Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday, 15 September 2021
Time: 2.00pm
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

Membership

Councillor Adrian Warwick (Chair)
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Piers Daniell
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Will Roberts
Councillor Richard Spencer
Councillor Robert Tromans
Councillor Martin Watson

Items on the agenda: -

1. General

(1) Apologies

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. Any changes to matters registered or new matters that require to be registered must be notified to the Monitoring Officer as soon as practicable after they arise.

A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless they have a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web
https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1

(3) Chair's Announcements

(4) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021.

2. Public Question Time

Up to 30 minutes of the meeting is available for members of the public to ask questions on any matters relevant to the business of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Questioners may ask two questions and can speak for up to three minutes each. To be sure of receiving an answer to an appropriate question, please contact John Cole (Democratic Services) at least two working days prior to the meeting.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holders Relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Up to 30 minutes of the meeting is available for the Committee to put questions to the Leader and Portfolio Holders on any matters relevant to the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. Work Programme

To consider the Committee's proposed Work Programme and future areas of scrutiny.

5. Council Plan 2020-2025 Quarterly Progress Report - Quarter 1 (April 2021 to June 2021)

The report is attached.

6. Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme

The report is attached.

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7.   Customer Feedback Overview Report

The report and appendix are attached.

8.   Any Urgent Matters

At the discretion of the Chair, items may be raised which are considered urgent (please notify Democratic Services in advance of the meeting).

Monica Fogarty
Chief Executive
Warwickshire County Council
Shire Hall, Warwick

Resources and Fire &
Rescue Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday 15 September
2021

Page 3

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Public Speaking
Any member of the public who is resident or working in Warwickshire, or who is in receipt of services from the Council, may speak at the meeting for up to three minutes on any matter within the remit of the Committee. This can be in the form of a statement or a question. If you wish to speak please notify Democratic Services in writing at least two working days before the meeting. You should give your name and address and the subject upon which you wish to speak. Full details of the public speaking scheme are set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

Resources and Fire &
Rescue Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday 15 September 2021   Page 4

Warwickshire
County Council

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 14 July 2021

Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members
Councillor Adrian Warwick (Chair)
Councillor Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Sarah Boad
Councillor Piers Daniell
Councillor Sue Markham
Councillor Caroline Phillips
Councillor Will Roberts
Councillor Richard Spencer
Councillor Robert Tromans
Councillor Martin Watson

Other County Councillors
Councillor Peter Butlin, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community Safety
Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Place

Officers
Charles Barlow, Delivery Lead – Localities
Barnaby Briggs, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
John Cole, Democratic Services Officer
Andrew Felton, Assistant Director, Finance
Isabelle Moorhouse, Democratic Services Officer
Rob Powell, Strategic Director, Resources
Steve Smith, Assistant Director, Commissioning Support Unit
Nichola Vine, Strategy and Commissioning Manager, Legal and Democratic

1. **General**

    (1) Apologies

    Apologies were received from Councillor Andy Jenns (Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation), Kieran Amos (Chief Fire Officer) and Sarah Duxbury (Assistant Director, Governance & Policy).

Warwickshire County Council

(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

In respect of agenda item 6; as committee members of Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC), the Chair and Councillor Boad declared a personal interest.

(3) Chair's Announcements

The Chair drew members' attention to the imminent retirement of Kieran Amos (Chief Fire Officer). He praised the contribution Kieran Amos had made to Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS) and the wider Council, stating that he was knowledgeable, approachable, and highly respected.

Councillor Crump stated that under the leadership of Kieran Amos, WFRS had developed strong links across communities. The success of initiatives such as Hospital to Home demonstrated the effectiveness of this approach. Kieran Amos had enabled WFRS to combine effectively with other blue light services; Safer Warwickshire initiatives had strengthened community engagement. He praised the Chief Fire Officer's focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion. He was a valued colleague and highly respected across WFRS, WCC, and in the wider community.

The Chair moved that the Committee formally record its thanks to Kieran Amos for his service to WFRS and the communities of Warwickshire.

Councillor Boad seconded the motion.

The Chair called a vote on the motion, it was unanimously supported.

Resolved:

That the Committee formally records its thanks to Kieran Amos for his service to WFRS and the communities of Warwickshire.

(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 25 May 2021 and 27 May 2021 be approved as a correct record.

There were no matters arising

2. Public Question Time

No public questions were received or presented at the meeting.

3. Questions to Portfolio Holders relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

There were none.

4. Work Programme

Resolved:

That the Committee agrees the updated 2021/22 Work Programme, as set out in the report, and notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. Year End Council Plan 2020-2025 Quarterly Progress Report (April 2020 to March 2021)

Steve Smith (Assistant Director, Commissioning Support Unit) introduced the report, stating that it drew upon information provided to Cabinet on 17 June 2021 in respect of performance against key business measures (KBMs). He drew attention to the commentaries attached to each of the performance measures outlined within the report. A consolidated performance report on financial outturn had been provided following the presentation of accounts to Cabinet.

In response to Councillor Phillips, Rob Powell (Strategic Director, Resources) advised that WCC was among the few local authorities which continued to offer a local welfare scheme. Several tranches of government funding had been utilised, including the recent £1.3 million 'Local Support Scheme' grant enabling provision of free school meal vouchers to eligible households during the school summer holidays. It also provided scope to introduce measures to address fuel poverty. He stated that plans to phase out the £20-per week boost to universal credit in October 2021 could result in increased demand for the Local Welfare Scheme. The longer-term impact of these changes depended upon future provision of government funding. The measures currently in place would support residents experiencing financial hardship for the duration of the school holidays.

In response to Councillor Boad, Barnaby Briggs (Assistant Chief Fire Officer) stated that Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS) would not set a target of anything other than zero in relation to the number of fire-related injuries; anything above that could be construed as a commitment to allowing people to be injured. He advised that some Fire & Rescue Services benchmarked performance against a three-year average, which offered a means to view data in context.

Councillor Crump advised that the recently formed cross-party Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Assurance Panel had agreed to examine WFRS targets to consider whether they were practical and proportionate. The Panel provided a good forum to hold this discussion.

In response to Councillor Boad, Councillor Crump stated that in many instances response time targets had been met but WFRS was unable to save the individuals concerned. This underlined the importance of the prevention agenda.

Councillor Boad suggested that the scope for members to fully utilise the full capability of Microsoft Power BI would be improved by bespoke training sessions orientated towards individual scrutiny committees.

The Chair stated that he had liaised with Information and Communications Technology (ICT) officers to examine how Power BI data could be presented in an accessible way to support scrutiny. He praised the App version of the software which provided an interactive platform to view information.

The Chair praised the performance of the ICT service which had enabled a robust and resilient response to the pressures brought about by COVID-19 across the organisation.

In response to Councillor Tromans, Rob Powell advised that the section of the report outlining the percentage of leaders and managers driving a high-performance culture drew upon information derived from staff surveys. An average of between 45% to 50% of staff had responded to the surveys.

To sum up, Steve Smith stated that an updated performance framework would be established alongside plans to refresh the Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy. A member working group would be set up to review performance targets and benchmarking processes. He stated that efforts would be made to promote the use of Power BI, including members' interaction with the software. He advised that consideration would be given to how performance information was provided to scrutiny committees, including increased visual presentation of data.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the progress of the delivery of the Council Plan 2020 - 2025 for the period covered by the report.

6. Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-25 Progress Report

Charles Barlow (Delivery Lead – Localities) introduced the report which provided an update on delivery of the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy alongside a summary of the significant and fundamental changes affecting the sector during the past two years.

Charles Barlow reported that the Strategy had been approved by Cabinet on 12 September 2019. It aimed to create a thriving, sustainable and dynamic voluntary and community sector which improved the lives of individuals and communities in Warwickshire. He advised that the response to the Pandemic had provided further evidence of the wealth of skills and resources within Warwickshire's communities. The report outlined the significant challenges faced by the sector, which had changed fundamentally since March 2020. He praised the quality of the response of community organisations to COVID-19.

Charles Barlow stated that, despite the transformation brought about by the Pandemic, the vision and purpose of the Strategy was unchanged. The key objectives remained to support Council Plan outcomes. He advised that a crucial link was present between the Strategy and the COVID-19 Recovery Plan, which sought "to harness the power of our communities to tackle inequality and social exclusion".

Charles Barlow stated that, in addition to the emphasis on social value and digital inclusion outlined within the Strategy, a focus on climate change, mental wellbeing, loneliness and isolation, and financial exclusion was required.

Charles Barlow directed members' attention to the tables within the appendix of the report which provided details of progress made against the six core priorities of the Strategy. He stated that greater uncertainty could be anticipated over the coming 12 months. The Council would need to maintain a dynamic approach, act upon the knowledge and experience acquired during the Pandemic, invest wisely, and continue to recognise the strengths of the sector.

In response to Councillor Phillips, Charles Barlow advised that the Food Forum had been established in response to the challenges related to food supply and sustainability observed at the outset of the Pandemic. He stated that the issue of food supply could not be considered in isolation, a broader view encompassing debt, money management, housing and employment was required. The Food Forum would adopt an inclusive approach to supporting communities. In respect of the Family Hardship Strategy, he suggested that advice be sought from Kate Sahota (Lead Commissioner, Family Wellbeing).

Councillor Phillips praised the work undertaken by the Localities Team during the Pandemic. They had provided valuable support for individuals who were shielding.

Councillor Boad praised the quality of the report. She highlighted the work undertaken by town and parish councils during the Pandemic. Funding from WCC to Warwickshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) had enabled town and parish councils to better support communities and strengthened relationships between organisations.

The Chair strongly agreed, stating that the response of town and parish councils had been very impressive. He praised the exceptional contribution made by the Localities Team in coordinating arrangements.

Councillor Kaur highlighted the importance of digital inclusion, stating that connectivity was good across Warwickshire; however, a shortage of devices could limit development of skills. She suggested that the proposed Digital Inclusion Task and Finish Group consider inequalities affecting access to equipment.

Charles Barlow highlighted the advantages conferred to households with ready access to devices during the Pandemic. This underlined the importance of work to promote digital inclusion.

To sum up, Charles Barlow thanked the Committee for its endorsement of the approach taken by the Strategy. He stated that it would be necessary to review the 'golden threads' of social value, digital inclusion, climate change, mental wellbeing, loneliness and isolation, and financial exclusion. This would inform delivery of the Strategy's six core priorities, taking account of the considerable impact of COVID-19.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the progress made against the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-25.

7. 2020-21 Performance Report of Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Activity

Barnaby Briggs (Assistant Chief Fire Officer) introduced the report which covered the period between April 2020 and March 2021. He stated that COVID-19 was present throughout this period. The report showed a reduction in operational activity due to lockdown; a reduction in face-to-face engagement with the public was also discernible for the same reason.

Barnaby Briggs stated that at the time of publication of the report, a coroner's verdict was anticipated; he confirmed that there had been no fire-related deaths during the period of the report.

Barnaby Briggs advised that 86% of accidental dwelling fires had been confined to the room of origin. He commented that this represented an insightful indicator of Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service's (WFRS) performance.

Barnaby Briggs advised that response times had been affected by the Pandemic. Early on, WFRS had taken the decision to create protective 'bubbles' to limit transmission of the virus. This had restricted scope to move personnel between stations. He stated that, overall, it had been possible to maintain response availability. However, the Pandemic had impacted upon individual stations where minor outbreaks had been experienced.

Barnaby Briggs reported that the Pandemic had impacted upon training programmes. Delays had been experienced due to the requirement to hold training in a covid-safe environment.

Barnaby Briggs reported that the Hospital to Home initiative had proved to be a success with a significant increase in collections throughout the Pandemic. WFRS was considering increasing capacity in this area.

In response to Councillor Phillips, Rob Powell (Strategic Director, Resources) advised that the Authority did not have reason to anticipate cancellation of the government's Better Care Fund, which funded the Hospital to Home scheme.

The Hospital to Home scheme was widely praised; it provided valuable support for elderly and vulnerable individuals and relieved pressure on the health service. The initiative provided a means to undertake safe and well checks, enabling support from other agencies to be made available to individuals who may be reluctant to seek help and could otherwise be overlooked.

In response to Councillor Boad, Barnaby Briggs advised that there had been a decline in community safety contacts due to COVID-19. Opportunities for prevention and protection work were becoming available; a return to pre-pandemic levels was anticipated soon.

Resolved:

That the Committee notes the contents of the report.

8. **Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Assurance Panel - Update**

Barnaby Briggs (Assistant Chief Fire Officer) provided an update regarding the recently established cross-party Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Assurance Panel. Terms of reference for the Group had been agreed at the inaugural meeting. It would aim to act as a 'critical friend' to challenge and monitor the delivery of the IRMP; provide independent scrutiny of the IRMP and its workstreams; performance manage Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service (WFRS) against the objectives set within annual IRMP action plans; act as an enabler to address any barriers to achieving objectives; champion the IRMP and the work supporting it; and assist WFRS to link-in with corporate strategic documents with common aims.

Barnaby Briggs advised that the Panel had discussed the recent inspection of WFRS by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) at its recent

meeting. Progress against action plans would be reported at the Panel's next meeting in September 2021.

The meeting rose at 14:55

…………………………...
Chair

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14.07.21

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Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2021/2022 – September 2021

Item / Lead Officer	Report detail	Date of next report
Public Question Time/Questions to the Portfolio Holders / Work Programme	Standing items for every meeting.	* Standing item
Council Plan 2020 – 2025 Performance Report	Council Plan 2020 – 2025 Performance Report	* Standing item
Maureen Oakes	Customer Feedback Overview Report	15 September 2021
Richard Ennis / Reece Bowman	Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme	15 September 2021
Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service	Verbal Update: Impact of the construction phase of HS2 on Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service	TBC
WRIF Member Oversight Group	Annual Report of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF) Member Oversight Group to be presented to the Committee each year to enable attention to be given to the performance, progress, and priorities of WRIF.	TBC (recurring annually)

Agenda Item 4

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Agenda Item 5

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 September 2021

**Council Plan 2020-2025 Quarter 1 Performance Progress Report:
Period under review: 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021**

Recommendation

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

Considers and comments on the progress of the delivery of the Council Plan 2020 - 2025 for the period as contained in the report.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Council Plan Quarter 1 Performance Progress Report for the period April 1st 2021 to June 30th 2021 was considered and approved by Cabinet on 9th September. The report provides an overview of progress of the key elements of the Council Plan, specifically in relation to performance against Key Business Measures (KBMs), strategic risks and workforce management. A separate Financial Monitoring report for the period covering both the revenue and capital budgets, reserves and delivery of the savings plan was presented and considered at the same Cabinet meeting.

1.2. This report draws on information extracted from both Cabinet reports to provide this Committee with information relevant to its remit.

1.3. Comprehensive performance reporting is now enabled through the following link to Power BI full OSC Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance Report.

2. Council Plan 2020 - 2025: Strategic Context and Performance Commentary

2.1 The Council Plan 2020 – 2025 aims to achieve two high level Outcomes:

- **Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent**; and,
- **Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure**.

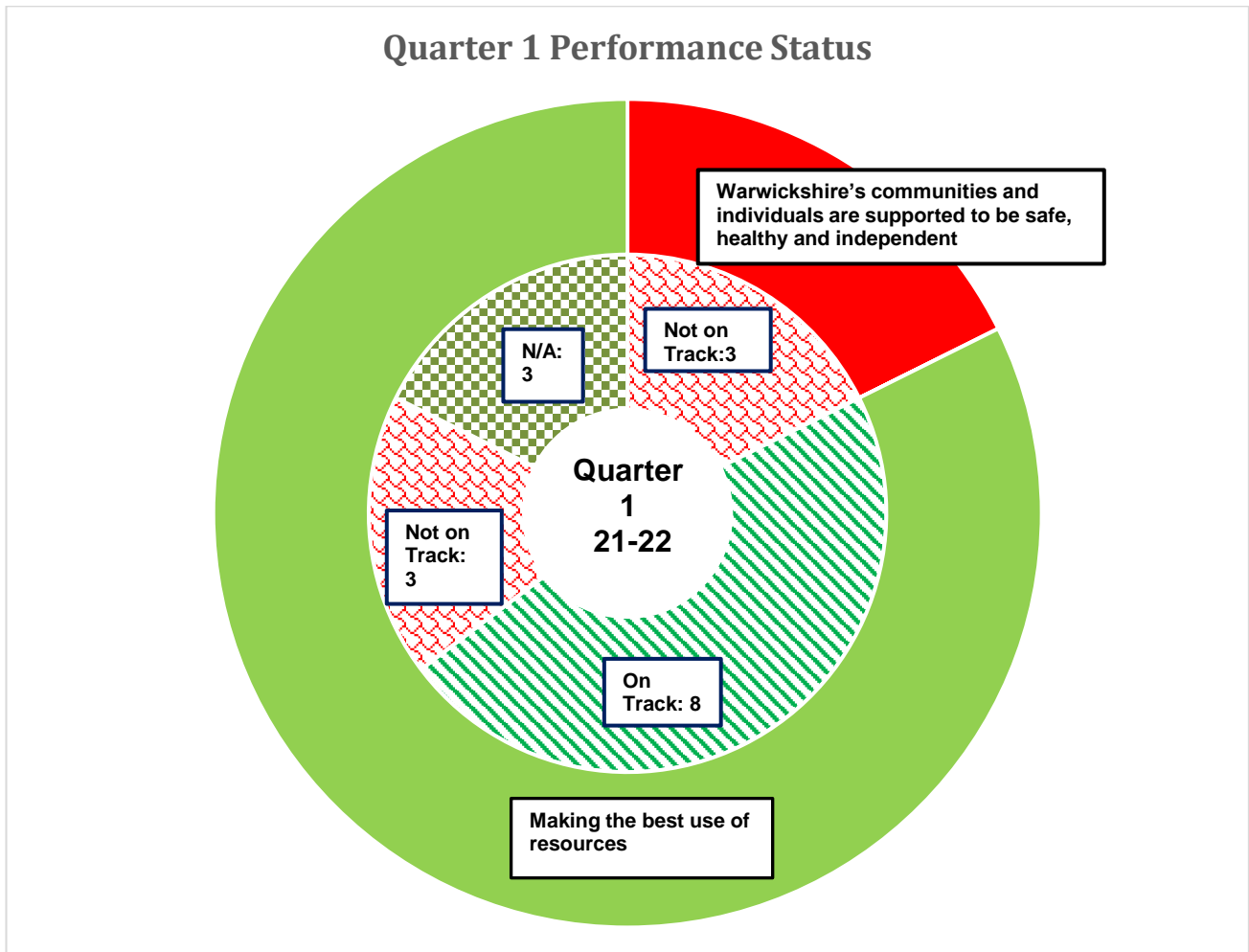Delivery of the outcomes is supported by **WCC making the best use of its resources**.

Progress to achieve these outcomes is assessed against 54 KBMs.

Outcome	No. of KBMs	No. of KBMs available for reporting at Quarter 1
Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent	27	21
Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure	13	8
WCC making the best use of its resources	14	11

2.2 Overall, the Council continues to maintain its robust performance across the board in the face of the challenges posed by the pandemic, including increased and changing demand, new service delivery to meet the challenges of the pandemic and significant changes in how services are delivered. The Council continues its journey towards a more business as usual situation as restrictions are removed, Services are focusing on their core work and this is reflected in KBM performance.

2.3 Of the 54 KBMs, 17 are in the remit of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and at Quarter 1, 14 KBMs are available for reporting as 3 are annual measures and will be reported by year end. 57% (8) KBMs are On Track and 43% (6) are Not on Track.
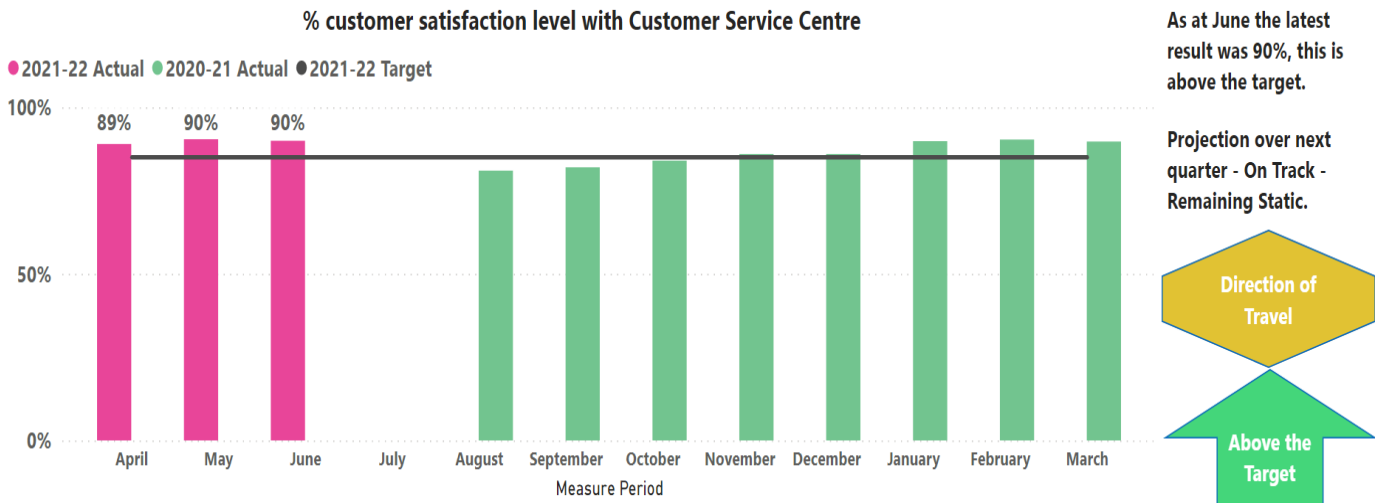
2.4 Chart 1 below summarises KBM status at Quarter 1 by agreed Outcomes

Quarter 1 Performance Status

- Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent
- N/A: 3
- Not on Track:3
- Not on Track: 3
- Quarter 1 21-22
- On Track: 8
- Making the best use of resources

2.5 Of the 57% (8) KBMs which are On Track, there are 2 of note which are detailed in Table 1 below:

WCC makes the best use of its resources

% customer satisfaction level with Customer Contact Centre

% customer satisfaction level with Customer Service Centre

● 2021-22 Actual ● 2020-21 Actual ● 2021-22 Target

| | April | May | June | July | August | September | October | November | December | January | February | March |
| 89% | 90% | 90% | | | | | | | | | |

As at June the latest result was 90%, this is above the target.

Projection over next quarter - On Track - Remaining Static.

Direction of Travel

Above the Target

Measure Period

Page 17

Current performance narrative:

During Quarter 1, the Customer Service Centre (CSC) has continued to experience high call volumes both inbound and outbound. This is reflective of the corporate response to Covid-19 to ensure the most vulnerable can access services and support through all channels including telephone e.g. Covid-19 hotline with the focus shifting more towards testing queries, Covid-19 Local Grant Scheme (welfare support) and Adult Social Care. NB. The April – July 2020 data was unavailable for reporting as the mechanism for capturing the satisfaction survey information was temporarily turned off due to Covid-19.

Data for this measure is provided via telephone surveys and the customer satisfaction levels continue to remain above target.

This is the third consecutive quarter % customer satisfaction level with the Customer Service Centre has remained on track.
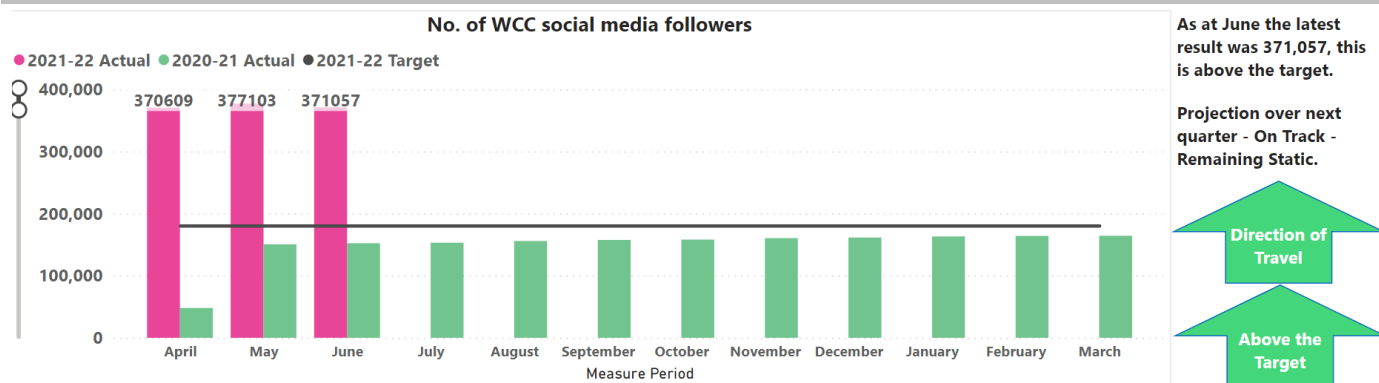
Improvement activity:

The Service will continue its quality assurance processes as well monitor demand and resource availability and action when needed.

Explanation of the projected trajectory: On Track – remaining static

The CSC is operating both virtual and from office bases and has increased its service offer in response to Covid-19 and customer needs. Individual customer feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and this is reflected in this measure as there has been a steady increase in satisfaction levels and it is expected this will continue to be on or above target going forward.

No. of WCC social media followers

No. of WCC social media followers

- 2021-22 Actual
- 2020-21 Actual
- 2021-22 Target

As at June the latest result was 371,057, this is above the target.

Projection over next quarter - On Track - Remaining Static.

Direction of Travel

Above the Target

Current performance narrative:

Social media followers continue to exceed targets. The drop in followers between May and June 2021 is accounted for by the ongoing decommissioning of inactive social media accounts across all networks.

Improvement activity:

The Service are currently auditing their social media accounts. The current target of 180,000 will be reviewed at the end of the next quarter.
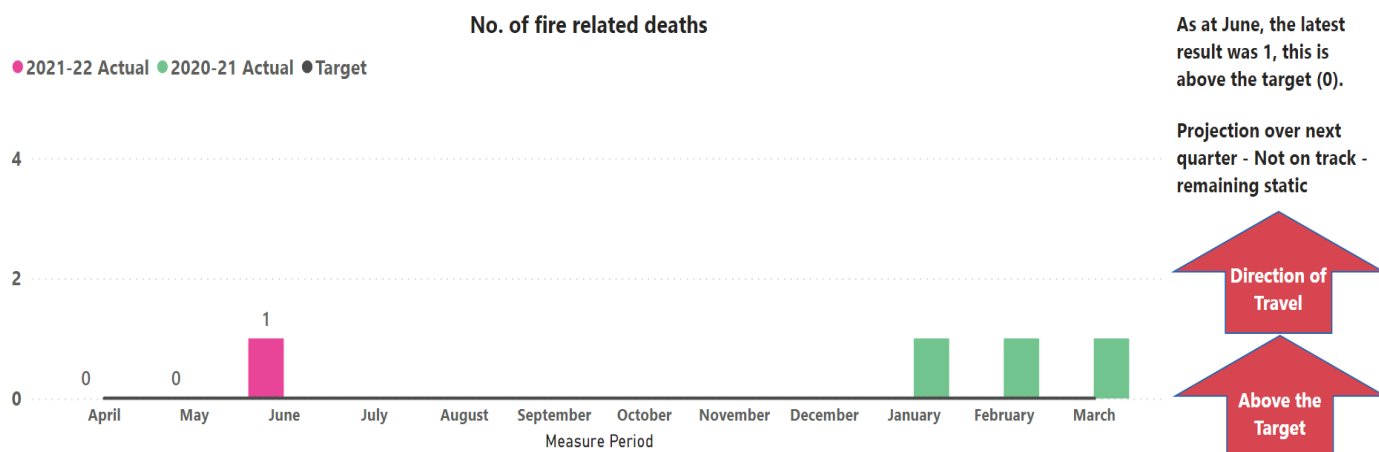
Explanation of the projected trajectory: On Track – remaining static

Given the current performance, this is projected to remain static.

2.6 Of the 43% (6) KBMs that are Not on Track at Quarter 1, 4 KBMs require highlighting below with details of the current performance narrative, improvement activity and explanation of projected trajectory:

Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent

No. of fire related deaths

No. of fire related deaths

● 2021-22 Actual ● 2020-21 Actual ● Target

As at June, the latest result was 1, this is above the target (0).

Projection over next quarter - Not on track - remaining static

Direction of Travel

Above the Target

Current performance:

For the period 1st April to 30th June 2021 there has been 1 fire related death (in the same period of 2020 there were 0 deaths). The incident was a fire suicide.
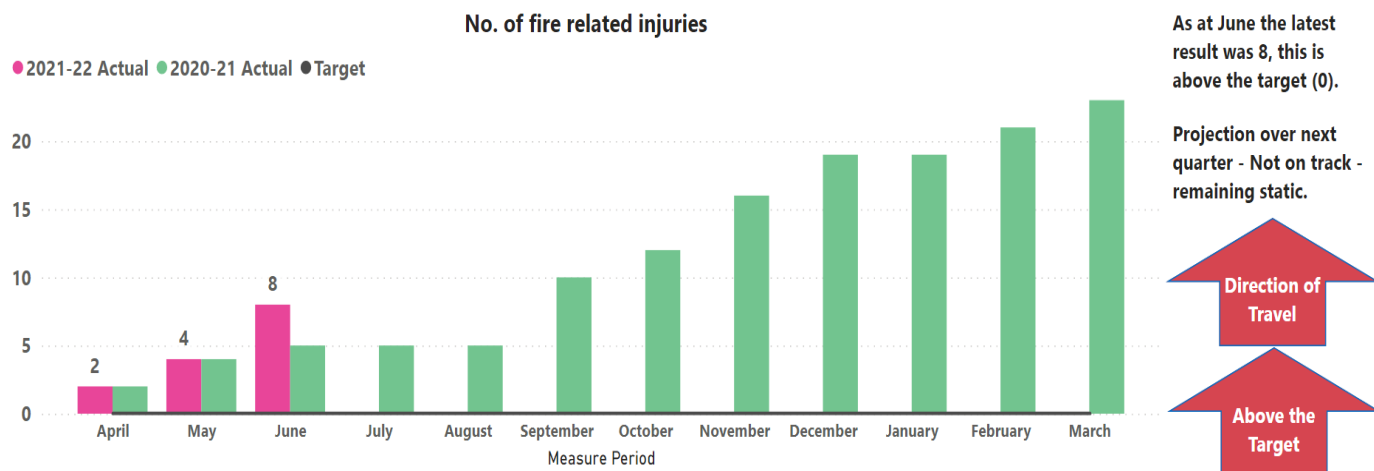
Improvement activity:

The Service investigates takes every fire related death very seriously and investigates each one in an effort to understand causes and identify any appropriate Improvement activity. Where it is identified that an improved multi agency approach could have prevented the fatality a multi-agency serous case review is carried out. With a growing trend, albeit in small numbers, for suicide by self-immolation the Service will be joining the multi-agency suicide prevention group to see if any prevention strategies can be deployed.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: Not on Track – remaining static

Detailed reports have previously been to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Committee Members recognise that it is difficult to influence fire death outcomes as a result of suicide or crime. However, the Service will endeavour to seek all preventable causal factors to fire deaths.

No. of fire related injuries

No. of fire related injuries

● 2021-22 Actual ● 2020-21 Actual ● Target

As at June the latest result was 8, this is above the target (0).

Projection over next quarter - Not on track - remaining static.

Direction of Travel

Above the Target

Current performance:

Of the 8 fire related injuries, 1 victim was taken to hospital for serious injuries, 2 taken to hospital for slight injuries and 5 were given first aid at the scene. For the victim with serious injuries - the individual tried to light a fire pit using petrol and set themselves on fire.
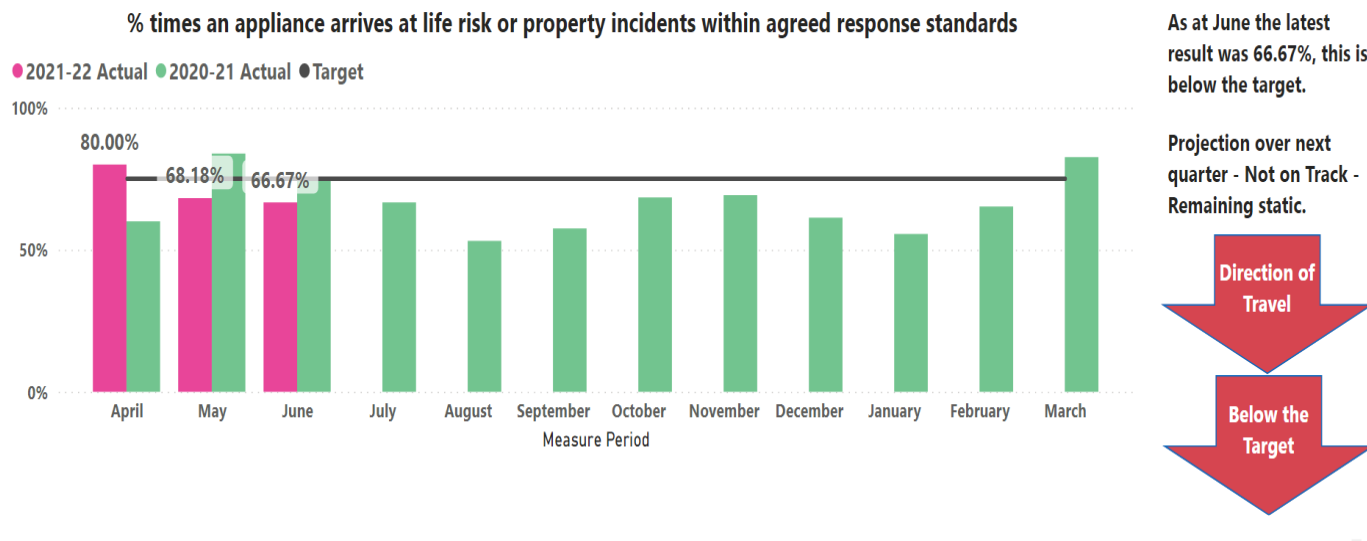
Improvement activity:

The Service closely monitors levels and types of incidents involving fire related injuries to address any emerging issues to inform community prevention activity. Similarly, to the fire related deaths measure, the Service will continue to work with partners to better understand any causal factors (such as alcohol/drug dependency/mental health issues) in the hope of preventing similar incidents and injuries in the future. Smoke hoods have been purchased to allow crews to escort members of the public through smoke to safety.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: Not on Track – remaining static

Detailed reports have previously been to OSC, and Committee Members recognise that it is difficult to influence fire related injury outcomes. However, the Service will endeavour to identify and reduce all preventable causal factors to fire injuries.

% times an appliance arrives at life risk or property incidents within agreed response standards

% times an appliance arrives at life risk or property incidents within agreed response standards

● 2021-22 Actual ● 2020-21 Actual ● Target

As at June the latest result was 66.67%, this is below the target.

Projection over next quarter - Not on Track - Remaining static.

Direction of Travel

Below the Target

Current performance:

The April to June 2021 figure for the percentage of times an appliance arrives at life risk or property incidents within agreed response standards is 71.62% which is an improvement on the year end 2020/21 figure of 66.54%.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has resulted in a welcome reduction in life risk incidents as people spot potential situations in the home earlier and travel less, resulting in a reduction in serious fires and Road Traffic Collisions (RTC). The pandemic has also had the effect of reducing the support available to On-Call fire stations from wholetime stations as the Service introduced station "bubbles". This meant that at the height of the pandemic the Service was not moving wholetime staff around to support On-Call stations.

The decision to cancel the recruits' course was predominately around reducing infection and transmission between the existing workforce. The impact was not fulfilling those vacancies that On-Call units have been experiencing.

Average response times for initial appliances;
    7 minutes 53 seconds for Fire incidents; 73 Fire incidents.
    8 minutes 22 seconds for Road Traffic Collisions; 15 RTC incidents.
    8 minutes 59 seconds for Special Services incidents; 13 Special Service incidents.

For initial appliances which missed the 10-minute target the average time for response was:

13 minutes 42 seconds for Fire incidents; 18 Fire incidents; 34 minutes and 0 seconds was the longest response.
12 minutes 45 seconds for Road Traffic Collisions; 5 incidents; 15 minutes and 0 seconds was the longest response.
15 minutes 52 seconds for Special Services incidents; 5 incidents; 22 minutes and 27 seconds was the longest response.

The Service focuses its attention and short-term remedial measures on the incidents which occurred within the modelled 10-minute response time but at which that target time was missed.

This is the fourth consecutive quarter % times an appliance arrives at life risk or property incidents within agreed response standards has been not on track.

Improvement activity:

Recruitment and retention of On-call firefighters is an ongoing challenge, reflecting the national picture, and the Service has seen significant variations in On-call availability across Stations in recent months.

Resources are positioned to meet the demand and risks within Warwickshire. Unfortunately, due to the geographical make up of Warwickshire and the large rural areas that are covered, the Service does occasionally have challenges with meeting the response standards due to some of the travel distances involved. Targeted fire prevention activity is delivered to remote rural areas which the Service knows it will struggle to reach within the 10-minute response time.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: Not on Track – remaining static

In the longer term the Service Asset Management Plan sets out the intention to relocate some whole-time response points onto transport nodes across the County with the intention of improving response to emergency incidents outside of the current predicted 10 minute travel time, particularly those on the motorway network.

WCC makes the best use of its resources

% Variation DSG overspend compared to Budget Provision
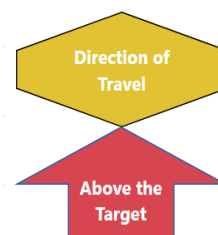

% Variation DSG overspend compared to Budget Provision

● 2021-22 Actual ● Target
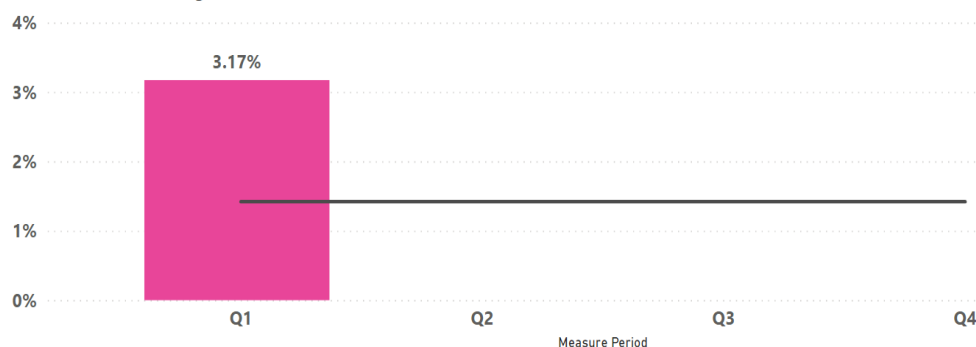
As at Quarter 1 the latest result was 3.17%. This is above the target.

Projection over next quarter - N/A

Direction of Travel

Above the Target

Current performance:

Based on the Quarter 1 forecast Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is expected to overspend by £7.887m with £7.894m relating to the High Needs Block.
If the service were performing to the targets and projections within the current DSG recovery plan, the DSG overspend for 2021/22 would be £3.541m (which the target of 1.42% represents). This is the deficit to be addressed through future year savings/interventions between the current year and 2025/26 which are still to be determined.

However the current Quarter 1 projections (before the refresh of the recovery plan has been fully concluded) are forecasting the £3.541m deficit noted above (for which interventions are still to be determined) as well as a further £4.353m deficit on 'in year activity' that interventions in the current recovery plan were expected to have addressed.

For information, the drivers of the 'in year' overspend include:

- the objective of increasing the number of children with an EHC (Education, Health and Care) plan being placed at lower cost Mainstream schools is being achieved, but this is not yet being fully offset by the required reduction in the higher cost placements at Special Schools and Independent Special Provision;
- the reduction in independent settings has not been achieved in line with the recovery plan;
- an increase in the placement of children into other local authorities combined with an increase in the unit cost due to complexity of needs; and
- costs from Post 16 is greater than set in the recovery plan (this area is currently being reviewed which includes investigation for the reasons of this cost increase and whether it can be mitigated).

Note that there are some underspends in Alternative Provision and special school top ups. Please note that this will be flagged in Finance's Quarter 1 Monitoring Report, presented to Cabinet on 9th September.

Improvement activity:

Work is ongoing to refresh the current DSG recovery plan and forecast taking into account the latest demand projections as well as recent Government announcements about 22/23 funding.

Explanation of the projection trajectory: Not applicable

The refresh of the DSG recovery plan will determine the projection, therefore, this is currently not applicable. In addition, by the time of Quarter 2 reporting, September school and placement data will be available and therefore a more robust forecast is expected.

2.6 Chart 2 below illustrates the considered forecast performance projection over the forthcoming reporting period as well as the three previous periods.

Resources, Fire and Rescue OSC Projection Status
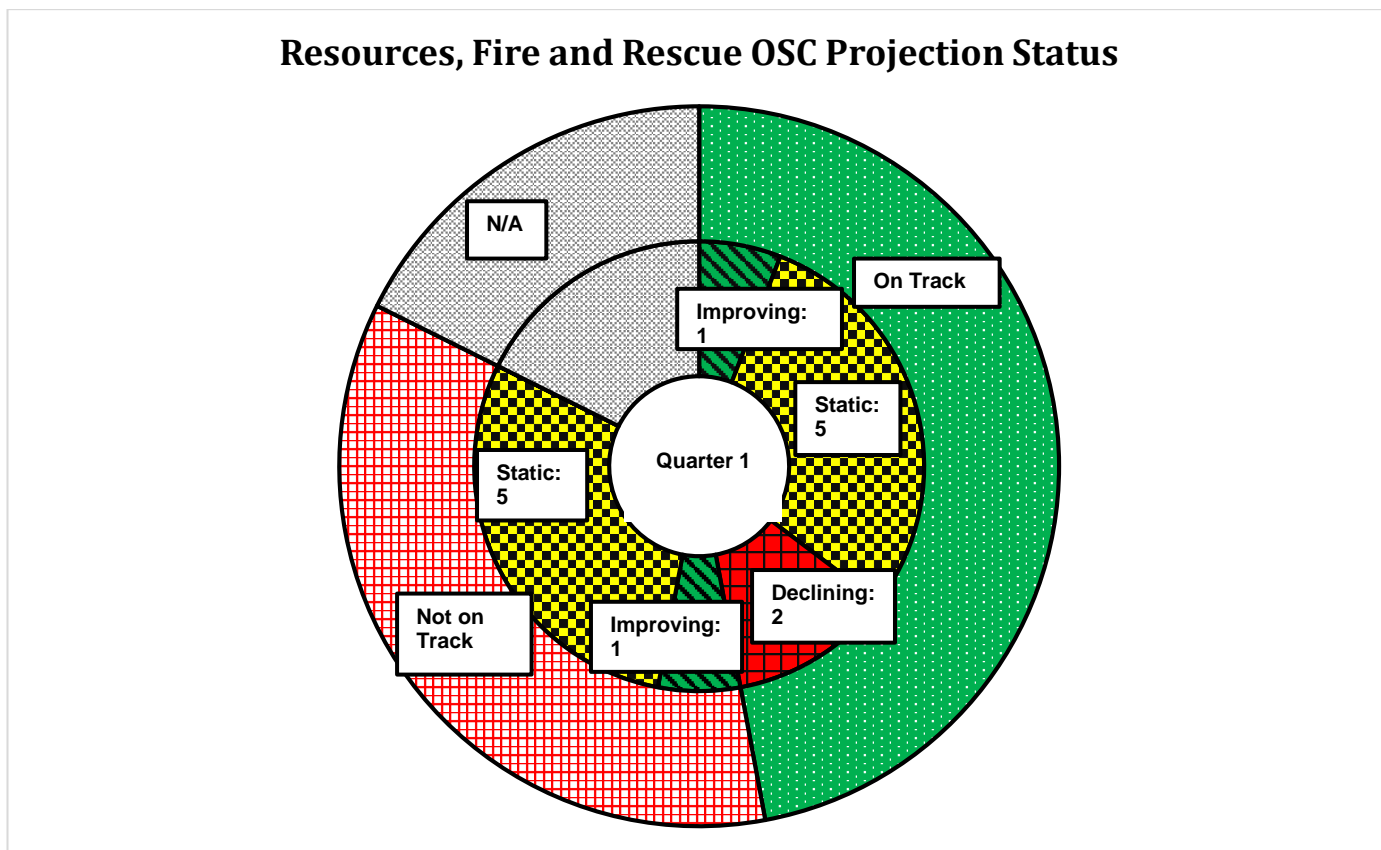
2.7 It is forecast that over the next period overall performance will be similar to current performance. Of the 57% (8) of measures reporting on track, 4 will remain static, with '% General and Directorate Risk Reserves Compared to the Net Revenue Budget' measure set to improve and the following 2 are projected to decline:

- % of capital expenditure against budget - due to the work to refine capital forecast, by Quarter 2 a reduction in the forecast is anticipated. This will lead to the deterioration of this performance measure, into Not on Track, however it should be considered a positive change that will provide more accurate and reliable capital forecast; and
- No. of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, Judicial Review cases or Information Commissioner's Office adverse decisions for WCC – overall the Authority is seeing an increase in complaints following a lull experienced during the pandemic and so it expected the overall trajectory will increase. Although projected to decline over the next quarter, this measure is still likely to remain On Track, compared to the target of 10.

2.8 Of the 43% (6) of measures which are currently Not on Track, it is forecast that 5 will remain static, however, the following is projecting performance to improve into being On Track, although the measure will continue to see peaks and troughs during year as and when significant volumes/values of debt are raised:

- Value of debt over 35 days old as a % of debt raised in last 12 months - Debt Recovery team is liaising with Schools Finance and Communities teams to ensure that appropriate action is being taken to resolve unpaid debts wherever possible.

Full context on all measures is provided in the Power BI reports.

2.9   As the Council continues to transform, the Performance Framework will evolve, providing a sharpened focus on performance and supporting delivery of the Organisation's priorities. Following the light touch review of the Performance Framework for the 2021/22 period, a comprehensive review of the entire Framework is already in progress ready for implementation in 2022/23 and a Cross Party Member Working Group is supporting the review.

Financial Commentary – relevant finance information taken from Cabinet report

3.1   Revenue Budget

3.1.1 The Council has set the following performance threshold in relation to revenue spend: a tolerance has been set of zero overspend and no more than a 2% underspend. The following table shows the forecast position for the Services concerned.

	2021/22 Budget £'000	2021/22 Outturn '000	Revenue Variance £'000 %	Retained Reserves £'000	Financial Standing £'000
Business and Customer Services	19,021	22,904	3,883 20.41%	0	3,883
After taking account of Covid related pressures of £2.986m; and the impact of earmarked reserves the remaining service variance is an overspend of £0.904m which represents a 20.4% variance against the approved budget. The remaining service variance of £0.904m is the result of an increase in staffing and employee costs, with the majority of this within the Business Support area where there have been increases in demand particularly in relation to Adults and Children & Families.					
Commissioning Support Unit	7,136	13,743	6,607 92.59%	0	6,607
After taking account of Covid related pressures of £7.009m; and the impact of Investment/Transformation funds the remaining service variance is an overspend of £0.044. The Covid related expenditure includes £5.228m COMF funding to be spent in 2021/22 still to be allocated and £1.657m for Covid Community Testing.					
Enabling Services	25,944	24,344	(1,600) -6.17	0	(1,600)
After taking into account Covid pressures and transfer to/from earmarked reserves leaves a service-related underspend of £1.228m which comprises of the following: £0.386m underspend across Property Services – mainly due to over recovery of income, which is likely to be one off; and some staffing underspends £0.032m underspend across HR Enabling mainly from staffing					

£0.094m net underspend across Digital and ICT (£0.456m staffing underspends offsetting overspends of £0.362m related to Software and Licensing costs; the recurrent nature of each requires further analysis in order to establish any long-term impact)
£0.711m underspend across ICT Strategy and Commissioning – £0.074m in year staff underspends and £0.637m one-off underspends from ICT projects.

Finance	6,245	6,311	66 1.06%	0	66

After taking account of Covid related pressures of £0.126m; and the impact of earmarked reserves, the remaining service variance is an underspend of £0.041.

Governance and Policy	2,511	3,875	1,364 54.32%	0	1,364

The Covid pressures relate to employee costs, printing and advertising within Communications, costs of reinstatement of face-to-face Council meetings and additional staffing. The remaining service forecast overspend predominantly comprises:
£0.521m of historic savings which date back to 2017/18 and are no longer achievable within the service.
£0.304m Legal Services increased spending on agency staff for backfill and decreased external income. Further review of this pressure is necessary in order to establish if there is a long-term impact and what mitigating actions are required to manage this pressure.

Fire and Rescue	22,080	22,039	(41) 0.19%	0	(41)

After taking account of Covid related pressures of £0.046m; and the impact of earmarked reserves and Investment/Transformation funds, the remaining service variance is an underspend of £0.078m.

3.2. Delivery of the Savings Plan

3.2.1. The savings targets and forecast outturn for the Services concerned are shown in the table below.

	2021/22 Target £'000	2021/22 Forecast £'000
Business and Customer Services	524	379
£145k shortfall relating to vacancy management saving plan due to operational pressures.		
Commissioning Support Unit	46	46
Enabling Services	1,118	1,118

Finance	16	16
Governance and Policy	358	351
£7k shortfall on third party savings target.		
Fire and Rescue	385	370
£15k shortfall relating to third party saving plans		

3.3 Capital Programme

3.3.1. The table below shows the approved capital budget for the Services and any slippage into future years.

	Approved budget for all current and future years (£'000)	2021/22 Forecast £'000	Slippage from 2021/22 into Future Years (%)	Current quarter - new approved funding / schemes (£'000)	Newly resourced spend included in slippage figures (£'000)	All Current and Future Years Forecast (£'000)
Business and Customer Services	1,629	181	0%	0	0	1,629
Enabling Services	29,765	24,327	0%	0	(1,710)	28,055
Governance and Policy	3,626	3,626	0%	0	0	3,626
Fire and Rescue	7,545	5,200	-30%	0	50	7,595
£2.187 million delay caused by: Fire and Rescue HQ Leamington Spa - the project currently on hold.						

4. Supporting Papers

4.1 A copy of the full report and supporting documents that went to Cabinet on the 9th September 2021 is available via the committee system.

5. Environmental Implications

None specific to this report.

6. Background Papers

None

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Agenda Item 6

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 September 2021

Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme (PWHTB)

Recommendations

That the Committee:

1. Considers and comments on the attached Priority Worker Help to Buy (PWHTB) report;

2. Considers and comments on the proposal to adopt a broad definition of a Priority Worker from which to make specific decisions about priority workers to target on a scheme-by-scheme basis, using local workforce data and intelligence, as developments come through the Warwickshire Property and Development Group; and

3. Makes recommendations to Cabinet in respect of any suggested amendments to the proposed arrangements in the report.

Report structure:

1. Background
2. Draft product description
3. Legal considerations
4. Subsidy control
5. Financial implications
6. Environmental considerations
7. Risk management considerations

1   Background to this report

1.1   This report follows the reports to Cabinet on the set up of the Warwickshire Property and Development Group (WPDG) and continues work on the operational delivery of the Commercial Strategy. It aims to provide the Overview & Scrutiny Committee with detail on the proposed Warwickshire Priority Worker Help to Buy Scheme, to enable the recommendations of the Committee to be fed into Cabinet consideration of the scheme when it meets on 14th October 2021.

1.2   The proposal in this paper aligns with the Council's Recovery Plan objective 7.8 'Working in partnership with Homes England, we will remove the blocks that have

1

prevented some sites in Warwickshire from being developed, providing more and affordable housing whilst also supporting the recovery of our local economy.' The proposal is intended to complement the new (replacement) national Help To Buy Scheme, as amended from April 2020, the newly announced First Buy Scheme. The proposed Warwickshire Priority Worker Help to Buy scheme (PWHTB) has potentially less restrictive applicant criteria and is potentially less restrictive on whom the property can be sold on to than the new national Help to Buy Scheme.

1.3 This report sets out the rationale for proposals for Warwickshire County Council to:

(i) progress development of a financial product of its own – the Warwickshire PWHTB scheme - to encourage home ownership; and

(ii) have an option to offer this PWHTB product selectively across its own WPDG developed sites on a variable proportional basis.

1.4 This report is about the concept and development of a potential PWHTB scheme. Roll out of the PWHTB product would not take place until the scheme is approved in principle, further developed and after WPDG develops out and builds homes. We will be seeking Cabinet approval for the principle of the PWHTB scheme, based on the work to date, and approval for the further development of the product in collaboration with WPDG.

1.5 It is possible that thereafter the Council could widen and increase the scale of the scheme as further WPDG developments take place. There would also be future opportunities to work with central Government to jointly utilise and potentially operate some of Government's funding programmes, building on the Council's enhanced knowledge of the local area and local delivery vehicle through PWHTB.

1.6 The primary benefits of this proposed scheme are to provide the Council with a financial product it controls that:

- provides priority worker residents with a product that provides a 'better' alternative to the Government schemes, such as the new national Help To Buy and First Homes Schemes;

- helps existing or to be Warwickshire residents who are priority workers working in Warwickshire to afford to buy homes, thus contributing to 'levelling up' and demonstrating an innovative approach to addressing both local housing need and national priorities (this may potentially include some County Council employees in priority roles but will not be limited to council employees);

2

- de-risks WPDG sales from an affordability perspective by making homes more affordable on a site-by-site basis, although this would transfer some of the financial risk associated with reductions in house prices from buyers to WCC, as WCC's equity-based loan may decrease in value; and

- provides a recruitment and retention tool for those employing priority workers who live and work in Warwickshire, contributing to robust, resilient services to the public and helping mitigate significant recruitment and retention risks, which are well understood, in particular sectors, roles and places.

1.7 The legislation is complex, but, at present, is drafted in a way which means this scheme can only be applied to property WCC owns, or has provided development funding for (which will generally be the case for assets developed by WPDG). Subject to further work to finalise the details, it is envisaged that the key elements of, and principles underpinning, a Warwickshire Priority Worker Help To Buy Product would include:

- being available for homeowners where this will be their only home (so not a pure first-time buyer scheme as it will include movers and previous owners, but explicitly not those with other homes);

- being based upon equity-based loans[1] – such a product could be interest-free for 5 years (for example) after which it could convert into an interest-bearing loan. This loan crystallisation date could require the homeowner to either refinance on day 1 of year 6 so that WCC gets its investment % back based on the house value at that time, or the homeowner will pay WCC interest on the loan from the first day of year 6, in addition to WCC's stake in the property, until refinancing takes place;

- offering a loan rate on day 1 of year 6 that starts at x% and grows at RPI plus x% to help encourage refinancing (rates to be set higher than the prevailing market rate) and it is proposed that these rates will be set at the time of issuing a PWHTB scheme for a specific site;

- the ability for priority workers to buy out WCC's share of the equity on their property (known as 'staircasing up') in blocks of 5%, so if WCC's interest was a 25% share, the homeowner could in this example have 5 additional share buying 'staircasing' events, until they own the entire property;

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[1] In this instance, an equity-based loan means that WCC would in effect take share of the property. This ties the loan to the current house price, so if house prices fall, the loan reduces in value, but if they rise, then the value of the loan rises proportionally.

3

- no restrictions on who the home can be sold to (unlike the First Homes Scheme where equity is left in in perpetuity and sales are restricted to priority workers only, which reduces the demand for First Homes, and so appears to be unpopular with lenders);

- an example split of funding whereby the homeowner (Mortgagor) funds a deposit of 5%, WCC/WPDG funds 25%, and the Lender (Mortgagee) 70%;

- the ability to set maximum house price levels for the WCC scheme in line with each development rather than being restricted by the maximum house price of £255,600 in the current national HTB scheme level (reduced from £600,000 in the Government's HTB Scheme 1); and

- the ability to set a timely maximum 'household' income level to be eligible for the scheme.

1.8 In essence, this is a scheme which could be used for specific WPDG developments with the potential for the Council to develop and promote access to homeownership within Warwickshire for current and future priority workers who work in Warwickshire and want to own a home in Warwickshire. This report is about consideration of the concept and development of such a product in advance of homes being built by WPDG so it is ready as an option for use when these homes are built. The appropriateness of the scheme for each WPDG development site would be considered as part of each Site Specific Business Case and thus considered at the WPDG Governance Group, and subject to recommendation from the Shareholder's Representative, to Cabinet for decision.

1.9 There are other options that could be considered in order to facilitate access to home ownership. These include Rent to Buy and lease products which provide support to potential buyers while they save for a deposit. These alternatives are not considered within this paper, other than to recognise that the proposed PWHTB scheme would potentially be one of a number of options available to help with affordability for Warwickshire priority workers at a point in time, as part of wider work by the Council to support the 'levelling up' agenda.

1.10 Depending on the final structure of the PWHTB scheme, the Council will have decision making authority in terms of its use and the terms of the product; this will enable the Council to develop a product that meets local objectives on a scheme-by-scheme basis. It will be important for the Council to signpost unsuccessful PWHTB applicants and interested parties to other alternative schemes.

4

1.11 The Council will need to consider the potential parameters of any product and the priority groups it may be made available to. The original Homes England Help to Buy scheme has had a significant impact on the new build market largely because it was made available to a very broad range of potential purchasers. This has, however, also been the source of much criticism of the scheme in that it has not provided targeted support. The new national Help to Buy scheme, which has been funded from April 2021, is a far more limited product designed to support first time buyers to access lower value properties.

1.12 The Council should consider as part of the design of any product the priorities for the Warwickshire area and the type of assistance which will make the most difference in the market. This should be aligned with the Council's existing priorities and programmes and local intelligence on market need. In Warwickshire the maximum house value for which Help to Buy can be used was reduced from £600,000 in the original scheme to £255,600 in the current scheme.

1.13 The following table provides the new levels across England, for comparison:

Region	Maximum House Price
West Midlands	£255,600
East Midlands	£261,900
North East	£186,100
North West	£224,400
Yorkshire and the Humber	£228,100
East of England	£407,400
London	£600,000
South East	£437,600
South West	£349,000

Note: The Price caps are set at 1.5 times the average price paid by first time buyers in each region of England in August 2018.

1.14 As part of each development proposal from WPDG, where it is proposed to utilise the PWHTB product, the Cabinet would consider recommendations in respect of the potential use of price caps against the objectives of the specific development and types of homes being built. It is possible the house price cap will not work for priority worker couples who for example have a requirement for three or more bedroomed new build homes or a further example, regardless of price, are looking at a flat as their home and the new national scheme excludes flats. By taking a local, scheme-by-scheme approach the Council can apply a more up to date and targeted offer appropriate to local circumstances and needs.

5

1.15 WCC engaged with a building society to test the appropriateness and mortgage-ability of this product. Feedback from these early discussions suggests broad support for the product with further consultation needed and planned to test this in more detail.

2   Draft product description

2.1 As set out above, the initial proposals are that the product:

- is purely available on WCC/WPDG developed assets - new builds only;
- must be the homeowner's only home, including houses and flats, (so not a pure first-time buyer scheme as will also include movers and excludes multiple homeowners and flats are no longer part of the new HTB2 Government Scheme);
- offers equity-based loans - interest free for 5 years then becomes an interest bearing loan - crystallise for refinancing on day 1 of year 6 and WCC gets its investment % back based on the house value at that time or the homeowner will pay WCC interest on the loan;
- offers a loan rate on day 1 of year 6 that starts at x % and grows at RPI plus x % to help with that refinancing decision. Rates could be set at the time of the Cabinet decision to approve the site-specific development plan, or nearer the time the homes are built;
- provide for staircasing[2] in 5% blocks so if WPDG/WCC equity was a 25% share the homeowner would be able to take up to five staircasing opportunities; and
- include no restrictions to whom the home can be sold to.

2.2 Other alternatives to setting a scheme-by-scheme maximum price might include increasing the national scheme cap of £255,600 to either a flat rate of say £350k or offer different maximum levels for 1, 2, 3 and 4 bed homes of say £200k, £250k, £350k and £400k respectively. This and options relating to the percentage contribution to be made by the home buyer will be considered in the next phase of work.

2.3 The scheme will be open to priority workers only who work in Warwickshire:

i. Great care must be taken when deciding who may be eligible, and Equality Impact Assessments will be required in finalising the product. The current intention is for the scheme to be available to priority workers, under a

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[2] Staircasing is the ability of the homeowner to buy out WCC's equity share in a series of transactions, to try and find a balance between these being affordable, without WCC having to micromanage a large number of small changes.

6

definition to be determined with an income eligibility threshold, who work in Warwickshire and purchase Warwickshire developed homes through the WPDG as their sole residence.

ii.   As there will be limited volume of homes available from this offer and there are other national products available it may be advisable to keep the criteria for those eligible relatively narrow.

iii. In addition WCC should also ensure that unsuccessful applicants are directed towards other affordability products available at that time.

2.4   There are various definitions of priority workers / key workers in existence. Given this, it may be better to keep such a definition flexible at this stage. However, for the purposes of this report some of the potential included groups are shown below by way of example.

Narrow
- NHS
- Education (potentially incl. Higher Education)
- Police
- Firefighters
- Local Authority - all or just those highlighted as 'key workers' e.g. children's social workers, adult social workers, planners, HGV drivers
- Ministry of Defence (MoD) – include ex forces and their partners if they are deceased

Broader:
- Prison Service/Probation Service
- Highways Agency frontline workers
- Supermarket workers
- Bus drivers
- Nursery workers
- Court Service staff
- Delivery drivers
- Non-NHS medical
- Care workers, including domiciliary and in care home workers
- Energy and environmental workers

2.5   Adding others is something to consider against the volume of available PWHTB homes which is a factor in this consideration given the small numbers available, in addition to the local circumstances at the time of the developments.

7

3 PWHTB scheme and legal considerations

3.1 In summary, the legal advice received is as follows:

i. An equity loan product in respect of housing stock owned or developed by the Council (including any wholly owned housing delivery vehicle or the JV) can be structured such that it is not FCA regulated (so the Council would not require FCA authorisation in order to offer it). This would need careful structuring and would need to be marketed appropriately to fit within the relevant FCA exemption, but it is considered that this would not be unduly restrictive in terms of the product the Council could offer.

ii. An equity loan product in respect of open market housing (i.e. housing owned by persons who are unrelated to either the Council or its wholly owned subsidiary) is likely to require the Council to be FCA authorised and would also require the Council to offer the product on the basis of a statutorily prescribed interest rate which may make the product financially unviable for the proposed target purchasers.

4 Subsidy Control

4.1 Subsidy Control is the post-Brexit replacement for State Aid. It is an area on which the Government is consulting and a Subsidy Control Bill is expected within the lifetime of the current parliament. Therefore, the below position could be subject to change.

4.2 There are two potential classes of beneficiary from a PWHTB scheme, the Purchasers (who are in receipt of state assets to permit them to purchase a home) and the seller (who are in receipt of state assets in return for sale of that home). The below applies to both.

4.3 Subsidy Control treats the provision of social/affordable housing more generously than other economic activities. Funding aimed at enhancing low-cost home ownership (**LCHO**) could be a lawful subsidy provided that the relevant criteria are complied with.

4.4 These criteria currently require that an investment:

- must involve tasks in the public interest – LCHO can be seen to be in the public interest;
- must be assigned in advance of payment in a transparent manner – WCC must have a clear set of eligibility criteria;

8

- should satisfy the relevant Subsidy Principles, i.e:

  a. should support a specific public policy objective to remedy an identified market failure;
  b. be proportionate, limited to what is necessary;
  c. be designed to bring about economic behaviour conducive to policy aims;
  d. does not duplicate what recipients/beneficiaries would fund themselves;
  e. be an appropriate policy instrument, with no other less distortive methods; and
  f. make positive contributions which outweigh any negative effects

- should be limited to what is necessary to perform the task [in this instance the provision of affordable homes] plus, if necessary, a reasonable profit; and
- should not cross subsidise market activities.

4.5 Provided that care is taken, the above criteria can be navigated, and the proposed scheme can be structured in such a way as to be compliant with the current Subsidy Control regime.

5   Financial Implications

5.1 In offering a PWHTB product the Council will need to have funded a capital sum in the development for each house that it puts into the PWHTB scheme. It will be deferring a proportion of the receipt on the sale of the house to the value of the help to buy equity-based loan.

5.2 Whilst the balance sheet will have an asset to the value of all these deferred receipts, they will not be usable until such time as the priority worker exits the scheme. The equity-based loan may increase or decrease in value and valuations will take place annually for the accounts and can be more frequently estimated for reporting purposes. Where the home is a 100% WPDG home then in effect the Council is deferring the 25% if the equity based loan is 25% of the value of the home. Where the home is constructed through the JV then the Council will be deferring 50% of its share of the value of the home. 80% to 90% of the homes constructed are due to be constructed through the JV.

5.3 Each site development plan will need to be considered individually within the context of the MTFS.

5.4 The Help To Buy equity based loan is a financial instrument which is held at **and**

9

measured at 'fair value'. If the scheme is administered by the Council, any changes in value of each loan will need to be externally assessed at the end of each financial year and **any change in value recognised** through the Council's income and expenditure account. We would only need to resource any downward changes in value at the point they materialised i.e. at the point of the loan crystallisation; up to this point valuation changes will be an unusable reserve. However, we would also not be able to benefit from any upward valuation until this point also.

5.5   The relevant part of the Council making the investment will own a % of the property based on value and these values can go up or down. Whilst the homeowner would incur the first loss in this respect the Council will be second in line for any value losses which could become crystallised losses should a buyer have to sell the home at a price lower than the invested value. Consequently, the Council would be more protected through a 5% deposit scheme rather than a 3.75% one.

5.6   Assuming 20% of homes built by WPDG were available through PWHTB this would mean circa 440 PWHTB homes in total over say a 20 year period. Were these to have a value of say £250k per home the equity-based loan value of WPDG homes given the homeowner buying out our equity share, probably at least at the end of each five-year period, we will have exposure on some 100 homes at any given time. A reduction in house values of 10% across the portfolio would give rise to a loss of (100 homes * 25% *10% of £250k) £625,000 of our £6,250,000,000 portfolio which would be a cost that would need to be resourced at the point the loan crystallises.

5.7   The Council will be leaving its capital investment as an equity-based loan in the properties it allocates to the PWHTB scheme. This is, in effect, a deferral of capital receipt that it would otherwise take at the point of sale. In the case of Joint Venture (JV) developed properties, the Council would need to purchase the JV share of the property, so in the case of a £250k property, for example, this value would be a cost to the Council of £25k per property). The financial impact of this additional cost/deferral of receipt will need to form part of the considerations, as part of the site-specific development plan, about whether to offer the PWHTB scheme on each development based on the prevailing market conditions at that time.

5.8   At this stage the focus of the financial implications is on seeking agreement to some high-level principles that can be used to form the parameters of the subsequent detailed financial analysis and considerations, if the concept is approved.

5.9   At the level of an individual property any help to buy option could be financially less attractive from a timing perspective than a straightforward sale at market

10

value which secures the full receipt immediately. For the County Council there will always be a cost in terms of either reduced returns (in the form of lower dividends at the time of sale from the WPDG) or the loss of dividends from any deferral of sale income for five years. That said, the dividend at year 6 (or beyond) on sale would be reflective of the house equity-based loan value at the point this is purchased by the homeowner.

5.10 Therefore, the overall framework within which the help to buy scheme is developed reflects the following key points:

- There should be no or minimal impact on the approved benefit to the County Council from WPDG approved as part of the MTFS and/or longer term financial implications;
- Consideration of whether help to buy is offered must be on a site-by-site basis and form part of the business case for the site, as the level of Council investment tied up in any site will vary depending on whether PWHTB is offered on a site;
- The cost of offering PWHTB **must** be lower than the profit element of any development that would be returned to the County Council as a dividend;
- There should be no or limited change to the level and timing of the repayment of any equity loans, the level and timing of the repayment of any construction loans and the level and timing profit share to the JV partner as a result of offering the help to buy scheme; and
- The cumulative financial impact of the PWHTB scheme across the different sites must be affordable to the Council and not have a material impact on the Council's financial resilience as reflected in the MTFS, Treasury Management and Investment Strategies.

5.11 To meet these requirements, it is likely that PWHTB can only be offered on a small proportion of houses on any WPDG development, and that the product will not be suitable or necessary for all WPDG developments. Each development will include the business case on whether help to buy is a product the Council wishes to include at that time.

5.12 The priority financial risks from offering such a scheme are:

- The assumption that homeowners' incomes will have increased sufficiently over the five year period to make taking on the full equity after five years affordable for them; and
- Assuming that the value of the Council's security in the asset is maintained over the period.

11

6   Environmental Considerations

6.1   There are no direct environmental implications (although there may be opportunities to reduce distances commuted) arising from the setup of the PWHTB. Environmental implications arising from the developments will be considered as part of each site-specific business case.

7   Risk and Risk Management

7.1   The following table summarises the key risks and proposed mitigations involved in setting up and operating the PWHTB scheme.

Risk	Mitigation
Fiduciary duties (PWLB, Prudential Code)	• Continual testing by the finance team independently of WPDG in respect of relevant CIPFA codes, accounting requirements and MHCLG guidance.
Compliance with regulatory requirements	• Regular checks by the legal team internally • Specialist external legal advice as required
Default/loss, bad debts, interest rates, economic cycle risks	• Annual valuations for the accounts • More regular reporting and house price monitoring
Impact on MTFS	• Ability to start small and build the PWHTB portfolio up slowly with ongoing review of impact on MTFS of external/internal borrowing • Prudent accounting by including default assumptions in the business case and plan • Annual review and annual business plan approval by Cabinet, effectively a site-by-site decision • Specific further consideration of the adequacy of the £7.5m commercial reserve to cover any potential losses from PWHTB in addition to WRIF, WPDG and other commercial activity • Full provision is made in the MTFS for any downside risk at the point the risk materialises, i.e. for any potential loss on valuation of the PWHTB equity loans, but any gain will not be reflected until it materialises • Commercial Risk Reserve increase in value relevant to risk considerations and calculations
Reputational	• Policy-driven objectives underpin PWHTB, with clear strategic priorities to drive decisions • Development site approval of PWHTB plans • Clear performance framework and benefits to track impact

12

	of PWHTB scheme and annual valuation • Member Oversight Group meets quarterly to review performance and operation of the portfolio
Skills and capability	• Mix of internal skills available through WPDG to run the PWHTB • Appointment of specialist support in Finance and Communities teams for financial valuation and advice if needed

13

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

None

Local Member(s): none

14

Agenda Item 7

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

15 September 2021

**WCC Corporate Customer Feedback Overview Report
Financial Years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21**

Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the content of the WCC Corporate Customer Feedback overview report.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   Feedback is always welcomed from customers of the Council's services. The Council receives four types of feedback, comments, compliments, complaints, and questions. There were 4,932 cases created during 2020/21 which is an increase of nearly 25% (3,953) on the previous year.

1.2   Customers have a choice of channels to provide their feedback: digitally via a self account they can set up through the Warwickshire County Council (WCC) website, telephone, face to face at an outlet or by post. Generally over recent years the use of a self account has been steadily increasing, during 2018/19 and 2019/20 it was around 70% for the authority. During 2020/21 this has risen to over 77%.

1.3   During the financial year 2020/21 the volume of cases processed and closed (4,903) increased by just over 20% (3,953) on the previous financial year and by almost 7% (4,587) on 2018/19.

1.4   Timeliness

WCC has specific Service Level Agreement's (SLA) for timeliness of response to feedback classed as a question or a complaint. Most cases that are received by WCC are dealt with by the appropriate Directorate team. During 2020/21, there were 3,731 cases assigned to teams across WCC. Of the 2,915 complaint and question cases assigned and processed during the period, 81% (87.26% of questions and 73.15% of complaints) were closed within the appropriate SLA. There is no SLA performance target for questions however the target for complaints is 70%.

1.5   Complaints

- During 2020/21 there were 1,322 complaints closed by teams across WCC which is an increase of 16% on 2019/20 and over 25% more than during

2018/19. Of those closed 967 cases achieved the service level agreement (i.e., timeliness requirement), which means that 73.1% of complaints were managed within required timescales. This is an increase of almost 9% from the previous financial year and achieving the authority's target of 70%.

- Most of the complaints raised focused on perceived issues with: WCC service standards, physical environment issues, communication and staff conduct. However, Contact Us currently only allows the selection of one complaint reason for each complaint raised therefore this may not provide a holistic view of all issues.
- 13% of the complaints closed were not upheld
- 19% of complaints have been upheld either fully or partially
- 35% of questions have been answered as part of a complaint.

1.6   Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

The LGSCO received 50 complaints and enquiries in respect of Warwickshire County Council during financial year 2020/21 which was 3 more than during 2019/20 (47 received) and 17 less than 2018/19 (67 received)

1.7   Learning from feedback

Putting things right where they have gone wrong and learning from issues raised is the most important part of our customer feedback process. Where there are opportunities for learning and change beyond the individual complaint raised, we look carefully at how best to do this.
From the information captured on the system the main categories of learning have been recorded as follows:

- Poor communication by officers both internally and with the customer
- Better planning required
- Staff training needed
- Improve the time for completing cases – Work has been initiated on this point with recommendations from stage 2 reports being shared and monitored with the appropriate services to ensure these are actioned and lessons learnt.

2.   Financial Implications

None.

3.   Environmental Implications

None.

4. Supporting Information

4.1 Number of cases created during 2020/21 was 24.8% up on 2019/20 and 4% up on 2018/19.

4.2 During 2018/19 and 2019/20 approximately 70% of all cases were created digitally however during 2020/21 this has increased to over 77%. It should be noted that this is a corporate figure and there are differences across directorates. For example, during 2020/21, the Communities directorate received 89% of its feedback digitally whereas People Directorate received 40% of feedback digitally.

4.3 Of the 2,915 cases assigned to teams 81% (2,357) of cases were closed within the appropriate SLA (73.15% of complaints and 87.26% of questions) which is an increase of over 6% on 2019/20.

4.4 Over 86% of the complaint cases were in relation to:

o Communication over 69%
o Physical environment issues almost 10%
o WCC service standards almost 8%

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

Not applicable.

Appendices
1. Appendix 1 – WCC Corporate Customer Feedback Overview report.

Background Papers
None

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Councillors Adrian Warwick, Parminder Singh Birdi, Sarah Boad, Caroline Phillips, and Will Roberts.

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Appendix 1

Corporate Customer Feedback Overview Report

Financial years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to detail the four types of customer feedback which have been received by Warwickshire County Council during financial years 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 including volume, efficiency of processing and outcome for the customer.

Background

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has a well-established and comprehensive customer feedback handling process which is detailed in the Corporate Complaints Policy https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/complaints. There are two statutory procedures used in People Directorate – Adult Social Care complaints procedures, and Children's Social Care complaints procedures, as well as the use of the corporate General complaints procedures for issues which do not fall within these statutory procedures. The systems in place confirm that we want to hear from people when we get things right, and when we could do things better. This helps us to:

- Understand what services people value and why
- Share best practice
- Make sure we learn and continually improve how we provide services to our customers
- Recognise and reward when our staff "go the extra mile".

Our customer feedback is handled and kept within a specialist ICT customer feedback management system called 'Contact Us'. Most of our feedback is received digitally, through the WCC website, where customers can choose to register, or submit their feedback anonymously. Contact Us is not a dedicated case management system and has some flaws in relation to allowing the Council to get the best value from customers' feedback, however this is being addressed.

We encourage all staff to respond quickly and clearly to any concerns that are raised by individuals or groups. We want all our customers to feel confident that their views will be taken seriously, and that there will be no repercussions if they need to raise genuine concerns.

The Council aims to resolve customer's complaints at the earliest opportunity and with the minimum of formality wherever possible. However, we follow the statutory requirements for complaints about Children and Family services, which gives customers the potential to have their issues considered at three internal stages if required, before referring to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) if they remain dissatisfied.

This report will detail and analyse the following:

- Volume -
  - All feedback cases created during the period: compliments, complaints, questions and comments that have been received by all services across the organisation
  - Cases processed and closed within the period
- Timeliness – Feedback closed within the appropriate SLA
- Complaint issues
- Outcomes and remedies for customers
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)
- Learning from feedback

1

Appendix 1

Feedback received

Feedback is always welcomed from customers of the Council's services. The tables below detail the number of cases received during the periods of this report and the breakdown by volume of the 4 types of feedback.

Total cases created

Year	Total cases
2018/19	4738
2019/20	3953
2020/21	4932

Total cases created by feedback type

Category	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Complaint	1545	1442	1616
Question	1651	1323	2012
Compliment	983	743	670
Comment	365	308	448
Other Category	194	137	186
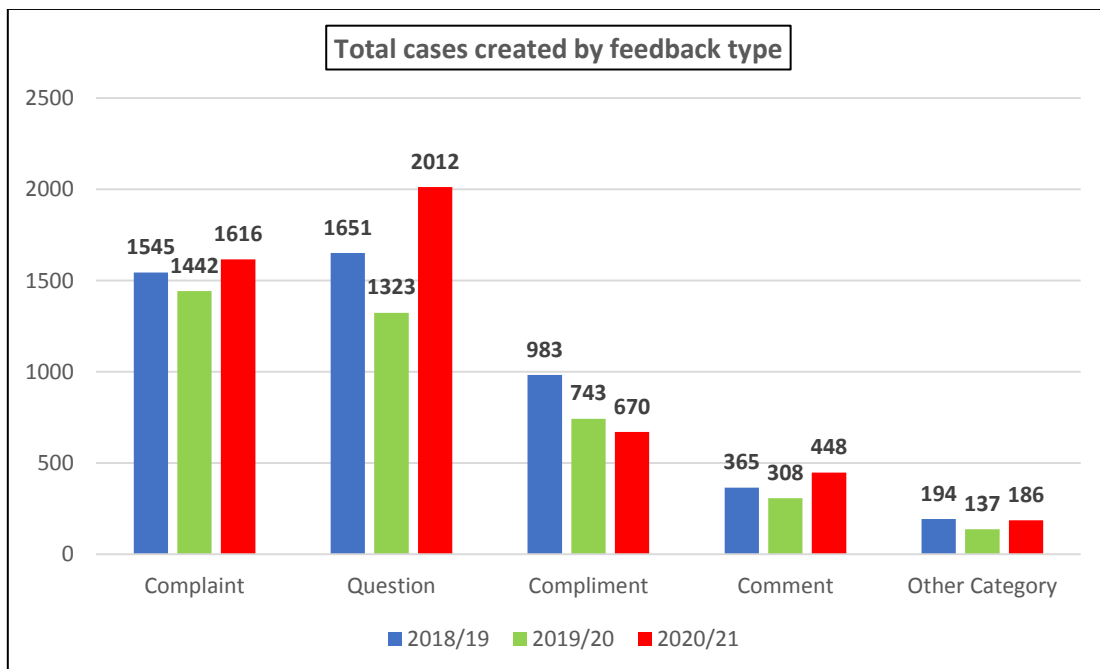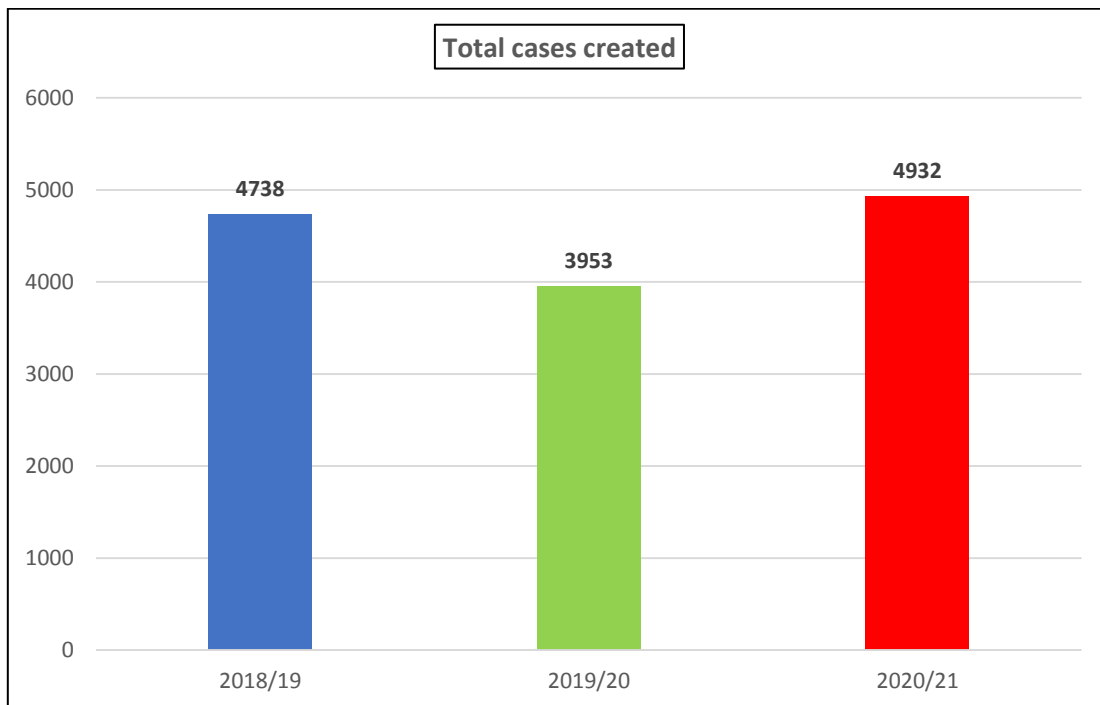
Cases created are all feedback cases that have been received within the period. This does not include cases that were created in the previous year which had not been closed in the same financial year. The total number of cases created during 2020/21 (4,932) is an increase of 24.8% on 2019/20 (3,953). 2019/20 saw a decrease of nearly 17% on the previous year (4,738).

2

Appendix 1

Each feedback type saw a reduction in cases created during 2019/20 compared to 2018/19:

- Complaints reduced by 6.6% although Resources directorate saw an increase of 15.6%.
- Compliments reduced by over 24% with People directorate receiving almost 75% of all compliments assigned to teams during 2019/20.
- Questions reduced by almost 20% although questions to People directorate increased by just over 8%
- Comments reduced by almost 16%, however Communities directorate received almost 65% of all comments asigned to teams during 2019/20.

However during 2020/21 the trend, apart from compliments, has seen an increase in feedback compared to 2019/20:

- Complaints have increased by over 12% across the authority, with 2020/21 being the highest volume in the past 3 years:
  - o Communities complaints are up by almost 51%
  - o Resources complaints have decreased by almost 3%
  - o Peoples complaints have reduced by almost 2%
  - o Complaint cases received that were not assigned to teams decreased by almost 27%.

- Compliments have fallen during the past 3 years, 2018/19 (983) to 2020/21 (670) by over 31%, the lowest volume in the past 3 years:
  - o Although complaints to Communities have increased they have seen an almost 9 fold increase in compliments
  - o Resources compliments have reduced by over 84%
  - o People have seen a reduction in compliments of over 8%
  - o Compliments not assigned to a team have also reduced by almost 34%.

- Questions to the authority have increased dramatically over the past year up 52% on 2019/20, the highest volume in the past 3 years:
  - o Communities had the greatest increase and also the largest volume during 2020/21 (1,163). This is an increase of 69% on the previous year
  - o Resources received 246 questions which is an increase of over 90%
  - o People received 191 questions an increase of almost 58%
  - o Questions not assigned also increased by 7% from 385 in 2019/20 to 412 in 2020/21.

- Comments to the authority rose by over 45% in 2020/21 and are at the highest volume in 3 years:
  - o Most comments were received by Communities Directorate, 239 which is an increase of over 143% on the previous year.
  - o Resources received an increase of 64%
  - o People received an increase of almost 43%
  - o Comments not assigned reduced by 20%.

3

Appendix 1

The above analysis can be seen in the graph below:
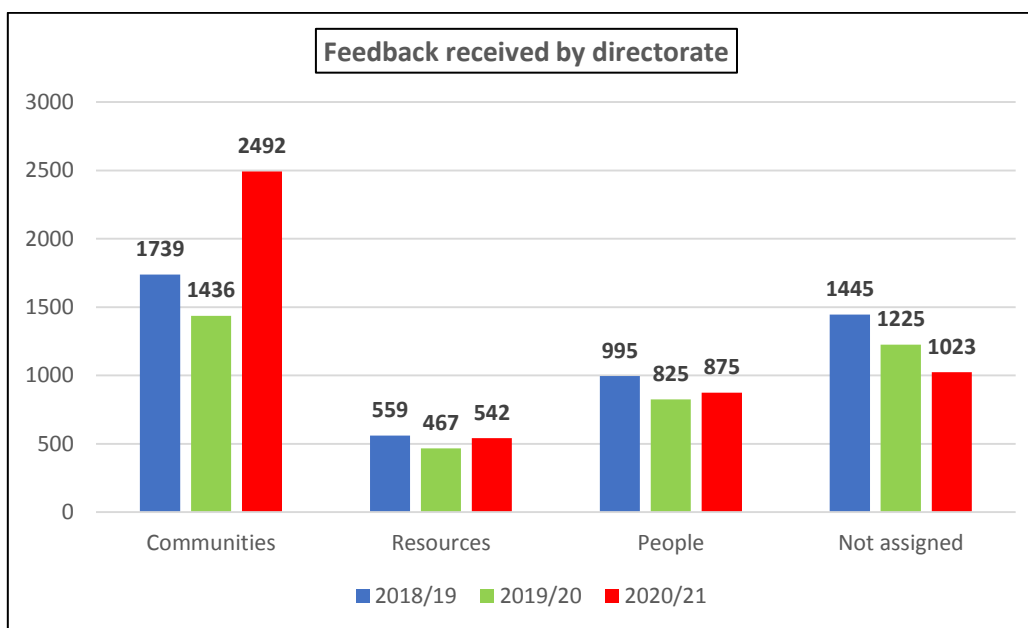
Customers have a choice of channels to provide their feedback: digitally via a self account they can set up through the WCC website, telephone, face to face at an outlet or by post.

The table below details the gowth in digital channel use for feedback over the past 3 years.

Percentage of cases created* via customer self-account by feedback type			
Type of feedback	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Complaint	69%	66%	63%
Question	99%	99%	99%
Compliment	19%	15%	23%
Comment	93%	85%	82%
Other category	83%	83%	79%
Total	**77.14%**	**69.08%**	**68.93%**

* Note that cases created is different from cases closed.

Customer use of the digital channel to provide feedback differs across each directorate. 'Other category' are cases that provide additional information on closed or open cases.

The Communities directorate during 2020/21 received 89% of its feedback digitally whereas People Directorate received 40% of feedback digitally.

The table below details the percentage use of the digital channel by directorate over the past 3 years.

Percentage of cases created* via customer self-account by directorate			
Directorate	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Communities	86.03%	86.63%	88.76%
People	21.11%	29.82%	40.00%
Resources	53.31%	51.18%	70.48%
Not assigned a team/closed at triage	89.13%	83.35%	85.14%
Total	**69.48%**	**69.57%**	**77.35%**

* Note that cases created is different from cases closed.

4

Appendix 1

Cases closed

All cases received into Contact Us have to be processed prior to closing in the system. There are 2 different types of processing required:

1. A complaint or question relating to WCC and/or its services requires processing and a response provided to the customer within an agreed timescale (Service Level Agreement) As set out in our complaint policy link here , Customer Care Charter and Standards link Customer care or in legislation.

2. Feedback received within the system which is not with regard to WCC or the services it delivers or not appropriate for the system requires a specific response (generally signposting) to the customer.

The chart below details the number of cases that have been processed and closed over the past 3 years. During 2020/21 there was just over a 20% increase in cases closed on the previous period and an increase of almost 7% on 2018/19.

Cases clossed by feedback type
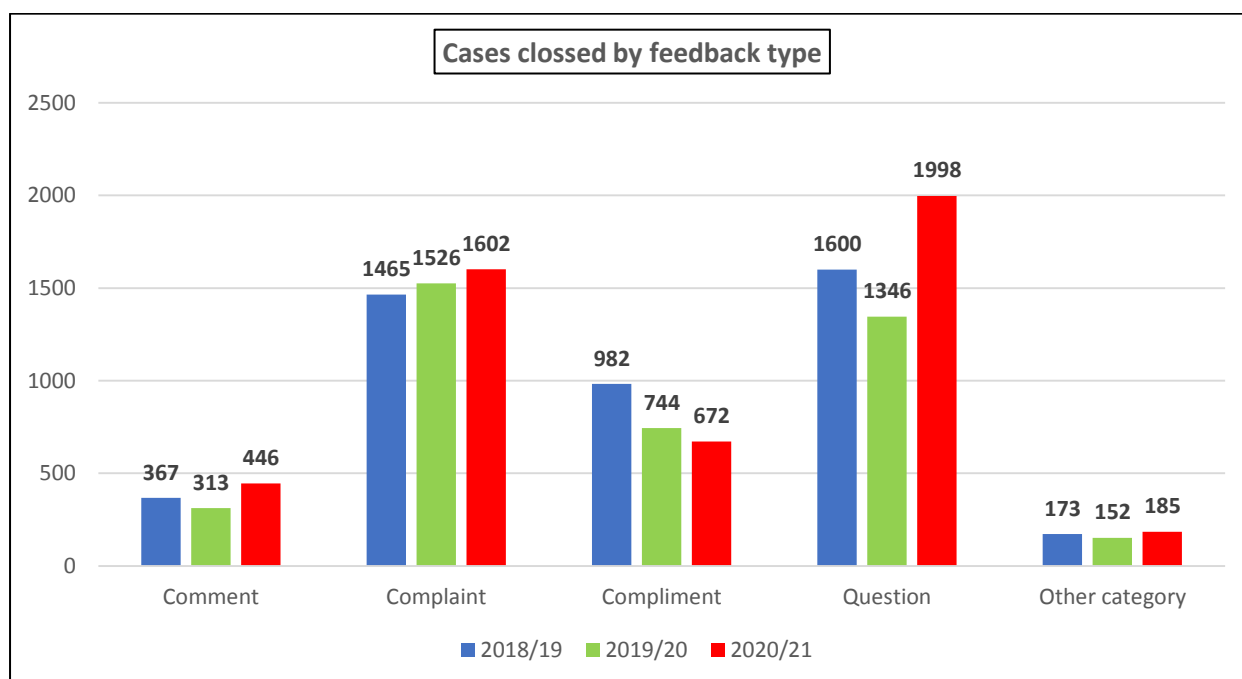
It should be noted that cases closed during a period represent those that have been processed, however there were existing cases which were carried over from the previous financial year, just as there were cases received but not processed by the end of the period.

Timescales

Cases Closed at Initial Triage

WCC has specific SLA's for timeliness of response to feedback classed as a question or a complaint, customers do not receive a response to comments or compliments made.   Where a response is required, most of these cases are dealt with by the appropriate Directorate team. However, there are cases which are submitted digitally by customers via their self-account that are either not for WCC or not appropriate for the Contact Us process. These cases are:

1. Services delivered by another authority, a district or borough or another organisation
2. The reporting of an initial service request, generally highways related

5

Appendix 1

3. Anonymous submission of question or complaint whereby it is not possible to fully process and respond to the customer.
4. Or can be answered by the Customer Relations Team immediately

Cases which fall into the above categories are closed at initial triage and the customer responded to accordingly. These cases are referred to as 'not assigned a team/closed at triage'. **All these cases are closed within the SLA**. In addition, comments and compliments do not require a response to the customer and are generally processed and closed at triage.

Cases closed

	2018/19			2019/20			2020/21		
Complaints	**Number of Cases**	**Within SLA**	**%**	**Number of Cases**	**Within SLA**	**%**	**Number of Cases**	**Within SLA**	**%**
Communities	636	535	84.12%	577	510	88.39%	843	738	87.54%
People	281	99	35.23%	378	114	30.16%	308	130	42.30%
Resources	136	81	59.56%	185	111	60.00%	171	99	57.90%
Total assigned	**1,053**	**715**	**67.90%**	**1,140**	**735**	**64.47%**	**1,322**	**967**	**73.15%**
Not assigned to a team	412	411	99.76%	386	386	100.00%	280	279	100.00%
Total	**1,465**	**1,126**	**76.86%**	**1,526**	**1,121**	**73.46%**	**1,602**	**1,246**	**77.77%**
Questions									
Communities	819	702	85.71%	713	645	90.46%	1,146	1,050	91.62%
People	102	77	75.49%	119	89	74.79%	200	152	76.00%
Resources	177	129	72.88%	132	100	75.76%	247	188	76.11%
Total assigned	**1,098**	**908**	**82.69%**	**964**	**834**	**86.51%**	**1,593**	**1,390**	**87.26%**
Not assigned to a team	502	502	100.00%	382	382	100.00%	405	405	100.00%
Total	**1,600**	**1,410**	**88,13%**	**1,346**	**1,216**	**90.34%**	**1,998**	**1,795**	**89.83%**
Comments									
Communities	116	100	86%	102	94	92%	239	221	92%
People	14	11	79%	14	9	64%	21	16	76%
Resources	74	68	92%	40	37	93%	62	52	84%
Total assigned	**204**	**179**	**88%**	**156**	**140**	**90%**	**322**	**289**	**90%**
Not assigned to a team	163	163	100%	157	157	100%	124	124	100%
Total	**367**	**342**	**93%**	**313**	**297**	**95%**	**446**	**413**	**93%**
Compliments									
Communities	35	33	94%	18	17	94%	151	148	98%
People	515	512	99%	357	354	99%	327	322	98%
Resources	107	106	99%	102	102	100%	16	14	88%
Total assigned	**657**	**651**	**99%**	**477**	**473**	**99%**	**494**	**484**	**98%**
Not assigned to a team	325	325	100%	267	267	100%	178	178	100%
Total	**982**	**976**	**99%**	**744**	**740**	**99%**	**672**	**662**	**99%**

6

Appendix 1

The table above details the responsiveness of each directorate to customer feedback during 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21. It is important to note that questions and complaints for People Directorate are not all processed within the directorate; the Customer Service Centre - Supporting People Team, the Financial Assessment Team and the Commissioning Support Unit are service areas within the Resources Directorate that are responsible for investigating and responding to certain People Directorate complaints.

Cases closed after assignment to teams

- During 2020/21 there was an increase of over 36% of cases assigned to teams on the previous financial year and 24% higher than during 2018/19.

- Of the 2,915 cases (complaints and questions) assigned 81% (2,357) of cases were closed within the appropriate SLA (73.15% of complaints and 87.26% of questions) which is an increase of over 6% on 2019/20. There is no SLA performance target for questions however the target for complaints is 70%.

Complaints

Closed cases

During 2020/21 there were almost 5% more complaint cases closed than during the previous year and over 9% more than during 2018/19.
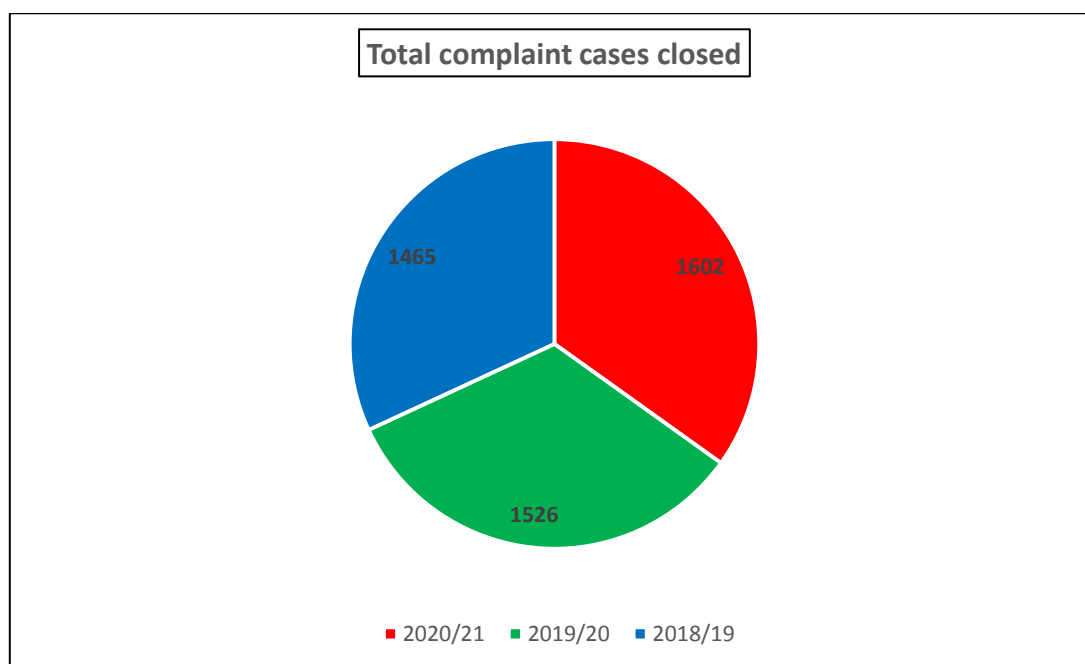
Of the 1,602 complaint cases processed during 2020/21, 1,246 cases achieved the service level agreement (i.e. timeliness requirement), which means that 77.77% of complaints were managed within required timescales. This is an increase of over 4% from the previous financial year and achieves the authority's target of 70%.

7

Appendix 1

Timescale for complaint cases closed 2020/21

356

1246

■ Within SLA   ■ Outside SLA
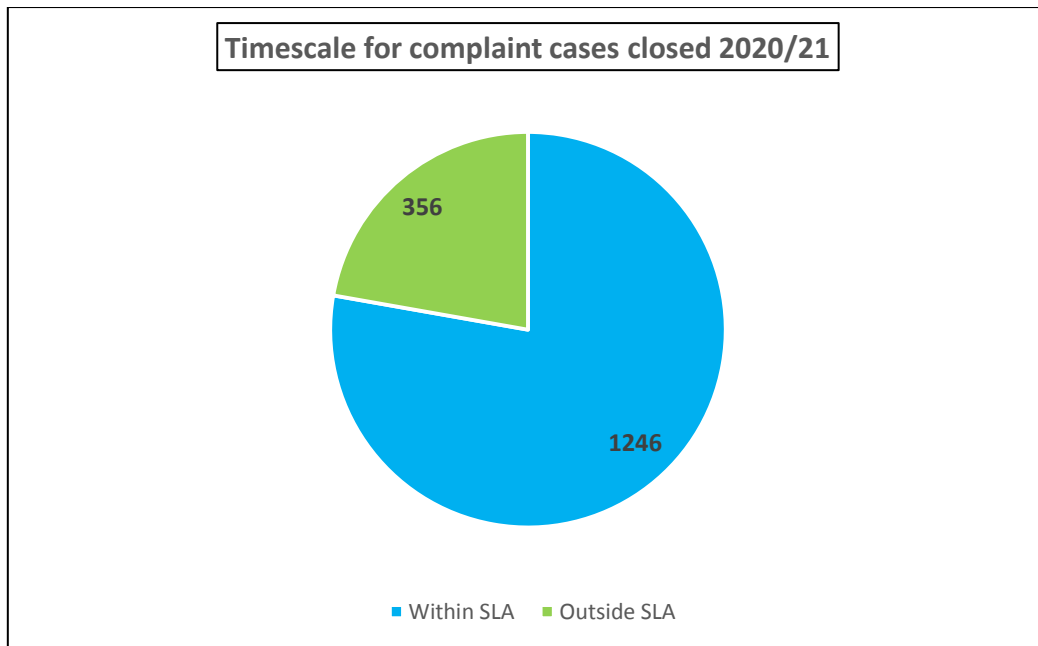
Categories of complaint

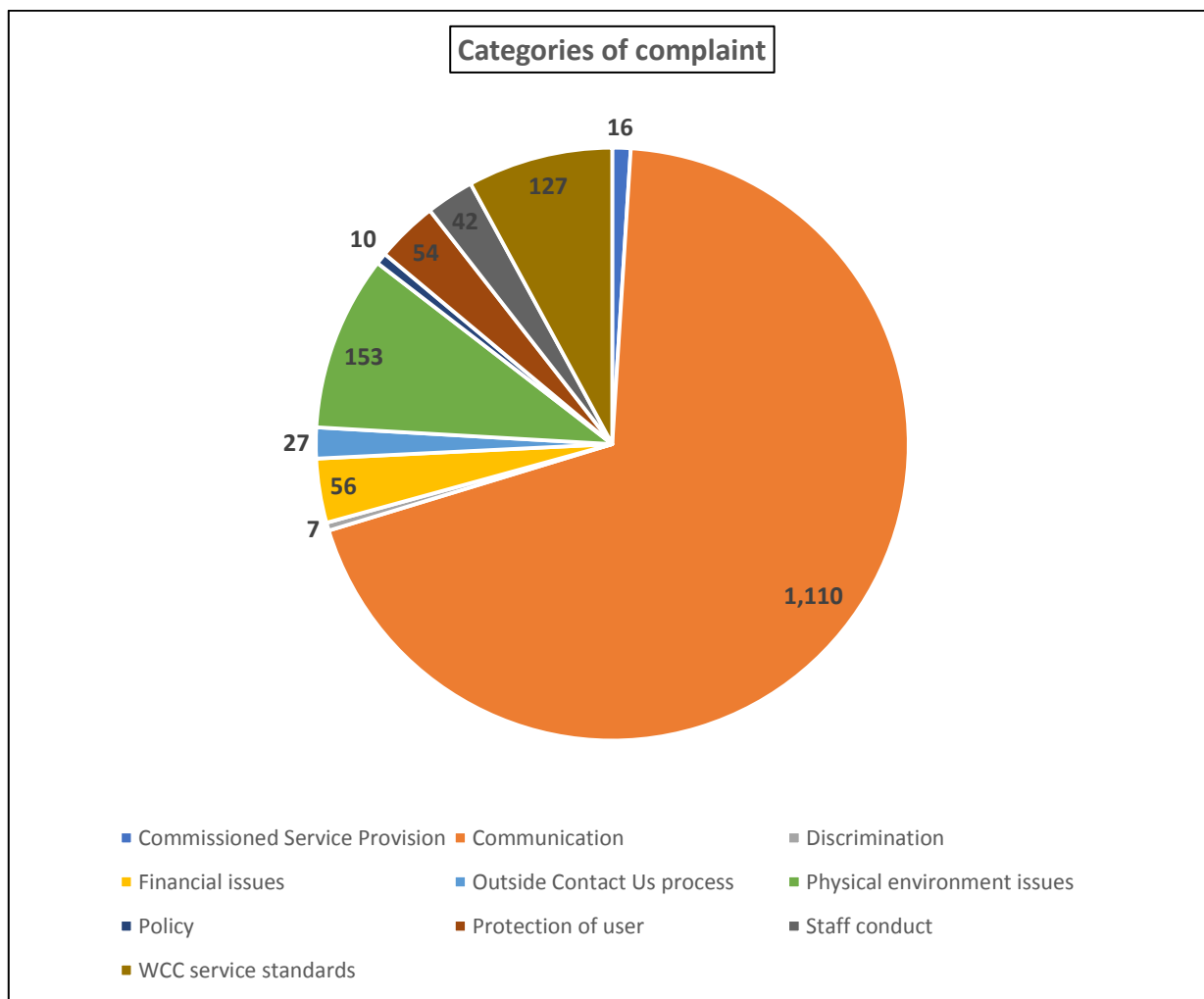Most of the complaints raised focused on perceived issues with: WCC service standards, physical environment issues, communication and staff conduct. However, Contact Us currently only allows the selection of one complaint reason for each complaint raised therefore this may not provide a holistic view of all issues.

The diagram below shows the closure categories of all complaints processed during 2020/21.

8

Appendix 1

Categories of complaint

Value	Category
16	Commissioned Service Provision
1,110	Communication
10	Discrimination
56	Financial issues
27	Outside Contact Us process
153	Physical environment issues
7	Policy
54	Protection of user
42	Staff conduct
127	WCC service standards

Closure categories of complaint by Directorate 2020/21

When a complaint is processed and closed the investigating officer or triage officer must assign a reason to the complaint. Of the 1,602 complaints processed the table below details the categories assigned at closure either by Directorate or when closed at triage. During 2020/21 69% of complaints closed were categorised as communication issues. However, during the previous financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20 'WCC service standards' was the highest reason for complaints with 30% and 33% respectively. During all 3 financial years the second highest closure reason was 'Physical Environment Issues' ranging from 26% during 2018/19, 23% 2019/20, falling to 9.5% in 2020/21.

9

Appendix 1

Closure category	Communities	Fire and Rescue	People	Resources	Not assigned a team/closed at triage	Total by category
Commissioned Service Provision	2	-	12	2	-	16
Communication	663	4	189	93	165	1,110
Discrimination	3	-	-	3	1	7
Financial issues	16	-	19	10	11	56
Outside Contact Us process	8	-	2	1	16	27
Physical environment issues	71	-	3	11	68	153
Policy	5	-	-	2	3	10
Protection of user	5	-	36	8	5	54
Staff conduct	14	-	12	13	3	42
WCC service standards	56	-	35	28	8	127

Outcome and remedy for customers

Complaints closed by outcome			
Closure Outcome	Total 2018/19	Total 2019/20	Total 2020/21
No outcome provided	12	18	133
All: Transferred	34	24	61
Complaint: Deemed to be Withdrawn	23	43	35
Complaint: Inconclusive	38	54	58
Complaint: Not upheld	202	203	169
Complaint: Partially Upheld	112	158	121
Complaint: Upheld	79	98	130
Complaint: Withdrawn by Customer	17	21	20
Question: Answered	499	447	463
Question: Partially Answered	14	19	31
Question: Unable to Answer	23	55	101

The above data shows:

- The percentage of complaints not upheld has reduced over the past 3 years: 19.2% in 2018/19, 17.8% 2019/20 and 12.8% in 2020/21.

10

Appendix 1

- Complaints that have been upheld either fully or partially have fallen from 22.5% in 2019/20 to 19% in 2020/21.
- The percentage of questions answered as part of a complaint has fallen from over 47% during 2018/19, down to 39.2% in 2019/20 and 35% in 2020/21.

Complaints closed by Remedy			
Remedy	**Total 2018/19**	**Total 2019/20**	**Total 2020/21**
Apology	217	241	218
Change in Policy	4	2	3
Change in Process	36	19	26
Explanation Provided	776	829	773
Financial Remedy	13	10	11
Service Provided	247	282	372

There can be more than one remedy to a complaint, but most of customers' issues have been resolved - at least partially - with an explanation. During 2020/21 an explanation was provided as a remedy in 48% of cases closed, 55% during 2019/20 and 53% in 2018/19. A further significant proportion have been resolved by providing an apology or delivery of a service.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

There were 21 complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO in respect of Warwickshire County Council during the financial year 2020/21. Full details of the areas these related to and the outcome is as follows:

Area	Upheld	Not upheld	closed after initial enquires
Adult Social Care	3	1	3
Education	2	1	2
Children Social Care	1		1
Right of way			1
Transport		1	2
Planning			1
COVID19			1
Other			1

11

Appendix 1

Further information is available on the LGSCO website here

The table below details the areas of complaints and enquiries which were received by the LGSCO in respect of Warwickshire County Council in the period relating to this report.

More details relating to the 47 received during 2019/20 can be found in the report to Cabinet 10 September 2020 here

Regarding the 35 complaints and enquiries made to the LGSCO during 2018/19 further information is available on the LGSCO website here

Area	2018/19	2019/20
Adult Social Care	9	17
Corporate & other services	2	5
Education & Children's Services	13	17
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	-	1
Highways & Transport	7	5
Planning & Development	2	1
Other	2	1
Total	35	47

Learning from complaints

Putting things right where they have gone wrong and learning from issues raised is the most important part of our customer feedback process. Where there are opportunities for learning and change beyond the individual complaint raised, we look carefully at how best to do this and consider:

- improving training and support for staff
- reviewing guidance and communication
- reviewing and improving policies, procedures and processes

As mentioned, the current complaints case management system, Contact Us, is under review due to failings around the level of information it captures, as well as its ability to manage information in a user-friendly, customer-centric way. Much of the detail in relation to learning from our customers' feedback therefore has been captured outside the system. There is a field 'Lessons learned' within Contact Us which should be completed by the investigating officer once the complaint has been closed however on most occasions this field is used for case notes, is marked N/A or is left blank.

However, from the responses captured on the system the main categories of learning have been recorded as follows:

- Poor communication by officers both internally and with the customer
- Better planning required
- Staff training needed

12

Appendix 1

- Improve the timescale for processing and closing complaints – Work has been initiated on this point with recommendations from stage 2 reports being shared and monitored with the appropriate services to ensure these are actioned and lessons learnt.

Summary

Understanding our customers and their views is key to delivering the best possible service, which is something Warwickshire County Council is committed to striving to achieve.

Managing the timeliness of our responses is a high priority and this will be helped by a new case management system as it will give us greater visibility.

Customers have a right to take their complaints to the LGSCO if they remain unhappy. Therefore, while we aim to resolve issues as early as possible, it is an objective to ensure that our suggested/offered outcomes are appropriate so that the Ombudsman does not disagree with our decision, rather than to aspire to have less complaints taken to that stage.

Maureen Oakes

June 2021.

13

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