

Report to	-	Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date	-	25 September 2013
Report of the	-	Executive Director of Resources
Subject	-	First Quarter Report for the Annual Performance Plan 2013-14

When exercising the scrutiny function the Committee can only make recommendations to Cabinet and has no decision making authority.

Recommendation: It be **RESOLVED:** That the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider these findings and recommend any actions to Cabinet.

Service Manager: Brenda Mason

Introduction

1. This report brings before Members a summary of the Council's performance for the first quarter of 2013-14.
2. The purpose of the report is to give Members an opportunity to scrutinise the progress towards the Council's stated aims and objectives, to scrutinise the efficiency of the Council's services and to make any necessary recommendations to Cabinet for future service delivery.

Key Results for the First Quarter of 2013-14

3. At the joint meeting of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 January 2013, Members chose a small number of measurements and set a level of service delivery for each of them. The selected set acts as a barometer of the overall performance of the authority. As requested by the Committee, the results of the set are reported below.
4. **R1 Households Prevented from Homelessness** through the action of the council.
Target: 1 in every 1,000 Rother households.
Result: 1.61 in 1,000 (Higher is better).
Between April and June the Housing Needs staff helped 71 local households considered to be vulnerable to avoid becoming homeless. For comparison purposes, this is the same number of households assisted in the same period last year. Members may recall that last year saw peak numbers of households presenting for assistance and by the end of the year the service had supported 460 families.
5. **R2 Speed of Processing Benefit Applications**, calendar days from receiving the application to the decision.

Target: 24 days to process new claims and 15 calendar days to process changes of circumstances to existing claims.

Result: 20 days for new claims and 10 days to process changes (Lower is better).

Processing times are better than the same period last year. Based on published results from all English councils, Rother's performance is better than average. The Benefits team processed 12,395 new claims and changes to existing claims, slightly fewer than the same period last year.

6. R3 Benefit Payments Paid by Local Authority Error as a Percentage of the Total Spend

Target: 0.48%

Result: 0.52% (Lower is better).

The Service Manager for Finance and Welfare reminds Members that 0.48% is the threshold level at which councils receive full subsidy back from the Government for any local authority error overpayments raised. If the Council's result is higher than 0.48% at the end of the financial year, then the Council will receive a lower subsidy payment back from the Government. At the start of the financial year we always experience a large increase in work resulting in processing delays. Processing delays are counted as a category of local authority administration error for the purpose of this indicator. As the backlog decreases we will return to the threshold level and performance will be on target for the end of the year.

7. R4 Income from Business Units owned by Rother District Council (gross)

Target: £404,790

Result: £381,723 (Higher is better).

Income was down in May, both against the forecast and compared to May 2012. In June, income improved and returned to forecasted levels.

8. R5 Income from Planning Applications Fees

Target: £102,200.

Result: £100,321 (Higher is better).

Income was higher than last year in both April and May, but lower than expected in June (see Figure 1 below). Overall, performance is much higher than last year because the Council received more applications for larger developments and the Government's increase in charges introduced last September.

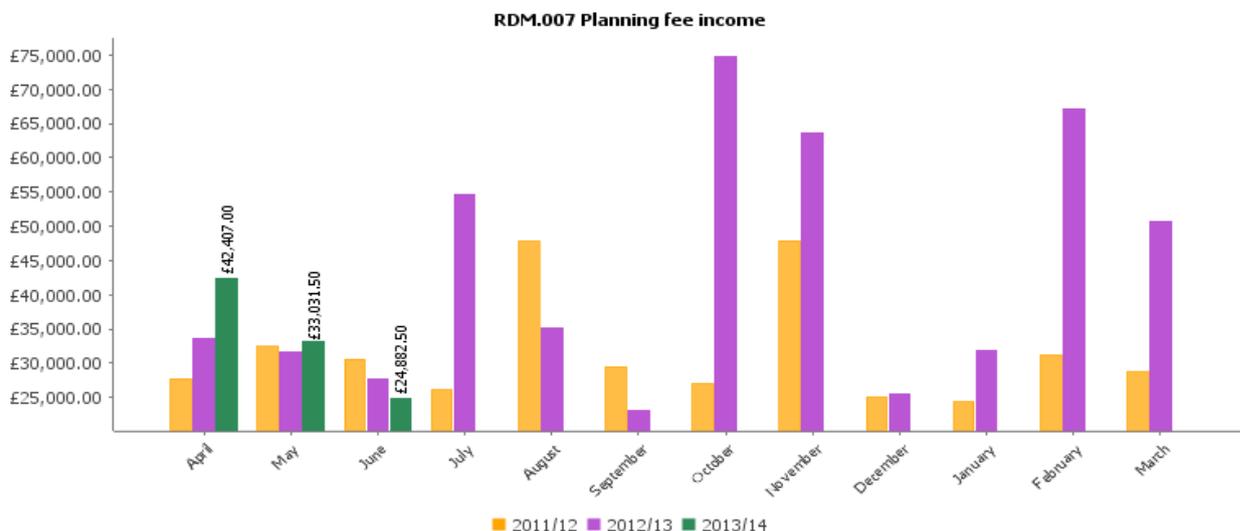


Figure 1: Planning Fee Income Each Month April 2011 - June 2013

9. **R6 Income from Building Control Applications (gross)**
Target: £108,600
Result: £102,374 (Higher is better).
Income has been steady, in the first quarter, without the peaks and troughs experienced last year. If the average income each month, £34,000, can be maintained then the end of year target should be exceeded.
10. **R7 Income from Car Parks (gross)**
Target: £314,790
Result: £314,564 (Higher is better).
The peak months for car parking income are July to September. Members will see improved performance in the second quarter report.

Other Performance Information

11. **Benefit Prosecutions and Sanctions for every 1000 Cases**
Target: 0.75 for every 1,000 cases.
Result: 0.11 in April; with zero in both May and June.
This service is delivered in partnership and managed by Hastings Borough Council. The Service Manager for Finance and Welfare reports that the Hastings and Rother Fraud Service was restructured following the manager's departure. As a result, finalising and reporting the work undertaken was delayed. The backlog of cases will be presented to the Sanctions Panel soon. The Service Manager for Finance and Welfare will monitor for a recovery in productivity in July and August. If this service's performance does not recover there will be more information in the report for the second quarter.
12. **Violent Crime, Offences Reported for every 1,000 Residents**
Target: 1.74
Result: 1.88
There were 171 violent crimes in the first quarter compared to 139 during the same period in 2012. These results suggest that the rise in violent crime, seen in Rother in 2012-13 may continue during 2013. Crime measurements are considered indicators for deprivation and the changing local economy. Two of our 3 regularly monitored measurements of crime, as priority areas for action, are showing signs of rising levels of offences (see below).
13. **Theft from Vehicles, for every 1,000 Residents**
Target: 0.64
Result: 0.72
There were 64 thefts from vehicles in the first quarter compared to 45 thefts during the same period last year. What makes this measurement particularly worthy of attention is the upward trend in theft from vehicles over the last 3 months. There were 17 thefts in April, 38 in May and 65 in June. The Community Safety officer is taking up these crime levels, their context and the implications, with Sussex Police and will prepare a report.
14. **New Homes Built (Net)**
Target: 60 a quarter on average.
Result: 9 new homes.
Although lower building rates in the first quarter are not unusual this is the lowest in-quarter result in the last 5 years (see Figure 2 overleaf) and is in the context with lower than average new home building over the previous 4 quarters.

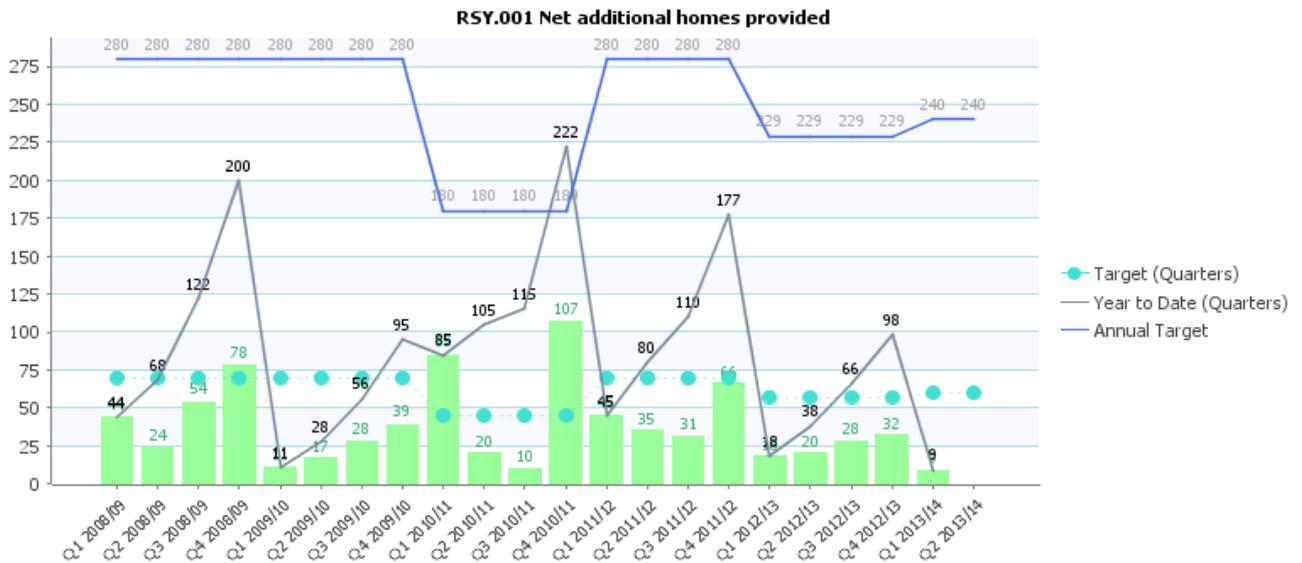


Figure 2: Net New Homes Built Each Quarter & Year, 2008 - Q1 2013

15. The Service Manager for Strategy and Planning reports that the economy continues to have a significant effect on depressing house building nationally and locally in Rother. The chart (Figure 2) of the last 5 years of net new homes in Rother shows a reduction in net new homes after the economy slows down, starting with the recession at the end of 2008. The service forecasts that the district will have lower levels of building for at least the next 2 quarters, in-line with 2012-13 and this assessment is based on the developments currently underway. However, we forecast some improvement in 6 to 12 months for two reasons. Firstly, more large developments are going on site and secondly more applications have come through the Planning Committee recently. There were 7 major development decisions made over the first quarter compared to 13 in the whole of last year. It should be noted that it can be 2 years between planning decision to completed new homes, particularly where developers can slow delivery because of a change in the economic climate.

16. Members may wish to read more on the subject of land supply and the impact of the economy in relation to the housing market in the Cabinet agenda for the meeting held on 29 July 2013 in report 7.3 Monitoring of Housing Land Supply.

Conclusion

17. Members are requested to consider this report and make recommendations to Cabinet to ensure that the Council's performance meets the level of performance that they would require in order to meet the Council's objectives.

Malcolm Johnston
Executive Director of Resources

Risk Assessment Statement

There are financial, reputational, statutory and health risks to the Council and, more importantly, the wider community if the Council does not monitor and manage its performance across all the services. This report mitigates those risks because it ensures that reporting performance to Members takes place and gives Members an opportunity to scrutinise results and make remedial recommendations.