



# Second Quarter Performance Management Report

1st July to  
30th September 2024



**Braintree**  
District Council

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## Section 1: Introduction and Summary

### Purpose of the Report






The purpose of the report is to demonstrate the performance of the Council at the end of the second quarter of 2024/25 in relation to our Annual Plan 2024/25. This sets out the key activities being implemented to deliver our corporate priorities and summarises the measures in place by aligning key performance indicators to our priorities within the Corporate Strategy 2024 – 2028. Further detail is given in relation to a set of business performance indicators covering finances, customer focus, our people and health and safety.

This report does not contain details of the numerous activities ongoing in each service area that also contribute to delivering what is important and will make a difference to all in the District. Full details of all projects and performance indicators used to measure the outcomes are available upon request.




### Summary of the Corporate Projects current position for the end of the quarter

Corporate Priorities	Status of projects and actions				
					
Communities	-	15	-	-	-
Prosperity	1	9	4	-	-
Environment	1	13	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>




#### KEY:

-  Project completed
-  Project on target
-  Project scope/target date requires attention
-  Project requires amendment
-  Project aborted/closed

### Summary of the Key Performance Indicators position for the end of the quarter

Status of indicators			
			Data Only
10	5	2	4

#### KEY:

-  Performance Indicator has achieved target
-  Performance Indicator is up to 5% below target
-  Performance Indicator is 5% or more off target

## **Summary Position**

The performance in the second quarter is broadly in line with expectations with the majority of projects underway and progressing well. 37 projects are on track at the end of the second quarter.

One project completed in the second quarter, where the Essex Waste Strategy was adopted in September totalling two projects complete this year.

Four projects have an amber status. Projects with an amber status are:

- The Witham and Halstead Town Centre Improvements where further approvals are required to complete works on non-Braintree District Council land.
- The District Jobs fair where the target date of October is going to run over with the event being delivered in the first week of November.
- The planning permission for Horizon 120 plots 6 through 8 where the target date of October is likely to be extended due to the additional time taken to prepare the applications for plots 6-8 due to disposal options for excess soil.
- Creating a multi-media and additional meeting space at the plaza where the originally identified space has been repurposed to better meet customer demands and an extension to timescales is required to review the options available.

Further information regarding the completed, on track and amber statuses can be seen within the detail for the respective projects.

Ten performance indicators have met or exceeded target and seven have not met target. For the performance indicators that have not met target, five have missed target by less than 5% and two have missed target by more than 5%.

Performance indicators which have missed target by less than 5% are:

- Collections for Council Tax where performance last year for the same period was impacted positively by the New Homes and Growth Dividend.
- Percentages of invoices paid on time which is considered to be due to changes in staffing in areas where there are high payment volumes.
- Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre whilst continuing to receive large volumes of calls in relation to complex matters.
- Percentage of stage one complaints responded to within timescales where a cluster of overdue complaints in August resulted in a lower outturn.
- Business rates collection rate had a minimal reduction against target. It is expected that this will be on target by the end of the year as minor variation year to year is expected.

The following indicators missed target by more than 5%:

- Number of visitors to our leisure centres has been impacted by the Council's leisure partner experiencing system issues. It is expected that the level of participation is higher than the reported figure.
- Time taken to process housing benefit claim changes where changes to the local council tax support scheme has changed the profile of cases resulting in fewer but more complex cases.



Further details of all performance indicator out turn can be found in the 'Performance Indicators in detail' section of the report.





## Section 2: Delivering our Corporate Strategy

# Communities



### Priority 1: Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and families and reduce health inequalities focusing on prevention and early intervention

Project title & progress	Target date & status
<p><b>1.1 - Working with the Mid-Essex Alliance, develop a programme of local activities targeted towards addressing the priorities outlined in the Thriving Places Index.</b></p> <p>The Centre for Thriving Places (CTP) have been commissioned by the Mid Essex Health &amp; Wellbeing Alliance to establish working groups across the Mid Alliance footprint which includes Maldon, Chelmsford and Braintree Districts. These workshops will focus on two priority areas identified by the alliance: Healthy Housing and links to respiratory conditions and economic wellbeing.</p> <p>CTP is planning to facilitate a workshop with the Health &amp; Wellbeing Panel members on 25 November to identify opportunities to address some of the key challenges around Healthy Housing and Economic Wellbeing together locally.</p> <p>A Healthy Housing workshop will also be facilitated by CTP, which will include officers from across Braintree District Council, the Integrated Care Board, Essex County Council and external partners in November. An Economic Wellbeing Workshop is also planned to be facilitated at a later date.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> <p></p>
<p><b>1.2 - Continue to support residents and communities impacted by the cost-of-living crisis through initiatives raised by the £1m new homes bonus.</b></p> <p>The Braintree foodbank was awarded £89k to support their annual food purchase, also to provide new tablets to support signposting and the Lived Experience Project. Work continues to support the delivery of a community supermarket in the district, looking to successes in Maldon District.</p> <p>Braintree Museum Holiday Activity and Food programme took place with nearly £8,000 funding from the cost of living fund. Fusion Leisure also received funds to support the 50p Swim &amp; Gym programme, and to support providing social spaces with free hot drinks.</p> <p>The Small Grant Scheme awarded over £100k to various community groups around the district including the Braintree Foyer, Mid &amp; North Essex Mind, Age Well East, Witham Hub, and Trust Links.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> <p></p>







<p><b>1.3 - Subject to a successful bid for funding from the Football Foundation, build the new 3G Pitch at Witham Sports Ground.</b></p> <p>The Council was successful in its bid to the Football Foundation for a grant totalling £290,000. Following success in the bid, the Council is now beginning the process to find and appoint a contractor to deliver the new pitch at the Witham Sports Ground.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>1.4 - In partnership with Healthwatch Essex, host a Fellas Fair event in the district.</b></p> <p>The Council have engaged with Healthwatch Essex and begun to plan the Fellas Fair event. Project planning and stakeholder engagement are underway, with specifics to be agreed in the third quarter and the event to take place in the fourth quarter. The event is likely to take place at the Halstead Empire, include guest speakers and healthcare professionals, and tie into men's interests to achieve the best engagement possible.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 

## **Priority 2: Provide affordable, high quality and safe homes that meet the needs of our residents**

<p><b>2.1 - Deliver the Home Upgrade grant phase 2 for people living in cold homes or struggling with winter fuel bills.</b></p> <p>Promotion of the scheme has continued through staff interactions and the Council's communications channels. The scheme will close to new applications on 20 October. A total of 76 applications have been made since 1 April on the portal for HUG2 scheme. 10 Properties are currently at the survey stage, 2 properties are in progress and 6 have had works completed.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>2.2 - Introduce a landlord incentive scheme.</b></p> <p>The landlord incentive scheme pilot has continued into the second quarter, and to date has assisted in accommodating 28 households in the private rented sector. If not for the scheme these households would have either entered into temporary accommodation or have been functionally homeless if not eligible for temporary accommodation. Work has already begun to establish the financial benefits of the scheme for both residents and the Council.</p> <p>Training is also taking place with officers to evaluate the social return on investment of the scheme, which will start from the third quarter. In addition to the administration of the scheme, the Council continues to work with landlords and letting agents to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones by advising them of the scheme and resolving any issues arising.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 

**Priority 3: Reduce social isolation and loneliness and support communities to build positive social networks and connections.**

<p><b>3.1 - Launch round 2 of the Halstead Community Fund.</b></p> <p>Round 2 of the Community fund completed in the first quarter with three organisations receiving funds. £70,000 remained available within the fund and as such round 3 of the Community Fund launched on 2 September and remains open for applications until 11 October. During the second quarter the Halstead Community Shed officially opened, which was the recipient of the largest grant during Round 1 totalling £296,229. The Community Shed was visited by officers and Councillor Mary Cunningham ahead of the official opening.</p>	<p>December 2024</p> 
<p><b>3.2 - Continue to work with partners to deliver various activities and initiatives supporting people experiencing loneliness or social isolation.</b></p> <p>The Braintree District Council Social Isolation and Loneliness Forum met in July to review previous activities and discuss future opportunities. Discussions and feedback from partners included the pop up lounges which took place in the first quarter, winter resilience, summer holidays activities, Braintree Community Gardens, period poverty support homeless people, and the opening of the Braintree District Volunteer and Active Braintree Awards. The next meeting of the Forum is scheduled for 3<sup>rd</sup> October to discuss opportunities in the third and fourth quarters.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>3.3 - Award contract and start to build Witham Community Centre.</b></p> <p>The Council agreed the land transfer for the site of the Community Centre at Cabinet in September. Reptile translocation at the site is underway. The tender evaluation process for construction has completed and a contractor is due to be appointed in the third quarter.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>3.4 - Provide a Community Garden through funding from the Changing Futures Programme.</b></p> <p>The Wilderness Foundation have now been funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to deliver sessions to complex and vulnerable adults until the end of March 2025. The sessions started on 6 June and have currently been getting around 2 participants per week, as well as visitors, volunteers and interest from those walking through the park. The sessions have been advertised through the local press and the Council's online channels throughout August and September.</p> <p>7 volunteers from Braintree Rivers Rotary Group have visited the garden and EnVar have kindly donated soil improver, woodchip, several pairs of secateurs, pack of spring bulbs and loppers which has been helped to facilitate the garden sessions.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 

### **3.5 - Support and expand community-led walking activities to 10 in the district.**

The Council have been successful in Public Health Accelerator Bid to set up a Beat the Street mass participation walking programme in the Braintree District, and be working alongside Intelligent Health to deliver the 6 month project. Beat the Street is a mass participation behaviour change programme which aims to transform activity levels and improve mental and physical well-being across a community. The Beat the Street game takes place over a six-week period across an entire mapped local area. RFID sensors called "Beat Boxes" are placed on street furniture, in parks and green spaces. Residents are provided with RFID cards and then encouraged to walk, run or cycle between boxes, tapping their cards on the boxes and earning points for themselves and/or their team as they do so. The game is displayed on a website where leaderboards contain school, workplace and community teams all on a journey together.

March 2025



## **Priority 4: Develop safer and more resilient communities empowering residents to take ownership of local projects and initiatives**

### **4.1 - Through the safer streets funding, prevent violence against women and girls in public, neighbourhood crime and anti-social behaviour in Halstead.**

Several workstreams of the safer streets programme have progressed through the second quarter. 250 Crimestoppers posters have been printed by The Council's Reprographics team to be distributed to Halstead Businesses in partnership with Essex Police. Preparation for the second Night of Action is underway with over 660 anti-spiking devices purchased to be distributed on the night. Joint door-knocking with Essex Fire and Rescue saw residents informed about the safer streets programme and fire safety. The Ramsey Road Skate Jam took place on 28 September, and the Essex Youth Service also delivered two sessions in September.

September  
2025



### **4.2 - Continue to administer the Councillor Community Grant Scheme.**



August saw the most grants awarded this year so far with fourteen being awarded to the value of £7,580. Birdbrook Bowls Club received a grant which will be used to encourage young people to take up the sport. The grant of £350 will enable them to purchase suitable bowls. Witham Allotment and Leisure Gardens Association will use the £200 grant they have been awarded towards installing solar panels to provide power to the hut which is used by the allotment holders for events.

A project submitted by The Archer Community Trust was joint funded by 10 Councillors and awarded £3,000 towards the supply and fitting of a defibrillator within the Braintree Central & Beckers Green ward.

March 2025









<p><b>4.3 - Oversee the coordination of the Community Safety Action Plan to increase awareness of child exploitation, domestic abuse, fraud and cybercrime.</b></p> <p>The consultation concluded for the implementation of a Public Spaces Protection Order in Braintree Town Centre, with over 500 responses and 97% in support.</p> <p>Community Day of Action too place in September to engage with visitors to Braintree about antisocial behaviour and perception of safety. Partners included Essex Police, Family Solutions, Youth Offending, Dog Watch, Community Speedwatch, First Stop, Phoenix Futures and Braintree District Council.</p> <p>24 people attended Active Bystander training from Braintree Village businesses including the cinema, Namco, retail outlets and restaurants. A communications campaign has been developed with posters displayed on the backs of toilet doors and in window displays in Braintree Village, and the promotion of the Commonplace on-line reporting tool.</p> <p>Two Saturday patrols have been carried out with Streetscene Enforcement and Essex Police and Spot It Stop It training was delivered to Fusion staff at Halstead Leisure Centre.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>4.4 - Continue to support local investment in communities through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (year 3).</b></p> <p>Work continues to coordinate delivery of the Social Spark Programme in the Braintree District, which will focus on 3 key areas. These are training community leaders, Social Entrepreneurship and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) capacity building.</p> <p>The Council is working in Partnership with Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) to deliver this. ARU have developed a business case, which is now being reviewed before delivery commences.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 



## Priority 1: Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure

Project title & progress	Target date & status
<b>1.1 - Deliver physical improvements to Halstead and Witham Town centres.</b> <p>Following submission and approval of the required street furniture licences, the Council continues to liaise with Essex Highways to coordinate delivery of the work in both Halstead and Witham, which the Council has been informed will now require a minor works agreement. The schedule of works is being reviewed to prioritise work which can commence immediately, to allow for other agreements to be sought concurrently for work on land not owned by BDC. Deliberation is being given to phasing these works, and until all agreements required have been sought delivery timelines are unclear, therefore the status remains amber.</p>	March 2025 
<b>1.2 - Work with communities to implement neighbourhood plans in Steeple Bumpstead, Hatfield Peverel and Earls Colne.</b> <p>The Hatfield Peverel neighbourhood plan has been completed and adopted during the second quarter. The Steeple Bumpstead plan has been prepared ready for referendum during the next stage of the process. Earls Colne neighbourhood plan is at the Regulation 16 stage, which seeks approval to publicise the plan.</p>	March 2025 
<b>1.3 - Revise the Local Plan in line with recent changes to National Planning Policy Framework.</b> <p>A revised timetable for the Local Plan review was discussed and agreed at the Local Plan Sub-Committee Meeting in September, moving the target date for this project to June 2026. Work on technical documents to support the Local Plan Review continues together with site assessment work. This will inform growth strategy options.</p>	June 2026 
<b>1.4 - Develop an affordable housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</b> <p>The Strategic Environmental Assessment Determination Statement (SEA) has been approved, and the affordable housing SPD is now in draft awaiting publication.</p>	December 2024 
<b>1.5 - Develop a design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</b> <p>The design SPD is now being developed by the development management team, to allow appropriate resources to work on the Local Plan revision. The end date for completion has moved from June 2025 to December 2026 to accommodate this. The design SPD will go out to first consultation in the third quarter and has been scheduled for an extended period of public engagement.</p>	December 2026 



**Priority 2: Attract and support growth, providing high quality employment opportunities in high growth sectors and industries**

<p><b>2.1 - Develop the Council's inward investment activity in association with the North Essex Economic Board (NEEB).</b></p> <p>The action plan agreed in the first quarter highlighted numerous opportunities including local business support organisations, research and development opportunities, coordination of young start ups and entrepreneurs, and promoting green potential. In the second quarter the tendering process has commenced, with a contract anticipated to be awarded and started in the third quarter.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>2.2 - Create an additional meeting area and multi-media space at the Plaza.</b></p> <p>The demand for occupancy space and profile has changed since the proposal for the works was put forward. The proposed space has been repurposed to provide gym facilities based on feedback from customers and to support revenue generation from that space. The Council are exploring the opportunity to offer multi-media spaces in the hatchery space, and this needs to be considered against the current customer demands for space. The target date for this project has been revised from September 2024 to March 2025 to accommodate for the review of the business case and subsequent works to take place.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>2.3 - Provide planning permission for the remaining plots at Horizon 120.</b></p> <p>Planning permission for plot 5 was approved in September. The planning applications for plots 6-8 are anticipated to be submitted in the third quarter. The length of time taken to prepare the applications has been extended due to exploration for disposal of excess soil on plots 6-8. The timeline for this project is being considered and is likely to be extended in the third quarter to accommodate for the planning application review of plots 6-8.</p>	<p>October 2024</p> 
<p><b>2.4 - Confirm the viability of the Council delivering the enterprise site at Witham.</b></p> <p>An updated viability assessment including new design drawings, revised costing estimate and a financial analysis is being drafted for consideration in the third quarter.</p>	<p>December 2024</p> 

**Priority 3: Provide tailored business support and access to funding to help businesses thrive and innovate**

<p><b>3.1 - In association with the North Essex Economic Board, provide business support services focused on enhancing digital skills, financial management and business growth.</b></p> <p>A new year two Blueprint for Business (B4B) programme is now up and running from until 28 February 2025. As well as 1:1s comprising a mix of 'low' and 'high' intensity support, there will be eight face-to-face workshops being held in all districts across north Essex and a further ten online events across a spectrum of subjects, taking learnings from the year one programme and the demands of businesses. The North Essex Finance Brokers contact exercises continues to drive opportunities from a range of sources.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>3.2 - Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a Green Business Expo.</b></p> <p>Project completed. The Green Business Expo took place in June at the Plaza, delivering Net-Zero support and advice to 33 businesses.</p>	<p>June 2024</p> 
<p><b>3.3 - Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a Digital Business Expo.</b></p> <p>The second quarter has seen marketing and advertising for the Expo which is due to take place in October. Due to the interest shown in the residents' day, the opportunity to host a second day is being considered. The Council is also producing a brochure to distribute at the event promoting and providing information on the Council support services. Digigo has been commissioned to assist with providing transport to and from the event.</p>	<p>October 2024</p> 





**Priority 4: Develop skills that are attractive to employers and support residents to access opportunities to improve their economic well-being**

<p><b>4.1 - Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, deliver a green skills programme.</b></p> <p>The tender process concluded in the second quarter and the Green Skills programme official launched on 13 September delivered by Essex ACL. Courses offered range from level 2 to level 5 in domestic retrofitting and energy assessment. A recent statement provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has stated that UK Shared Prosperity funding will not be available for any activities taking place after March 2025, and the Council is exploring opportunities to continue delivering training beyond the end of the financial year.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>4.2 - Organise and deliver a jobs fair in the district.</b></p> <p>The Jobs Fair has been organised to take place on 2 November at Queen's Hall, Halstead in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions. 23 exhibitors are expected to attend to represent the various industries in the Braintree District, including advanced manufacturing and engineering, health and care, professional services, recruitment and education. Marketing has been increased through Facebook sponsorship. Live vacancy information will be provided and available on the day for attendees.</p>	<p>October 2024</p> 







# Environment

## Priority 1: Ensure district growth is sustainable and accessible with strong connectivity and infrastructure



Project title & progress	Target date & status
<b>1.1 - Enhance the play areas at Meadowside in Braintree, and Oxford Meadow in Sible Hedingham.</b>  The tender process has completed during the second quarter and a contractor has been appointed to complete the refurbishment. Works are due to commence in November with a provisional completion date of January 2025.	March 2025 
<b>1.2 - Develop a renewable energy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</b>  The renewable energy SPD target date has been amended from December 2024 to December 2025, due to the resourcing requirements to undertake the Local Plan revision.	December 2025 
<b>1.3 - Upgrade the skateparks at Spa Road in Witham and Weavers Park in Braintree.</b>  Weavers Park opened on 13 September, with Spa Road opening a week later on 20 September. Both parks were opened by The Chairman and Cllr Tom Cunningham. The Skate Jam in Braintree on 14 September was a success, with the Witham Skate Jam planned for 5 October. Now both skate parks are open contractors will address any final snagging work in October before project completion.	October 2024 
<b>1.4 - Revise The Council's Tree Strategy.</b>  The management protocol for tree stock and other supporting documentation has been prepared, which will constitute a significant proportion of the Tree Strategy framework. Work on the strategy document has paused pending the recruitment of a Landscape Services Manager and a Senior Arbiculture Officer in the third quarter, as these roles will be heavily involved in the development and implementation of the strategy.	March 2025 




**Priority 2: Continue to deliver a cohesive and integrated response to climate change adaptation and mitigation**




<b>2.1 - Develop a local Air Quality Strategy.</b>  Following a meeting of the Essex Air Quality Working Group in July, it has been decided that the Council will support Essex County Council (ECC) in developing an Essex wide Air Quality Strategy (AQS). In the third quarter, the Council will review Air Quality Strategy documents and provide feedback to ECC. Essex County Council are aiming to go to public consultation on the joint AQS in November.	March 2025 
<b>2.2 - Procure 14 Electric Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs).</b>  Delivery of the electric vehicles since placing the order in the first quarter has been delayed by the supplier. The current estimate for delivery is now November. Livery designs for the electric vehicles have now been finalised, and UK Power Networks have connected high voltage lines to the site to facilitate charging infrastructure. As a result of the delays in vehicle delivery, the target date for this project has moved from September to December 2024.	December 2024 
<b>2.3 - Install solar panels at Witham Leisure Centre.</b>  The specification for the solar panels and supporting canopy was completed, with the tender process commencing in July. Invitations to tender closed at the end of August with tender evaluation taking place through September. The sustainability team continues to meet contractors on site throughout the project. The award of the contract will take place and work will commence on site in the third quarter.	March 2025 
<b>2.4 - Take part in establishing a Climate and Environment Partnership and work programme across the North Essex Councils.</b>  The fourth meeting of the North Essex Climate Partnership took place in August, and was hosted by Braintree District Council. Officers discussed Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions reporting and decided to work towards a shared reporting tool for reporting next year. Officers also discussed creating a shared Climate Risk Log and the concept was agreed in principle. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in October with a focus on renewable energy. Essex County Council have begun consideration of a North Essex Nature Conference in the fourth quarter.	March 2025 

**Priority 3: Support residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint and be more resilient to climate related impacts**

<p><b>3.1 - Allocate funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support at least ten Community Infrastructure initiatives in relation to decarbonisation.</b></p> <p>All eleven applications were successful and were granted funds ranging between £1,668 and £15,000. The applicants included: Witham Town Football Club, Birdbrook Community House, Braintree Cricket Club, Earls Colne Parish Council, Stisted Village Hall Charitable Trust, Little Yeldham Village Hall, Coggeshall Parish Council, Feering Parish Council, Great Notley Parish Council, Silver End 1st Scout Group and Hatfield Peverel Community Association.</p> <p>The measures to be installed include solar panels, an infrared heating system, LED lighting, and replacement windows. All grant funding agreements have now been agreed and funds have been transferred.</p> <p>Braintree Cricket Club has already successfully installed their solar panels and other projects are due to commence in the third quarter. Projects are on track to be delivered successfully and reduce carbon emissions by up to 75%. There are also additional economic benefits to organisations for each project. Post installation The Council intends to publish case studies and communications to highlight the benefits.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
<p><b>3.3 - Deliver a campaign to encourage motorists around schools to switch off their engines when stationary outside schools.</b></p> <p>Progress on this project was limited over the second quarter, due mostly to the school holidays. During this time, opportunities have been identified to collaborate with other schools-based activity occurring later in the year such as the programme to engage school children with recycling and food waste initiatives.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 

**Priority 4: Improve the way that we manage waste and encourage residents and businesses to reduce, reuse and recycle more**

<p><b>4.1 - Collaborate with other Essex Authorities to establish and adopt a new Waste Strategy for Essex.</b></p> <p>The Waste Strategy for Essex was adopted at Cabinet in September, providing a strategy for waste collection and disposal across Essex over the next 30 years. This project is now complete.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 
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<p><b>4.2 - Work with other authorities, including Essex County Council, to develop and deliver waste minimisation and recycling initiatives that deliver on the requirements of Waste Reforms and the Essex Waste Strategy.</b></p> <p>The second quarter has seen research and benchmarking undertaken to develop a range of options for delivering on the requirements of the upcoming waste reforms and the Environment Act. Consultation with Councillors and senior officers is underway to consider which options provide the most effective solution. It is anticipated that the options will be presented to Cabinet for a decision in the third quarter.</p>	<p>March 2026</p> 
<p><b>4.3 - Develop a waste Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).</b></p> <p>The Operations team have reviewed and provided feedback on the waste SPD, and the draft is scheduled for review in the first week of October. Following this, a Strategic Environmental Assessment will be required prior to consultation on the SPD.</p>	<p>December 2024</p> 
<p><b>4.4 - Deliver a behaviour change campaign to increase recycling, reduce waste and encourage reuse.</b></p> <p>Work continues to research campaign material tool kits and establish the best approach. Consideration is also being given to any planned changes to collection methodology as a result of the waste reforms and the Environment Act, and that the campaign needs to be aligned with these. Opportunities to collaborate with Essex County Council's Love Essex are also being explored to take advantage of any county wide campaigns.</p>	<p>March 2025</p> 

# Climate Change Action Plan



## Introduction

The 2024-25 Climate Action Plan and the Climate Change Annual Report for 2023-24 were agreed by Full Council and published on the Council's climate webpages. The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reporting was completed and carbon emissions fell from the previous year.

The fourth meeting of the North Essex Climate Partnership was hosted by The Council on 12th August. Officers discussed Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions reporting and decided to work towards a shared reporting tool for reporting next year (2024-25 reporting). Officers also discussed creating a shared Climate Risk Log and the concept was agreed in principle. A shared document portal for the NECP is being scoped for creation to support more fluid and streamlined working and the Climate Change Project Manager will build this portal in Quarter 3.

The Climate Change Members Training (December 2024) is being scoped, along with Managers Training which will be delivered in Spring 2025. Proposals were made for adaptation of the Council's business case template to include greater emphasis on how projects impact the Council's Climate Strategy and pledge for carbon neutrality.

Officers attended various Climate Change network groups including the Anchors Group, HUG Consortium and the CORE Group.

The CCPM attended the Hedingham Enterprise Challenge, hosted by Housing and Communities, and presented the Council's Climate Strategy and actions / projects undertaken to date to address climate change.

The Climate Action Plan is classified under seven themes and individualised progress on these themes is outlined below:

## Resources

The Council have now received data for the water usage across the estate for 2023-24 and begun a desktop exercise to investigate high use sites and anomalies for unusually high water use. The Council have requested data analysis from Concept Energy- the company which validates our utilities bills- in order to understand trends and opportunities for water reduction.

The Council promoted a local craft brewery, The Courtyard Brewery, based in Gosfield. The case study was published on Facebook, Instagram, in our newsletter and on our website. It achieved the most engagement of all our September Facebook posts. We also continued to promote our weekly and monthly street markets, which sell local produce.

A new platform has been launched for Council Staff – an internal Freegle site for the reuse and sharing of items between staff members. The Staff Eco Meeting continued to meet on a monthly basis.

## Energy Conservation

Specification documents were written for the solar canopy and roof-mounted solar panels at Witham Leisure Centre and the project Invitation to Tender was published through the Council's procurement channels. The Sustainability Team evaluated 5 tender submissions with a view to a contract being awarded on 4 October.

An audit of the current streetlighting owned and managed by the Council is still underway. A specification for the tender has been drafted. Once the results of the asset audit are received, the tender process will begin.

Officers are scoping the exact requirements and specifications for the LED replacement lighting project at Witham Leisure Centre, funded by Sport England and will shortly tender the works.

The September Staff Eco Group meeting was centred on digital foot printing and how a more conscious effort to reduce unnecessary digital activity can impact carbon emissions and energy use.

The Council attended the Accelerating the Pace, Scale and Financing of Local Net Zero Projects workshop at Anglia Ruskin University which discussed large-scale and collaborative projects through private financing.

An Officer met with White Colne Parish Council to discuss and offer support for an all-day event they are hosting following their successful bid for solar panels through the UKSPF Rural Prosperity Fund. The parish council are hosting an event to showcase their carbon reduction program as well as the work of the Colne Valley Community Energy Project.

## Built Environment

Officers met with Housing and Communities to discuss the challenges of partnering further with Registered Social Landlords and how partnerships may be strengthened in future.

The Grant Funding Agreements for all eleven successful applicants of the UKSPF Community Infrastructure Grant were all sealed and funds processed. The applicants have now received their funds and four projects were completed in Quarter 2- solar pv on the roof of Braintree Cricket Club, LED lighting at Feering Community Centre, solar pv on the roof of Witham Town Football Club and replacement windows at Birdbrook Community House. Site visits were made to Feering Community Centre and Birdbrook Community House to see the works carried out following the successful applications for the UKSPF Community Infrastructure Grant. Each successful application will have a case study completed and added to the Council's website and follow up carbon reduction reporting shall be completed on a bi-annual basis as available.

The application screen on the HUG 2 Warmworks website has been updated to better filter out those applicants that would not be eligible to both avoid disappointment and work on non-viable leads. A recent Essex-wide mailout has generated over 200 additional leads so far. A further mailout will take place once datasets have been reviewed. Doorstep engagement activity by the managing agent Warmworks of targeted households/properties that are known to be eligible has been delayed until 8 July. There have been 146 referrals to date.

The Council have continued to promote the HUG 2 scheme. It will close to new residents on 20 October. A total of 76 applications have been made since 1 April on the portal for HUG2 scheme 10 Properties are currently at survey stage, 2 properties are in progress and 6 (revised target is 20) are completed.

With winter on the horizon and concerns of residents around the cessation of the winter fuel allowance for 10m pensioners Don't Wait for Winter booklet has now been updated and is currently being printed. It is circulated through press and social media and with partner organisations giving advice on how to save energy and stay warm this winter.

## Transport

For the Vehicle Replacement Programme, works continued at Lakes Road. The base for the electricity substation was installed, trenches for the cabling were dug to the site of the charging points and electricity cables were laid. The livery designs for the new vehicles were agreed in principle and further development of the designs is in progress for individual vehicle specifications.

The taxi fleet now has four electric vehicles, which equates to 4.5% of the entire fleet (not including private hire vehicles). The fleet also has six private hire vehicles which are fuelled by electric. A press release was published to promote this.

The Sustainability Team met a member of the Sustainable Transport Team at ECC and learnt of the large-scale roll out of on street electric vehicle charging units due to be introduced between now and 2030. The team understood the criteria for selecting locations and expressed the need for more electric vehicle charging infrastructure both in rural areas and further north in the Braintree district.

## Business and the Green Economy

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund funded Green Skills Program launched on 13 September with the aim of supporting residents and businesses with upskilling regarding retrofit. Qualifications range from entry-level to Level 5. The Council have been promoting this through various channels.

The Lean 2 Green decarbonisation package for businesses, funded by Essex County Council, continues to be promoted and several businesses have now signed up.

## Natural Environment

The Council have been attending regular, monthly meetings with Essex County Council to support with the development of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. In July, The Council responded to the pre-public consultation for Essex County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The public consultation for the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy is live from August 30th until the 25 October, 2024. The Council have promoted the consultation to residents to encourage as much engagement across the district as possible.

Essex County Council are also hoping to further engage with all local authorities within their Climate Focus Area and are working with The Council in its role as sponsor of the North Essex Climate Partnership to support this. This includes a potential NECP Nature Conference in January 2024 and the Climate Change Team, are supporting Essex County Council to scope this.

Officers met a representative of Essex Rivers Hub at Bocking Blackwater Nature Reserve in July to discuss opportunities for river maintenance on the site. Opportunities for restoration of the river bank at the Straits Mill millpond will be high on the list of priorities - a site where dogs regularly enter the water and erosion has impacted the riverbank.

The UKSPF Community Gardens and Orchards grant scheme launched and closed and the applications were processed and scrutinised. The final decision of grant allocation will be made in Quarter 3.



## Adapting to Climate Change

The Council have continued to publish and promote severe weather warnings, including Yellow Weather warnings, flood warnings and winter ready preparation communications.

The Council have continued to take an active role in the Essex Resilience Forum to monitor and plan for extreme weather events amongst other emerging risks.

The Council continues to engage with town and parish councils both on a one to one basis and through regular wider meetings such as the Supporting Communities webinar.

Advice on winter preparedness and preparation during an emergency will be published in the Contact Magazine in autumn 2024. The article shall have links to various partners including for Property Flood Resilience Grants and flood preparation.



# Fit for the future

## **Programme delivery and design**

The mobilisation of the programme continued to ramp up during the second quarter. The new Head of Transformation began his role with the Council towards the end of the quarter and two Project Managers, appointed on fixed term contracts, were onboarded during the summer. Recruitment is under way for resource to support the communication activities for the programme and this should be completed in the early part of the third quarter.

Regular briefings have been established with opposition Group Leaders to ensure that they have visibility of the development of the programme. Engagement across the organisation continues with interactive sessions at staff briefings during the summer and regular email bulletins provided.

## **Agile and Flexible**

Following the appointment of a new Project Manager work has commenced on building the documentation required for the let of the contract for an external provider to deliver the changes agreed for Causeway House. Work is now well underway to for the tender to be released during the third quarter and award of contract to happen in the last quarter of this financial year.

## **Shared Service**

During the quarter a new Programme Manager was appointed to lead the shared back office project. This role is being hosted by Colchester City Council but is funded equally by the three partners for the project (Colchester City Council, Braintree District Council and Epping Forest District Council). Work is completed on a shared template business case which will be used by each of the workstreams in the project. The workstreams for the project are running at different speeds and business cases will come forward for consideration by the Shared Services Executive Board ahead of decisions being taken through each of the partner organisations in line with their own constitutions. The new Programme Manager has been tasked to review the programme and its governance and will report back to the Executive Board in the third quarter. During the period a full update was provided to each Cabinet of the three authorities via a report tabled in September.

## **Asset Management**

Work has continued to ensure that key vacancies are filled included Building Surveyors and Business Centre Manager who have been appointed during the quarter. The framework consisting of the Asset Management Policy, Strategy and Plan were completed in draft and have been shared with key stakeholders for consultation and consideration. The Corporate Policy Development Committee is due to consider them in the early part of quarter three. There continues to be a review of the portfolio to identify those properties that are underperforming and discussions on next steps for those assets.

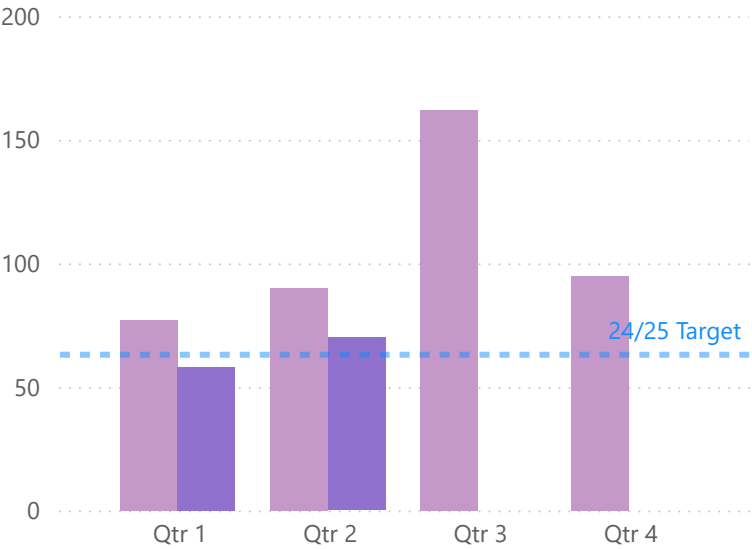
## **Service Reviews**

Detailed planning was undertaken during the quarter following the appointment of a dedicated Project Manager and the agreement of the methodology. Engagement has been undertaken with all Service Review leads during the quarter to ensure that requirements are clear. A Service Review Assurance Team has been established as has a Service Review Cohort Working Group. The first Service Reviews have commenced in line with the timetable as agreed.

# Performance Indicators in detail

## Number of affordable homes delivered

Financial year ● 23-24 ● 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

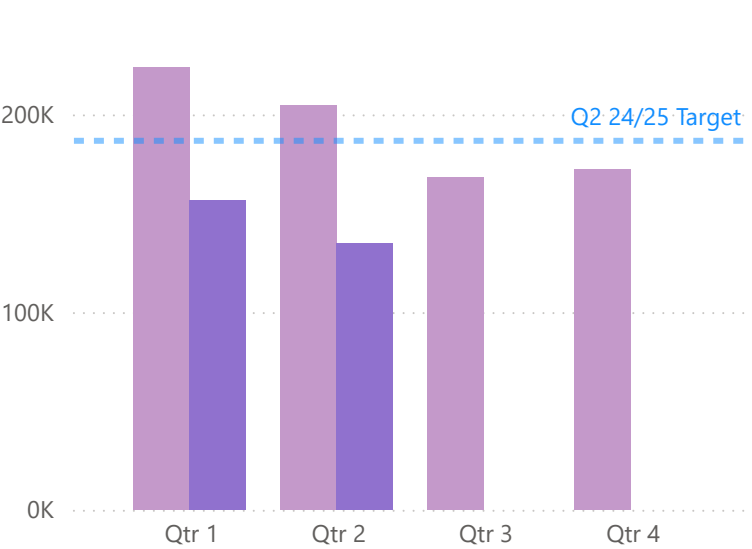
YTD cumulative:

128

Comments: The number of affordable homes delivered in the second quarter exceeded target by a total of 7, offsetting the first quarter return. This indicator is now on track over the course of the year.

## Number of visitors to our leisure centres

Financial year ● 23-24 ● 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

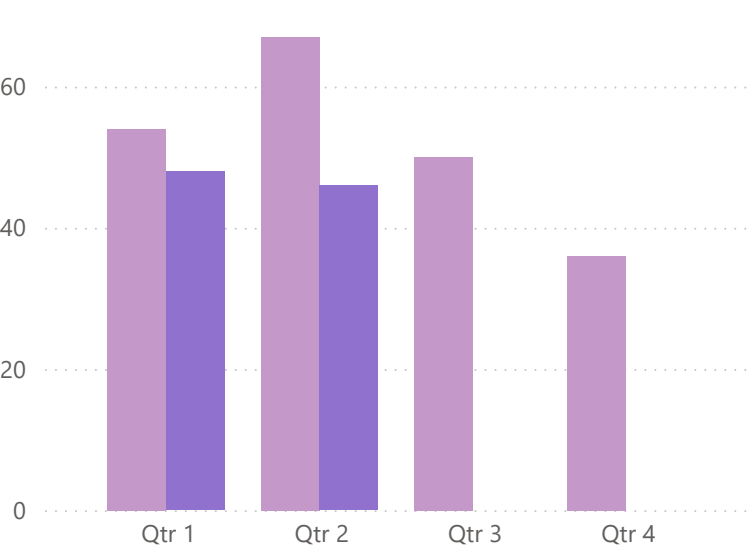
YTD cumulative:

291,470

Comments: The reported number of leisure centre visitors continues to be lower than the previous year. The Council's leisure partner has reported system issues, which are believed to be contributing to the lower outturn, and it is expected that participation levels are higher than is represented in the provided figures. The Council continues to work with its leisure partner to address these issues.

## Number of homelessness cases prevented

Financial year ● 23-24 ● 24-25



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

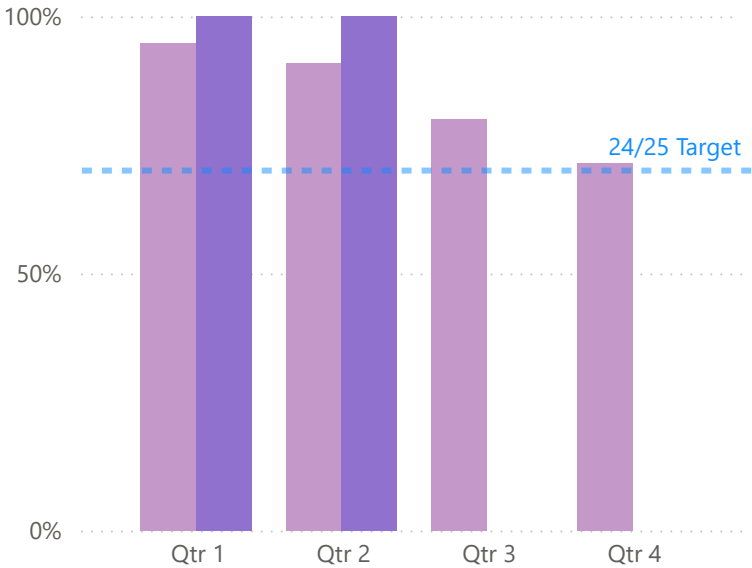
YTD cumulative:

94

Comments: The number of homelessness cases prevented in the second quarter was 46. This number is in line with the previous quarter, but a reduction on the same period in the previous year.

Major planning applications decided on time

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

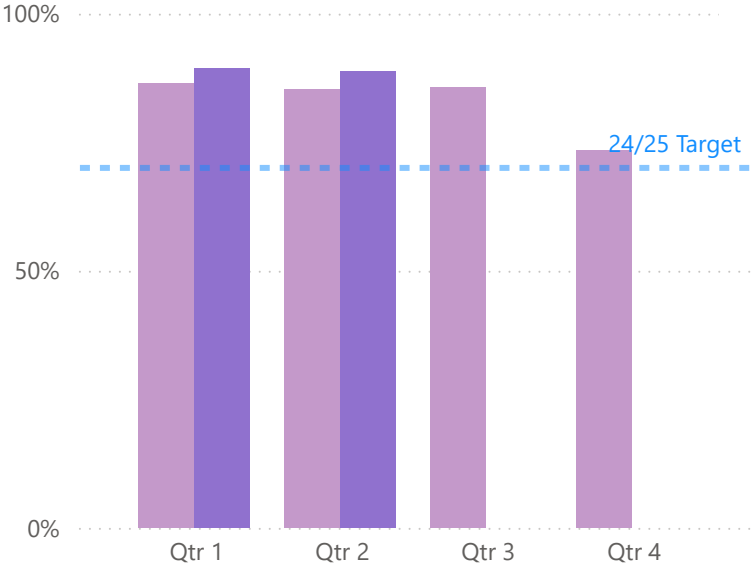
100.00%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	94.74%	70%
23-24	Qtr 2	90.91%	70%
23-24	Qtr 3	80.00%	70%
23-24	Qtr 4	71.43%	70%
24-25	Qtr 1	100.00%	70%
24-25	Qtr 2	100.00%	70%

Comments: All major planning applications in the second quarter were decided on time. This follows on from an outturn of 100% in the first quarter, meaning all major applications so far this year have been decided on time.

Minor planning applications decided on time

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

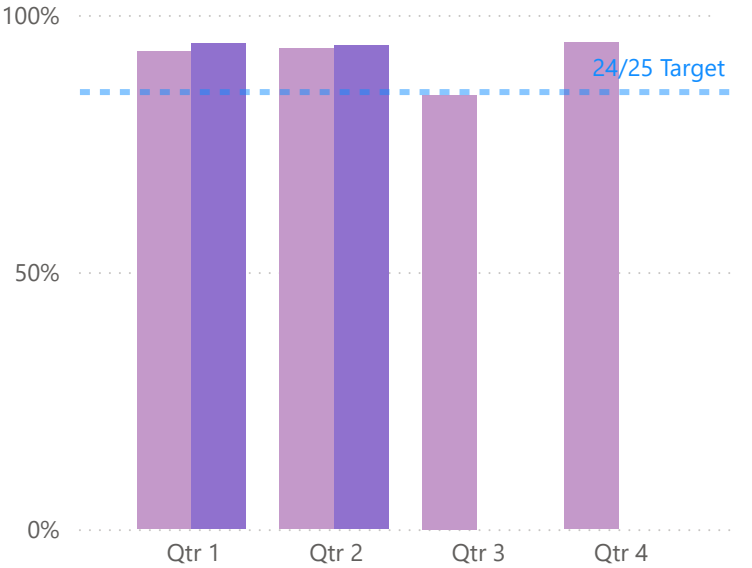
89.00%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	86.36%	70%
23-24	Qtr 2	85.26%	70%
23-24	Qtr 3	85.58%	70%
23-24	Qtr 4	73.33%	70%
24-25	Qtr 1	89.29%	70%
24-25	Qtr 2	88.71%	70%

Comments: 88.71% of minor planning applications were approved in time in the second quarter, meaning that the target has been exceeded for the sixth consecutive quarter.

Other planning applications decided on time

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

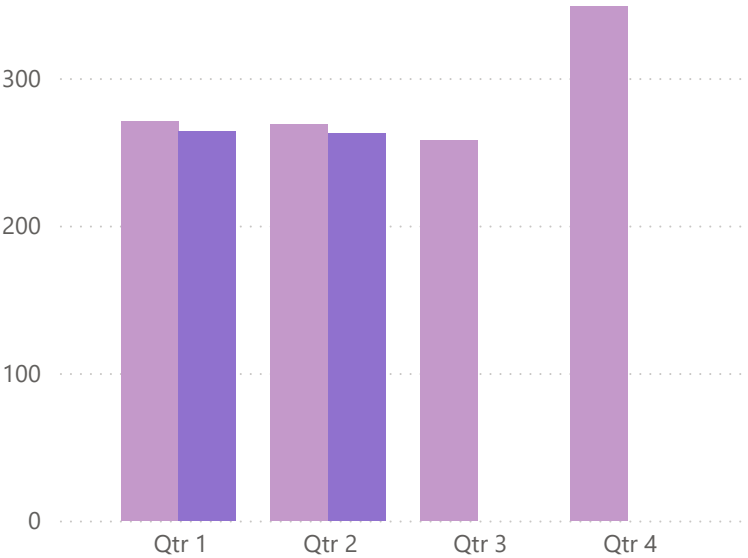
94.23%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	92.86%	85%
23-24	Qtr 2	93.53%	85%
23-24	Qtr 3	84.44%	85%
23-24	Qtr 4	94.70%	85%
24-25	Qtr 1	94.41%	85%
24-25	Qtr 2	94.05%	85%

Comments: The second quarter outturn for other planning applications decided on time was 94.05%, well in excess of the 85% target. This is the third consecutive quarter this target has been exceeded.

Number of new start up businesses

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

YTD cumulative:

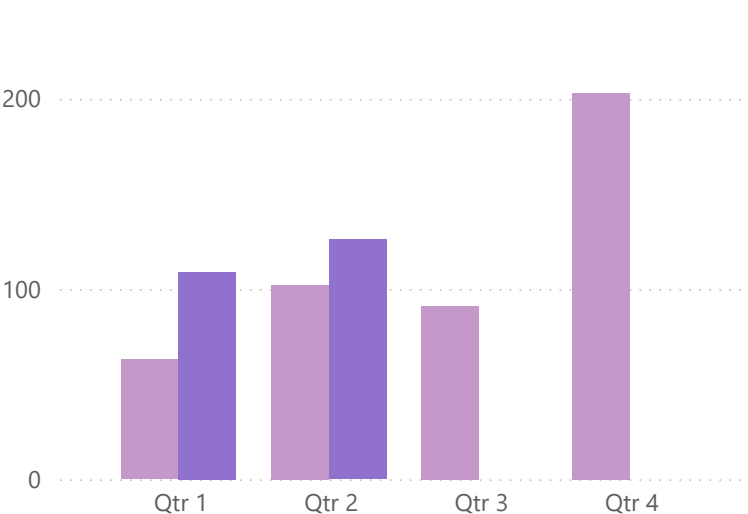
527

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
23-24	Qtr 1	271
23-24	Qtr 2	269
23-24	Qtr 3	258
23-24	Qtr 4	349
24-25	Qtr 1	264
24-25	Qtr 2	263

Comments: The number of new business start ups continues to mirror the previous year's performance through the second quarter. With the exception of Q4 23/24, there is no clear trend either upwards or downwards in this measure.

Number of businesses accessing business support

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

YTD cumulative:

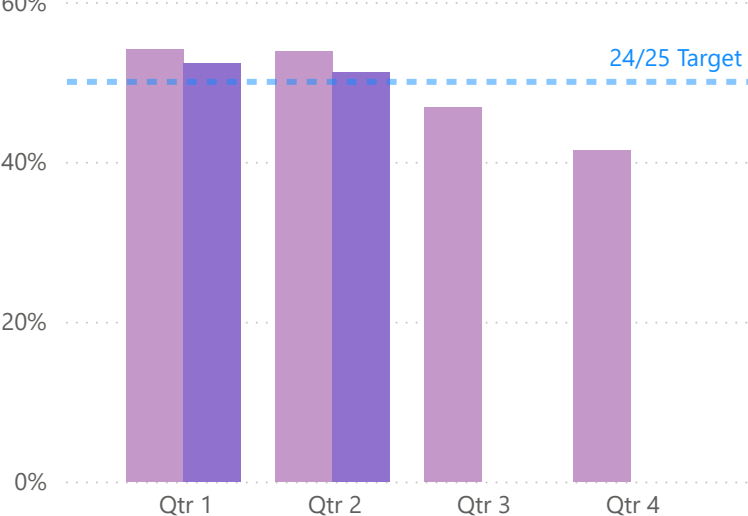
235

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
23-24	Qtr 1	63
23-24	Qtr 2	102
23-24	Qtr 3	91
23-24	Qtr 4	203
24-25	Qtr 1	109
24-25	Qtr 2	126

Comments: The number of businesses access business support has increased in the second quarter, both in comparison to the previous quarter, and the same quarter last year. So far 24/25 has seen a 30% increase in this metric compared to 23/24.

Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

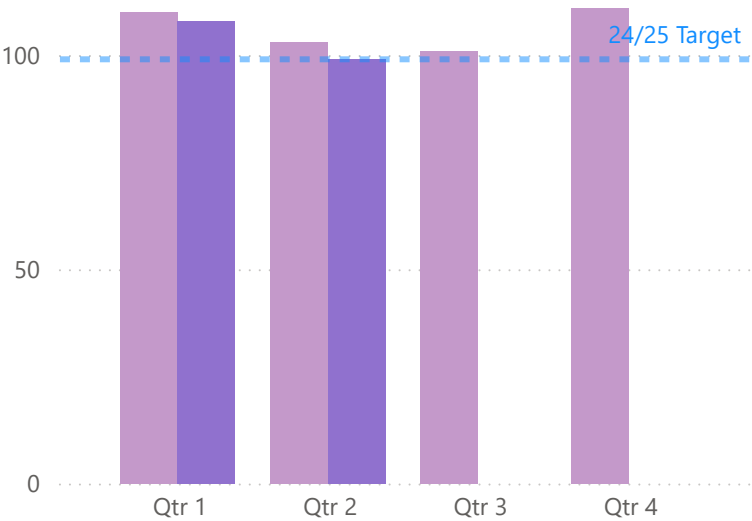
51.84%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	54.14%	60%
23-24	Qtr 2	53.88%	60%
23-24	Qtr 3	46.87%	60%
23-24	Qtr 4	41.44%	60%
24-25	Qtr 1	52.39%	50%
24-25	Qtr 2	51.29%	50%

Comments: Second quarter outturn for recycling rate has exceeded target following on from a successful first quarter outturn, however both first and second quarter in 24/25 have returned a lower rate than in 23/24.

Kilograms of residual waste per household

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status: ✔

Desired trend: Lower

YTD cumulative:

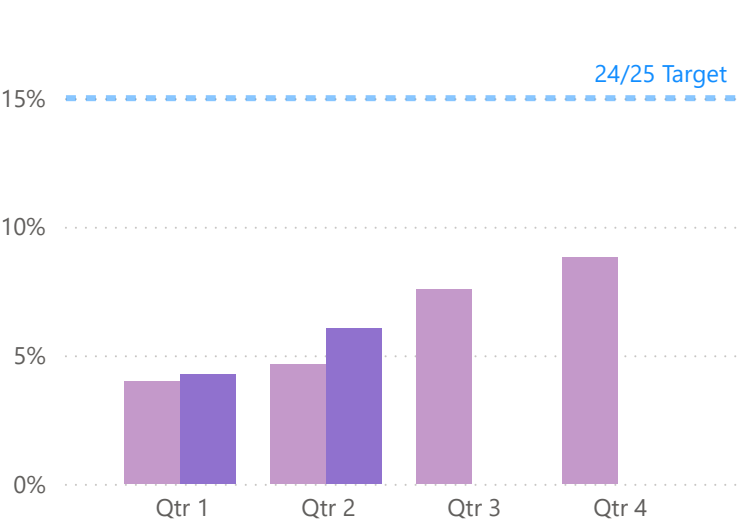
207

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	110	117
23-24	Qtr 2	103	117
23-24	Qtr 3	101	117
23-24	Qtr 4	111	99
24-25	Qtr 1	108	99
24-25	Qtr 2	99	99

Comments: The second quarter return for residual waste achieved the new lower target of 99kgs per household. This is the lowest recorded figure since lockdown, and continues the trend from the first quarter of a reduction on the previous year.

Recycling contamination rate

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status: ✔

Desired trend: Lower

YTD cumulative:

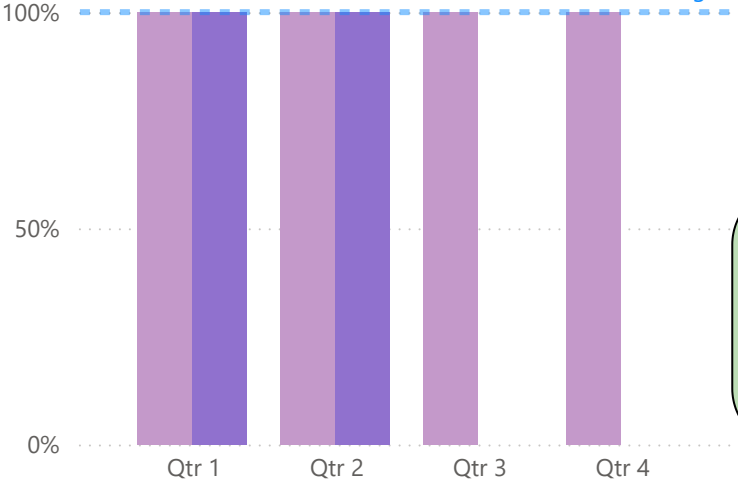
5.15%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	4.00%	15%
23-24	Qtr 2	4.66%	15%
23-24	Qtr 3	7.55%	15%
23-24	Qtr 4	8.80%	15%
24-25	Qtr 1	4.24%	15%
24-25	Qtr 2	6.06%	15%

Comments: Recycling contamination rate was below target for the second quarter returning a rate of 6.06%. This is an increased on the previous year, and is following a trend of increasing rate. However, returns are still well below the target rate.

Percentage of fly tips cleared within 24hrs (numbers reported within table)

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status: ✔

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

100%

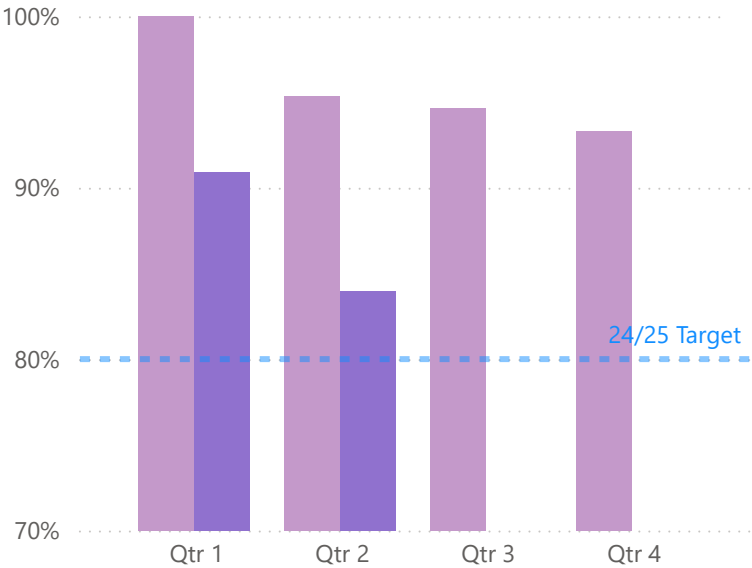
Financial year	Quarter	Number	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	294	100%	100%
23-24	Qtr 2	323	100%	100%
23-24	Qtr 3	236	100%	100%
23-24	Qtr 4	196	100%	100%
24-25	Qtr 1	173	100%	100%
24-25	Qtr 2	218	100%	100%

Comments: For the sixth consecutive quarter, 100% of fly tips were cleared within 24 hours. The second quarter observed a significant reduction in the number of fly tips compared to the same quarter last year (218 - 323), but an increase on the previous quarter (218 - 173).



Percentage of DFGs approved on time

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

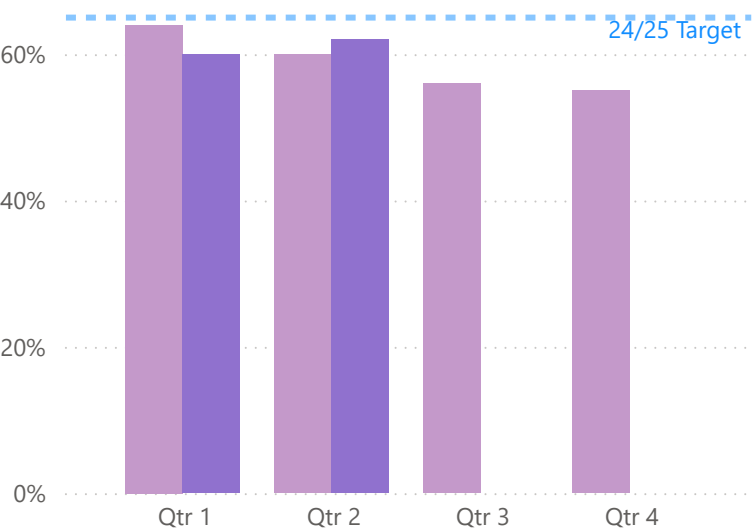
87.5%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	100.0%	80%
23-24	Qtr 2	95.4%	80%
23-24	Qtr 3	94.6%	80%
23-24	Qtr 4	93.3%	80%
24-25	Qtr 1	90.9%	80%
24-25	Qtr 2	84.0%	80%

Comments: The percentage of DFGs approved on time exceeded target in the second quarter, returning 84%. Whilst still above the target rate, a steady reduction in outturn for this metric over the past 6 quarters.

Percentage of calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

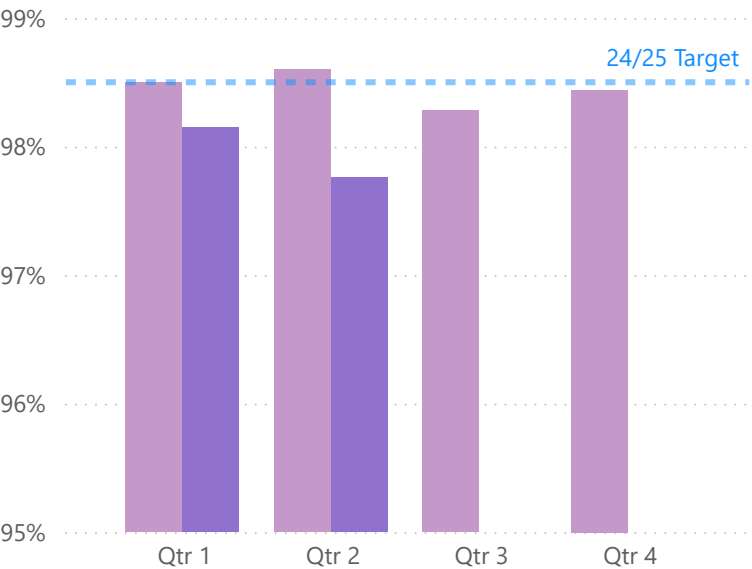
61%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	64%	70%
23-24	Qtr 2	60%	70%
23-24	Qtr 3	56%	70%
23-24	Qtr 4	55%	70%
24-25	Qtr 1	60%	65%
24-25	Qtr 2	62%	65%

Comments: The outturn for calls resolved at first point of contact in the customer service centre was 62% in the second quarter. This represents an improvement compared to the last quarter, and the highest outturn in the last 5 quarters. The customer service centre continues to receive high volumes of calls in relation to complex matters such as housing, council tax, elections and environmental services which are unable to be resolved at the first point of contact.

Percentage of invoices paid on time

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

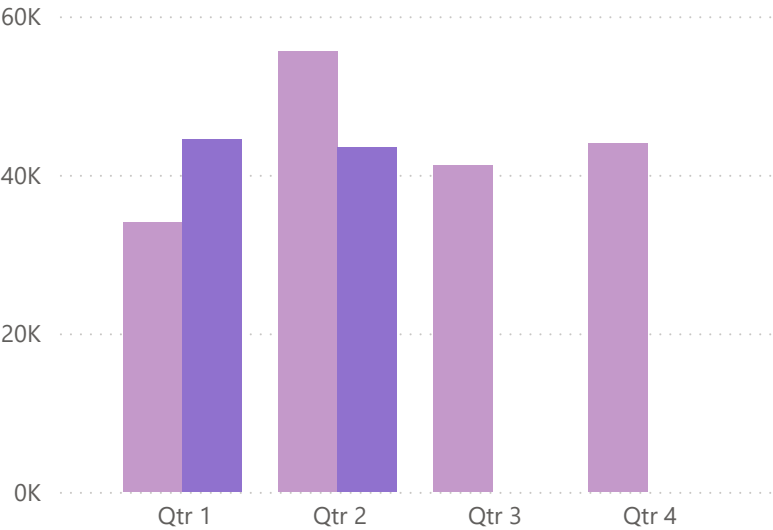
98.0%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	98.5%	98.0%
23-24	Qtr 2	98.6%	98.0%
23-24	Qtr 3	98.3%	98.0%
23-24	Qtr 4	98.4%	98.0%
24-25	Qtr 1	98.2%	98.5%
24-25	Qtr 2	97.8%	98.5%

Comments: Performance has continued to dip in the second quarter, which is considered to be due to changes in staffing in areas where there are high payment volumes. Finance continues to work with services to ensure processes and procedures are adhered to, although this is expected to take some time to embed.

Number of people transacting with the Council online

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Data only: This metric does not have a target.

YTD cumulative:

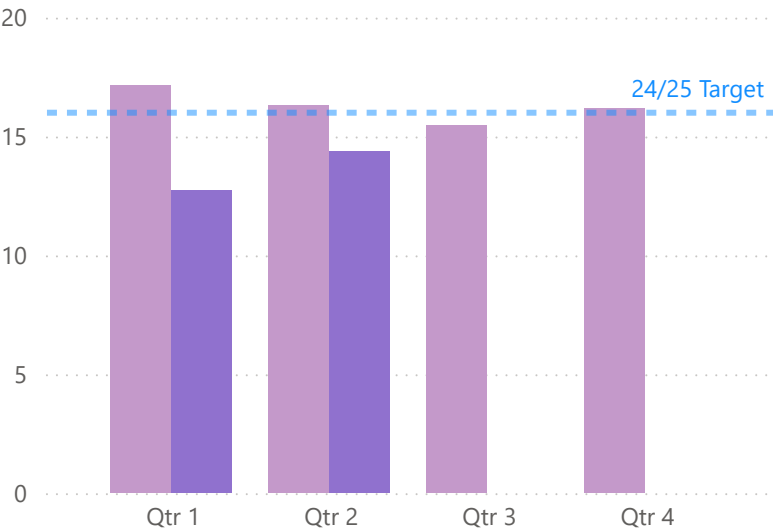
87,972

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn
23-24	Qtr 1	33,995
23-24	Qtr 2	55,634
23-24	Qtr 3	41,222
23-24	Qtr 4	43,982
24-25	Qtr 1	44,532
24-25	Qtr 2	43,440

Comments: The number of online transactions in the second quarter remains broadly level to the first quarter. Whilst there has been a reduction compared to the second quarter of the previous year, the total number of transactions for the year so far is similar to the previous year.

Days taken to process housing benefit/council tax benefit new claims

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Lower

YTD cumulative:

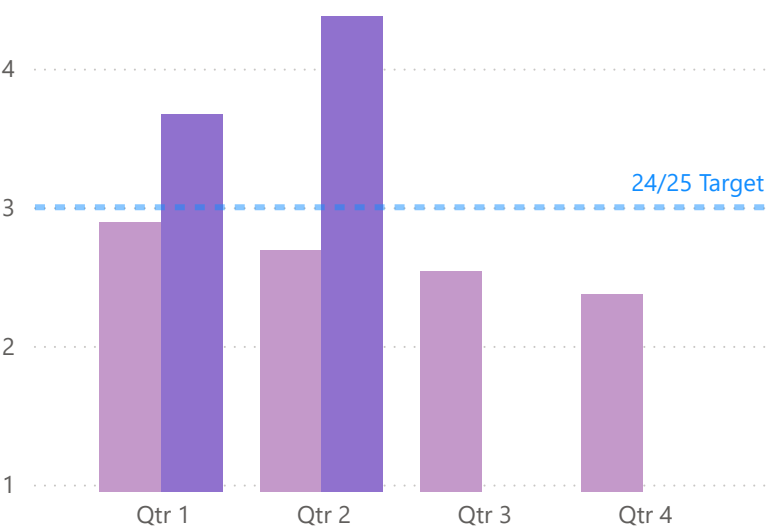
13.55

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	17.13	18
23-24	Qtr 2	16.31	18
23-24	Qtr 3	15.47	18
23-24	Qtr 4	16.18	18
24-25	Qtr 1	12.73	16
24-25	Qtr 2	14.37	16

Comments: The time taken to process new benefit claims has remained below the lower target for 24/25 in the second quarter with an outturn of 14.37 days.

Days taken to process housing benefit claim changes

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Lower

YTD cumulative:

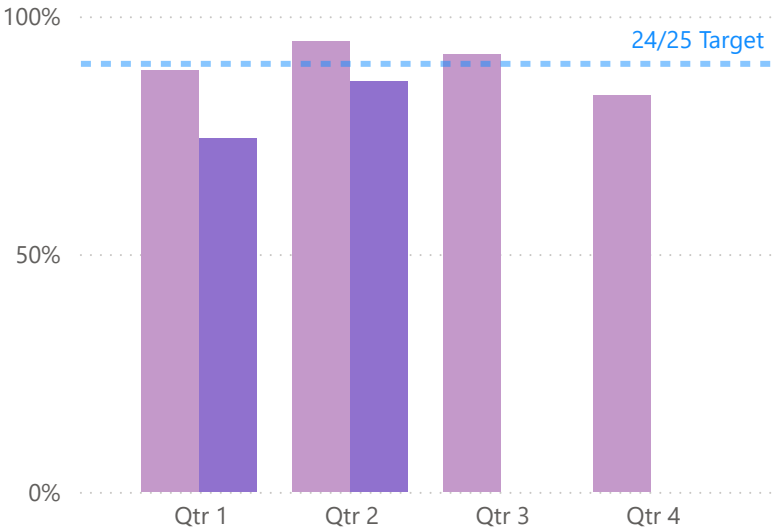
4.03

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	2.89	5
23-24	Qtr 2	2.69	5
23-24	Qtr 3	2.54	5
23-24	Qtr 4	2.38	5
24-25	Qtr 1	3.67	3
24-25	Qtr 2	4.38	3

Comments: The new local council tax support scheme has resulted in a positive fall in overall caseload; however this means that the remaining claim changes are more complex, which causes an increase in average processing time. Caseload is also being managed with reduced staffing resources as the service prepares for migration of Housing Benefit cases to Universal Credit.

Percentage of stage 1 complaints dealt with in timescale

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

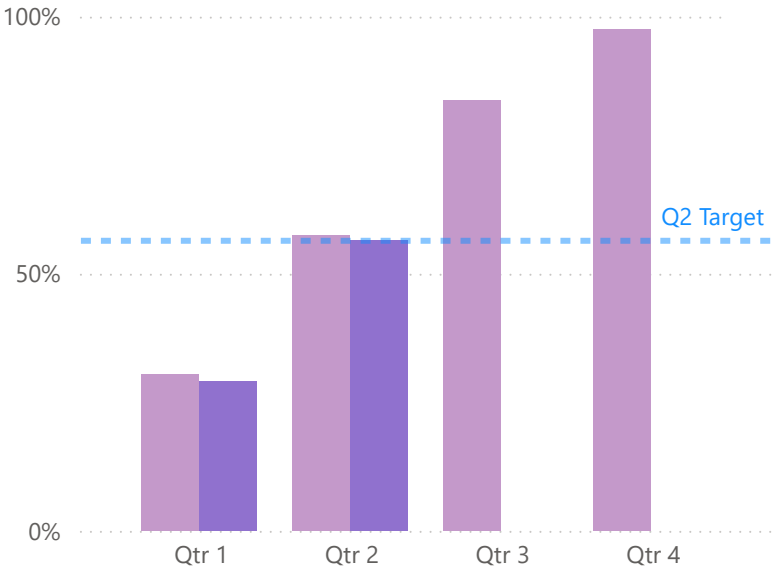
80.30%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	88.61%	90%
23-24	Qtr 2	94.74%	90%
23-24	Qtr 3	92.04%	90%
23-24	Qtr 4	83.46%	90%
24-25	Qtr 1	74.33%	90%
24-25	Qtr 2	86.27%	90%

Comments: Stage 1 complaint response times improved in the second quarter compared to the first quarter. July and September exceeded the 90% target, returning 93% and 92% respectively. August saw a lower return of 73%, which caused the overall quarterly performance to miss target, driven by a number of overdue operations complaints.

Collection rate for Council Tax

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

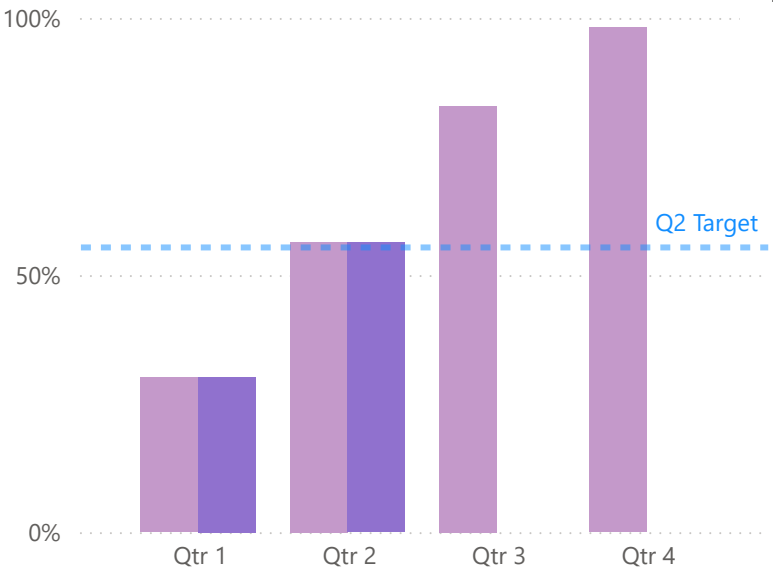
56.41%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	30.45%	30.10%
23-24	Qtr 2	57.42%	57.44%
23-24	Qtr 3	83.81%	84.23%
23-24	Qtr 4	97.59%	97.71%
24-25	Qtr 1	29.06%	30.45%
24-25	Qtr 2	56.41%	57.42%

Comments: The target for collection rate for Council Tax uses last year's figure as a benchmark, which was impacted positively by the New Homes & Growth Dividend. The impact of this against the 24/25 target will lessen over the year.

Collection rate for Business Rates

Financial year 23-24 24-25



Status:

Desired trend: Higher

YTD cumulative:

56.27%

Financial year	Quarter	Outturn	Target
23-24	Qtr 1	30.12%	31.26%
23-24	Qtr 2	56.40%	56.90%
23-24	Qtr 3	82.90%	82.26%
23-24	Qtr 4	98.13%	98.92%
24-25	Qtr 1	30.17%	30.12%
24-25	Qtr 2	56.27%	56.40%

Comments: The second quarter collection for business rates had a minimal reduction against target (0.13%). It is expected that this will be reconciled by the end of the year as minor variation year to year is expected.

## **Complaints**

The quarterly complaints analysis is detailed below. The figures represent all three stages of the complaints process.

<b>Complaint Category</b>	<b>Q1 23/24</b>	<b>Q2 23/24</b>	<b>Q3 23/24</b>	<b>Q4 23/24</b>	<b>Q1 24/25</b>	<b>Q2 24/25</b>
Justified	43	95	56	64	115	<b>102</b>
Not Justified	23	40	35	41	62	<b>33</b>
Partially Justified	13	17	20	20	14	<b>23</b>
Not known	0	0	1	4	5	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>159</b>

### **Comments:**

The second quarter has seen a reduction in complaints compared to the first quarter, and a broadly similar number of complaints compared to the same quarter last year.

Operations complaints continue to be the driver for complaints activity across the council (141 out of 153 stage 1 complaints), with 6 out of every 7 complaints relating to kerbside waste collection. 50 complaints related to garden waste collection, where greater-than-anticipated uptake of the service has resulted in an additional two collection routes added throughout the year, and changes to routes has resulted in missed collections. These issues are being addressed by Operations with new processes to address repeat missed collections.

Finance and the Customer Service Centre also saw a small number of complaints in the second quarter.

There were a total of 4 stage two complaints, with 2 complaints escalating to stage three.

The percentage of justified complaints continues to increase reaching 65% in the second quarter of 2024/25, and reaches 78% if including partially justified complaints. This indicates that the majority of complaints that the council receives are valid complaints, highlighting opportunities for improvement and review of Council services.

### **A summary of Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) cases:**

In the second quarter of 2024/25, the Council received an initial enquiry in relation to the handling of a complaints for Housing Services. This was deemed premature as the complaint had not been considered through the Council's complaint process.

One new complaint was raised by the LGO, which declined to investigate based on the apparent lack of fault on the part of the Council.

## Our Organisation

The following is a selection of our people performance measures:

People: Indicators of Performance	Q1 23/24	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Change on previous period	Yearly Target
Total headcount	482	489	502	501	499	<b>509</b>	+ 10	-
Total staff FTE	435.98	444.29	457.18	458.54	458.52	<b>467.96</b>	+ 9.44	-
Level of employee turnover	3.9%	1.8%	2.0%	3.4%	2.4%	<b>3.1%</b>	+ 0.7	-
Number of leavers	19	9	10	17	12	<b>16</b>	+ 4	-
Number of starters	15	16	23	16	10	<b>26</b>	+ 16	-
Working days lost to sickness per employee*	1.34*	1.73*	5.87	5.9	6.22	<b>5.65 days</b>	- 0.57 days	8.0
Percentage of staff with nil sickness	84.6%	68.3%	55.2%	48.7%	80.8%	<b>67.4%</b>	Cumulative	-
Number of learning hours	1078	617	751	833	688	<b>842</b>	+ 154	-
Number of delegates	200	235	347	379	345	<b>314</b>	- 31	-
Number of apprentices**	19	20	20	21	21	<b>20</b>	- 1	-

Year on Year Headcount	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	481	492	499	492	486	501

\* From the third quarter 23/24, The Council has moved to reporting working days lost to sickness on a rolling 12 month basis, to allow a more meaningful comparison going forward.

\*\* BDC's apprenticeship programme runs throughout the year. The figures reflect various apprenticeships ranging from level 3 through to a degree level 6

## **Health & Safety**

The following is a selection of our health and safety performance measures. The data is for information purposes only.

Health and safety is a crucial responsibility of everyone within the organisation. This information is used to improve the management of health and safety of staff, our customers, residents and other non-employees we come into contact with. Monitoring is undertaken by the corporate health and safety committee and action plans will be put in place where necessary.

<b>Health &amp; Safety: Indicators of Performance</b>	<b>Q1 23/24</b>	<b>Q2 23/24</b>	<b>Q3 23/24</b>	<b>Q4 23/24</b>	<b>Q1 24/25</b>	<b>Q2 24/25</b>
Total number of reported accidents/ incidents, calculated from:	13	22	12	5	5	<b>16</b>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to employees</i>	12	22	9	5	5	<b>14</b>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to contractors</i>	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<i>Accidents/ incidents to non-employees</i>	1	0	3	0	0	<b>2</b>
Time lost in days due to employee accidents/ incidents	14	9	45	19	25	<b>0</b>
Number of reported verbal/ physical incidents to employees	0	4	2	5	3	<b>2</b>
Number of near miss incidents	2	1	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Number of Accidents/ incidents registered resulting in insurance/ compensation claim	2	1	1	1	0	<b>0</b>
Number of claims settled	0	1	3	2	0	<b>2</b>

### **Comments:**

There were a total of 16 accidents/incidents reported in the second quarter, a reduction of 6 compared to the previous year. Of the 14 incidents relating to employees, 7 occurred whilst moving or handling objects, 3 suffered slips trips or falls, 3 were struck by a moving object, and one member of staff was taken ill at work.

Both incidents involving members of the public related to persons being taken ill at Council premises.

Two instances of verbal abuse were reported by members of the housing team.

One near miss accident occurred when a member of staff was nearly struck by a moving object.



# Financial Performance

## **Summary**

The review of the financial performance and projection for the year at this second quarter shows an overall positive variance of £1.9 million with two main areas contributing to this position. Firstly, treasury management income, which is projected to outperform budget due to a combination of higher-for-longer interest rates as the Bank of England continues to take a cautious approach to relaxing monetary policy; and higher cash balances. Secondly, take-up on the new garden waste subscription service is higher than was originally anticipated. This better than expected performance is reflected in proposed changes to the 2025-26 Budget.

While Asset Management and Sustainable Development are projecting an adverse position, in both areas this has reduced from the position reported at the First Quarter. Vacant commercial units and letting space within Causeway House contribute to the variance for Asset Management along with temporary resourcing costs supporting a period of transition for the service.

The main reason for the budget variance for Sustainable Development remains a projected underachievement of income from planning applications, partially offset by net underspends on staffing and one-off government funding.

A change in position for Environment is now forecast with an adverse position being reported which is primarily related to increased staffing related costs in Building Control, coupled with a forecast drop in service income. This in part reflects a difficult labour market at the time of new regulatory requirements.

A central provision has been made for the additional cost of the staff pay award, recently settled. Service budgets will be adjusted ahead of the next quarter's report with a budget transfer from overachieved income.

Elements of the forecast position have already been taken into account in the initial proposals for the 2025/26 Budget; however, with this updated position, further assessment will be made as to other risks and opportunities that need to be considered before finalising the position on next year's budget.

Capital expenditure to the end of the first quarter was £2.3 million, with the main areas of spend being on community facilities, climate change projects, Shared Prosperity projects, and grants for residential disability adaptations. There is currently a projected underspend across several projects of £415k.

## **Background**

Full Council agreed a net budget of £19.6m. Budgets may be updated during the year in accordance with the Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure, and monitoring is then against the updated budgets.

The financial review is a collaborative process between the Finance Team and Service Managers, and which considers the position at the end of each quarter to establish a projection of the outturn position for the year. The assessment uses information that is available at the time with forecasts made based on previous experience and applying assumptions for the remainder of the year. The projection set out below is therefore subject to changing circumstances, recognising that many aspects of financial performance are affected by external factors and service demands.

## General Fund Revenue Spending

The tables below show the projected outturn for the year by service as forecast at the end of Q2.

Business Plan Service	Updated Budget £'000	Forecast Spend for the year £'000	Current Forecast Variance £'000	Previous Quarter Variance £'000	Forecast RAG Status
Asset Management	(2,819)	(2,687)	132	168	R
Community & Leisure	932	944	12	7	A
Corporate Management Plan	1,642	1,616	(26)	(6)	G
Economic Development	188	76	(112)	(82)	G
Environment	940	1,049	109	(20)	R
Finance (incl. Treasury Management)	876	(248)	(1,124)	(927)	G
Governance	1,408	1,469	61	48	A
Housing Services	993	990	(3)	(3)	G
ICT & Facilities	2,085	2,007	(78)	(59)	G
Marketing & Communications	697	687	(10)	2	A
People & Performance	1,142	1,134	(8)	(2)	G
Operations	7,456	6,143	(1,313)	(1,136)	G
Strategic Investment	149	149	0	0	G
Sustainable Development	1,607	1,770	163	196	R
<b>Service Plan Total</b>	<b>17,296</b>	<b>15,099</b>	<b>(2,197)</b>	<b>(1,814)</b>	<b>G</b>
Corporate Financing	2,605	2,373	(232)	(77)	G
Pay Award Provision	0	171	171	186	
Vacancy Allowance	(300)	-	300	300	
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>19,601</b>	<b>17,643</b>	<b>(1,958)</b>	<b>(1,405)</b>	<b>G</b>

Business Plan Service	Staffing Expenditure			Other Expenditure			Gross Income		
	Updated Budget	F//Cast	Variance	Updated Budget	F/Cast	Variance	Updated Budget	F/Cast	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Asset Management	610	635	25	1,244	1,337	93	(4,673)	(4,659)	14
Community & Leisure	897	887	(10)	539	535	(4)	(503)	(477)	26
Corporate Management Plan	1,791	1,750	(41)	93	108	15	(242)	(242)	0
Economic Development	220	138	(82)	(32)	(62)	(30)	0	0	0
Environment	1,861	1,929	68	82	86	4	(1,003)	(966)	37
Finance	2,779	2,684	(95)	25,999	26,101	102	(27,902)	(29,033)	(1,131)
Governance	904	895	(9)	776	840	64	(273)	(267)	6
Housing Services	1,538	1,538	0	(48)	(51)	(3)	(497)	(497)	0
ICT & Facilities	1,037	1,011	(26)	1,048	996	(52)	0	0	0
Marketing & Communications	563	543	(20)	291	308	17	(157)	(164)	(7)
People & Performance	1,070	1,056	(14)	72	78	6	0	0	0
Operations	7,758	7,620	(138)	6,692	6,732	40	(6,993)	(8,208)	(1,215)
Strategic Investment	358	358	0	(148)	(148)	0	(61)	(61)	0
Sustainable Development	2,883	2,684	(199)	519	615	96	(1,795)	(1,529)	266
<b>Service Plan Total</b>	<b>24,269</b>	<b>23,728</b>	<b>(541)</b>	<b>37,127</b>	<b>37,475</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>(44,099)</b>	<b>(46,103)</b>	<b>(2,004)</b>
Corporate Financing	762	762	0	3,538	3,366	(172)	(1,696)	(1,756)	(60)
Pay Award Provision	0	171	171	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vacancy Allowance	(300)	0	300	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Total</b>	<b>24,731</b>	<b>24,661</b>	<b>(70)</b>	<b>40,665</b>	<b>40,841</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>(45,795)</b>	<b>(47,859)</b>	<b>(2,064)</b>
<b>As percentage</b>			<b>(0.3%)</b>			<b>0.4%</b>			<b>(4.5%)</b>

## General comments

- Staffing projections are based on vacancies and other known changes at the end of Q2 and reflect service expectations for the remainder of the year. Changes are likely to occur across the year which will impact future quarterly reviews
- A pay award provision of £171k has been made for the additional cost of the Employers' offer over that already provided in the budget.
- A vacancy allowance of £300k is included in the base budget anticipating that staffing costs may be lower than budgeted due to staff turnover and other changes.

## Main changes (+adverse/ -positive) from the previous quarter

The change in forecast from that at the First Quarter is an improvement of £553k. The main reasons for this change relate to the following areas:

- **Treasury Management Income** (-£170k) - Cash balances remained significantly higher than forecast allowing for additional short-term investments accompanied by interest rates remaining higher than forecast.
- **Waste Management Sale of Glass** (-£137k) – The market price of glass has risen significantly from an estimated £65 per tonne assumed in the budget to an average rate for the first half of the year of £122 per tonne.
- **Council Tax Sharing Agreement** (-£122k) – Council Tax collection performance for the Council and across all Essex authorities to the end of Q2 was better than baseline leading to a projected increase in share-back percentage from preceptors.
- **All Other Services** (-£124k Net) – whilst there was an adverse shift in Environment due mainly to the position in Building Control, there was an overall improvement across most other services along with a reduction in the amount required for the pay award.

## Specific comments on the main service variances (+adverse/ -positive)

### Asset Management

- Additional staffing cost due to short-term interim support partially offset by vacant posts (+£28k).
- Reduced income at the Plaza from the Makerspace partially offset by income from Shared Prosperity Fund initiatives and lower operating costs (Net +£54k)
- Lower income at Victoria Square due to vacant units partially offset by lower service charge costs (+Net £57k)
- Additional cost of industrial sites including utilities and repairs (+£30k). Net increase in rental income from industrial units following rent reviews (-£84k).
- Net other property related variances including Causeway House letting space remaining vacant (+£47k)

### Economic Development

- Economic Development underspend due mainly to vacancies (-£112k) but as the service is part funded from reserves, this has been offset by a commensurate reduction in the use of reserves shown under Corporate Financing.

### Environment

- To comply with new Building Safety Regulator Operational Standards and faced with an extremely difficult labour market, interim staff are having to be appointed to the Building Control service at additional cost net of the existing budget for vacant posts. Fee earning account income has also fallen, partially offset by other ancillary charges. (+£142k)
- Additional income in Public Health & Housing, combined with a saving due to a staffing vacancy in Environmental Protection (-£33k)

### Finance

- Additional treasury management income due to higher-for-longer interest rate environment and higher cash balances (-£1.186m)

- Net underspend on staffing due to vacancies, and reductions in contracted hours or staff appointed at lower scale points than assumed (-£95k)
- Projected shortfall in Local Tax and Housing Benefit cost recoveries assuming similar position to recent years' outturns (+£60k). Cost-of-living will be impacting as liabilities relate to low-income households
- Increased system related costs for the Revenues and Benefits system (+£42k)
- Other variances relating to banking charges, postage, and audit fees, partially offset by lower insurance premiums (+£55k)

#### **Governance.**

- Provision for extra cost of Member allowances following approval of a new scheme by Full Council and backdated to April 2023 (+£53k)
- Net other variances (£8k) including higher Land Charges income partially offset by under-recovery of sealing fees.

#### **Housing**

- Net position is (-£3k) however agency costs (£74k) is forecasted to cover vacant posts throughout the year funded by additional drawdown from reserve.

#### **ICT & Facilities**

- Corporate ICT systems maintenance (-£56k)
- Net other underspend (-£22k) mainly on Causeway House operating costs (e.g. energy and maintenance)

#### **Operations**

- Net saving (-£138k) across all staffing budgets mainly due to vacancies and restructure
- Car parking income has been overachieved mainly on pay & display, partially offset by increased collection costs (-£103k)
- Cemeteries is projecting higher income and lower costs which appear to relate to the current profile of requests for burials and interments (-£42k).
- The subscription-based garden waste collection service is projected to generate additional net income (-£603k) bringing forward the achievement of the current MTFS target assumed by 25/26. The position remains subject to demand for the service and the potential for additional costs due to collection route capacity as preparations are made for year two of the service
- Income from the sale of recyclate material, composting credits and tipping away payments are projected to be higher for the range of materials collected due to changes in market prices and tonnages, and diversion of waste from Cordons Farm (-£171k)
- Income from the sale of glass is projected to be higher due to a significant increase in market price over the first half of the year (-£137k)
- Demand for commercial waste and bulky waste services continues to increase resulting in a forecast of net additional income (-£63k)
- Other expenditure is lower (-£56k) across operations, including vehicle running costs, and depot costs.

#### **Sustainable Development**

- Net staffing variance due mainly to vacancies in Development Management and Landscape Services, partially offset by agency cover (-£199k).
- Projected cost of planning appeals based on prior year spend, and which exceeds the current balance held in the appeals reserve (+£45k)
- Landscape services spend with ECC, and tree maintenance contractor costs are projected to be higher, but partially offset by net savings (+£47k)
- New burdens funding from the Planning Skills Delivery Fund (-£65k) – extra resources was approved in the budget pending receiving confirmation on a bid submitted for the Fund.
- Projected shortfalls in Planning Application income (after allowing for the full-year effect of statutory price increases) and Pre-application income, partially offset by additional income forecast from Planning Performance Agreements. Income can be highly variable and subject to economic conditions and may be impacted by recent announcements by government on planning reforms (Net +£319k)
- Other variances (+£16k) including a shortfall in income from charges for the Self-Build and Custom Build Register.

## Corporate Financing

- The gainshare from the Council Tax Sharing Agreement with preceptors is projected to be higher than assumed based on collection performance for the first half year across Essex authorities resulting in a share-back percentage of 7%, up from 6% (-£81k). The amount is provisional and subject to final performance for the year with a maximum upside of 9%.
- Staffing costs recharged to capital are estimated to be lower than budgeted, based on current project officers' timesheet data (+£30k)
- External interest costs are forecast to be lower due to internal borrowing defraying any requirement to increase debt (-£229k)
- Reduction in use of reserves as a contra to the underspend projected on Economic Development (+£112k)
- Central provision for increased staff costs/retention (-£75k)
- Net other variances (+£11k) including cost of intervention works related to a dangerous structure, apprentice levy; partially offset by saving from staff annual leave purchase scheme, and business rates transitional provision (+£11k)

## **Capital Programme**

Current capital programme totals £14m. The table below shows the budget amount profiled to be spent in 2024/25; actual spend for the first half-year; and, where applicable slippage and forecast variance:

	Budget Profiled 24/25 £000	Actual Spend 24/25 £000	In-year Variance 24/25 £000	Slippage (-or deduction from future budget) £000	Forecast Project Variance 24/25 £000	Expected Remaining Spend 24/25 £000
Horizon 120 Business Park infrastructure	238	38	200	0	0	200
Horizon 120 - The Plaza	253	16	237	0	-238	-1
Manor Street regeneration	107	0	107	0	-107	0
Witham Community Centre	1,400	82	1,317	-360	0	957
Town Centre improvements	716	7	709	0	0	709
Industrial estate improvements	39	13	25	0	-8	17
Property planned maintenance	836	68	768	-136	-3	628
Information technology systems & equipment	383	94	289	-73	-38	178
Community facilities, play areas, parks & open spaces	1,244	508	736	0	0	736
Cemetery improvements	11	0	11	0	0	11
Paths, cycleways, and other infrastructure	73	69	4	0	0	4
Operational equipment	383	93	290	0	-58	232
Sports and leisure facilities improvements	265	73	192	0	18	210
Climate change initiatives	853	287	567	0	46	613
Shared / Rural Prosperity Fund	623	170	453	0	0	453
Housing renovation & disabled facilities grants	1,169	687	482	0	3	485
Capital salaries	263	126	136	0	-30	106
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,856</b>	<b>2,333</b>	<b>6,523</b>	<b>-569</b>	<b>-415</b>	<b>5,539</b>

### **Changes to the programme since first quarter**

- Programme and profiled spend has increased due to the addition of s106 funded projects: Clare Road play area, Silver End Recreation Ground parking, and Springwood Drive footpath improvements
- Estimated programme slippage is currently £569k, identified by project managers, been mainly on Witham Community Centre and Causeway House Refresh.
- There is currently a projected underspend across the programme totalling £415k, subject to final project closures

### **Capital receipts & other resources**

- New receipts generated in the second quarter totalled £223k, mainly from the VAT shelter arrangement with Eastlight Community Housing, giving the total achieved to date of £1.58 million.
- There were no receipts from Right-to-Buy making it a second successive quarter with no completed sales. The Council has been advised that 22 applications are in progress; however, timing of any completions is uncertain.

## **Treasury Management**

Investments at the start of the year totalled £56.3m which increased over the first half of the year with an average amount under management of £75.7m and a peak amount of £84m. New investments of £75.7m were made, and £55m matured, resulting in £77m being held at the end of September.

Funds totalling £19m was maintained across a range of long-term pooled funds with varying exposures to property, equities, and other financial assets, with the remainder of funds under management held in short-term investments comprising money market funds; Debt Management Office Account (UK Government); bank deposits; and liquid cash held with Lloyds Bank.

Dividend income earned up to the end of September was £547k and interest on short-term investments totalled £1.466m, a combined total of £2.013m, giving an annualised return of 5.31%.

The closing market value of shares and units in long-term pooled funds was £22.3m, representing an unrealised gain of £3.3m.

## **General Fund Balances**

Based on the above forecast, General Fund balances are estimated to be £10.3m by the end of the year, a net increase of £1.7m.

The level of reserves will be reviewed as part of the 2025/26 budget process.