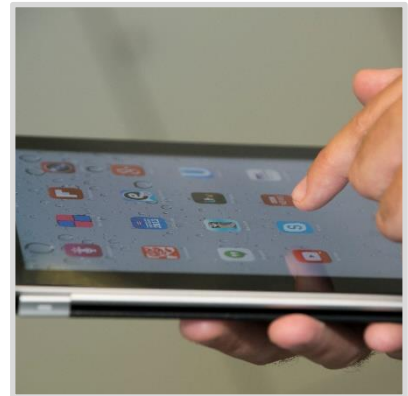


# Leader's Statement

## 2021/22



## **INTRODUCTION**

East Staffordshire Borough Council has three Corporate Priorities:

- **Value for Money Council**
- **Community Regeneration**
- **Environment and Health & Wellbeing**

The following statement sets out how the Leader and officers within this portfolio area will contribute to achieving these priorities, as well highlighting key achievements from 2020/21.

However the activities outlined in the statement are often cross-cutting themes with overlaps into other areas, and throughout the statement there may be examples of joint delivery with other Executive Members as well as managers from other sections.

Each of the statements made by the individual portfolio holders will then be collated to form the basis of East Staffordshire Borough Council's Corporate Plan for 2021/22.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2020/21**

Over the past 12 months, the Council has been working hard to deliver the objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and to continue to improve its services, whilst at the same time adapting and responding to the unprecedented challenges resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Leader's portfolio is currently on track to achieve 84% of the milestones set for 2020/21 by the end of this financial year.

Some of these achievements are highlighted in the following section.

### ***Continued to Improve our Financial Resilience***

We continued to improve financial management activities within the Council, making sure that proper arrangements are in place to ensure continued value for money and financial resilience and for this year we ensured compliance with the HMRC's VAT digitalisation requirements. We have started to review compliance against the CIPFA Financial Management Code of Practice. We undertook a comprehensive procurement exercise covering the Council's Insurance activities which delivered an annual saving of just under £50K p.a. Despite the added complexities related to the pandemic, we met the ever challenging deadlines for the preparation and audit of the Council's Statement of Accounts, and although 55% of councils didn't, we were still able to achieve the approval by the revised statutory deadline. We also achieved unqualified opinions from Grant Thornton on the Statement of Accounts as well as their assessment on the Council's ability to secure Value for Money. We played a proactive role responding to Government finance consultations and met all the deadlines regarding expenditure and income analysis required by Government as a result of the pandemic. We also set the MTFS for 2021/22 in line with new funding arrangements.

### ***Remaining a Value for Money Council through Corporate Projects, initiatives and Procurement***

Corporate support was provided to strategic projects and initiatives within other areas of the Council, including the direct management of the Leisure Operating Contract and significant support to the Town Centre Regeneration Programme. Support was also provided to the SMARTER Waste Review, the refuse collection, street cleaning and corporate facilities vehicle procurement and the grounds maintenance contract renewal. The Council's Procurement Strategy was also transformed into a Corporate Procurement Policy, which identified responsibilities, preferred approaches and when and where to seek professional advice.

### ***Improved Resilience Planning***

We undertook a review of the available Rest Centre locations for use in the event of a major incident and played a key role in the countywide Local Resilience Forum, particularly with the impacts from the February 2020 floods, Brexit implications and the Covid-19 Strategic Coordinating Group.

### ***SMARTER, Safer Digitised Services***

The Council has continued to build on its successful 'Digital' achievements to date and refreshed the Digital Strategy, with the three distinct themes of Digital Council, Digital Services and Digital Enablement, which maintains a focus on the delivery of value for money services. We also embedded the new Local Land and Property Gazetteer software.

The Council ensured that its security arrangements continued to meet the requirements of the Public Services Network (PSN) and we commenced the roll-out of our hardware refresh.

The Council also explored opportunities for income generation and shared services, particularly within ICT, and started providing strategic support to Oadby and Wigston Borough Council in order to assist them develop a new ICT strategy and their operational management approach.

### ***Human Resources***

The Council has continued to monitor staffing availability through ongoing and detailed analysis of short term sickness absence, to ensure staffing resource is optimised.

### ***Payments Team***

The Council has continued to support businesses and supply chains by continuing to promptly pay its Creditors following receipt of an invoice, providing an element of stability during this time of economic uncertainty.

### ***Legal and Assets***

Work continued to ensure that corporate projects receive the appropriate levels of legal support. The Council's assets portfolio continued to be well-managed, by carrying out works to industrial units to maintain and improve conditions.

## **OBJECTIVES FOR 2021/22**

The Council is determined to continue to build on its successes during 2020/21 as it moves forward into the 2021/22 financial year. It will continue to improve performance, service delivery and value for money through delivery of the Council's three Corporate Priorities. Achievement of these priorities will be supported by the **Leader's** portfolio through delivery of the objectives detailed in the following section. The specific performance indicators identified to measure these objectives are referenced in the paragraphs below.

### ***Successful Delivery of Elections and Implementation of Boundary Review Outcomes (Target Ref No. L01, L02, L03)***

This year the Council will continue its successful track record in its delivery of electoral services. In addition to the necessary by-elections in the Borough, this year the Council will co-ordinate the delivery of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) elections (postponed from 2020) with the County Council elections for Staffordshire, in a Covid-secure manner. Furthermore, the Council will also be taking on the Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) responsibilities for the PFCC election, which means that not only is it responsible for administering and returning our local count, the Council has the added responsibility for the administration and returning of the whole County wide election.

Taking account of the final Boundary Review outcomes, this year the Council will also prepare its systems and processes for amended boundaries and complete the necessary review of its polling places.

### ***Embracing Digital Opportunities (Target Ref No. L04, L05, L06, L07)***

Following the development of the Council's new Digital Strategy in 2020, this year will see the Council implementing a number of important aspects from the Strategy to take forward a range of digital opportunities. In particular the Council will establish a process for reviewing digital services. This process will begin by identifying an intended outcome, designing an appropriate process and considering the technology most suitable to deliver that outcome.

The Council will also maintain Gold Standard in the Geo-Place categorisation listing for all Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG) activities that the Council has control over, and implement the first phase of a project utilising Unique Property Reference Numbers (UPRNs) which will underpin and provide the structure for any address based digital services the Council develops.

The Council will also complete a feasibility study investigating the possibility of introducing a mechanism for residents to register for an online customer account, in order for information from different services and systems to be managed in one place.

***Continue to Develop Effective Communications (Target Ref No. L08, L09, L10, L11)***

The response to the challenges of the past 12 months has highlighted how effective good communications can be. This year the Council will review its PR and communications approach in order to develop a new Communications Strategy building on the successes of the past year. In addition to this, in the early part of 2021/22, the Council will also look to implement a corporate E-newsletter to allow for even more effective communication with its stakeholders which it can use to promote Council services. This will also be complemented with a regular Leader's Blog and a targeted video update from a Cabinet Member to share relevant and important messages.

***LGA Peer Review (Target Ref No. L12)***

This year the Council will again look to work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to deliver a peer review to another council to build up to hosting one in East Staffordshire this coming year.

***Improved Resilience Planning (Target Ref No. L13)***

The Council has demonstrated over the past year that it has in place a robust approach to resilience planning and business continuity. However it will be prudent to reflect on the challenges of the past year, including its experience from the Storm Dennis flooding, the Covid-19 pandemic and the EU withdrawal. The Council will complete a review of its emergency and business continuity planning approach incorporating any learning from the recent response and recovery.

***Review of Council Committees (Target Ref No. L17)***

During 2021/22 the Council will look at identifying any opportunities for improvement across its Committee structure. This could include considering Committee sizes and functions, the effectiveness of the organisation's scrutiny and overview approach or any further relevant digital opportunities.

***Continue to Improve our Financial Resilience (Target Ref No. L18, L19, L20, L21, L22)***

We will continue to proactively improve financial management activities within the Council, making sure that proper arrangements are in place to ensure continued value for money and financial resilience, and providing sound financial advice to key corporate projects, initiatives and decision making. We will update the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations once the government's review of public procurement, which is currently underway, has been completed. We will continue to ensure that the work that we carry out is done in time to meet the deadlines for the preparation, audit and approval of the Council's Statement of Accounts, we will strive to achieve unqualified auditor's opinions on this as well as for Value for Money.

Once again, we will continue to play a proactive role responding to Government finance consultations, particularly around the proposed changes to Business Rates and funding reforms and will brief elected members on the implications for the Council. We will monitor the financial impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and any associated Government support, ensuring we complete the necessary Government returns and finally we will set the MTFs for 2022/23 in line with new funding arrangements.

***ICT Business Support and Refresh (Target Ref No. L15, L16)***

We will complete the desktop hardware renewal and carry out a number of server renewals as well as ensuring we keep all business systems current. We will also carry out any cyber essential changes to PSN within the required timescales in order to maximise security. We will continue with the Business Development Project, providing technical strategy and support to OWBC.

***Investigate Cloud Services (Target Ref No. L14)***



We will carry out a review of Cloud services/applications to see where and if cost savings, security improvements or further efficiencies can be gained from remote hosting.

***Human Resources (Target Ref No. L23)***

The Council will continue to monitor staffing availability through ongoing and detailed analysis of short term sickness absence, to ensure staffing resource is optimised.

***Payments Team (Target Ref No. L24)***

The Council will continue to support businesses by promptly paying its Creditors following receipt of an invoice.

## MEASURES AND TARGETS FOR 2021/22

The Leader's portfolio has identified a number of measures and targets for 2021/22 which will contribute to the delivery of the objectives detailed above. These are set out in the following tables.

### Value for Money Council

| Statement Reference Number | Measures                                   | Target 2021/22   | Target Date    |
|----------------------------|--|--|----------------|
| L01                        | Successful Delivery of Elections           | Successfully Deliver Staffordshire County Council Elections  | May 2021       |
| L02                        | Successful Delivery of Elections           | Successfully Deliver PFCC Election as PARO with all constituent authorities submitting returns by 11 May   | May 2021       |
| L03                        | Implementation of Boundary Review Outcomes | Prepare for amended boundaries and complete Polling Place Review   | March 2022     |
| L04                        | Embracing Digital Opportunities            | Maintain GeoPlaces Gold Standard in ESBC related categories  | March 2022     |
| L05                        | Embracing Digital Opportunities            | Establish a process for reviewing digital services that begins by identifying the intended outcome, designing the process and considering the technology most suitable to deliver that outcome | September 2021 |
| L06                        | Embracing Digital Opportunities            | Implement Phase 1 of the UPRN project  | March 2022     |

| <b>Statement Reference Number</b> | <b>Measures</b>                              | <b>Target 2021/22</b>  | <b>Target Date</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------|
| L07                               | Embracing Digital Opportunities              | Complete Feasibility Study investigating the possibility of introducing online customer accounts                 | September 2021     |
| L08                               | Continue to Develop Effective Communications | Implement Corporate E-Newsletter solution  | July 2021          |
| L09                               | Continue to Develop Effective Communications | Leader's Blog live on the Council Website  | May 2021           |
| L10                               | Continue to Develop Effective Communications | New Targeted Cabinet Video Messaging commences   | May 2021           |
| L11                               | Continue to Develop Effective Communications | Develop New Communications Strategy  | December 2021      |
| L12                               | LGA Peer Review                              | Work with the LGA to deliver a peer review to another council/s to build up to hosting one in East Staffordshire | March 2022         |
| L13                               | Improved Resilience Planning                 | Complete a Review of our Emergency and Business Continuity Planning approach                                     | September 2021     |
| L14                               | Investigate Cloud Services                   | Provide report looking at the benefits/issues with Cloud Computing for ESBC.                                     | December 2021      |
| L15                               | ICT Business Support                         | Continue with strategic support to OWBC – Two update reports.  | March 2022         |

| <b>Statement Reference Number</b> | <b>Measures</b>   | <b>Target 2021/22</b>   | <b>Target Date</b>          |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|
| L16                               | ICT Business Support  | Complete Desktop refresh  | March 2022                  |
| L17                               | Review of Council Committees  | Complete a Review of Council Committee Functions                                  | December 2021               |
| L18                               | Responding to Significant Local Government Finance Changes and Assessing the Impact on the Council's Financial Position | Activities Throughout the Year Reported in Line with the Timed Responses          | March 2022                  |
| L19                               | Set the MTFS for 2022/23 onwards  | Set Budget for Council Approval   | February 2022               |
| L20                               | Having an approved Statement of Accounts  | Submit Statement of Accounts to Audit Committee by the earlier Statutory Deadline | (By the statutory deadline) |
| L21                               | Continue to Improve Financial Resilience  | Review and Refresh Financial Regulations  | March 2022                  |
| L22                               | Continue to Improve Financial Resilience  | Review and Refresh Contract Procedure Rules                                       | March 2022                  |
| L23                               | Increasing Staffing Availability Through Reduced Sickness   | Short Term Sickness Days Average:<br>To be Agreed Post Outturn                    |                             |

| Statement Reference Number | Measures                             | Target 2021/22  | Target Date |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| L24                        | Maintain Timely Payment of Creditors | <b>Average Time To Pay Creditors:</b><br>Within 10 days of receipt of invoice |             |