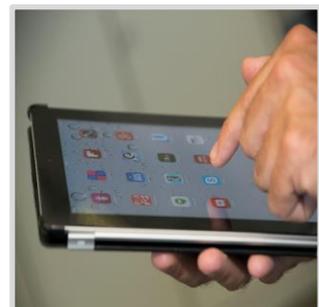
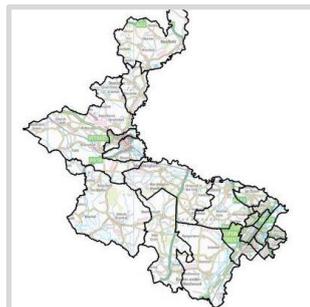
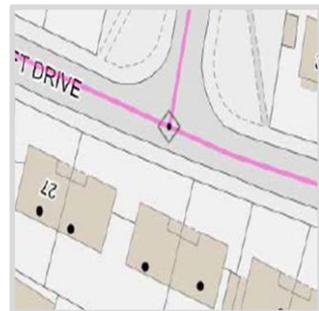




Leader's Statement

2020/21



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 of the Council and officers within this portfolio area will contribute to achieving these priorities, as well highlighting key achievements from 2019/20.

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 2020/21.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2019/20

Over the past 12 months, the Council has been working hard to improve its services and is currently on track to achieve [INSERT %] of this portfolio's milestones set for 2019/20 by the end of this financial year.

Some of these achievements are highlighted in the following section.

Continued to Improve our Financial Resilience

Despite experiencing significant reductions in Government funding since 2010, the Council has continued to deliver front line services to residents whilst also reducing the costs of delivering those services. In our most recent consultation with residents, 65% said that they were prepared to pay more to protect services. The additional Council Tax raised in 2019/20 is the equivalent of £3.62 per household and has been utilised to protect council services. We have continued to proactively improve financial management, ensuring that proper arrangements are in place to ensure value for money and effective financial resilience. The savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Strategy have been realised and we have once again achieved unqualified auditor's opinions relating to the Statement of Accounts and Value for Money.

We have met the challenging new statutory deadlines for the preparation, auditing and approval of the Council's Statement of Accounts, whilst at the same time also complying with various new technical changes.

We have continued to play a proactive role responding to Government finance consultations. This has included Business Rates Retention reforms; aligned to the full reset of the business rates baseline and the move to 75% business rates retention and the review of local authorities' "relative needs and relative resources" which is fundamental to the Government's new funding distribution methodology.

We have strengthened the Finance Team to ensure we have the right capacity, skill sets and resilience whilst we move into the new environment without the Revenue Support Grant, focussing on a greater reliance on Business Rates. The Council has commenced preparations for the roll out of HMRC's "making tax digital" reforms in advance of the local authority rollout planned for the second half of 2020.

The Council has also continued to improve Member engagement and Member knowledge through a series of financial briefings.

Refreshing our Internal Audit arrangements

During the course of the year we reviewed our internal audit arrangements and completed a procurement exercise to ensure that we continue to obtain value for money in relation to this key service, which forms an important element of our overall governance arrangements.

SMARTER, Safer Digitised Services

The Council has built on its Digital Strategy, and the refreshed website, and with a "*design once use often*" approach has worked towards developing an interface between the Agresso Finance (cash-receipting) system and MS Dynamics so that this complex relationship with requests for service and payments can both be carried out at the same time. This now will allow for transactions such as bulky waste requests to be processed and paid for, providing a seamless service for our residents. The Council has also built a number of new features into its website. A new search engine will improve the 'search experience' on the corporate website, making the most popular pages easier to find. The launch of a recycling widget allows residents to search to find out how to correctly dispose of an unwanted item.

Through the procurement of new audio equipment, the Council has added a full audio recording of each formal public meeting along with the official minutes of each meeting to the Council's website.

The Council has continued to ensure that security arrangements continue to meet the requirements of the Public Services Network (PSN). The PSN provides assurance that the Council continues to offer a safe and secure digital environment when delivering services to members of the public.

Successful Elections

The Elections Team has successfully delivered a number of elections, including the Borough and Parish elections in early May last year, as well as the European Parliamentary election held later that same month. At short notice, the team also delivered the Parliamentary General Election called in December 2019 as well as the Yoxall Ward by-election held in February, are working to deliver a further by-election for two vacant seats in the Eton Ward in late March.

Being a Value for Money Council through Corporate Projects, initiatives and Procurement

Corporate support has been provided to manage strategic projects within other areas of the Council, including the delivery of Leisure Management Contract and the Town Centre Regeneration Programme as well providing assistance to new and emerging corporate initiatives.

There has been a continuous drive for improvements with procurement and we have investigated how we can further consolidate the Council's contractors, whilst balancing the need for a healthy supply base and we have once again carried out a detailed spend analysis to see what opportunities there are for increased savings.

Human Resources

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

Legal and Assets

Work has continued to ensure that corporate projects receive the appropriate levels of legal support. The Council's assets portfolio has been well-managed, carrying out the works identified from the condition survey of the Canal Street industrial units, and commissioning a further condition survey for some of the Council's other properties to identify any repairs or improvement works which need to be carried out.

OBJECTIVES FOR 2020/21

The Council is determined to continue to build on its successes during 2019/20 as it moves forward into the 2020/21 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 of the Council's portfolio through delivery of the objectives detailed below. The specific performance indicators identified to measure these objectives are referenced in the paragraphs below.

Continue to Improve our Financial Resilience (Target Ref No. L01; L02; L03; L04; L05; L07; L08; L09; L10)

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 for this year we will ensure compliance with the HMRC's VAT digitalisation requirements, review compliance against the CIPFA Financial Management Code of Practice and review our Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules. We will also undertake a comprehensive procurement exercise covering the Council's Insurance activities as well as aiming to realise the savings identified in the MTFS and, whilst meeting the ever challenging 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 Business Rates and funding reforms and will brief elected members on the implications for the Council. We will set the MTFS for 2021/22 in line with new funding arrangements.

Completion and Implementation of the Boundary Review (Target Ref No. L19; L20)

During the forthcoming year the Council will continue to contribute to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE)'s electoral review of East Staffordshire, responding to their consultation on draft ward boundaries to help ensure that the new council wards reflect, as far as possible, the interests

and identities of communities across the borough, whilst also delivering electoral equality. Following on from the outcome of the Boundary Review it will also be necessary to complete another Polling Place Review.

Successful Elections (Target Ref No. L18)

We will hold the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) election in May 2020 and for this election we will hold the PARO (Police Area Returning Officer) responsibility which means that not only are we responsible for administering and returning our local count but we have the added responsibility for the administration and returning the whole Police-County wide election.

Being a Value for Money Council through Corporate Projects, initiatives and Procurement (Target Ref No. L06)

Corporate support will be provided to manage strategic projects within other areas of the Council, which includes the direct management of the Leisure Operating Contract, the Town Centre Regeneration Programme, the SMARTER Waste Review as well providing assistance to any new and emerging corporate initiatives.

We will also continue to provide professional procurement support where appropriate and to further develop this approach we will be updating the Council's Procurement Strategy, transforming this into a Corporate Procurement Policy, which will clearly identify responsibilities, preferred approaches and when and where to seek professional advice.

LGA Peer Review (Target Ref No. L17)

We will 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 year.

Improved Resilience Planning (Target Ref No. L16)

This year the Council will be undertaking a review of the available Rest Centre locations for use in the event of a major incident. This will ensure that

appropriate facilities continue to be available, accounting for the refreshed Multi-agency Flood Plan recently updated by the Civil Contingencies Unit.

SMARTER, Safer Digitised Services (Target Ref No. L11; L12; L13; L14; L15)

The Council will continue to build on its Digital Strategy, which will be refreshed during the year. Our work will include improvements to the Local Land and Property Gazetteer, fully embedding the newly procured gazetteer software. This will include harmonising property references, and achieving the Gold Standard of the Geo-Place categorisation listing for all those activities that the Council has control over. As part of the Digital Strategy we will also investigate the feasibility of a Council App, what that could consist of and how that could operate.

The Council will ensure that security arrangements continue to meet the requirements of the Public Services Network (PSN), or any replacement standard, which provides assurance that the Council continues to offer a safe and secure digital environment when delivering services to members of the public. In order to support this we will procure and commence roll-out of our hardware refresh during the first quarter 2020/21.

The Council will also explore further opportunities for income generation and shared services, particularly within ICT and bring forward a report during the first quarter 2020/21 which details a proposal and way forward.

Human Resources (Target Ref No. L21)

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. L22)

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

Legal and Assets (Target Ref No. L23; L24)

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

MEASURES AND TARGETS FOR 2020/21

The Leader of the Council's portfolio has identified a number of measures and targets for 2020/21 which will contribute to the delivery of the objectives detailed above. These are set out in the following tables.

Value for Money Council

Ref	Measures	Target 2020/21
L01	Continue to Improve Financial Resilience	Compliance with HMRC VAT Digitalisation Requirements (October 2020)
L02	Continue to Improve Financial Resilience	Review compliance against CIPFA FM Code of Practice (December 2020)
L03	Continue to Improve Financial Resilience	Review and Refresh Financial Regulations (March 2021)
L04	Continue to Improve Financial Resilience	Review and Refresh Contract Procedure Rules (March 2021)
L05	Continue to Improve Financial Resilience	Undertake a Procurement Exercise for the Council's Insurance and related support (October 2020)
L06	Continue to Improve Financial Resilience	Develop Procurement Policy (June 2020)

Ref	Measures	Target 2020/21
L07	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 2021)
L08	Set the MTFS for 2021/22 onwards	Set Budget for Council Approval (February 2021)
L09	Savings targets for 2020/21	Achieve Savings Targets as Stated in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (March 2021)
L10	Having an approved Statement of Accounts	Submit Statement of Accounts to Audit Committee by the earlier Statutory Deadline (July 2020)
L11	Prepare for a Corporate ICT refresh	Commence Desktop Hardware Renewal (June 2020)
L12	Explore opportunities for shared service/income generation	Report on ICT income generation (June 2020)
L13	Continuing to digitise SMARTER services	Digital Strategy Refreshed and approved (September 2020)
L14	Continuing to digitise SMARTER services	80% of revised Digital Strategy targets achieved (March 2021)

Ref	Measures	Target 2020/21
L15	Continuing to digitise SMARTER services	GeoPlaces Gold Standard in ESBC related categories (March 2021)
L16	Improved Resilience Planning	Review of Rest Centres Complete (March 2021)
L17	LGA Peer Review	Work with the LGA to deliver a peer review to another council to build up to hosting one in East Staffordshire in October 2020

Community Regeneration

Ref	Measures	Target 2020/21
L18	Successfully deliver local elections	Successful PFCC Election as PARO with all constituent authorities submitting returns by 11 May. (May 2020)
L19	Proactively Supporting the Boundary Review of East Staffordshire	Respond to Boundary Review Consultation in line with LGBCE timetable
L20	Proactively Supporting the Boundary Review of East Staffordshire	Prepare for Polling Place Review following completion of Boundary Review (March 2021)
L21	Increasing Staffing Availability Through Reduced Sickness	Short Term Sickness Days Average: <i>To be Agreed Post Outturn</i>
L22	Improve On The Average Time To Pay Creditors	Average Time To Pay Creditors: <i>To be Agreed Post Outturn</i>

Ref	Measures	Target 2020/21
L23	Legal and Assets	Commission a condition survey of the Council's industrial units at Centrum 100 Business Park (September 2020)
L24	Legal and Assets	Carry out works to 8 of the Council's commercial properties, as identified in the condition survey (March 2021)