

Review of Environment Scrutiny Basket of Performance Indicators

Recommendations

Performance Indicator	Scrutiny Review - Comments	Officer Response	Scrutiny Review - Recommendation
<p>Planning Applications - EHPI 157a, 157b and 157c</p>	<p>Concern that performance for EHPI 157a was red for the 2012/13 annual outturn and within the year performance has been off target. Would like to know whether the indicator can be modified to show performance based on the 'process' that the council can control. For example can the clock be stopped if further negotiation is required due to third parties?</p> <p><i>What we need to know</i> - is it possible to 'stop the clock'; what would that mean for the statutory returns that are completed and how will we be affected by the new assessment framework for planning authorities.</p>	<p>These indicators have been in place at national level for many years. Throughout their life, the government has always been very clear that the time taken in dealing with an application is to be calculated from the day it is received with all the relevant information, through to the day that a decision notice is dispatched from the planning authority.</p> <p>No dispensation is permissible when progress is not being made, regardless of whether this is as a result of the actions of the applicants or other third parties, and not inaction on the part of the Council. So, it has always been the case that the clock cannot be stopped when, for example, an amendment to the submitted plans is being drawn up by the applicant and the Council is waiting to receive it, or the Council is awaiting response from an applicants solicitor in relation to a legal agreement.</p> <p>Because of this very strict consistent and nationally applied interpretation of the indicator, all software providers have geared their reporting systems in this way. The software system used by East Herts (Swift APAS) certainly works in that way. As a result, there is no automatic or system generated reporting that can be used to identify periods of inactivity that are due to third parties (and not the Council).</p> <p>To undertake such recording, manual systems, or secondary software systems would be required. The volume of applications dealt with by the service is in excess of 2000 per year, with up to 50 being dealt with each week. Additional resources would be required to operate an additional and/or separate manual time recording system as it would be beyond the current capacity of the team.</p>	<p>No additional monitoring to be undertaken to identify periods of inactivity due to third parties and the indicators remain as they are.</p> <p>Accepted officer advice and noted the extra resources that would be required to record such information separately.</p> <p>Suggest that the service continues to provide contextual information when performance data is reported. So when off target the reasons are clear. In addition the review team support the introduction for an additional reference paper to the Healthcheck report, setting out a more detailed description of each indicator.</p>

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Local Biodiversity - EHPI 197	How much can we influence this indicator? Last 2 years there has been no change in the outturn. With the current pressure on resources are there any plans to improve performance? Also is it possible to monitor progress on local biodiversity through other means e.g. service plan monitoring.	This is an old national performance indicator. It is no longer a meaningful performance indicator as the sources of the data are external and, due to financial pressures, some of the organisations that captured the data are no longer able to do so which results in a year on year comparison being meaningless. The Council itself cannot influence the capture of the data and therefore officers support the proposal to drop the indicator.	EHPI 197 is no longer monitored.
Abandoned Vehicles - EHPI 218a	Should the focus be more on EHPI 218b removal of abandoned vehicles and therefore is EHPI 218a needed now. At the meeting the benefits of EHPI 218a in terms of measuring the speed of response and that it can help support contractor performance were discussed. <i>What we need to know</i> - Are there any other issues that need to be considered before a recommendation is made to drop EHPI 218a from the scrutiny healthcheck basket?	This indicator is fine as an internal management indicator as it monitors how quickly our staff inspect a vehicle once reported (a) and how quickly our contractor removes it (b). However, the number of abandoned vehicles in the district is now so low due to changes in legislation to control registration of vehicles and steel prices, that the indicator is really meaningless in terms of monitoring impact on the local environment.	EHPI 218a and EHPI 218b is no longer monitored. Status will be changed to SPI, as they will continue to be monitored by the service.
Unit Cost - Penalty Charge Notice - EHPI 8.44	The unit cost shows that the cost of processing the penalty charge notice is higher than the actual penalty charge. Obviously the unit cost will vary dependent on the number of notices processed. But should service costs be driven down to bring the unit cost lower? <i>What we need to know</i> - is it possible to reduce some of the service cost?	This is a statutory function. The charge is set by government and the council has no control over this. On-street enforcement costs more than one would ever have in the form of penalty charge notice. It always will. Compliance is the aim of on-street enforcement not income generation, in which case the cost per PCN issue will always increase. High levels of compliance reduce PCN issue and in turn increase unit cost. Only large city conurbations will break even or receive more receipts from penalty charge notice payment due to the nature of the towns.	Explanation helpful in understanding the full position. Support continued promotion of positive parking messages, so local residents are clear on what we do, how we do it and how much it costs.

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		<p>Points to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The cost of the parking enforcement contract fell by in excess of £200,000 per annum when re-tendered. The service has been successful in driving the costs of enforcement down and running a very successful shared service contract. ➤ Enforcement activities are subsidised by our car park pay and display income and this income, which far exceeds these costs continues to be the key source of council income after Council Tax. ➤ Enforcement activities and hence cost are also governed by the enforcement policy, set by council in the Parking Strategy. ➤ Members approved additional notice processing resource within the MTFP as a part investment in customer service and providing a good penalty charge notice processing operation given the magnitude of the contract saving achieved. ➤ The costs can not be reduced further without changes to policies regarding levels of enforcement, or impacting notice processing performance. 	
<p>Recycling - new measures</p>	<p>An indicator (s) so the Committee can monitor the effectiveness of the new recycling collection that is being introduced in Autumn 2013. Obviously the current recycling indicator will play a significant part in this.</p> <p><i>What we need to know</i> - Are there other measures that the service will be able to share with members, so they can scrutinise performance around this change. E.g. complaints, telephone enquiries. The Cllrs agreed if any new measures were introduced they only saw them as short term measures until the change in the service had settled down.</p>	<p>The service will be providing the Committee with feedback on the implementation of the scheme at their meeting in February 2014, June 2014 (as part of the contract performance report) and then a full analysis in September 2014. The number of extra enquiries the council receives about the new scheme will be included as part of the 'post implementation' reports. The Council already has a system for monitoring the number of corporate complaints.</p> <p>From next year the service will be recommending some new measures for waste collection performance, in addition to EHPI 191 and EHPI 192.</p> <p>Historically there has been an over emphasis on the amount of waste recycled which came out of the targets set by the previous Government. In fact the amount of waste reduced is more important environmentally than the amount recycled. The suggested new measures are:</p> <p>Total waste collected by the district (kg per household) - the</p>	<p>Support the introduction of two new waste minimisation indicators.</p>

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		<p>purpose behind this indicator is to show over time whether waste produced by householders is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ reducing or increasing. The Council works with the Herts Waste Partnership to actively encourage residents to think about how they can minimise the amount of waste they produce and therefore the cost to the tax payer of collecting and disposing of it. ➤ Percentage of residual waste (refuse) sent for disposal - the aim behind this indicator is show how much 'black bin' residual waste (refuse) is being disposed of. The indicator will be the opposite of EHPI 192 – which only shows the percentage of recycling and not whether less is going to landfill. <p>Targets - both these measures will be given profiled targets (e.g. targets will vary each quarter) to take account of seasonal trends. There will be one annual target.</p> <p>Monitoring frequency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quarterly - average based on the outturn for the three months in the quarter e.g. outturn for Quarter 1 will be based on April, May and June data. ➤ Annually - as part of the normal outturn process. <p>The service has tested these measures.</p>	
<p>Cycle paths - new measures</p>	<p>Local concerns are emerging in the district regarding the lack of cycle paths and the poor condition of some. It would not be appropriate to develop a performance indicator on this topic. However it was suggested that perhaps a question could be considered for inclusion in the residents' survey to ascertain evidence of need across the District. Once the data is available a decision can be made as to whether there is a need for a council wide response or whether the need is managed within the local community.</p>	<p>The residents' survey is being undertaken this year and 'cycle paths' could be added as an option in the list of areas available for the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Which of the things below would you say are most important in making somewhere a good place to live? ➤ Thinking about this local area, which of the things below, if any, do you think most need improving? <p>Request has been left with the Engagement and Partnerships Officer (Equalities & Consultation) to consider and share with SMG as part of the drafting of the Resident Survey questions.</p>	<p>Support the inclusion of cycle paths in the list of issues for residents to choose from in the residents' survey so that the level of need can be ascertained.</p>

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<p>Road Closures - new measures</p>	<p>An indicator to measure the speed of processing road closure applications. Concern that there have been cases across the District where the process has taken too long. They are aware that other parties as well as the council have a role to play in making the decision.</p> <p><i>What we need to know</i> - Do you have a service standard in place for this? Having researched the website the road closure form states that HCC need 6 months notice. Is this for all types of roads or does the notice vary dependent on road type? How many decisions take longer than 6 months?</p>	<p>Community Safety and Health only have a small part of dealing with road closures. They are the single point of contact for all large events. Event organisers are encouraged to notify the service of an event using an event form available online. This form is also used to ask for information on road closures. Most of the delay is because the organisers do not clearly state what they are asking for and the service has to liaise them about this. Some very simple road closures fall to the District Council to grant. Where this is the case the details are passed onto Democratic Services. Other road closures are dealt with by HCC highways who ask for 6 months notice.</p> <p>The council has no control over road closure request sent to HCC or timing, the determining criteria for us is the purpose of the closure derived from legislation.</p>	<p>Recognise that this area may not lend itself to performance indicator monitoring but would still like to scrutinise the process further due concerns with road closure applications recently submitted. Review team to take this issue back to Environment Scrutiny to consider as part of their overall work programme.</p>