

## **East Herts Council Report**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date of meeting:** 3 November 2020

**Report by:** Councillor Geoff Williamson, Executive Member for Financial Sustainability

**Report title:** Corporate Plan Update

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Summary** – This report provides an update on progress towards meeting the actions and targets set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan, “East Herts: A Place to Grow”.

**RECOMMENDATION FOR** Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

**a)** That the progress to date be noted.

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

1.1 N/A

#### **2.0 Background**

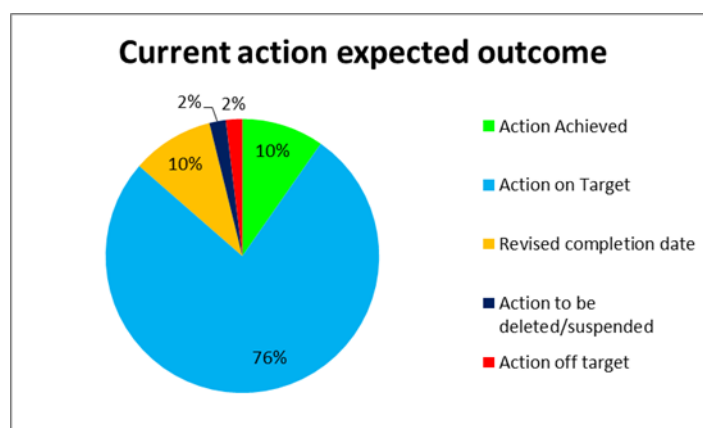
2.1 The Corporate Plan, “East Herts: A Place to Grow” sets out the priorities East Herts Council wants to achieve between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2023. The plan contains four themes:

- Sustainability at the heart of everything we do
- Enabling communities
- Encouraging economic growth
- Digital by design

- 2.2 Under each theme is a set of actions and performance measures outlining how the vision will be achieved full details of which can be found here:  
<https://www.eastherts.gov.uk/about-east-herts-0/vision-and-corporate-priorities>
- 2.3 This report details progress made over the period 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Appendix A contains a progress update on each of the actions and Appendix B contains a progress update on each of the performance indicators.
- 2.4 It is worth noting that the impact of Covid-19 has been significant in terms of council actions and priorities. Since the plan was agreed in early 2020 new and unforeseen challenges and issues have arisen. Where possible the council has continued to deliver against original priorities but in some instances these have had to be reconsidered. As part of the overall budget setting process the corporate plan will be refreshed to reflect the new reality.

### 3.0 Summary of progress against actions

- 3.1 The following table gives a summary of expected outcomes against all the actions in the corporate plan:



- 3.2 The below is an overview of actions that have progressed well or have been completed up to the end of quarter 2.

- **Enabling communities: grow the East Herts Lottery.** Despite the district response to COVID19, the projected income for the Lottery has increased steadily over quarter 2. From July to September 2020, the 12 month forecast has increased from £37 034 to £41, 464. Over Quarter 2 2020/21, the number of supporters has increased from 635 to 689 and the number of good causes that have signed up to the lottery has increased from 90 to 93.
- **Enabling communities: grow our digital communication channels.** There has been a steady increase in the number of followers/subscribers to our social media accounts. The increase in following is hopefully due to more engaging/interactive content as well the public being more interested in council services since Covid-19 restrictions were imposed. Generally speaking digital engagement has increased significantly across the whole population since the end of March (in terms of on-line retail and communication) and this is reflected in our social media followings.
- **Enabling communities: deliver the £20m investment in Hertford Theatre.** The project has just completed RIBA stage 3. Consultation took place in September and a planning application is due to be submitted in November. Construction is scheduled to commence in August 2021.
- **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do: draw up a carbon assessment tool** to be used to assess all council projects. This action is complete and the tool will be used to assess the carbon impact of council projects.
- **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do: amend procurement regulations to explicitly include consideration of carbon footprint.** Amendments to the council's procurement regulations have been approved and implemented.
- **Digital by design: undertake training on complaints handling.** Training with champions and other members of

staff has been undertaken over zoom. Quarter 2 performance data indicates there has been improvement in both the recording and timeliness of complaint handling

3.3 The below is an overview of some actions that have not progressed as well up to the end of quarter 2.

- **Encourage economic growth: Launchpad.** As the Launchpad was closed for 4 months we did not receive any income from the facility nor we able to market the service to new users. However since we re-opening in July use has been steadily increasing and we expect October income to be similar to pre Covid levels. There has been an increase in enquiries from start-up businesses and people who are no longer able to travel into London to work
- **Sustainability at the heart of everything we do: run electric vehicle roadshows and demonstrations** and two climate change film festivals in Hertford and Bishops Stortford. The Bishops Stortford event is not achievable for 2020 due to ongoing Covid 19 restrictions. This has been moved to early spring 2021 with a date to be confirmed by the local group leading on the Eco Festival. Hertford Arts Hub have expressed interest in looking at running a similar Hertford event also in 2021.
- **Digital by design: improve customer journey and self-service in Wallfields reception.** Design work was commissioned in February for this project however as receptions have been closed this work has been put on hold. Although receptions are now partially re-open we are assessing the overall office and front of house requirements for the 'new normal' and it is unlikely we will return to the old operating model of a walk-in service. In the meantime we have put an appointment booking service in place for customers to either receive a call back from a council officer or use a PC/ phone where they do

not have access to one themselves.

## 4.0 Summary of performance

4.1 Below is an overview of some indicators that have performed well up to the end of quarter 2.

- **Encouraging economic growth: percentage of planning applications that were processed and dealt with in a timely manner.** Although there was a minor decrease in performance from quarter 1 due to additional applications, both major and minor planning applications were dealt with in a timely manner and this PI sits well above target. Three out of four major planning applications were dealt with in less than thirteen weeks and 28 out of 30 minor planning applications were dealt with in less than 8 weeks.
- **Enabling communities: number of social media followers and likes;** email subscribers to network and press favourability score. Our number of followers and likes on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram has steadily increased over the last quarter with more customers using these platforms for updates and information. It is likely that this is partially the result of many residents moving to greater use of digital platforms as part of the Covid-19 restrictions. Quarter 2 has also seen a steady increase in the number of email subscribers to our network. Our press favourability score has increased this quarter following positive coverage on the council's major projects, sustainability initiatives and coronavirus service updates.
- **Enabling communities: number of unique clients supported through the East Herts Social Prescribing Service.** Despite the lockdown, and with the majority of patient appointments now restricted to mainly telephone calls, the number of GP/Health Professional referrals sent

to our social prescribing service continues to be received and supported at a steady pace.

- **Digital by design: percentage of stage 1 complaints resolved within 10 working days or less.** There were 66 stage one complaints out of a total of 48 resolved within 10 working days over quarter 2 which keeps this above the performance target of 70%. As mentioned above the actions taken to improve our complaints performance is making a difference. A full report on complaints will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny on 3<sup>rd</sup> November.
- **Digital by design: percentage of good satisfaction through GovMetric emails.** There was a total of 119 ratings over quarter 2, of which 94 were green, 9 amber and 16 red. This service was only launched in April and the target was set at 80% so it is encouraging to see are within target, particularly when no face to face services have been available. Although emails and webforms as a proportion of contact has dipped slightly since the start of the year it is positive to know that customers generally rate their interaction with the council as positive.

4.2 Below is an overview of some indicators that did not perform to target over quarter 2

- **Enabling Communities: Time taken to process housing benefit new claims and change events.** The time taken to process claims has gradually increased over the last quarter. COVID 19 actions (including awarding £29m in grants and £18m in business rate reliefs) have meant additional, unplanned work for the revenues and benefits service which has contributed to this slight decline in performance. However it remains well within target
- **Digital by design: percentage of Govmetric good satisfaction ratings on website.** Website satisfaction dropped to 18% in September and only 11 ratings were received. This is incredibly disappointing. Over previous

quarters, we achieved on average over 100 ratings which are usually in the region of 50% satisfaction. We have implemented changes to the Govmetric widget so it is more visible to users to try and encourage feedback. Of the 9 poor ratings, 7 were given during a short period in which the revenue and benefits system was down and these related to not being able to access accounts. The system is hosted externally and we have no control over its downtime.

- **Digital by Design: percentage of member enquiries responded to within 10 working days.** 40% (19 of 48) of member enquiries were responded to within 10 working days. This is a recently launched service however performance is poor. This has been discussed at Leadership Team and all managers reminded of the importance of responding to Member queries in a timely manner.

4.3 As well as the appendices all latest data can be found at <https://eastherts.covalentcpm.com/login> and can be accessed at any point. All Members have a shared read only account. Log in details can be found via the [members section of the intranet](#)

## 5.0 Risks

5.1 N/A

## 6.0 Implications/Consultations

6.1 N/A

## Community Safety

No

## Data Protection

No

## **Equalities**

No

## **Environmental Sustainability**

No

## **Financial**

No

## **Health and Safety**

No

## **Human Resources**

No

## **Human Rights**

No

## **Legal**

No

## **Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

7.1 Appendix A – actions

7.2 Appendix B – performance indicators

## **Contact Member**

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