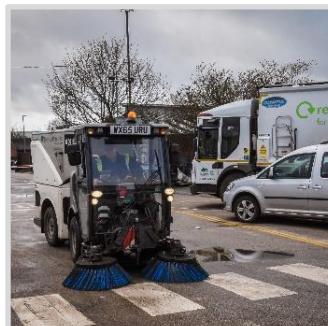


Environment & Housing

Deputy 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 Deputy Leader (Environment & Housing) 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 Environment and Housing portfolio is currently on track to achieve 90% of the milestones set for 2020/21 by the end of this financial year.

Some of these achievements are highlighted in the following section.

SMARTER Waste

We continued to work through the SMARTER Waste and SMARTER Street Cleaning initiatives, producing update reports to Cabinet as well as analysing other service delivery options, developing the case for sharing services, conducting a management reorganisation within the Waste Management and Street Cleaning area and implementing the new BARTEC Street Cleaning Module which will provide a higher level of service management information.

We concluded the strategic procurement exercise for the replacement of our refuse collection and street cleaning vehicles to take effect from when the current contract expires in October 2021. It is pleasing to note that we were able to acquire some electric vehicles as part of this procurement exercise which has enabled the Council to meet some of its Climate Change Action Plan commitments ahead of schedule. We also commenced work on the Council's Dry Recycling Service and Garden Waste contracts which expire in March 2022.

Tackling Rough Sleeping

We have successfully implemented the 'Everyone In' programme, which involves protecting rough sleepers by ensuring they have access to the facilities that enable them to adhere to public health guidance on hygiene or

isolation. This programme has been in place in one form or another for most of the year, with the majority of recipients departing into settled accommodation. This measure, in conjunction with the existing Housing First Project, Navigator service, and the new Home4Me Project, have enabled us to secure resettlement for some of the most entrenched and marginalised individuals. As a result, rough sleeping in the borough continues its impressive decline, with a figure of zero recorded at the annual rough sleeper count in 2020.

For those rough sleepers who reside in shared supported accommodation a recently launched project provides a stepping stone towards independent accommodation, offering self-contained 'Stage 2' accommodation with low level support. The six properties acquired under this capital project are to be made available to rough sleepers for the next 30 years.

Better Services to Support Homelessness

We have navigated the changing landscape of housing law during the pandemic, and wherever possible made use of the additional time to resolve housing issues and prevent homelessness. We have continued to proactively improve our service through a series of initiatives such as maximising the utilisation of self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless applicants and reducing the void turnaround to an average of six working days. We also ensured that the average time from appointment to an initial decision for homeless applicants was below the 3 day target.

The Burton and East Staffs Homeless Partnership remains strong, with the collaborative working achieved through the Partnership arrangements being key to the success of the 'Everyone In' programme and the overall reduction in rough sleeping. The Partnership decided not to proceed with the promotional activity intended for this year, but this may be revisited in the coming year.

A revised Housing Strategy

A new Housing Strategy has been adopted for the period of 2021-2025; the strategy promotes housing supply, bringing more empty homes back into use, maximising housing options for people on a low income and securing suitable housing for people with vulnerabilities. It was agreed that this would be subject to an annual review.

The East Staffordshire Housing Register is now accessed online following a new contract with our delivery partner, Trent and Dove Housing. Applicants to the Housing Register are now benefiting from the ability to make and update their applications from home at a time to suit them, as well as reduced processing times for applicants to become active on the Housing Register.

The empty homes service commissioned from Grafton UK has performed well, and achieved its targets for bringing empty homes back into use this year. Consideration will be given as to what additional measures may be appropriate where particular homes remain empty in the coming year and progress will be reported during the year.

Delivered Excellent SMARTER Services

We continued to deliver effective and efficient services across Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contacts. We had to quickly respond to the Coronavirus pandemic and had to deal with an unprecedented amount of grants and reliefs that were announced by three different Government departments and then handed over to the Council to administer. This included¹:

- Awarding £20,527,525.83 worth of Expanded Retail Discount Relief to 828 businesses
- Awarding £255,335.42 worth of Nursery Discount Relief to 21 Nurseries
- Paying a total of £1,200,000 in Local Authority Discretionary Grants to 120 businesses;
- Issuing 1,981 Small Business and Retail, Hospitality & Leisure grants totalling £23,320,000 to local ratepayers;

¹ Figures as at 23rd February 2021

- Paying out £6,093,192.66 in Local Restrictions Support Grant schemes to 667 applicants.
- Paying out £47,684.00 in Additional Restrictions Grants
- Paying out £56,000 in Christmas Support Payments to 56 local pubs
- Paying a total of £562,813.60 in Council Tax Hardship Fund payments to 3,323 working age Council Tax Reduction claimants;
- Paying £273,000 in Test and Trace Support Payments to 546 successful applicants; 420 under the main scheme and 126 under the discretionary scheme.

Of course, this was carried out whilst the teams were continuing to carry out the normal range of Council services, such as the billing and administration of Council Tax and Business Rates throughout the Borough as well as the administration of Housing Benefits, and in addition to these we went live with the new Business Rates Rate Relief Policy and also reviewed our court costs as well as updated our Recovery and Write-Off Policies.

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 **Environment and Housing** 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.

SMARTER Waste Management (Target Ref No. EH17, EH18, EH21, EH24, EH25, EH26)

We will continue to identify the most effective way to deliver services and continue to progress the potential for a shared service and complement the activity with a revised project plan and regular project updates. We will continue to respond to Government consultations on the Waste & Resources Strategy and consider impacts of any suggested changes in Government policy. We will build on the Scrutiny (CREHWB) Committee review and embark on a series of regular communication and education campaigns in order to improve the quality and quantity of recycle we collect throughout the borough.

SMARTER Street Cleaning (Target Ref No. EH19, EH20, EH23)

We will start to realise the benefits from the implementation of the Street Cleaning software and develop a new policy with new procedures for how we organise resources around litter collection, bins and street cleaning.

Strategic procurement (Target Ref No. EH14, EH15, EH16)

This year will be a particularly busy year with some significant procurement activities. These will include a new contract for the treatment of the garden waste that we collect, a collaborative procurement exercise to provide a new contract for the processing of the dry recycling material that we collect, and to support the dry recycling processing we will require a new waste transfer station contract. Building on the previous year's activities we will go live with the new vehicle contracts in order to ensure as smooth a

transfer as possible, as well as installing the new electric charging points for the smaller electric fleet.

Housing Strategy Initiatives (Target Ref No. EH27, EH28, EH29)

We will review our Housing Strategy and refresh the Housing Allocations Policy to facilitate improvements in the delivery of the Housing Register Service. The refresh will need to provide a balanced approach to prioritising housing need, taking into account changes that have been observed since the current policy was adopted in 2018, as well as streamlining the assessment of applications where possible to maximise the benefits of delivering the service digitally.

We will continue to support enforcement activity where appropriate in respect of targeted Empty Homes. The current escalating approach to tackling empty homes may need to go further in specific cases that are proving intractable; in each case the evidence will be considered by Cabinet for a decision on invoking relevant legal powers.

Continue to Deliver Better Services to Support Homelessness & Tackle Rough Sleeping (Target Ref No. EH22, EH30, EH31)

We will continue to ensure that the average time from an appointment to an initial homelessness decision is a maximum of 3 days. We will initiate a project which maximises our use of S106 commuted sums to improve the pathways out of supported accommodation, as well as further exploring opportunities to secure Social Landlord registration for voluntary sector supported accommodation providers. We will also maintain optimal utilisation of self-contained temporary accommodation for homeless applicants, as well as proactively engage with the Rough Sleeper Initiative Year Four to maximise interventions that are available.

Deliver Excellent SMARTER Services (EH01, EH02, EH02, EH04, EH05, EH06, EH07, EH08, EH09, EH10, EH11, EH12, EH13)

We will continue to deliver effective and efficient services across Revenues, Benefits and Customer Contacts, maximising income through collection rates, reducing former years' arrears and continuing to increase the collection of overpaid Housing Benefit. We will undertake a comprehensive review of the Local Council Tax Reduction

Scheme to identify any fundamental necessary changes which could be made to improve the scheme. We will implement the new Recovery and Write-Off Policy changes. In terms of SMARTER Working we will also support the Corporate Digital Strategy through the evaluation of automation within the Revenues and Benefits IT systems and carry out a review of the operations of our Customer Service Centres.

MEASURES AND TARGETS FOR 2021/22

The Environment and Housing 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 2020/21	Target Date
EH01	Continue to Maximise Income Through Effective Collection Processes	Collection Rates of Council Tax: 98% (Previously BVPI 9)	
EH02	Continue to Maximise Income Through Effective Collection Processes	Collection Rates of NNDR: 99% (Previously BVPI 10)	
EH03	Continue to Maximise Income Through Effective Collection Processes: Reduce Former Years Arrears	Former Years Arrears for Council Tax; To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH04	Continue to Maximise Income Through Effective Collection Processes: Reduce Former Years Arrears	Former Years Arrears for NNDR; To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH05	Continue to Maximise Income Through Effective Collection Processes: Reduce Former Years Arrears	Former Years Arrears for Sundry Debts; To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH06	Maintaining excellent customer access to services with face-to-face and telephony enquiries	99% of CSC and Telephony Team Enquiries Resolved at First Point of Contact	
EH07	Maintaining excellent customer access to services with face-to-face and telephony enquiries	Minimum 75% Telephony Team Calls Answered Within 10 Seconds	

Statement Reference Number	Measures	Target 2020/21	Target Date
EH08	Continue to Improve the Ways We Provide Benefits to Those Most in Need:	Time Taken to Process Benefit New Claims and Change Events (Previously NI 181) To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH09	Working Towards the Reduction of Claimant Error Housing Benefit Overpayments (HBOPs):	% of HBOPs Overpayments Recovered During the Year; % In Year HBOPs Overpayments Recovered During the Year; % of HBOPS Processed and on Payment Arrangement; To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH10	Implement the new Recovery and Write-Off Policy Changes	Revised Policy changes implemented	April 2021
EH11	Review and develop a new Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme	LCTS approved	December 2021
EH12	SMARTER Working in RBCC	Report on automation opportunities within RBCC software	December 2021
EH13	SMARTER Working in RBCC	Report on Operations of the Council's CSCs	September 2021
EH14	Strategic Procurement Activities	Dry Recycling Treatment Procurement concluded	June 2022
		Waste Transfer Station Procurement concluded	February 2022
		Garden Waste Treatment Procurement concluded	February 2022
EH15	Strategic Procurement Activities	Implementation of new operational fleet	Commencing November 2021
EH16	Strategic Procurement Activities	Installation of new electric charging points for electric fleet	TBA post award

Statement Reference Number	Measures	Target 2020/21	Target Date
EH17	Further Development of SMARTER working (Waste Collection)	90% milestones achieved on the revised Project Plan focusing on Shared Service delivery	March 2022
EH18	Further Development of SMARTER working (Waste Collection)	Initiate new recycling communication campaign post Scrutiny Review	TBA Post Scrutiny Review
EH19	Further Development of SMARTER working (Street Cleaning)	New Street Cleaning Policies	March 2022
EH20	Further Development of SMARTER working (Street Cleaning)	90% milestones achieved on the revised Project Plan	March 2022
EH21	Respond to Government (Waste) Policy Announcements	Complete responses to Government consultations in line with consultation deadlines	
EH22	Delivering Better Services to Support Homelessness	Project to maximise VFM and improve pathways out of supported housing. Project Initiation and approval of approach	Project Initiation by June 2021

Environment and Health & Wellbeing

Statement Reference Number	Measures	Target 2020/21	Target Date
EH23	Maintain Performance For Street Cleansing	Litter Detritus Graffiti Fly-posting To Be Agreed Post Outturn	

Statement Reference Number	Measures	Target 2020/21	Target Date
EH24	Maintain Performance On Recycling	Household Waste Recycled and Composted: To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH25	Maintain Performance On Waste Reduction	Residual Household Waste Per Household: To Be Agreed Post Outturn	
EH26	Minimise The Number Of Missed Bin Collections	Number Of Missed Bin Collections: Achieve 99.97% successful bin collections across the Borough	March 2022
EH27	Housing Strategy Initiatives: Review the Housing Strategy	Strategy review completed	December 2021
EH28	Housing Strategy Initiatives: Refresh the Housing Allocations Policy	Approve refreshed Allocations Policy	December 2021
EH29	Housing Strategy Initiatives: Proactively reducing the number of empty homes in the borough	Produce two performance reports during the year	March 2022
EH30	Delivering Better Services to Support Homelessness	Average time from appointment to initial decision for homeless applicants of 3 days	
EH31	Continue to Maximise Utilisation of Self Contained Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Applicants	Maintain 'Key to Key' Void Turnaround to an average of 6 working days	