4 and a contractor secured to start the construction phase in early 2025.
- A consultation response has been submitted to government regarding the potential withdrawal of the £9.2m Levelling Up funding for Hucknall. A decision is expected towards the end of January.
- The Kirkby Long-term Plan for Towns funding of £19.5m was confirmed by government in October. We are awaiting updated guidance and submission deadline which are due in the new year.

### Skills and Employment (UKSPF funded projects)

- Aspiring Careers is working with schools and local businesses for work experience and career opportunities and 'Gradboost' is connecting local businesses with Ashfield undergraduates, working with nine of the East Midlands universities to promote Ashfield as a place for graduates to start their career in.
- 'Transform Your Future' is supporting Ashfield residents who are economically inactive. Outputs have already been exceeded in priority ward areas with community grants delivered to 310 residents.
- Academy Transformation Trust Further Education (ATTFE) have extended their programme in priority wards, over the last month 53 people have attended digital training sessions.
- A successful careers fair was held in October at the Kirkby Leisure Centre with over 500 people attending.

### Town Centres and High Streets

- Save the High Street have completed a successful pilot project in Hucknall, supporting 15 retailers on Hucknall High Street with £13,606 awarded in grants. The project has now been expanded to cover the remainder of the District and supporting market traders to develop their businesses.
- A significant number of events and improvements have taken place in our town centres throughout 2024/25, some examples being Ashfield Food Festival with 4,000 attending, and Idlewells Indoor Market has successfully maintained 90% occupancy.

### Visitor Economy, Arts and Culture

- A successful Place Partnership bid to the Arts Council secured £1m of investment.
- The events programme 2024/25 was delivered in full, attracting over 36,000 attendances, including 20,000 attending Ashfield Show, 7,000 attending Sparks in the Park, and over 4,000 attending our Christmas Light Switch Ons across all three town centres.

## Cleaner and Greener:

### Cleanliness of the District

- A significant transformation and improvement programme is being delivered across our operational services, ensuring the Council can meet new legislative changes such as Simpler Recycling; transition to more effective and efficient neighbourhood/area-based working, whilst delivering improved services to customers.
- The Council continues to drive forward recycling; local residents are currently achieving a recycling rate of 41.5% of all household waste generated (4,672 tonnes of recyclates) in line with CIPFA nearest neighbour averages.
- Over the last 12 months, between October 2023 and September 2024, the Council emptied 3,757,979 refuse bins, collecting nearly 6,300 tonnes of garden waste, 2,500 tonnes of glass and over 7,100 tonnes of dry recycling. Most recently, between June and September 2024, 4,700 tonnes of garden waste was collected, 3,600 tonnes of dry recycling and 1,200 tonnes of glass.
- Between April and September 2024, the Council effectively controlled weed growth across 691 km of highways and pavements. Over the same period our road sweepers collected over 800 tonnes of detritus.

### KEY SUCCESSES

- Over 4,000 free bulky waste collections have been made throughout the year as part of the Big Ashfield Spring Clean
- Seven Green Flag Awards for the main parks were retained this year maintaining the Council's high Standards for public open space
- The Council planted 2,023 trees in the financial year 2023-2024, through a variety of funding sources including Section 106, grants from Trees for Cities, Trees for Climate Change and Urban Tree Challenge Fund. This year (2024/25) we expect to have planted a further 2,462 trees.
- The Council's Scope 1 and 2 footprints reduced by 5% in 2022/23. A further reduction of 8% is anticipated in 2023/24.
- A variety of initiatives have been undertaken to address fly tipping, waste on land, littering, graffiti and dog fouling, since April 2024, 76 warnings and notices have been issued, with Ashfield ranking better than average when compared nationally for occurrences of fly tipping.

### Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

- The Council successfully completed the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 scheme with the retrofitting of a range of thermal improvements to flat roofed bungalows. A successful SHDF wave 2.1 funding bid of £995k was also made for the retrofit of thermal improvements to a range of non-traditionally built properties.
- £583k received associated with Devolution Retrofit funding from the Midlands Net Zero Hub (MNZH) to retrofit energy efficiency measures to social housing, largely comprising solar photovoltaic panels (SPV); with additional Council funding to provide battery storage at the same properties. This scheme is nearing completion.
- Delivery of HUG2 and ECO4 carbon emission reduction schemes for the private sector remain on track and working well with measurement of benefits achieved through the schemes now being assessed.
- Contractors have been appointed for the installation of solar panels and pool cover at Lammas Leisure Centre as part of the Sport England Swimming Pool Phase 2 Funding. The project is on track for delivery by 31 March 2025.

### Parks and Green Spaces



- Green Space projects have been completed at Washdyke Recreation ground, Kingsway Park entrances. Priority projects in development and delivery are Roundhills Rec. BMX track, Huthwaite Welfare Park phase two, Nuncargate Recreation ground BMX and The Wharf at Stanton Hill. Resurfacing of pathways around the cenotaph at Huthwaite Cemetery has been successfully completed.
- Between April and September 2024, the Council maintained 2,766,000 square metres of grass and planted over 5,000 bedding plants and planted over 4,000 spring flowering bulbs along with the creation of Wildflower meadows and Bee highways across the District. Various smaller projects of shrub beds rejuvenation took place and will continue through 2025. No Mow May initiatives also took place on selected arterial routes and will be extended to some Green Spaces locations in 2025.

## Safer and Stronger:

### A Safer District

- The Council responded to 2403 reports of anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood nuisance and environmental crime reports between 1st April 2024 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Of these demands, 11% were resolved through specialist triage advice at the initial point of contact.
- Positively, this equates to 19% fewer service requests being received by our Community Safety team April to September 2024 (2403), compared to April to September 2023 (2965).
- The Council's Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) was approved on 1 October 2024 which includes a regions first street harassment ban to help protect women and girls and a District wide ban on vehicle nuisance.

### KEY SUCCESSES

- 128 enforcement warnings and notices have been issued to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour and Statutory Nuisance.
- A further £476,168 funding has been secured to deliver a variety of community safety projects, target hardening measures and situational crime initiatives to help tackle crime and ant-social behaviour across the District.
- Successful increases in CCTV cameras have been made across the District from 29 to 59 devices in the last three years
- The Ashfield District has been confirmed as one of the lowest areas for reported crime per 1000 population compared to other 15 comparable areas across England and Wales

### Our Communities Feeling Safe (projects)

- All ASB principles from national pilots have been incorporated into the new draft policies and processes including housing regulatory requirements.

### Supporting Vulnerable People

- From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024, 18 referrals were made to MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and other support agencies to safeguard vulnerable adults and children and protect them from further harm or abuse.
- The Complex Panel has received 23 referrals between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024, and through risk assessments taken place, there was a reduction in risk for 100% of cases that received panel review and intervention.
- The Council has been successful in securing over £74,000 to deliver safer accommodation duties to support domestic abuse survivors and improve their safety. The scheme has resulted in 43 survivors being supported since April. The Council has also recently employed a second domestic abuse worker to support delivery of this work and since April, 65 domestic abuse interventions have been undertaken to support survivors.

- The Council has secured external funding to deliver Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), with a dedicated project worker employed by Juno finalising the coordination of our DAHA accreditation submission.

## Innovate and Improve

### Customer Experience and Customer Focus

- Our Citizen's Panel has been successfully re-launched, with initial face-to-face focus group meetings held in July 2024. The Citizen's Panel has increased significantly from 25 to 84 members.

### Digital and Service Transformation

- The level of take-up for making payments easily, using digital channels, remains at 90% of payments over the first 2 quarters of 2024/25 being made either by direct debit, online, automated telephone or recurring card payments.
- The use of the Council developed online forms in our low code solution continues to increase. There were over 27,000 online form requests during the first 2 quarters of 2024/25 which is a significant increase from the same period last year. Most of the increase in use has been for waste related requests such as bulky waste and garden waste collections, indicating successful ongoing development of the online form integration with the operational back-office system.

### KEY SUCCESSES

- Extremely positive Corporate Peer Challenge external assessment.
- Digital transformation successes continue with significant reductions in more costly channels - an overall 25% reduction in phone calls compared with the same period last year (over 10,000 less calls), and 2.9% reduction in Paypoint/Post Office payment transactions. Online payments have increased by 8%
- There are now over 21,000 residents signed up to Ashfield 24/7 customer portal.
- Significant improvements in customer telephone call answering with 62% reduction in call waiting times, and 54% reduction in abandonment rates.
- Over £2.5m social value has been delivered through our procurement activity since April 2021 representing a delivered percentage of

### Financial Sustainability

- The Service Review programme continues to identify cashable efficiencies and invest to save opportunities, which, once approved, will be factored into the 2024/25 revised budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- The procurement partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council has been in place for 18 months, over that period there has been 16 major procurement projects undertaken with an estimated award value of approximately £5 million. As of November 2024, there are a further 6 in the scoping stage and 3 projects out for tender.

### People and partnerships

- The Council's Career Champions programme is a voluntary programme whereby employees visit schools and educational establishments to support with career provision such as interview practice days and promote the range of jobs available in the Council as a career option. There are currently 14 employees signed up as Career Champions.
- A review of Ashfield's Strategic Partnerships has been completed and will feed into a wider Nottinghamshire review of strategic partnerships.

### Performance, Data and Change Management

- A 'Knowledge Hub' dashboard of data and data analysis has been successfully developed using powerbi, which is accessible across the organisation and is used to understand performance delivery. The Knowledge Hub also incorporates dashboards for place level data and other key datasets such as Education and skills, Economic Growth, visitor footfall insights and the resident survey.

- The Council's performance management framework is currently being reviewed in alignment with Best Value approaches. An improved approach to Performance Board's is now embedded. The review of Corporate and Place scorecards has been finalised, aligned to the new Corporate Plan, incorporating output and outcome measures.
- Excluding the social value delivered from our leisure centre contract, cumulative social value delivered since the measurement via the Social Value Portal from April 2021 is now over £2.5m. Most of the procurement activities are delivering more than targets set. The three largest deliverables by outcome are: -
  - More people in local employment £1,468,242
  - More opportunities for local Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and Voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) £775,277.
  - More spend locally £618,645

### **Areas for Improvement and Development**

- Average turn-around time for the re-letting of void Council homes was at 28.8 days in November 2024, which is above the target of 27 days and slightly increased on the previous year (28.1 days November 2023), delays in returning properties ready to let can be partly attributed to the transition to the Council's new finance system, the Council is working urgently to resolve any outstanding issues.
- Stock condition surveys of our housing assets have been substantially undertaken and are ongoing. Access issues are requiring multiple visits, and there remains approximately 15% of properties to complete. Actions are ongoing to improve data capture and system input and will be followed by independent validation of the data to develop an updated investment plan for major works and repairs.
- We have agreed to support 50 businesses (as part of the Council's UKSPF Investment Plan) to develop global trading opportunities (importing and exporting). As only 9 businesses to date have been supported, Officers are continuing to meet regularly with the Chamber to encourage increased delivery.
- Despite being below target, rent collection rates have improved slightly (93.49% April to September 2024, compared to 93.08% April to September 2023). Rent arrears have also increased and are over target (2.47% November 2024 compared to 2.32% November 2023). These indicators follow regular seasonal trends which have met target at the end of the financial year. The increased rate of "migration" of tenant's benefits from weekly paid Housing Benefit to monthly paid Universal Credit does have an impact on payments received towards rent and arrears. 67% of tenants in arrears are in receipt of Universal Credit compared with 62% at the start of the year. 75% of the overall arrears figure is owed by tenants on Universal Credit compared with 73% at the start of the year. The new Income Coordinator posts have provided additional resource to focus on low level arrears cases. A new Income Manager will also join the team in the New Year
- The level of payments made via direct debits has reduced slightly by 2.3% (273,380 payments made April to September 2024 compared to 279,763 April to September 2023).
- Average days of employee absence has increased by 8% (4.15 days average per full time equivalent April to September 2024, compared to 3.84 days average per full time equivalent April to September 2023). The main cause of absence is long term illness. Several interventions have been put in place to support employees including; implementation of streamlined and easier to navigate Attendance Policy; absence management training completed during August and September; ongoing robust management of absence cases with HR working closely with managers accordingly; improved communications and wellbeing support mechanisms in place to facilitate employees back in to the workplace or remain in work, including a Health and Wellbeing event which was undertaken in November to target mental health and muscular skeletal health.
- The Council Tax collection rate as of September 2024 is 54.83%, slightly lower than 55.16% collection rate in September 2023. This outturn is slightly below target however it is noted

that a number of payments are still to be allocated from the suspense account to the actual Council Tax accounts, which have been delayed due to the implementation of the new finance system.

- The collection rate for Business Rates as of September 2024 is 53.49%, despite being slightly lower than 55.12% collection rate in September 2023, is above target. A monthly recovery timetable is in place for the forthcoming financial year to ensure recovery action is taken promptly to ensure collection is on track.
- The Council has a robust improvement plan in place, following the independent Corporate Peer Challenge, which is incorporated into the Council's Performance Management Framework.

## **Implications**

### **Corporate Plan:**

The report relates to the delivery of the Corporate Plan Priorities. The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's priorities for the period 2023 to 2027 and intended deliverables which were monitored and managed through the Corporate Performance Framework.

### **Legal:**

The Council's new Corporate Priorities and strategic plans have been developed in consideration of current and forthcoming legislative requirements. [RLD 20/12/2024]

### **Finance:** [PH 20/12/24]

<b>Budget Area</b>	<b>Implication</b>
General Fund – Revenue Budget	The new Corporate Plan has been developed in alignment with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the financial sustainability of the organisation. The 'Innovate and Improve' Priority incorporates key programmes and projects which are focussed on identifying and delivering efficiencies and more effective working practices to support financial sustainability, whilst concurrently delivering improved customer service.
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	
	Financial performance during the 4-year term of the Corporate Plan has been considered on a regular basis via financial monitoring reports to both Cabinet and Council.

### **Risk:**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Absence of a Corporate Plan would result in a lack of prioritisation and focus on delivering what matters	Agreed Corporate Plan every four years which is delivered via the organisation's project management framework and reviewed annually.
Poor performance would potentially result in inability to deliver the Corporate Priorities as specified in the Corporate Plan	Regular monitoring of performance and robust performance management through the authority's performance management framework.

## **Human Resources:**

The 'Innovate and Improve' Priority incorporates key programmes and projects which will be focussed on delivering the Organisational Development Strategy and developing employees.

High levels of performance can have a positive impact upon employee engagement and retention which in turn can enhance performance further.

## **Environmental/Sustainability:**

The 'Cleaner and Greener' Priority incorporates key programmes and projects which will be focussed on delivering environmental improvement.

## **Equalities:**

There are no direct implications on equality and diversity as a consequence of the proposals and recommendations outlined in this report.

## **Other Implications:**

Not applicable

## **Reason(s) for Urgency**

Not applicable

## **Reason(s) for Exemption**

Not applicable

## **Background Papers**

Corporate Plan 2023-2027  
Corporate Plan Performance Report

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