

Bristol City Council - Performance Framework 2023/24

Background

The current and coming year will see the Council facing some significant financial challenges. This will inevitably mean that some of the things we had intended to deliver or indeed continue to deliver, will be affected and in some cases will cease or be scaled back. There will be a necessary focus on delivering the exacting programme of financial savings that have been agreed by the Mayor and Full Council. This will be a parallel focus throughout the year ahead and is reflected in the Annual Business Plan.

The Bristol City Council (BCC) [Corporate Strategy 2022-27](#), which was published during the Spring of 2022, provides a framework for our annual Business Plan*; the document setting out what we (BCC) are planning to achieve in the related municipal year. There are 7 Themes within the Corporate Strategy framework, each with 3 to 6 Priorities (32 Priorities in total). [*published on [Corporate Strategy \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)]

During the course of 2023/24 we intend to continue moving towards increased utilisation of Power BI and interactive self-serve tools for managers, in doing so enabling a more instant understanding of the data that underpins their performance. This will allow for further discussions at a Divisional/Directorate level without waiting for more formal performance reports to be submitted. This new technology should enhance and complement our existing performance reporting arrangements

One of the products which we are seeking to develop is a performance scorecard, which aims to bring together data from currently disparate systems (Finance, HR, Performance, Citizens Services, Audit, Risk and others) to provide a holistic overview of operational performance for all managers, while also assisting in the scrutiny of individual service areas at EDM and CLB. This will offer a more rounded view of performance generally, however it is to be acknowledged that this will be in addition to the more detailed reports that will continue to be submitted from each of these areas.

This document will now summarise how Bristol City Council will track how well it is performing against the Themes and Priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2022-27, and includes:

- A. An overview of the governance and performance management arrangements for 2023/24
- B. Performance reporting plans
- C. Performance metrics for the annual Business Plan

A/ Overview of performance management arrangements 2023/24

Business Plan

This is the engine room of delivery around the Corporate Strategy and is largely drawn from a combination of Service Plans, Director Summaries and the PMO pipeline.

The Business Plan comprises a specific and clearly understood range of activity and actions that BCC intend to carry out over the coming 12 months in order to deliver each of the Corporate Strategy priorities. Each priority contains a maximum of three actions to keep ambition manageable and focused. An assessment of the priorities show that many do not readily lend themselves to pure metrics, and as such a combination of actions *and/or* metrics is used to show our performance throughout and over the year. This represents an approach where the primary focus is now on actively tracking actions, alongside more traditional metrics, to demonstrate that BCC is delivering the things it has said it will.

These actions and metrics have been agreed by our senior leadership team (Corporate Leadership Board - CLB), ratified by Full Council, and will best reflect how we are progressing against our stated ambitions. All metrics listed have associated aspirational targets, which will be shown in our Targets 2023/24 document (*link when available*).

This performance framework focuses on three main component parts:

1/ City Outcomes – Corporate Strategy Theme level City Outcome Measures

2a/ Business Plan measures – Corporate Strategy Priority level Performance Metrics

2b/ Business Plan measures – Corporate Strategy Priority level Actions

1/ City Outcomes – these are generally annual indicators centred on the 7 Corporate Strategy Themes. They are primarily outcome-focused measures that are longer term in nature and slower moving, reporting annually (often in arrears) and look to assess the overall 'health of the city', as opposed to specific Council performance.

For the City Outcomes, we have set 5-year targets in line with the timeframe of the Corporate Strategy.

2/ Business Plan measures – the engine room of Corporate Strategy delivery, tracked quarterly.

As described, within each Corporate Strategy Theme sit a number of related Priorities which flow through to the annual Business Plan. Each Business Plan Priority contains up to three actions that the Council intends to deliver over the coming 12 months, and most though not all contain separate performance metrics. Several Priorities do not readily lend themselves to metrics.

A combination of tracking actions and/or performance metrics will be used to show progress throughout the year against each Theme/Priority. This blended approach includes quarterly management updates on progress against stated actions, alongside the more data-driven updates against our key performance metrics.

More detail around our Priority level measures is as follows:

a) Business Plan Priority performance metrics

These are primarily quarterly measures* centred on our Corporate Strategy Priorities, with direct data available to measure progress throughout the year. These are also the metrics the Council has more direct responsibility over, and so will be used to measure Council performance rather than the overall health of the city. *Please note that these metrics are not in place to measure Priority Actions – these Actions have their own reporting criteria (please see b) below).*

*Performance metrics will be reported quarterly where data is available; if metrics are annual (when data is only available once a year), a quarterly narrative on progress will be sought until any figure is made available.

b) Business Plan Priority Actions

Progress updates for Priority Actions will also be reported on quarterly, whilst noting that some actions may be achieved before year-end. This will provide consistent reporting on all Priorities, including those without specific quantitative metrics, and will provide a more rounded view of the Council's performance.

B/ Performance reporting

1/ Business Plan thematic focus

- a. There is a strong focus on the Corporate Strategy Themes which flow into the Business Plan, with each Theme being led by a BCC Director. Each of these Thematic Leads will work with a Performance Advisor/Business Partner through quarterly Performance Clinics, in order to both drive ambition and

to resolve/unlock issues which are impacting negatively on achieving our stated goals. Clinics should therefore be seen as the primary mechanism through which BCC scrutinises its corporate performance. Clinics also provide a more general framework within which direction and accountability in meeting the aims of the Corporate Strategy are established.

- b. Formal Performance reports, which emerge from Thematic Clinics, will then progress through the Council's pathway, beginning at the Executive Director Meetings (EDMs) before going through to Corporate Leadership Board (CLB) to agree recommendations before moving as information to Members (Cabinet Board and Scrutiny). For Directorate level EDMs, reports will focus on the measures relevant to that Directorate only, while Scrutiny Commissions will get reports based on their individual remits (more detailed information on Scrutiny is contained in section 5. below)

2/ Quarterly reporting

Managers responsible for individual Business Plan actions and performance metrics will provide quarterly updates / narrative for inclusion in the seven Themed reports. The summation of this will see Performance Advisors, working with the Director Lead (or their representative) for each Corporate Strategy Theme, host a quarterly Performance Clinic at which progress against actions and data for that Theme is reviewed. This would also extend into business challenges, solutions and use of other insight or inputs. Directors and relevant managers would sit down with advisors as "critical friends" to consider key performance issues, solve challenges and course correct if needed. Where progress is not as anticipated, plans will be put in place to draw on resource from across the wider organisation where appropriate. A brief written update on each Theme will then be prepared by the respective lead/sponsor.

3/ Annual reporting

At year end, an additional summary assessment will be published that sets out progress against all seven Themes and related Priorities, to follow shortly after the final Quarter 4 progress reports have been issued. This summary will be derived from conversations with all of the Corporate Strategy Theme Leads, where they will be asked to look back at the year and pick some pertinent points for inclusion (highlights/successes/unresolved challenges) in order for the Head of Insight Performance & Intelligence (IPI) to prepare a narrative around what this information means to BCC and for the city more generally. This annual report will then be published (either as an addendum to the following year's Business Plan or as a standalone document).

4/ Divisional 'Business as Usual' activity

It is recognised that a broad range of activity will be carried out across the Council's divisions and services that is considered "business as usual", and not directly related to our Themes and/or Priorities. This is where the implementation of the Power BI-driven performance scorecard will come into play. This will be an Officer-only performance management tool and therefore not subject to explicit scrutiny by Members or the public. It is being established to both provide essential information and business intelligence around core performance and also to support CLB and Directors in accessing more cohesive and joined-up insights into the mechanics of Divisional activity, utilising more operational and granular data to do so.

Day-to-day performance will be managed by individual Directors and their Heads of Service, supported where possible by a Performance Advisor from IPI who will act as a business partner and critical friend, helping provide constructive challenge, insight and assurance.

5/ Scrutiny Commissions

A key relationship in this process is Scrutiny. Due to the strong performance focus on the Corporate Strategy Themes, performance metrics for each Scrutiny Commission will be formally reviewed and linked to the related remit of each Commission. Currently these are tied to the Directorate structure that was in place in 2018. Performance Advisors (supported by contributions from officers in relevant services) will provide a written overview of performance in advance of the Scrutiny meetings. The Scrutiny Chair will be asked to identify key lines of enquiry to explore further at the meeting and relevant officers (or Theme lead) will then attend to update and take questions from the Scrutiny committee members.

6/ Targets

Targets help us to focus on what we want to achieve and tell us whether our objectives are being progressed as we would hope. Performance targets should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-specific).

Targets for 2023/24 will be published in July 2023 and are informed by the 2022/23 year-end results. They are agreed by CLB and will be published on our [Performance](#) page.

C/ Suite of performance measures 2023/24

The proposed suite of Business Plan measures is drawn from existing metrics, new metrics or new actions designed to monitor progress against the Corporate Strategy Themes and Priorities.

Compilation of the measures was led by the Insight, Performance and Intelligence team based on the Corporate Strategy Themes and Priorities, as well as drawing from Service Plans and Director Summaries for the coming year. These have been reviewed and updated through discussions with Managers, Directors, Cabinet leads and Scrutiny members.

Thematic City Outcomes and Priority-level performance metrics / actions are listed under each Theme and Priority in the Business Plan 2023/24 on [Corporate Strategy \(bristol.gov.uk\)](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/corporate-strategy), and will be included on the Targets 2023/24 document to be published in July 2023.