Place & Resource Scrutiny Committee

30 April 2026

2025/26 Quarter 3 Performance Report

For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council, Climate, Performance and Safeguarding

Local Councillor(s): **All**

Senior Leadership Team:
S Ford, Corporate Director, Strategy, Performance and Sustainability

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Statutory Authority: N/A

Report status: Public

1. Executive summary

1.1 This report provides the Place & Resources Scrutiny Committee with an overview of key performance indicators, trajectories and exceptions for Quarter 3 of 2025/26 (October – December 2025).

1.2 The report presents red-rated performance indicators, alongside amber indicators showing a declining trend, supported by narrative context and improvement actions.

1.3 It builds on the Quarter 2 performance report presented to the Committee on 11 December 2025 and includes progress on corrective actions, enabling the committee to track impact from Quarter 2 to Quarter 3.

1.4 Persistent areas of underperformance are explored within the body of the report, alongside recent benchmarking analysis from the Department for Transport. These insights, together with the performance dashboard, provide a rounded and meaningful basis for effective scrutiny.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the committee:

- notes the corrective actions undertaken since consideration of Quarter 2 performance data at committee on 11 December and associated performance trends.
- notes the Quarter 3 (October–December 2025) performance data available via the performance dashboard, with an accompanying exceptions extract provided for Quarter 3 (**Appendix 1 and 2)**.
- considers the performance analysis presented within the dashboard and body of this report, to inform future areas of scrutiny focus.

3. Reason for the recommendations

3.1 To support the council's commitment to robust governance and transparency, this approach:

- aligns with the council's constitution, particularly provisions relating to performance monitoring, decision-making, transparency, and democratic oversight
- promotes public transparency by ensuring performance-related information is accessible, clear, and reported consistently
- supports effective tracking and oversight of the scrutiny committee's actions and decisions, reinforcing accountability and enabling timely follow-up
- supports the council's wider performance management framework by ensuring the committee's work is integrated into quarterly reporting mechanisms

4. The report

4.1 At Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 11 December 2025, Quarter 2 (July–September 2025) performance data was considered. The committee explored red and amber rated measures, including workforce measures, operational performance within waste, parking and compliance measures linked to cyber security and DBS compliance. Actions were undertaken aimed at improving performance trends into Quarter 3.

4.2 The Place and Resources scrutiny dashboard now includes Quarter 3 (October–December 2025) performance data, alongside historic trends where available, enabling Members to interrogate key metrics and emerging issues. The dashboard is publicly accessible via the following **link**.

4.3 This report examines areas of continued underperformance from Quarter 2 into Quarter 3. Taken in turn:

Department for Transport: Local Road Maintenance Ratings

4.4 Since the previous performance report to the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, the Department for Transport (DfT) has introduced a new Local Road Maintenance Ratings system to show how effectively Local Highway Authorities (LHA) in England maintain their road network. The system uses a traffic light rating system of: Green, Amber, Red to provide simple, public insight into our performance.

4.5 This approach supports the Government's wider £7.3bn local roads funding strategy for 2026–2030 which now gives security of funding and aims to drive long term, preventative asset management.

4.6 The ratings system was created to improve public transparency around road maintenance performance, promote investment in long term preventative maintenance instead of reactive pothole repairs, and incentivise councils to adopt best practice, effective asset management, and greater network resilience. It also helps the DfT identify authorities that may require additional support or intervention. An online interactive map enables residents to compare national performance across all 154 authorities.

4.7 LHAs are scored across three core areas:

- Condition Scorecard: (Based on road condition across the network)
- Spend Scorecard: (Combined level of investment in maintenance from LHA & DfT)
- Best Practice Scorecard: (Adoption of best practices e.g., modern technologies and preventative maintenance)

4.8 Overall ratings are calculated using the three scorecards along with data from DfT official statistics. Performance across the RAG rating scores and the mandatory DfT transparency reports are used to determine our (incentive) funding allocation.

4.9 Dorset currently holds an overall Amber rating, which reflects a mixed but broadly positive performance profile. Dorset performs strongly in best practice and preventative maintenance, achieving a score of 100 for preventative maintenance and 87.9 for resurfacing red rated roads; both well above the national medians of 85 and 75 respectively and exceeding the Green thresholds. Dorset also demonstrates a well-developed strategic approach to asset management, achieving full best practice evidence scores with no penalties. This places Dorset among the stronger performers nationally in terms of governance, planning, and long-term lifecycle management.

4.10 However, Dorset’s road condition metrics, while above national medians, remain slightly below the Green rating threshold of 80 overall. Our A roads score is 84.5 (comfortably Green), but B/C roads at 74 and U roads at 73 fall short on these metrics, despite still outperforming the national median scores of 70 and 65.

4.11 These carriageway condition gaps, combined with our capital spend ratio of 67.7, which is below the national median of 80 and the Green threshold of 90, are the primary factors keeping the authority in the Amber category rather than advancing into Green. Improving the capital spend ratio is particularly significant, as it directly affects the council’s ability to demonstrate investment at the required 130% level relative to the maintenance block allocation. It should be noted this is not based on allocation of funds but actual spend reported through the transparency reports and DfT Works Done Survey.

4.12 To strengthen Dorset’s future rating and maintain its strong standing against national comparators, the council plans to prioritise targeted resurfacing and structural renewal across B, C and U roads to bring all condition metrics above 80%. The strategy also includes further expansion of our preventative maintenance programmes, with a continued emphasis on low carbon treatments and real whole-life cost efficiency to reduce dependency on reactive repairs. Aligning capital budgets to meet the required spending ratio will also be essential to unlocking maximum incentive funding due to the weighting on Metric 6 which carries the biggest influence on the overall score, with a weighting of 33.3%. Scoring well in this metric has a major impact on the final rating. The other core metrics (1, 2, 3, 4, 5a and 5b) each contribute 11.1%. Alongside these operational improvements, Dorset will continue to publish clear transparency reporting and meet any forthcoming DfT evidence requirements to retain its strong best practice score and build long term resilience into the network.

4.13 As our residents are now able to compare Dorset’s rating against other authorities through the national map, public expectations are likely to rise. Inevitably this will increase pressure on us to show strong links between our investment, best practice, and improved outcomes to maintain or enhance our current rating. This shift from the DfT is expected to bring greater scrutiny and audit focus on transparency reporting, asset management maturity, and preventative maintenance strategies. Continued, strong performance nationally and LHA investment in Dorset’s highways not only helps us secure maximum funding but also strengthens public confidence in our network.

Cyber Security

4.14 Following the Quarter 2 report we have undertaken several corrective actions to improve the data quality and reporting of cyber security training. We have produced a new internal dashboard which gives us better insight into compliance, including the ability to view whole organisational data and breakdowns by partners using our infrastructure, such as Care Dorset and some Town Councils.

4.15 More accurate establishment data has now been entered into our record management system, which is feeding the BoxPhish reporting. This follows an off-system audit via the Our Future Council programme. We are also now able to exclude those who are on long term absence, such as sickness, maternity, and career breaks. Conversations continue to consider whether data should include teams that do not use technology in their role and therefore do not pose an immediate risk to the council's network. They are currently included as part of our reporting.

4.16 Considering these actions we have now updated our compliance performance indicator so that it reports on the latest rolling 12-month position, in line with other indicators across the authority.

4.17 Using the dashboard, performance has improved since the data was provided for the report, with compliance now showing at 83.72% for the same period (January – December 2025). This identifies a potential issue with people completing courses at a later date. Compliance improves slightly to 84.38% when you remove those on long term absence, showing that sickness absence is not a significant reason for non-compliance. Once we've completed the data quality work, and if we remove those teams not using technology on our network, we expect to see compliance improve further.

4.18 For context, when considering performance since the first BoxPhish course was sent in December 2021, overall compliance stands at 89.19% of almost 160,000 courses sent to current employees in just over 4 years.

4.19 We will be working with Extended Leadership Team (ELT) colleagues, following some further analysis, to identify any patterns in the data and to improve compliance further. Initial analysis suggests that many teams are compliant, or close to compliance, with a much smaller set of teams showing very low compliance. Our immediate focus will be on working with managers of those teams to tackle this.

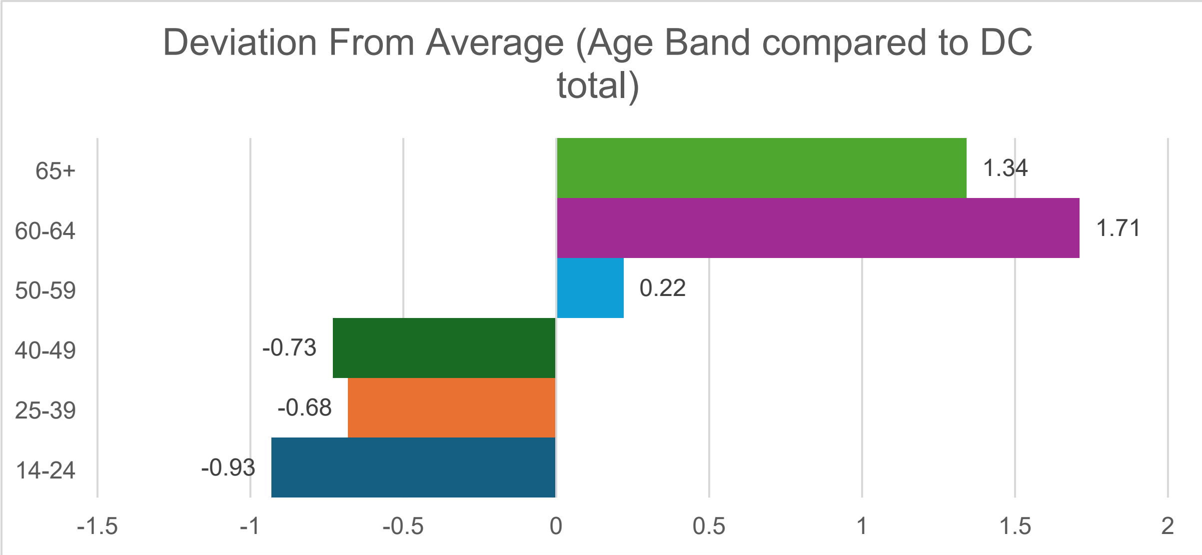
Workforce Sickness Absence

4.20 Following a slight reduction in sickness absence between March 2025 and August 2025, we have seen an increase in sickness absence over the last six months, moving from an average of 8.66 days lost to sickness absence per FTE in August 2025 to an average of 9.50 days in February 2026. This increase is largely attributable to a trend of increased long-term absence, with levels of short-term absence remaining relatively static.

4.21 The increase in long-term sickness absence correlates to a small proportion of the workforce, with most employees experiencing relatively low levels of absence, with over 82% of the workforce having less absence than average and nearly two-thirds of employees having three or less days absence over the past 12 months.

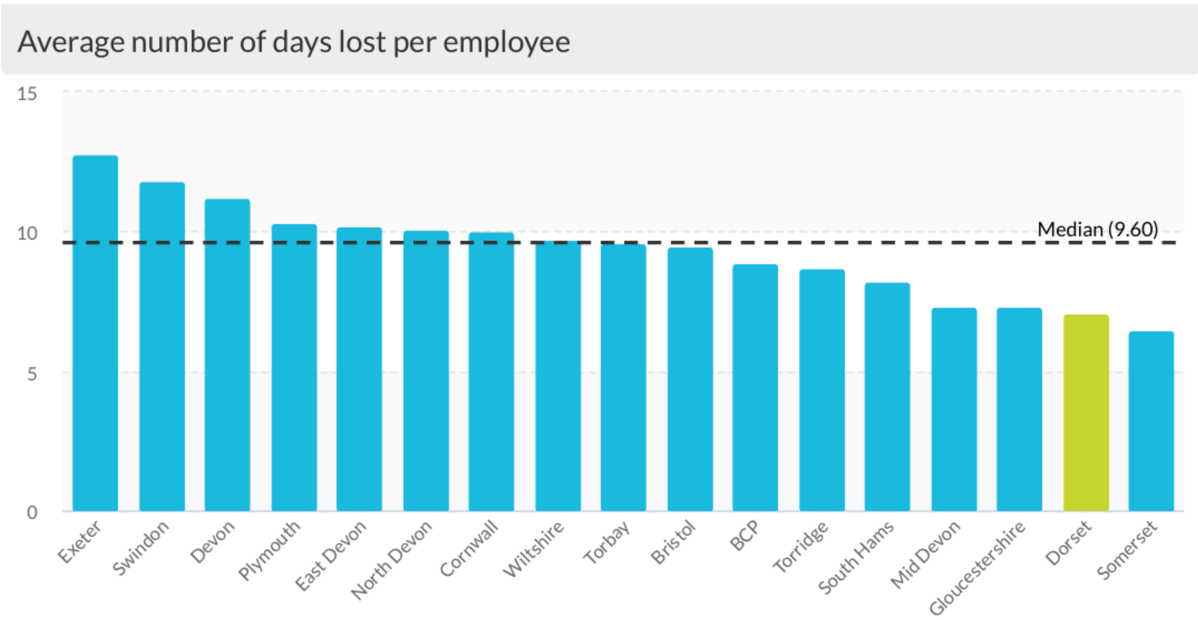
4.22 The Council's HR Advisory Team are currently taking proactive steps to reach out to managers to ensure support is in place for colleagues who are absent from work due to long-term sickness and ensure that our policies and procedures are applied consistently. This includes access to sound occupational health advice and guidance, provided by a combination of our in-house team and our external provider, Medigold, to ensure that we have clear advice on how best to support colleagues with a return to work or understand whether a return to work is unlikely, so that appropriate action can be taken.

4.23 The committee have previously asked if there is any correlation between levels of sickness absence and the age profile of our workforce. As can be seen below, our absence data does suggest that colleagues who are 50 or over are likely to have proportionately more sickness absence than younger colleagues. With just under half of the council's workforce being 50 or over, it is possible that this has an impact, however, the age profile of the council has remained static throughout 2025/26.

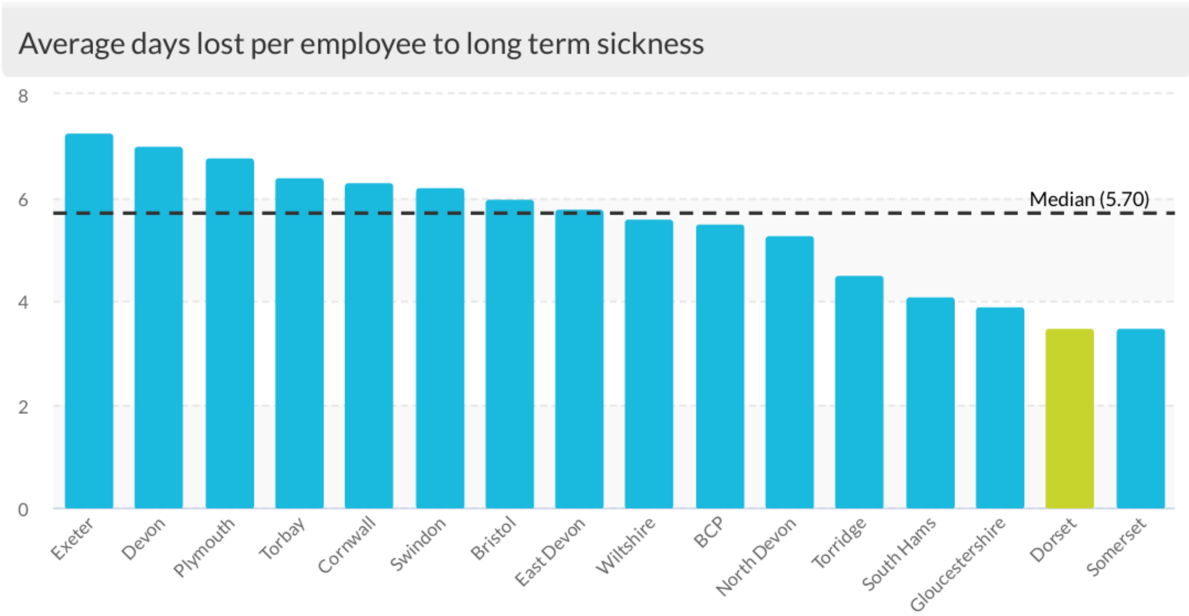


4.24 We hope to be able to provide the committee with an up-to-date view on how the council's levels of sickness absence compare to other local authorities in the region in the summer, when the latest data for 2025/26 is shared across councils.

4.25 When looking at our sickness absence levels during 2024/25, Dorset Council fell within the first quartile of all the South-West councils, as shown below:



4.26 We can also see that Dorset Council's levels of long-term sickness absence was the joint lowest of all councils in the region, so we await this year's data to see if this has changed or if all councils have experienced a similar increase in long-term absence as Dorset.



Turnover

4.27 Overall staff turnover over the last 12 months is 12.42%, with 585 leavers, of which 488 (83%) are voluntary. Voluntary turnover specifically is 10.36%, indicating that most exits are employee-initiated rather than through organisational design.

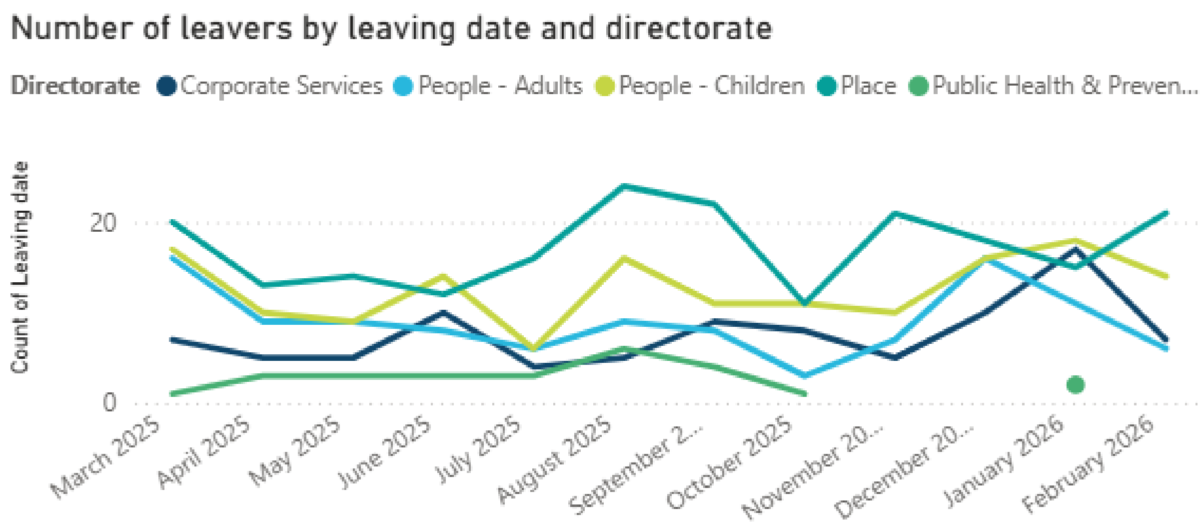
4.28 Turnover varies markedly by directorate. People – Adults has the highest turnover at 15.49% (108 leavers), followed by People – Children at 14.83% (152 leavers); Place is slightly lower at 13.10%. In contrast, Corporate Services shows a comparatively low turnover of 7.86% (92 leavers), and Public Health & Prevention sits mid-range at 10.88% (26 leavers).

4.29 Reasons for leaving are dominated by voluntary resignations, which accounted for the reason for 278 employees to leave the Council (45% of all leavers): Retirement is still significant, with 90 age retirements and 37 voluntary redundancies, suggesting a noticeable but small age-related component.

4.30 We are currently reviewing our exit interview and leaver process, to ensure that we gain more insight from this process into why colleagues are choosing to leave the Council.

4.31 As shown below, there is an ongoing, relatively stable flow of leavers across the year, with rolling-12-month leavers ranging between 544 and 611 and voluntary leavers between 443 and 494 over March 2025–February 2026. Monthly leaver counts peaked at 64 in January 2026, largely attributable to a number of voluntary redundancies associated with the implementation of the

Our Future Council programme. The peak in leavers within the Place directorate in August is largely attributed to the ending of fixed term contracts for Passenger Assistants, as demand for services often changes at the beginning of the school year in September.



Agency expenditure

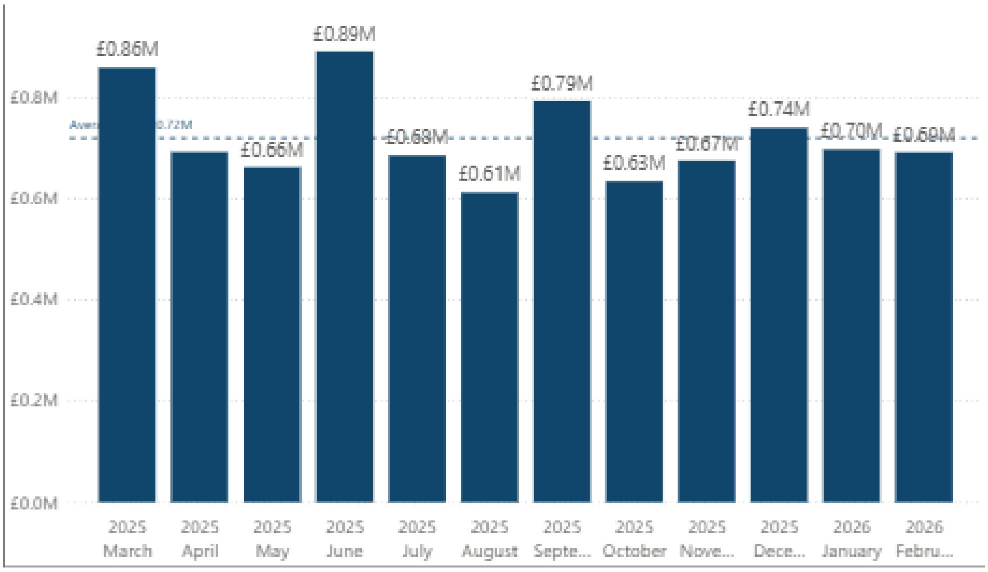
4.32 Whilst agency spend is not reported as part of the Performance Data presented to the Committee, this report provides an update to the Committee on this area, due to the potential correlation between agency spend and increased turnover and sickness absence.

4.33 Dorset Council engages most of its agency and interim workers through Connect2Dorset, a company jointly owned by Dorset Council and Kent Commercial Services Group.

4.34 Connect2Dorset was formed in April 2024, with the aim of working closely with the Council to improve the quality of agency workers, better manage supply and demand and reduce costs.

4.35 The use of agency workers and interims continues to be a key element of our workforce strategy, ensuring that we can respond to increases in demand, mitigate the impact of sickness and annual leave on the delivery of services to our communities and bring in skills and experience that we do not possess to support short term pieces of work.

4.36 As shown below, expenditure on agency workers and interims through 2025/26 has fluctuated slightly but remains relatively stable.



4.37 Nearly half of total agency spend is in the Children's Services directorate (just under £4m over the last 12 months), reflecting a challenging recruitment market for qualified Social Workers.

4.38 We also see comparatively high spend across our Waste Services (£2.78m over the last 12 months), with agency workers forming a key element of the service's resourcing model, ensuring that we have sufficient workers to keep waste collection services running to schedule.

4.39 Spend on agency workers and interims over the last 2 years has been relatively static at around £8m per year, which equates to approximately 4% of our overall pay bill. This is significantly less that previous years, where levels of spend were above £15m in 2022/23.

DBS compliance

4.40 Dorset Council sets its target for DBS compliance at 100%, underlining our commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

4.41 The processing of DBS checks can often take several weeks, so it is not uncommon for the council to allow candidates to commence their induction process with us, with an appropriate risk assessment and adjustment to duties in place to ensure that colleagues are not working alone with children or vulnerable adults. This often means that we are unable to meet our target.

4.42 We have recently commissioned SWAP to undertake an audit of our DBS processes, the results of which were made available in February. The audit confirmed that there was a reasonable level of assurance with regards to our current processes.

4.43 DBS compliance data is made available to directorates on a monthly basis, ensuring appropriate scrutiny of performance and action taken to ensure compliance.

4.44 Completion rates remain relatively high, at 99.15% compliance, performance dropped slightly at the end of Q3. This is largely attributable to 20 new starters having outstanding clearances, due to a review of DBS requirements in our Greenspace service. Risk assessments were completed for all.

Quarterly Performance Exceptions Extract 2025/26

4.45 The Quarter 3 (October–December 2025) performance data is available via the Performance Dashboard, with supporting exceptions extracts provided for Quarter 3 in **Appendices 1 and 2**.

- Appendix 1 provides Q3 red-rated indicators accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.
- Appendix 2 presents Q3 amber-rated indicators, with a worsening direction of travel, also supported by narrative and improvement actions.

Strategic Risk update

4.46 The performance dashboard incorporates strategic risks to acknowledge their critical role in shaping and influencing overall performance. Strategic risks are those that, if realised, could have the most significant impact on delivering the Council Plan or other key organisational priorities. Strategic risks may be considered by the Scrutiny Committee within the context of performance.

4.47 It is important to note that the responsibility for assessing the adequacy of risk controls and management rests with the Audit and Governance Committee, which holds the authority to make recommendations on the effectiveness of the council's risk management arrangements.

Quarter 4 Performance Report

4.48 The next performance report, presenting Quarter 4 data, will be brought to the Committee on 25 June 2026.

5. Alternative options considered

5.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not recommend any change to council policy or new action.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report; however some indicators are based on statutory returns, which the council must make to the Government.

7. Financial implications

7.1 There are no financial legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

8.1 The report does not have direct climate change implications.

9. Well-being and health implications

9.1 The report does not have direct well-being and health implications.

10. Other implications

10.1 None.

11. Risk implications

11.1 Not applicable. The report presents information on past performance and does not seek a decision.

7 12. Equalities

12.1 There are no direct equality, diversity or inclusion implications resulting from this report.

13. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Summary of Q3 performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.
- Appendix 2 - Summary of Q3 performance exceptions (Amber and ‘worsening’ RAG-rated measures) accompanied by narrative context and improvement actions.

14. Background papers

- Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee on Thursday, 11th December, 2025

15. Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the

Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).

Appendix 1: Summary of performance exceptions (red RAG-rated measures) – Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 3 2025/26 (October–December 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
People & Workforce	Average number of working days lost to long term sickness per FTE (12-month rolling data) - DC Overall	5.12	4.28	RED	RED	We continue to see an increasing level of long-term sickness across most areas, with an average of 2.15 days lost per FTE to long term sickness absence at the end of Q3 compared to 4.62 days in April 2025. Colleagues within our HR Advisory Service are proactively reaching out to managers to ensure that absences are being managed in accordance with our policy and procedure, including accessing Occupational Health advice to identify and understand how colleagues can best be supported to return to work.
People & Workforce	Average number of working days lost to sickness per FTE (12-month rolling data) - DC Overall	9.26	8.32	RED	RED	Following an initial slight reduction in sickness absence between March 2025 and August 2025, we have seen an increase in sickness absence over the last quarter, moving from an average of 8.66 days lost to per FTE in August to an average of 9.26 days in December 2025. This increase is largely attributable to a trend of increased long-term absence (see above), with levels of short-term absence remaining relatively static.
People & Workforce	Percentage of staff who have been DBS checked in job roles which require DBS clearance - DC Overall	99.15%	100%	RED	RED	Whilst completion rates remain relatively high, there was a reduction in performance at the end of Q3. This is largely attributable to 20 new starters having outstanding clearances, due to a review of DBS requirements in our Greenspace service. Risk assessments were completed for all.
ICT Operations	Percentage of employees that are	79.41%	90%	RED	GREEN	This indicator has been updated and now shows performance over the last 12 months (it previously monitored performance

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
	current with their mandatory cyber security training					over a 3-month timescale). Therefore, as it currently stands, December’s performance is not comparable to previous months, but it gives a truer reflection of compliance. A new internal dashboard has been introduced which gives us better insight into compliance (of BoxPhish courses and simulations clicked), including the ability to view whole organisational data and breakdowns by partners using our infrastructure, such as Care Dorset and some Town Councils. More accurate establishment data has now been entered into SAP, which is feeding the BoxPhish reporting. We are also now able to exclude those who are on long term absence, such as sickness, maternity, and career breaks. Conversations continue to consider whether data should include teams that do not use technology in their role and therefore do not post an immediate risk to the council's network. They are currently included as part of our reporting. Courses sent in the early part of the year have a 87% completion rate, whereas this drops to 68% in November and 60% in December, showing that courses are not completed straight away but are completed at a later date. Compliance improves to 80.23% when you remove those on long term sickness, maternity leave, or career breaks.

Appendix 2. Summary of performance exceptions (Amber and 'worsening' RAG-rated measures) – Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee, Quarter 3 2025/26 (October–December 2025)

Service Area	Indicator	Data	Target	RAG	DOT	Narrative
Legal & Democratic	Number of approaches to the LGSCO Ombudsman upheld - compared to total received (DC Overall)	4	0	AMBER	WORSENING	The Complaints Team recognises that, while the target of zero Ombudsman-upheld cases reflects our ambition for high-quality services, it remains an aspirational goal. During Q3, the Complaints function handled more than 500 formal complaints and absorbed a 20% increase in volume across directorates. Despite this, only four cases were upheld by the Ombudsman, equivalent to 0.7%. This reflects the strength of our assurance activity, early engagement with issues, and constructive challenge, which together help to resolve most cases before escalation to the Ombudsman.
People & Workforce	Number of staff RIDDOR reportable accidents - incl. schools (DC Overall)	7	5	AMBER	WORSENING	The Health and Safety team reported 7 RIDDOR reports to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on behalf of the authority in the third quarter of the year, made up of 4 from the Place Directorate and 3 from Schools. Q3 is always a higher risk time for waste, greenspace due to the nature of their work. These services have toolbox talks at the start of every winter reminding individuals of the risks and PPE is issued (safety boots) and checked to ensure suitability/serviceability. Working with Children's, adults, schools, libraries and transport to try and reduce these is an ongoing process.