
2021/22 Q2 – STRATEGIC FINANCE, TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

Performance Measures and Service Updates

The councillor development programme continues as planned, with greater focus now being given to the more specific knowledge requirements, especially for those who are newly elected to gain more confidence in their membership and participation in committee meetings. A learning needs analysis is also underway to identify other learning needs that will form the basis of a programme of learning for the new year. A number of councillors have also expressed an interest in joining a councillor development working group and who will be of great assistance in acting as champions of learning to their peers, as well as making sure that our investments in learning are targeted to where most needed. That group will be established shortly to agree its terms of reference and focus of priority activity.

A report to Scrutiny on 12 October 2021 provided an update on progress against our current commercialisation strategy and associated action plan. This showed that whilst there had been much activity to ascertain sources of new income streams for the council, with some small successes, unfortunately the resulting business cases were not capable of providing evidence of any substantial return and so have been closed as projects. Activity was somewhat hindered during the period of the pandemic, although exploration is continuing on other potential sources of income generation identified, and work is underway to refresh the commercial strategy so that it is aligned with the direction being set by our new administration. A training programme has also been commissioned to underpin these developments and will include a clear focus of municipal entrepreneurship as being at the heart of what we do.

We are yet to see the full impact of Brexit on the current public sector procurement regulations, although a green paper has already been launched by central government setting out the intended direction and changes that are likely to take place. It is clear that there will be greater emphasis on public reporting of contract performance, and our procurement team are actively looking at how that might operate in anticipation of new reporting requirements being put in place. Attention is being given to a refresh of the council's current approved procurement strategy with these new regulations in mind, and to address the new administration's ambition to secure greater local spend wherever possible and to raise the bar in demonstrating social value in our procurements.

The council's cultural change programme "Believe in Great" has now been refreshed and a new organisational development strategy is agreed and operational to take us over the next four years of our journey, for building both an employer brand that is seen as one of choice through responding to the needs of our employees, but which also focuses on capacity and resilience for future sustainability. What has been clear is our workforce's adaptability and flexibility during the pandemic, and the learning gained during that period will continue to be embedded to secure better and more efficient ways of working, as well as to be fleet of foot when change is required. The latest staff 'pulse' survey is currently underway which will give us useful feedback upon which to test progress against the intensive programme of work undertaken during the pandemic and into recovery on securing efficient and effective agile

working, and now the development of hybrid working practices that lead to greater efficiency savings for the council whilst also improving customer services, as well as to gain understanding of current issues facing staff that may need to be addressed. This will be fed into the annual 'BIG' conferences led by the chief executive later in the Autumn where there will be opportunity for all staff to participate in discussion around these issues, as well as to gain understanding of the new corporate plan, direction, and priorities for the council over both the next 12 months and over the next four years.

Sickness levels have shown a slight increase, which is not unexpected, as staff see a return to the workplace under the new hybrid working arrangements that have been put in place for those who are "administrative" in nature, but who can be flexible in the location at which they work from in the delivery of services. However, overall absence levels remain stable and well below the average working days lost target that the council has been working towards. There is an approved attendance management strategy and action plan that affords focus to those aspects of absence, mental health, health and safety and general wellbeing that require ongoing attention, and which assist in maintaining a healthy workforce and which can lead to maximum productivity.

Risk update:

Insufficient capacity

The council is not alone in that there are some known areas of occupational shortfalls which means that they are a challenge to source, recruit and retain. These are issues that are recognised nationally by all local authorities. Children's social workers have most recently become a source of concern locally, as are domiciliary and residential care workers. This is in part considered to be due to the pandemic situation and changes in pay rates to attract workers to other business sectors. Options to address these issues are currently being explored by the affected departments with the support of corporate human resources. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to develop the council's "employment offer" as an attractive place to work and this will remain a critical element to focus on within a very competitive employment market. Alongside this, there have also been specific and targeted recruitment campaigns undertaken in both children's and adult social care to assist in generating interest and increase recruitment to the area. There is, however, work to be done in modernising the council's recruitment processes and systems to reduce the amount of time and effort it takes to conduct a successful recruitment exercise, whilst also staying compliant with our legal obligations, as well as to make it easy and simple for prospective candidates to apply. Our human resource service has established a project that will set the course for these aspects of improvement to be undertaken over the next 24 months.

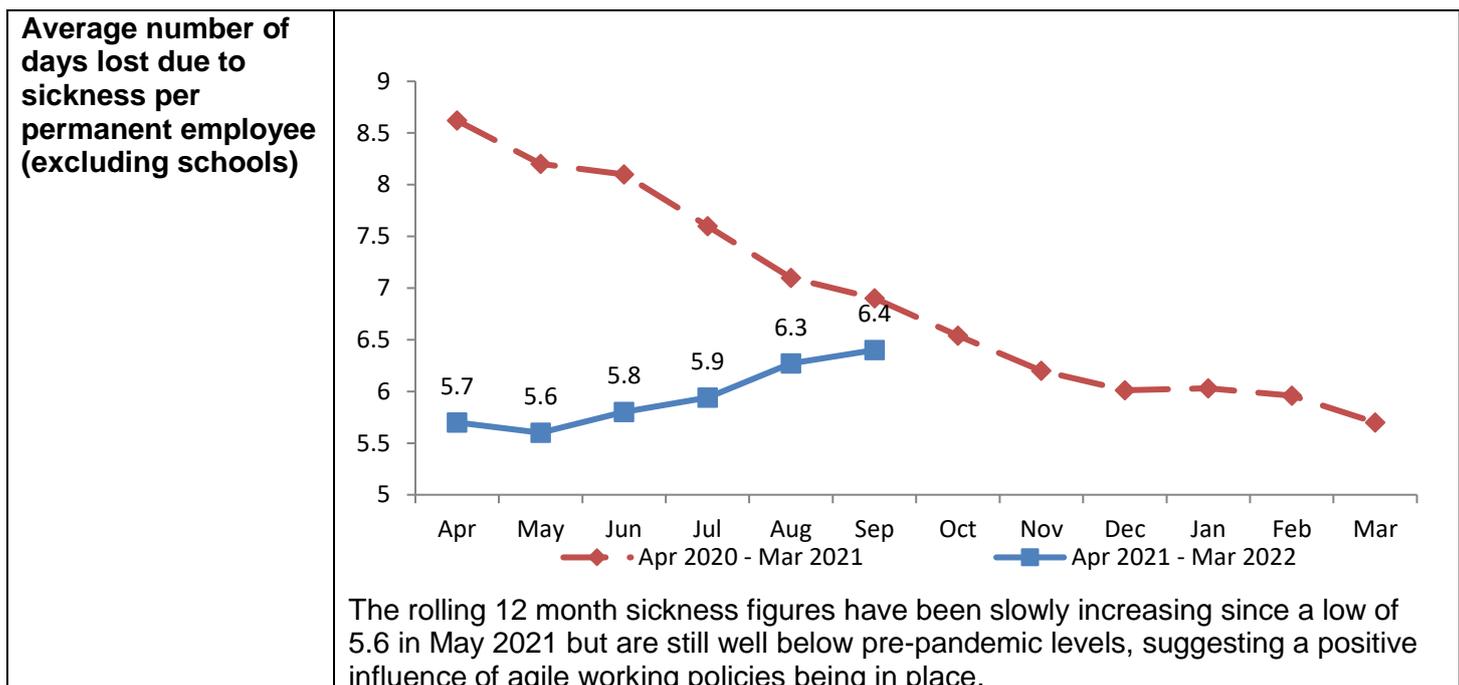
Aligned to this is the need for effective workforce planning to ensure that there is business resilience and continuity, particularly in areas where there are specialist roles, or those which can be difficult to recruit. With the support of the Local Government Association, a pilot programme will seek to refresh the council's approach to workforce planning and establish a cross organisational approach for the future which can afford greater confidence of planning and preparation for future business needs. This programme will commence in November of this year and dates for the underpinning workshops have now been set.

During the period of the pandemic, staffing capacity has been at its most stretched with the necessity for staff redeployment to keep and maintain essential front-line services as operational, as well as delivering other important related public services and processing of payments of the government grants received to support businesses and residents. As we are

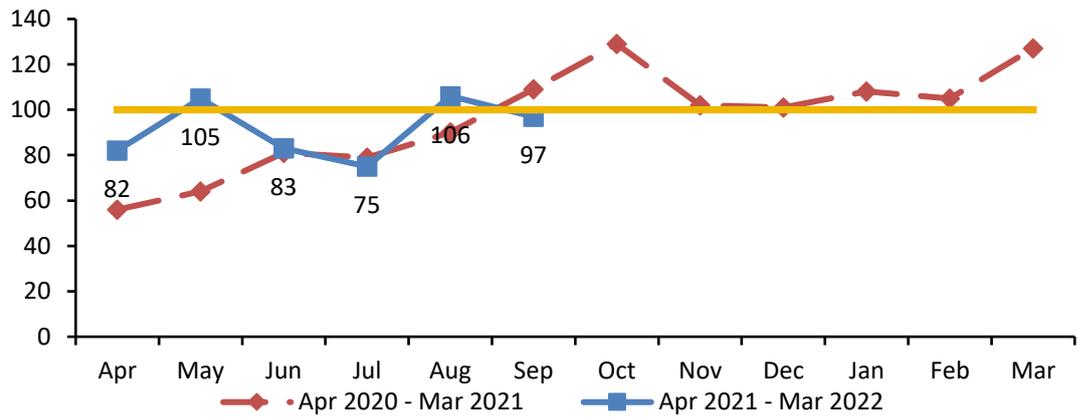
now well into the recovery phase, those demands continue to be reduced and staff are also beginning to operate the new hybrid working arrangements as the national Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted, which now allows flexibility of working base (which will continue to see homeworking as one of those options where appropriate and has proved beneficial for efficiency of working), as well as responding to any backlogs that exist. Close monitoring of capacity continues to be undertaken.

The focus of attention for the development of organisational culture continues to be that of the delivery of the council’s “Believe in Great” cultural change programme that is seen as being central to aligning staff to the successful delivery of the council’s priorities. A key element of this work is making sure that our performance management arrangements are both robust and engaging for staff to have a clear understanding of their role, the expectations placed upon them, agreed performance objectives that have an intrinsic link to the council’s priorities, regular performance review meetings to discuss progress, and ensuring that there is appropriate support in place to secure the desired outcomes.

Alongside this is a comprehensive workforce development programme designed to meet the learning needs of staff in their day to day work, which includes the use of the apprenticeship levy funding to support continuous personal development, as well as proving the necessary underpinning learning for new apprentices to the organisation.



Number of FOI requests received (Monthly figure)

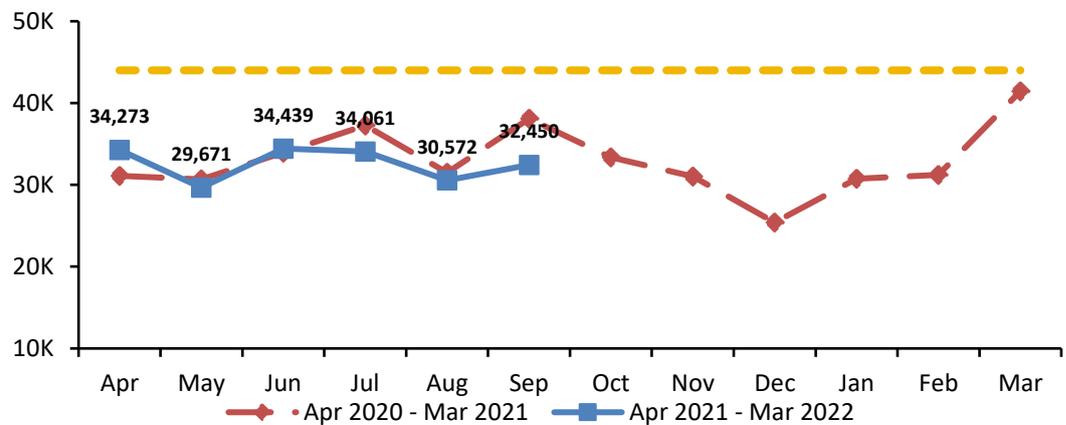


Of the 97 requests received in September

- Neighbourhoods received 34
- Corporate Services received 22
- Children’s Services received 17
- Adult Social Care and Community Well-being received 11
- Regeneration received 9
- Finance received 2
- A further 2 requests were received but the service was not recorded.

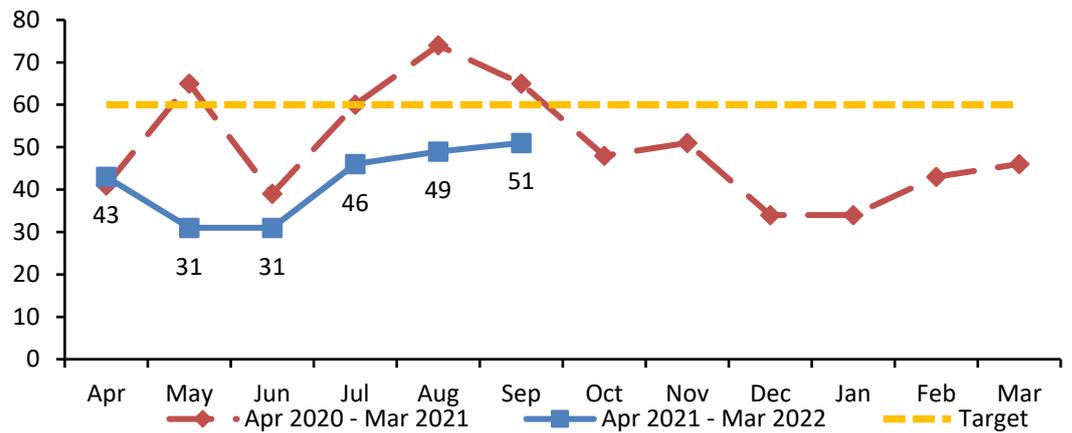
In total, 548 FOI requests have been received in the first 6 months of 2021-22. This is higher than in the same period of 2020-21 where 479 were received.

Number of calls made to the contact centre per month (Monthly figure)



The number of calls received over quarter one is in line with the first quarter of 2020/21 and lower than in previous years. The percentage of calls to the contact centre that resolved the caller’s enquiry at the first point of contact has been consistently at 90 percent or more for the last 4 months and has only fallen marginally below this twice in the past year.

**Average time to answer calls in the contact centre (in seconds)
(Monthly figure)**



The average time to answer has increased over Quarter 2, in part due to staff taking annual leave during this period, which has been the case in previous years also. The increase this year, however, is less marked than in previous years.

New Corporate Plan Indicators

The measures reported in future reports based on the new Corporate Plan will be:

Every Quarter:

- The percentage of predicted revenue outturn (net cost of services) compared to budget (quarterly measure)
- The percentage forecast revenue income (fees and charges) compared to budget (quarterly measure)
- The value of cumulative capital expenditure compared to profiled budget (quarterly measure)
- Average working days lost to sickness per employee (quarterly measure)
- Average time to answer calls to the contact centre (quarterly measure)
- Average speed of processing new benefit claims (quarterly measure)

Annually in the Quarter 4 Report:

- The level of income generation through the delivery of identified commercial and investment initiatives (annual measure)
- Number of local supplier tender awards (annual measure)
- Total value of gross business rates payable (annual measure)
- Number of Band D equivalent properties (annual measure)

Strategic Risks

Lack of financial resource and the ability to deliver the council's in-year budget strategy			Assigned to: Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer		
Inherent score	Target score	Current score	Previous scores		
			Jul 21	Feb 21	Sep 20
16 RED	5 GREEN	12 RED	12 RED	12 RED	14 RED
Risk score is consistent					

Lack of financial resource and the ability to deliver the council's medium-term financial strategy			Assigned to: Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer		
Inherent score	Target score	Current score	Previous scores		
			Jul 21	Feb 21	Sep 20
16 RED	9 AMBER	16 RED	16 RED	16 RED	16 RED
No change to risk score					

Insufficient staffing capacity and skills			Assigned to: Director of Corporate Services		
Inherent score	Target score	Current score	Previous scores		
			Jul 21	Feb 21	Sep 20
16 RED	8 AMBER	9 AMBER	9 AMBER	9 AMBER	9 AMBER
No change to risk score					

A change in organisational culture fails to keep a pace with the speed of organisational change, negatively impacting on the delivery of the required transformation to deliver the corporate plan			Assigned to: Director of Corporate Services		
Inherent score	Target score	Current score	Previous scores		
			Jul 21	Feb 21	Sep 20
16 RED	6 GREEN	6 GREEN	6 GREEN	6 GREEN	6 GREEN
No change to risk score					