

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 28 NOVEMBER 2017

QUARTERLY CORPORATE HEALTHCHECK – QUARTER 2
SEPTEMBER 2017

REPORT BY THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND
SUPPORT SERVICES

WARD (S) AFFECTED: All

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- To provide a report on finance and performance monitoring for East Herts Council for 2017/18 as at 30th September 2017.
- The net revenue budget for 2017/18 is £9.335m as set out in table 1, this is funded by Council Tax. The forecast expenditure at 30th September 2017 predicts a year end overspend of £251k. This equates to 2.7% of that budget.
- The revised capital budget for 2017/18 is £5.287m. The forecast position shows a variance of £1.573m underspend.
- There are 38 Performance Indicators reported corporately in total at Q2. Within the 28 indicators that have a target set against them, four have failed to meet their targets by varying degrees. Two results are a month in arrears due to sourcing from an external body.
- Of the 11 Performance Indicators that are trend only data;-
 - a) Five have improved compared to the previous reporting period
 - b) Five are in a worse position than the previous reporting period
 - c) One is a new indicator with no previous data to compare to.
- There are 44 corporate actions that East Herts Council committed to completing as set out within the Corporate Strategic Plan. 16 of those actions were completed within the 2017 calendar year.

<u>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE:</u> That

(A)	the projected revenue budget forecast overspend of
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	£251k in 2017/18 be noted (paragraph 2.1);
(B)	the capital budget forecast underspend of £1.573m be noted (paragraph 6.1);
(C)	the reported performance and actions for the period July 2017 to September 2017 be noted (paragraph 9); and
(D)	the comments of Performance, Audit and Governance Scrutiny Committee be received (paragraph 1.5).

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This is the finance and performance monitoring report for East Herts Council.
- 1.2 On 1st March 2017 Council approved a balanced budget for the 2017/18 financial year. This report sets out the financial position for the year to date and provides forecasts for the outturn position.
- 1.3 The Councils revenue budget is made up of 5 areas; these are shown in table 1 below. The report that follows provides details of the forecast outturn position against these areas.

Table 1: 2017/18 revenue budget

	Original Budget 2017/18	Forecast outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Total Net Cost of Services	13,945	14,225	280
Corporate Budgets Total	2,230	2,080	(150)
Net Use of Reserves	(647)	(647)	-
Funding	(6,192)	(6,071)	121
Net Revenue Spend	9,335	9,647	251
Funded by Council Tax	(9,335)	(9,335)	-
Overspend	-	-	251

- 1.4 Council approved the performance measures that would be monitored. This report sets out the year to date performance against those targets.
- 1.5 The Performance, Audit and Governance Scrutiny Committee will consider this report on 21 November 2017 and any comments will be reported verbally to the Executive.
- 1.6 This report contains the following sections and Essential Reference Papers:

REPORT SECTIONS	
2	Net Cost of Services
3	Corporate budgets
4	Reserves
5	Funding
6	Capital budgets
7	Medium Term Financial Plan
8	Debtors
9	Performance analysis
10	Corporate Actions
11	Implications/Consultations

ESSENTIAL REFERENCE PAPERS	
A	Implications/Consultations
B	Revenue budget
C	Capital Monitor
D	Debtors, aged debt profile
E	Performance monitoring
F	Corporate Action Update

2 NET COST OF SERVICES

- 2.1 The Councils net cost of services budget for 2017/18 is £13.945m. An over spend of £280k is forecast in 2017/18. Table 2 below shows this current forecast outturn position broken down by service area.

Table 2: Revenue forecast outturn

		Original Budget 2017/18	Forecast outturn	Variance
		£'000	£'000	£'000
Net Cost of Services	Chief Executive & Directors	490	498	8
	Communications, Strategy & Policy	1,000	995	(5)
	HR & Organisational Development	505	503	(2)
	Strategic Finance & Property	1,402	1,633	231
	Housing & Health	2,470	2,392	(78)
	Democratic and Legal	1,206	1,335	129
	Planning & Building Control	855	904	49
	Operations	4,312	4,295	(17)
	Shared Revenues & Benefits Service	1,694	1,701	7
	Revenues & benefits retained costs	(371)	(422)	(51)
	Housing Benefit Subsidy	(866)	(866)	-
	Shared Business & Technology Services	1,273	1,283	10
	Capital Salaries	(26)	(26)	-
	Total Net Cost of Services	13,945	14,225	280

2.2 There are a number of budgets where there is a risk of overspend or underachievement of income. Officers continue to work to reduce those funding gaps throughout the year to ensure that the final outturn position remains in budget. Initiatives currently underway include a review of all vacant posts and the necessity to fill them prior to 31st March 2018. Heads of Service have also agreed to a review of all service specific spend ensuring that all purchases are challenged and

considered essential in delivering current services. This work will also form part of the work currently being undertaken to set the 2018-19 Medium Term Financial Plan.

Details of the larger variances are shown below:

2.3 Strategic Finance and Property

2.3.1 Not unexpectedly, a current predicted overspend £231k in Strategic Finance and Property relates to the depressed rental income of Charringtons House and the fixed costs from units that are currently vacant. Officers are currently exploring alternative shorter term accommodation options to attract potential tenants.

2.4 Housing and Health

2.4.1 There is a forecast underspend of £78k across Housing and Health. This is the result of a £91k underspend arising from vacancies to posts created in the new structure being filled later than anticipated net of agency costs incurred, offset to some extent by income from taxi, licensed premises and gambling establishment licences being predicted to be 4.7% lower at year end than assumed in the annual budget, that is, just under £13k below budget.

2.5 Democratic and Legal

2.5.1 As reported previously, following revisions in work practices in order to comply with the statutory requirements of the Electoral Register and the workload and costs required to ensure compliance, current projections estimate a forecast overspend of £65k in Democratic Services. These costs will be built into the base budget for 18/19.

2.5.2 There are increased salary costs of £47k in Democratic and Legal Services due to additional staffing costs. These costs are one off and will not recur in 18/19.

2.6 Planning

2.6.1 The planning service area has recently undergone a restructure process, seeking to ensure that it is able to deliver the significant amount of development which will come forward following the adoption of the District Plan. Whilst recruitment is taking place to new posts in the service, interim staffing is being utilised to deal with some current workloads which is leading to the current predicted overspend of £25k. This is part of the overall £49k overspend shown in table 2

2.7 Operations

- 2.7.1 As reported previously, the resale price for dry recyclables, coupled with additional gate fees has had a significant impact on the income projections for 2017/18. Contaminated loads have also led to a reduced income levels. Officers are seeking to mitigate the impact of these issues by distributing leaflets to households and using pickers to sort the recyclables.
- 2.7.2 The income projected on season tickets at Bishops Stortford car parks is forecast to be £51k less than budgeted. This relates to the number of tenants currently in Charringtons House where parking has been temporarily suspended due to the creation of the new temporary car park.
- 2.7.3 There is an increase of £30k in the cleansing contract due to the requirement of additional resources to respond to fly tipping incidents. Officers are working to identify offenders and recoup costs.
- 2.7.4 Additional income of £74k is predicted relating to an increase in trade refuse business.
- 2.7.5 Hertford theatre is forecasting additional income of £23k which relates to an increase in ticket sales.

2.8 Shared Business and Technology Services

- 2.8.1 An overspend of £10k is reported against the BATS shared service. This relates to increased costs in respect of cyber security and additional software licences.

3 CORPORATE BUDGETS

- 3.1 Corporate budgets are costs and income received by the Council that are not service specific, these include income from the Council's investments, pension deficit contributions and New Homes Bonus grants to Town and Parish Councils.
- 3.2 Table 3 below shows the forecast outturn position against the corporate budgets.

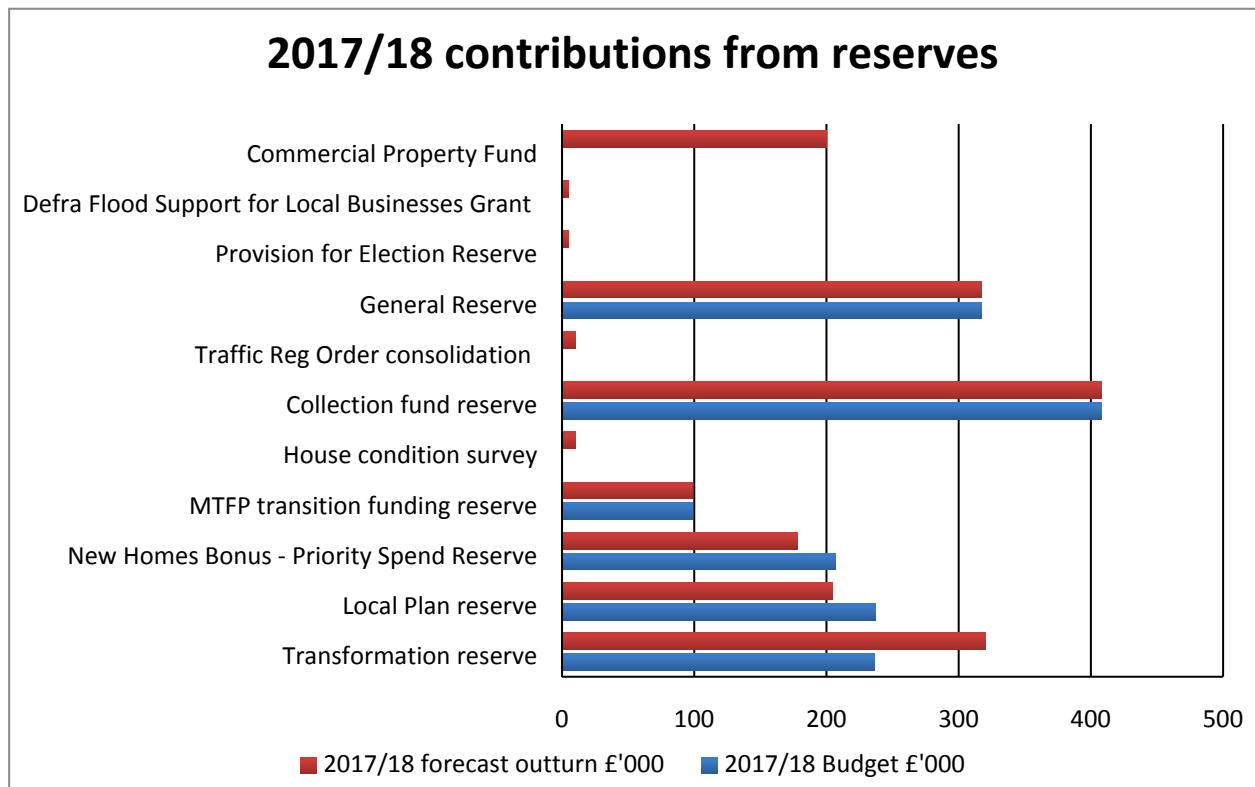
Table 3: Corporate budgets 2017/18 forecast outturn

	Original Budget 2017/18	Forecast outturn	Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000
NHB Grants to Town & Parish Council	890	890	0
NHB Priority Spend	890	890	0
Contingency Budget	150	0	(150)
Interest Payments	662	662	0
Interest & Investment Income	(1,084)	(1,084)	0
RCCO	26	26	0
Pension Fund Deficit contribution	696	696	0
Corporate Budget Total	2,230	2,080	(150)

4 RESERVES

- 4.1 The Council holds earmarked reserves to fund unpredictable financial pressures and to smooth the effect of known spending over time. Graph 1 and 2 below reflect the forecast outturn position as at 30th September 2017.
- 4.2 Funding from reserves will offset expenditure shown in section 2 of this report whilst a contribution to reserves will be shown as income in the revenue forecast outturn.

Graph 1: 2017/18 forecast contributions from reserves



4.3 As at 30th September 2017 it is forecast that there will be a total contribution from reserves of £1.756m in 2017/18 this is £252k higher than approved as part of the 2017/18 budget setting process. The significant variances are reported in the following paragraphs.

4.4 The transformation reserve was created to fund transitional staffing costs and service improvements. The total use of reserve is £84k above the 2017/18 budget, these items were agreed after the 2017/18 budget was approved at full Council. This includes:

- £75k funding for costs relating to Leisure Development project, approved in 2016/17 not included in the original 2017/18 budget.
- £10k to fund the procurement review costs
- £10k to fund additional staff costs in Community Wellbeing section
- £22k to fund the agency costs for the HR systems temporary role
- £19k to fund the employee rewards and benefits scheme 'My Rewards' provided by HR
- (£51k) reduction in the use of reserve to fund planning staff cost due to a higher estimate during the budget process.

4.5 The New Homes Bonus – Priority spend reserve was established from unspent New Homes Bonus monies and is utilised to fund items agreed by Leadership Team and Executive. The use of this reserve is £29k below budget, these items were approved after the 2017/18 budget was approved at full Council. The main items are:

- (£103k) reduction in the use of reserve to fund East Herts contribution to Public Health projects.
- (£10k) reduction in the use of reserve to fund the Wenta 'My Incubator' project as it does not provide good value for money. Officers are reviewing other providers.
- £25k for the implementation of the new financial system
- £14k to fund East Herts Digital Transformation projects.
- £49k to fund the development of the Business Improvement District project.

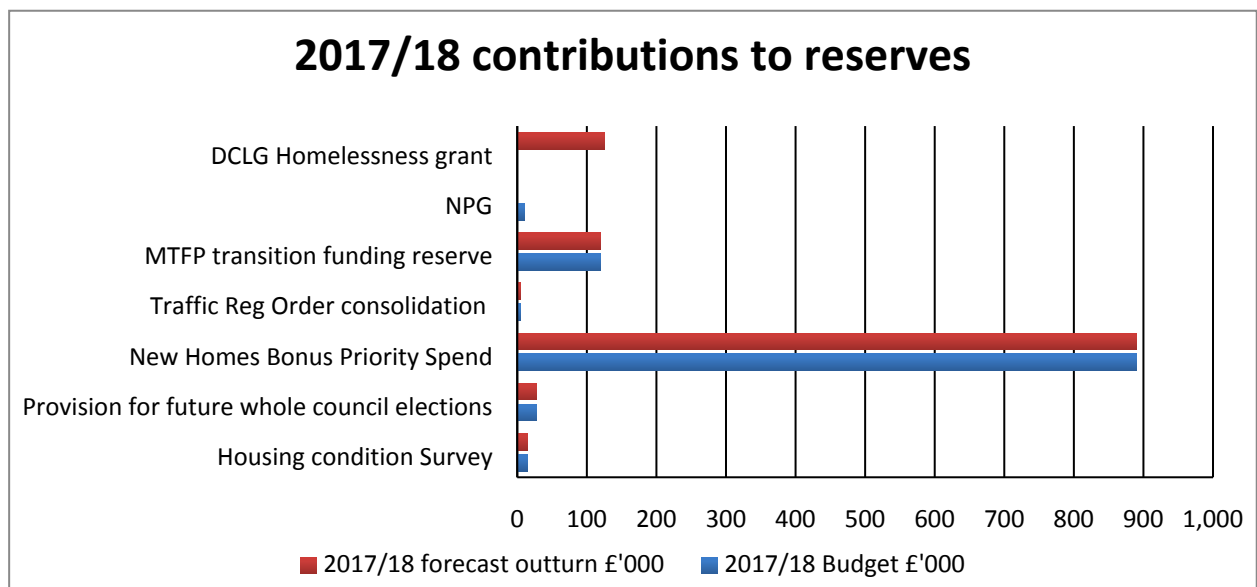
4.6 The Commercial Property Fund reserve is used to support the development of investment opportunities in commercial property. The costs funded from the reserve in 2017/18 are:

- Development of a housing company
- Cost associated with Old River Lane development including a project manager.

£200k of revenue expenditure for the above items will be funded from this reserve in 2017/18. These items were approved after the 2017/18 budget was approved at full Council in March 2017.

4.7 £240k will be used from the Housing Benefits equalisation reserve to offset the forecast variance in Housing Benefits subsidy received in 2017/18.

Graph 2: 2017/18 forecast contributions to reserves



4.8 The forecast outturn total contribution to reserves has decreased by £10k to £1.057m from the 2017/18 budgeted position. This is due to the budgeted Neighbourhood Planning Grant being utilised in 2017/18 and not transferred to reserves.

5 FUNDING

5.1 These income budgets are general and non-service specific income sources. The table below shows the value and source of these funding streams as at 30th September 2017.

Table 4: 2017/18 funding

	Original Budget 2017/18	Forecast Funding 2017/18	Variance
Council Tax	(9,335)	(9,335)	-
NDR & S31	(2,570)	(2,495)	75
Deficit on collection fund	408	454	46
RSG	(351)	(351)	-
New Homes Bonus	(3,559)	(3,559)	-
Transition Grant	(120)	(120)	-
Total Funding	(15,527)	(15,406)	121

5.2 The variance against the original budget shown above, in relation to Non Domestic Rates, is due to timing differences between the setting of the Council's budget and the statutory return to central government which forms the basis of the Councils income for 2017/18. The original budget is set before Christmas while the NNDR1 (statutory return) is submitted at the end of January. This year's budget setting was impacted by the business rates revaluation and the subsequent provisions and adjustments required in respect of business rate appeals.

5.3 Section 31 grants are those given direct from central government. The movement in the grants in the table above are to offset the impact on local government of reliefs that government has granted to business rate payers.

6 CAPITAL PROGRAMME

6.1 The total 2017/18 capital budget is £5.287m this includes a carry-forward of £1.899m underspend from 2016/17. As at 30th September 2017 there is a £1.573m underspend. Details of the movements against budget that make up this underspend can be found in the

following paragraphs.

6.2 The 2017/18 capital forecast expenditure is summarised in Table 5 below. **Essential Reference Paper C** sets out the detailed forecast on each scheme.

Table 5: Capital forecast outturn

	2017/18 Original Budget	2017/18 Revised Budget	2017/18 Total to Date	2017/18 Forecast Outturn	Variance between Forecast Outturn & Revised Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Strategic Finance & Property	315	622	340	702	80
Shared Business & Technology Services	540	1,198	350	1,022	(176)
Operations	617	784	80	561	(223)
Housing & Health	1,819	2,073	311	1,138	(935)
Planning & Building Control	97	570	180	263	(307)
Communications, Strategy & Policy	0	40	0	28	(12)
Total	3,388	5,287	1,261	3,714	(1,573)

6.3 An £80k overspend is predicted against the capital schemes that sit under the Head of Strategic Finance and Property. This includes;

- An estimated £600k for demolition of 1 The Causeway building. Work commenced on 3rd April 2017 following planning permission. This will be funded from the Capital Receipts Reserve.
- Underspend of £330k against the rolling programme for planned maintenance of operational buildings
- Underspend of £156k against the refurbishment for Charringtons House capital scheme. Planned works will be funded from revenue budgets however, should the work prove to be more extensive then additional funding maybe drawn from this budget.
- Underspend of £25k for refurbishment works to be carried out at Grange Paddocks pool. This is due to reprogramming of

maintenance works by the leisure management company.
Scheme to slip into 2018/19

- Underspend of £10k due to refurbishing pool pumps instead of replacing at Fanshawe swimming pool

6.4 An underspend of £935k is reported against the capital schemes under Housing and Health. This main area of underspend in this area is;

- Capital resources held for future social housing schemes of £821k remaining unallocated. New affordable housing is typically funded by developers through section 106 agreements. The council's resources arising from s106 commuted sums are then a secondary funding source which the council has yet to draw upon in full. It is recommended that these funds are placed in a reserve while priorities for their use are identified.

6.5 An underspend of £223k is reported against the capital schemes under Operations. These include;

- The capital budget for Castle Weir Micro Hydro Scheme remains forecast to be largely unspent (£189k). A business case review is currently underway to assess if the flood modelling analysis work, required for this scheme, can be undertaken in house, through investment in software and staff training. This business case review will be completed this year. Once this has been completed the results would need to be submitted to the Environment Agency for approval therefore scheme will not be fully completed this financial year.
- Energy grants are forecast to be underspent by £58k. A report on new home energy measures will go to Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration in December and if measures are approved this budget may be spent in this financial year

6.6 An underspend of £307k is reported against the capital schemes under the Planning service. There is a delay in the procurement phase for this project to make improvements to The Wash, Maidenhead Street & Bull Plain in Hertford. This funding will be carried forward into 2018/19.

6.7 A full review of the programme will be undertaken during Quarter 3 to ensure that projects within the programme are delivering the expected outcomes from when they were agreed. This process will help to form

the programme for 2018/19 onwards. An update on this process will be included in the Quarter Three Health check report.

7. Medium Term Financial Plan update on progress

7.1 Officers are currently undertaking the initial work for the production of the 2018/19 Medium Term Financial Plan. As the main funding contributions from Central Government disappear in 2018/19 and the uncertainties around Business Rates Retention cast doubts around Local Government funding on a year by year basis, the theme of financial sustainability becomes of greater importance. Work on a Financial Sustainability Policy and the key initiatives to support it will ensure that East Herts has a firm basis on which to develop ideas and initiatives to address future years funding gaps.

7.2 The timetable for the Medium Term Plan is shown below and sets out the engagement of all stakeholders within the organisation and the importance of a transparent, inclusive process.

Budget 2018/19 Timetable

w/c 13 November 2017	Budget Holder Challenge meetings with Finance
w/c 20 November 2017	Member briefings initially Executive and followed by all
30 November 2017	Final budget submissions & savings provisionally agreed
7 th December 2017	Informal PAG – all members to be invited
December 2017	MTFP 2018/19- 2021/22 & budget report produced
13 December 2017	Deadline for 2018/19 Budget Report to LT on 18 December 2017 to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Programme • Fees and Charges 2018/19 • Service Budgets - Forecast Outturn for 2017/18, Revenue Budget 2018/19 • Consolidated Budget Report and 2018/19 – 2021/22 Medium Term Financial Plan
18 December 2017	LT meeting for 2018/19 Budget report
3 January 2018	Deadline for 2018/19 Budget Report to Performance, Audit & Governance on 16 th January 2018:
16 January 2018	Performance, Audit & Governance meeting for 2018/19 Budget report
24 January 2018	Deadline for 2018/19 Budget Reports to Executive on 6 th February 2018:
6 February 2018	Executive meeting to agree 2018/19 Budget report
15 February 2018	Deadline for Council Tax Resolution to Council .
15 February 2018	Deadline for 2018/19 Budget report to Council
1 March 2018	Council to consider and approve the 2018/19 Budget.
1 March 2018	Council to approve the 2018/19 Council Tax.

8. DEBTORS

- 8.1 Total Outstanding debt as at 30th September 2017 is £1.45m. This is a 15% decrease from the previous quarter.
- 8.2 The outstanding debt over 120 days old totals £714k. Of this debt, and as reported previously, over 90% relates to disputed invoices where negotiations are ongoing to collect the debt owed on a complex lease arrangement for a property ground lease in Bishop's Stortford. The remainder of the debts over 120 days are invoices relating to environmental health enforcement, where a charge is held against property to pay the debt once the property is sold, or housing debts where repayments are being made with a payment plan over several months.
- 8.3 **Essential Reference Paper D** analyses the profile of aged debtors.

9. PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

Performance against targets

- 9.1 Summaries of performance can be found below however please refer to **Essential Reference Paper E** for the full performance indicator analysis. Our latest results can be found on the online browser which has been rebranded from Covalent to Pentana Performance. Members have been issued with a password to access these results, which can be found in the MIB.
- 9.2 Q2 analysis shows 38 performance indicators. These indicators demonstrate the performance against our three corporate priorities, and supporting all three priorities.
- 9.3 Three performance indicators will cease to be reported after Q2, for reasons detailed within the corporate priorities
- 9.4 **Corporate Priority 1: Improve the Health and Wellbeing of our Communities (9 performance indicators) summary**
- **MEHPI 5.13b - % of Good satisfaction (GovMetric) - telephone**

Traditionally we have very few customers who provide feedback via this channel. The automated telephone answers customers hear when they dial the Main Switchboard (01279 655261) was amended to include better advertising of this survey at the end of the call. The current volume and score includes a number of test calls to ensure each customer variation worked properly. As a result, this month's figures should not be considered valuable, but hopefully this script change will encourage greater feedback going forward.

There are also some amendments to how the following two indicators will be reported going forward:

- **QEHPI 140 - Number of over 50s participating in 'Forever Active' programme**

After review, it was decided that the figure reported would provide more value if it was cumulative over the year rather than setting a target for each quarter. As a result, across the year, we are on schedule to hit our annual target.

- **QEHPI 150 - Number of prevented homeless applications**

As above, the indicator adds more value as a cumulative figure across the year so targets have been amended to reflect this.

The one performance indicator remaining is a trend indicator (**EHPI 151 - Number of homeless households living in temporary accommodation at the end of the quarter**) which is showing a negative movement from the last quarter. Whilst the relevant team will be able to assist with providing accommodation, there are many external factors that may lead to the occurrence in the first place. This indicator is monitored closely but has been relatively consistent since monitoring began

9.5 **Corporate priority 2: Enhance the quality of people's lives (13 performance indicators summary**

- **EHPI 2.2 – Waste: missed collections per 100,000 collections of household**

Missed collections marginally missed the target of 30 again despite the dramatic improvement in August. This is under constant review and monitoring with our contractors.

There were also some amendments to collection methods:

- **QEHPI 149c – % of Affordable homes delivered on section 106 developments in Towns**

The target associated with this indicator was removed going forward to make it trend only indicator. This was because a 40% target was set across the year, so unless every housing scheme was 40% affordable, the indicator would fail by default. The 40% target is also not set by Housing and Health, it is governed by Planning Policy so cannot be changed once agreed. The indicator will now read '**QEHPI 149c% of Affordable homes delivered on section 106 developments in TOWNS against an annual 40% cumulative Planning Policy target**'. Currently, this sits at 32%

Within the three remaining trend only indicators, one was a new indicator with no previous data, one was in a better position than the previous reporting period and the remaining, **MEHPI 191 Residual household waste per household**, is a cumulative indicator across the year.

Year on year, waste per household has marginally increased but this was against 2016/17 levels which were the best observed since the indicator was reported. The kg difference year on year has decreased since the last reporting period (August) so this is an improving picture

9.6 Corporate priority 3: Enable a flourishing local economy (4 performance indicators) summary

- **QEHPI 32 - % of planned premises licencing enforcement visits due that were undertaken**

This indicator has been discontinued as the methodology for visiting changed in April from a routine schedule to a risk based / complaints based approach. Planned premises enforcement visits will no longer take place and providing a figure for this gave very little value or insight to the council. The council will continue to monitor other licencing features and manage the performance of this within the service.

The two trend only indicators both showed downward trends on the previous quarter. They provide an insight into the state of our local economy of which East Herts has some influence over, however

there are again many external factors influencing these changes.

Both of these trend only indicators (**QEHPI 11a - Number of active Businesses with their registered office in East Herts & QEHPI 11b Number of active Businesses with their registered office % and trading address in East Herts**) were provided by FAME, a business database that was funded for three years by HCC. This agreement ended in August, with the final results provided on the 15th September. Purchasing this system ourselves was not viable so East Herts will look at alternative measures of how our local economy is progressing, such as measuring vacancy rates.

9.7 Corporate priority: Supporting all priorities (12 Performance Indicators) summary

- **MEHPI 8 – % of invoices paid on time**

The target was marginally not been met this month (by 1.27%) and this is due largely to outstanding invoices from Community Safety and Health.

- **EHPI 5.1 – % of complaints resolved in 14 days or less**

As per previous quarter, 68% of complaints were resolved within 14 days (10 working days) meaning the target was narrowly missed by 2%. This indicator is being closely monitored following four failed targets across the last five quarters.

- **% of FOI cases closed in month that were closed within 20 working days or less**

The number of FOI cases closed within 20 working days failed marginally during September, achieving 85.8% against a 90% target. This was largely down to some long standing FOI cases that were closed in September but opened in previous months. Each Head of Service now receives weekly emails outlining outstanding FOI cases hence there is greater awareness and accountability

Data for one of the target indicators (**EHPI 12C -Total number of sickness absence days per FTE staff in post**) has been unavailable for a number of months due to the installation of a new HR system. The long term aim is that figures will be able to be extracted easily from this system; however, the installation of this

phase of the software has not occurred as yet. All figures will be back dated when figures become available.

The remaining four being trend only indicators. The trend indicators are all showing positive trends.

10. CORPORATE ACTIONS UPDATE

Please see Essential Reference Paper F for full details of corporate actions.

- 10.1 There are 44 corporate actions that East Herts Council committed to completing as set out within the Corporate Strategic Plan. 16 of those actions were completed within the 2017 calendar year. Of the 16 completed, seven were completed in advance of their due dates.

A further 16 of these actions are due to be completed before the end of the financial year. The remaining 12 actions are due to complete on or after April 1st 2018

- 10.3 Only two actions were overdue within the original time scales set:

10.4 Formerly Known as KA.40 “Implement the Council Environmental Crime Strategy and associated Public Space Protection Orders (PSOPs)”

The Environmental Enforcement Pilot was completed in October 2017. Litter enforcement function carried out within the Operations service only.

10.5 Formerly known as KA.30 “Provision of efficient, easy to use telephony facilities to access services and for staff to have the tools required to support efficient working”.

Project is overdue due to resource issues (staff departure). Phase 1 is on track for weekend of 21st Oct. Phase 2 is due to start end of October.

11. IMPLICATIONS/CONSULTATIONS

Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with

this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper A.**

Background papers:

None

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