

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

ANNUAL REVIEW 2020-21: OPERATIONS

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To present an annual review against the Council Plan 2018-21 in the context of the COVID-19 response and mid-term recovery plan.
- 1.2 The report provides an overview of performance for the year and achievement against the ambitions, goals and priorities of the council plan.
- 1.3 It also informs cabinet of the work undertaken across the service to support the response to the pandemic and contribution to the COVID-19 mid-term recovery plan priorities.
- 1.4 As part of the next phase of strategic planning the report highlights areas of focus for 2021-22 and beyond.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Council Plan 2018-21 sets the strategic framework for the operational delivery of council functions. This report demonstrates the activity and performance across the Operations area that has contributed to the strategic ambitions and priorities.
- 2.2 The operating environment during 2020-21 has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the report outlines how we have reacted, responded and adjusted our responsibilities in implementation of government guidelines and to ensure business continuity of council business.
- 2.3 The Council's approach throughout this period have been rooted in the values, principles and ambitions of the council plan, and furthered through the strong partnerships, one Council approach, excellent assurance, and financial practice, framed under the following priorities:

- keeping staff and residents safe and well
- protecting the most vulnerable
- protecting the local economy
- enabling communities to remain resilient

2.4 The diverse functions delivered by staff within the Operations area have largely continued throughout the pandemic. Swift adaptations to systems, processes and professional practice, in a rapidly changing operational landscape enabled continuity of services for residents and the council whilst ensuring organisational assurance and sustainability. Key headlines contributing to the Council Plan and COVID-19 priorities include:

2.4.1 **Well Led: Business Continuity** – business has continued across all functions to ensure that the council operates legally, internal controls remain robust, assurance processes are in place, whilst simultaneously adapting and supporting the overall COVID-19 response. Staff are continuing to deliver for the council and residents by making swift adaptations to systems, processes and professional practice to ensure continuity:

- Council buildings remained 'Covid Secure' ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff and the public with the Corporate Landlord function processing more than 155 approvals for buildings to reopen.
- As part of the council's response to managing the pandemic, we mobilised covid secure vaccine centres and lateral flow test centres.
- We supported the Coronavirus outbreak management and prevention work within high-risk business settings to reduce transmission. Businesses have welcomed us into their premises, valued our expertise and recognised the role that regulation can play in supporting business to thrive.
- We kept people safe and business operating through the distribution of 670,000 items of PPE to council staff and external organisations.
- We delivered PPE to schools, nurseries and care settings to support the wider community response.
- We enabled staff to work at home by delivering IT equipment.
- Bereavement Services ensured safe funerals continued throughout the pandemic with positive feedback such as many, many heartfelt thanks.
- We helped businesses to navigate the legal requirements to ensure they were Covid secure including:
 - Providing Covid secure advice to 1,320 premises.
 - Visiting 158 premises following the receipt of complaints.
 - Undertaking 2,268 Covid surveillance visits at food retail premises and hospitality venues.
 - Contacted 1,678 business to ensure Legionella prevention measures were conducted.

- Recruited Covid Prevention Assistants to monitor compliance and advise 5,950 businesses.

2.4.2 **Well Led: Transformation** – while reacting and responding to the pandemic has been a significant factor, the drive to transform and develop the way we operate has continued:

- Enhanced ways in which residents and businesses transact with the council digitally, including:
 - An appointment based bulky item collection service to improve service user experience.
- We challenged physical, structural, social and personal barriers to obtaining and maintaining secure quality housing through the creation of a Strategic Housing Partnership.
- We keep the wheels turning in the delivery of council services, contributing to service redesign through the procurement of a modern fleet. We inspect and maintain our fleet to keep our workforce and the public safe.

2.4.3 **Well Led: Financial Resilience and Sustainability** – we have continued to safeguard public funds to ensure that they are available and used for their intended purpose:

- There have been no challenges to procurement activity. Contracts let include the Construction and Highways Professional Services Framework, Highways Labour and Street Lighting Services and Works, the Northern Junction, Demand Responsive Transport and Waste Materials Contracts.

2.4.4 **Well Led: Governance and Assurance** – we have improved and maintained high standards and performance:

- Despite the pandemic customer standards have been maintained with overall complaints across the service reducing by approximately 40%.

2.4.5 **Keeping People Safe and Well:**

- Road safety improved in 2020 with an 18% reduction in the number of people injured on our areas roads compared to 2018 and 2019.
- We perform better than average on satisfaction levels for road safety locally (Quartile 1) – National Highways & Transport Public Satisfaction Survey. Our investment and prioritisation in the unclassified road network has delivered improved standards with roads needing maintenance reducing from 32% in 2017/18 to 21% in 2020/21.
- Our highway maintenance services compare well with the National Highways & Transport Public Satisfaction Survey Average of 50%.
- We kept North Lincolnshire connected and road users safe during the winter spreading 5,500 tonnes of salt over 87 network treatments, driving in excess of 33,000 miles.

- We commenced our new in-house recycling service collecting increased amounts of recycling from residents during lockdown.
- We maintained kerbside waste and recycling collection rates in excess of 99.89%.
- We were one of the 10% of councils who delivered an enhanced Household Recycling Centre (HRC's) offer, keeping the sites open to the public whilst keeping residents safe with social distancing measures in place.
- We are conserving our natural resources by reusing, recycling and composting 54% of household waste and are in the top quartile nationally (as at quarter 3).
- We actively choose to minimise the amount of waste landfilled and we remain in the top quartile nationally (as at quarter 3).
- We improved outcomes for our long-term homeless clients through the 'Everyone in Programme', helping 175 people remain safe and well. We maximised external funding programmes to repurpose long term empty properties to create future sustainable accommodation.
- We worked with people at risk of homelessness and prevented more than 700 cases of homelessness.
- We enhanced our green spaces, including Sheffield Park to enable people to connect and improve wellbeing, with 55 customers sending compliments about the park in a 3-week period. Our improvements included new equipment, disability friendly features, a volunteer presence, community links, and more sustainable planting and horticulture including the largest park meadow planting in the County.
- We facilitated the Crosby Memorial Garden improvement project with input from the local school, UTC, community groups, volunteers, and a range of other partners to provide a safer green space for the community.
- We worked with volunteers and our partners on environmental initiatives to improve air quality and wellbeing resulting in 25,000 new trees planted as part of the Northern Forest Project.
- We have created cleaner and greener spaces through a combination of targeted enforcement and increased community engagement on voluntary litter picking activity.
- We enabled residents to access the outdoors and travel to work safely by investing in cycle pathways and promoted Cycle Lincolnshire locally to improve health and well-being and reduce carbon emissions in North Lincolnshire.
- We supported clinically extremely vulnerable people by collecting and delivering grocery bags and providing a laundry service.
- Working with colleagues in Learning, Skills and Culture we have kept children and students connected to education through 'safe' school transport arrangements.

- We supported the education of children by delivering 100 meals each week to children during lockdown.

2.4.6 **Enabling Resilient and Flourishing Communities:**

- We provided greater choice to students in how they travel by introducing a new post-16 grant scheme in partnership with colleges to improve connectivity and enable access to education.
- We improved connectivity across North Lincolnshire and improved travel options for customers through the introduction of the new “Just Go” demand responsive transport enabling people to book via an APP.

2.4.7 **Enabling Economic Growth and Renewal:**

- We successfully devolved operational services to all Town and Parish Councils putting decision making at the heart of communities.
- We support regeneration through the capital delivery program including the demolition of the former market site, Northern Junction, Cambridge House and Community Hubs.

2.4.8 **COVID Recovery Plan**

- We will continue to review services to enable us to respond with agility to emerging issues.
- We will continue to align public protection work around the changing landscape around the re-opening roadmap.
- In response to the national roadmap, we will ensure safe spaces and facilities for the public and workforce.
- Continue to work with communities to ensure clean environments to create a feeling of pride and belonging.

2.5 Based on the review of 2020-21 and current position the following areas have been identified for development/action/risk:

- Fly tipping and waste enforcement – nationally increased awareness around fly tipping has created more concerns across North Lincolnshire which are being addressed via a range of proactive enforcement initiatives.
- Following a review of the evidence base for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy we will continue to challenge physical, structural, social and personal barriers to obtaining and maintaining secure quality housing through the Strategic Housing Partnership to improve outcomes for vulnerable people.
- The Integrated Transport Plan will reflect changes to priorities and programmes as a result of the pandemic and government policy on aspects such as active travel and carbon neutral considerations. e.g. active travel/carbon neutral considerations are being built into the Integrated Transport Plan.
- Continue to use the apprenticeship programme to recruit and develop staff in key areas.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Cabinet are asked to consider the report and note the contribution made to the Council Plan strategic ambitions and response made to date to the COVID-19 pandemic and mid-term recovery.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 The core functions across Operations have been effectively maintained and a range of systems and processes updated to enable efficient and agile operational delivery and improved customer experience.

4.2 The positive working practices that have been successfully embedded throughout this period will be considered and built on as part of the next phase of strategic planning for the council.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

5.1 At year end, Operations has an overall underspend of £600K, which is net of £2m in COVID grants now allocated to services.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

6.1 National advice and guidance has been incorporated into the local response to the pandemic as it has become available. The enactment of the Coronavirus Act 2020 led to certain relaxations of statutory requirements and the introduction of new powers and statutory instruments.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

7.1 Not applicable for the purposes of this report.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

8.1 Not applicable for the purposes of this report.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Cabinet notes the contribution made to the Council Plan strategic ambitions and response made to date to the COVID-19 pandemic and mid-term recovery as outlined in the report.

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None