

Leader and Corporate Strategy Portfolio – Cllr. Richard Millard

Environmental Services

EHDC's services have continued to be undertaken successfully by Norse South East during this period of turmoil around the coronavirus pandemic. At present there are very few coronavirus-linked absences and services remain largely unaffected.

Waste services - Even though restrictions are lifted, waste collection services continue to be reviewed daily and, if staff absenteeism due to coronavirus becomes an issue, services will be prioritised with waste collection taking precedence.

Grounds Maintenance - Grass cutting has now commenced and will continue throughout the Summer/Autumn. All trunk roads have been litter picked and mechanically swept

Leisure

In line with national guidelines, and the second phase of the national lockdown easing, EHDC and our partners at Everyone Active successfully re-opened all three of the district's sports centres on Monday 12 April.

Public reaction to the re-openings has been very positive with strong participation figures for all three sites with nearly 55,000 visits taking place between 12-30 April. This is much stronger performance than had been anticipated.

The restart of the junior swim school program has been a significant success and has already recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

The strong reopening experiences and the successful negotiations with the operator regarding the contractual impact of the pandemic means that EHDC's leisure portfolio is in a strong position to deliver excellent service in outstanding facilities for the people of East Hampshire.

Whitehill & Bordon Update

Work continues at pace on the Regeneration Programme and we continue to work positively with a wide range of partners to secure the best for the town. The delivery of the new town centre remains a key priority.

The leisure centre re-opened in April and has been shortlisted for a national Planning Award for Best use of Sports, Arts or Culture. Further exciting news is that The Shed (formerly known as the Makers Market) opened its doors on 29 May. It includes an exciting food and drink offer, creative workspaces and opportunities for entertainment. The official opening event takes place on 10 July, which will coincide with the opening of a drive-in cinema and the unveiling of the finished Sandhurst Block Public Art: 'The Rewilding of Sandhurst Block' (by artist Shiraz Ali), which will be a living green wall.

Another important milestone for the town centre in May was the announcement of Morrisons coming on board as the new 26,000 sq ft food store in the town centre (due to open in 2023).

It's a really exciting year for the town, particularly the town centre and we hope to see more announcements shortly on the next stage of the town centre.

We're creating new active travel routes through the town with the installation of the Green Loop. The Green Loop is a partnership project between East Hampshire District Council and Hampshire County Council, with funding support from the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership and section 106 funding. To date, over 4km of the new 7km route has been completed. In addition, an innovative new wayfinding strategy has been developed, working with the local community, local schools and landowners.

We continue to work positively with The Phoenix Theatre and Arts Centre to support them in their aspiration for National Portfolio Organisation status. We supported the Phoenix Trust with their successful bid for £25,000 to the Arts Council England's Culture Recovery Fund, the third successful application to the Arts Council since the start of the pandemic. This enabled the theatre to continue operating during lockdown and prepare for reopening in June.

EH Commercial Services

EHCS has weathered an exceptionally challenging trading year, thanks to good management, the government's job retention scheme and Covid Marshal work across three councils.

The company continues to grow with services to Adur and Worthing Councils starting on 21 June bringing the total number of partner authorities to 10. The phased return to core business is progressing well and the business development pipeline is healthy, with several exciting and innovative opportunities on the horizon. The company continues to deliver a high-quality, cost neutral service in response to our residents' concerns over litter.

Deputy Leader, Welfare and Community Engagement – Cllr. Julie Butler

Housing

Despite working with high numbers of homeless households during the last year, hard work from the team has meant that we currently only have four placements in emergency bed and breakfast - with move-on plans for three (one was placed on 17 May - so still looking at options for this household) - really positive news. We are anticipating an increase in applications with the eviction ban being lifted but officers are prepared.

We have attended meetings regarding the Domestic Abuse Act and how we can work with Hampshire County Council to ensure we have a county strategy by August 2021 in line with legislation.

We have been advised that our Joint bid for funding with Havant Borough Council, for continued and enhanced rough sleeper support has been accepted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and we are now looking at how the funding can be used to continue to support rough sleepers in both areas and build on the excellent progress we have achieved over the past few years.

The Housing Team has been instrumental in rehousing a family with a severely disabled child near Alton. The project has taken 18 months and involved interagency working between the council, Solent NHS Trust, SDNPA, HCC and Clarion Housing Association. The home adaptations included the construction of a substantial ground floor extension, with separate entrance, wet room and bedroom, with funding sourced from the SDNPA, Disabled Facilities grant and Affordable Housing Developer Contributions. The family is now in residence and is very happy.

March saw the inaugural meeting of the Affordable Housing Cabinet Liaison Panel. Feedback from councillors and officers was very positive, with a substantial portion of the agenda allotted to the Pinewood pods project, which will be brought before Cabinet in the near future.

Communities

As representatives for the local community councillors have a key role to play with regards to ensuring the safety of our residents. The council has a refreshed Safeguarding Policy and new Modern Slavery Statement which needs to be understood to ensure councillors can act on any safeguarding concerns that arise from contact with members of the communities we serve. The council has a duty to safeguard children and adults at risk, therefore, you have been invited to a basic safeguarding awareness session taking place from 6-8pm, on Wednesday 23rd June. This short course will cover what safeguarding is, the legal framework, types of abuse and recording and reporting.

It will also include the most up-to-date topics which fall under the umbrella of safeguarding including modern slavery. The training was last offered to Councillors 2 years ago, so all are encouraged to attend. There are 2 alternative dates for virtual staff training that Councillors are welcome to attend in place of the evening session: Tuesday 8th June, or Wednesday 16th June, both 9.45am-12pm.

New beginnings - Cabinet approved the review of the RAPP service in December 2020 with the recommendation to close the service. This was no reflection upon the great work of the team, but it was recognised that we needed to do things differently to support the Welfare and Wellbeing agenda for all of our communities in EH. I am delighted to be able to report back that all three of the RAPP team have remained working for the council – Lauren Preston is now the Accommodation Liaison Officer in Housing with Becky Davey being successful in getting the new Commissioning role and Lisa Clements the Community Development Officer role for the South. I am looking forward to working with all three in their new roles.

Supporting Communities Fund 21/22 - The process for this year opened on 1 April 2021, closing 31 May. The applications will now be assessed against the criteria by the Community Development Officers before being presented to the Supporting Communities Cabinet Liaison Panel. I am looking forward to seeing the detail of the projects that will be pivotal in the delivery of the council's Welfare and Wellbeing Action Plan.

Property – Cllr. Tony Costigan

We are now well into our fifth quarter of rent collection under coronavirus conditions. I am pleased to report that the average rent collection for the four full quarters commencing March 2020 now stands at 96.4%, an outstanding achievement under the circumstances.

Rent collection for the March 2021 quarter now stands at 92.9%. Some tenants hold leases that provide for monthly rent payments at the beginning of each month, hence the final instalment for the quarter is due imminently and this figure will again increase.

There are now only a few isolated cases in which a tenant is seemingly able to pay but choosing not to. All appropriate steps are being taken to reach a resolution and in full compliance with the relevant Code of Practice. To date the government has not extended the moratorium beyond 30 June that restricts landlords' remedies for debt recovery, and it seems increasingly likely they will now not do so. This will hopefully facilitate further progress.

It has been another solid period for general asset management activity. Numerous lease renewals and new lettings have concluded at Woolmer, Rams Walk and Sheridan House. At the time of writing, the portfolio vacancy rate stands at a mere 3.6% and with some early discussions in relation to leasing some of this space.

The team has also been busy with procuring and managing the annual external asset re-valuation process, a significant undertaking given the number of assets involved across both investment and operational portfolios. The valuations themselves have been passed on to the finance team as part of the year end accounting exercise, to be audited in due course ahead of general release.

Separately various workstreams have been undertaken to continue to support the general coronavirus response, including provision of vaccination centres.

It has also been a positive period in relation to evolving the property team itself. Having taken the team through a full review process, culminating in a new structure, two key new appointments have been made. Glyn Lloyd joined the council as Lead Asset Manager in April, with primary responsibility for maximising returns from the investment portfolio through effective management. We have also had an offer accepted for a Lead Estates Manager to join in August, leading the other aspects of the property service. Both are permanent positions, as we seek to reduce the level of contract staff and establish some firm foundations for the future of the service.

Governance and Legal – Cllr. Nick Drew

Digital & IT Services

EHDC are now preparing to make more use of Microsoft 365 tools, starting with the launch of a new Sharepoint Intranet (Skoop+) which is accessible from any device. This offers greater flexibility when accessing corporate information and forms and fits with our way of working. In the coming months more work will be taken forward to prepare for the council-wide use of Sharepoint.

Other plans underway are the use of MS Power Platform to improve how we use data and join up systems to improve the customer experience. All these tools combine to create more efficient and innovative ways of working.

A key IT Services project to unlock this potential is also now underway, which will see our Microsoft network redesigned, providing EHDC with more control over digital design.

Additional plans surrounding digital also include a review of options for councillors' IT, which will also be discussed with the Task & Finish Group currently reviewing the work of the Digital Strategy.

Legal Services

Legal Services continue to imbed the new version of IKEN (legal case-management software). The final service figures for 2020/21 have been concluded and the Legal team is pleased to report that it has exceeded its targeted income (from external sources) for the year.

The service will start next round of recruitment shortly, which will include the provision of an extra two trainee solicitors, providing an opportunity for local legal graduates.

Democratic Services

Democratic Services would like to welcome Jenni Harding as the new Team Leader. Jenni has worked for the council since 2015 as the Business Partner managing the Executive Team. Recruitment is underway to appoint a new Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Following the ruling by the High Court on 28 April 2021, all formal meetings after 6 May must be held in person and in a Covid-secure manner. The team, along with Health and Safety and Facilities colleagues, have looked into the best way to deliver this. In recognition of the increased attendance realised by virtual meetings over the past year, all formal meetings are being webcast using Microsoft Teams. This allows the public to view the meeting remotely if they so wish.

New members are currently receiving their induction training, following the recent elections. This is being undertaken remotely via Microsoft Teams, which has the advantage of being able to be recorded should a councillor not be able to attend one of the sessions. Following the successful award of the Charter for Elected Member Development, work is well progressed for the reassessment, which will take place in late June.

Planning – Cllr. Angela Glass

Draft Local Plan

Work continues on the draft Local Plan, 2017 to 2038. This is undertaken by the Planning Policy Team. Latest proposals have been presented to and discussed with the Local Plan Working Group and will be considered at Cabinet briefing then brought to the Planning Policy Committee, prior to full Council.

Beech Neighbourhood Development Plan

Beech Neighbourhood Development Plan was successful at examination and at the referendum held on 6 May. The Planning Policy Committee will consider the NDP at their next meeting on 2 June and decide whether it is to be recommended to full Council, for adoption as part of EHDC's statutory development plan. The next Planning Policy Committee will be held in person, at Penns Place.

Other parishes are either considering starting the Neighbourhood Plan process, have submitted a draft plan, or are reviewing their existing plans.

Planning training for parish councils

EHDC officers will once again be offering planning training to parish councils, for existing and new parish councillors across the district. Parish councils consider applications received, in their local parishes, and are consultees to EHDC. It is important for parish councillors to receive this training, and to receive any new planning proposals that come from government.

Development Management

The high volume of small householder applications continues, and some majors have also been received. A major application is an application for ten or more houses. The average number of applications received over last year was 118 per month. In February this year 133 applications were received, and in March the number rose to 162. This is a 37% increase and does not include applications within the South Downs National Park. Inevitably this has led to some delay in the processing of applications.

Virtual meetings

Virtual meetings ended on 6 May, and the first in person meeting was held in the Council Chamber on 20 May. The chamber was adjusted to accommodate the committee and to allow space for limited members of the public to attend. In addition, the proceedings were broadcast, enabling EHDC residents to "attend". The next Planning Committee will be an extraordinary committee, to be held on 9 June, and will consider the Havant Thicket Reservoir application.

CIL

EHDC has recently considered various applications for CIL funding, received from across the district. We are hopeful that we will receive more applications from parish councils in the future, to enhance infrastructure projects that will support future development.

Finance – Cllr. Charles Louisson

Finance

The exchequer services cover processing of invoices, purchase orders and cash handling, which is a shared service with Havant Borough Council. We are in the process of reviewing processes that are currently in place to improve these services and streamline efficiency.

Work to finalise the outturn and Statement of Accounts for 2020/21 is underway and will be reported on schedule. We are also reviewing pandemic related risks to the 2021/22 budget and this will be reported back to members and built into the 2022/23 budget setting process.

Business Grants

The government launched the new Restart Grant in April. To date we have made grant payments to 616 businesses, totalling £4,512,722. Of these, 197 were in the Alton area for £1.45M, 168 in the Petersfield area for £1.16M and 67 in the Whitehill & Bordon area for £459,000.

We believe that around another 100 businesses could also claim the grant, and we will continue to make contact to increase take-up of this grant.

We have also continued to make payments under the council's discretionary scheme – the Additional Restrictions Grant – we have made grant payments to 345 businesses, totalling £670,711 since April 2021. In total we have now paid over £2.3 million to nearly 500 businesses since November 2020 under the various Additional Restriction Grant schemes.

Land Charges

A large portfolio request has been made to the service for 461 properties. This demand is being resourced with additional temporary staff. These extra searches should result in net unbudgeted income of £98,000 after fees and additional staffing costs.

The property market in East Hampshire is extremely buoyant with usually 20 searches per day being submitted by the conveyancing market.

Insight Team

The third wave of the COVID-19 resident's survey is to be conducted over the summer months. In addition to questions around mental health and wellbeing, trust and understanding of coronavirus messaging and impacts on personal finance, this wave will add questions relating to vaccinations and physical activity to help better co-ordinate communications with residents and inform the Communities Team.

Results will be shared with members when completed.

Customer Services – Reception

The Penns Place reception has been closed to the public since March 2020. During this time, we have been able to serve customers through virtual meetings and other alternative contact options.

We are aiming to open the reception from 21 June from 10am-4pm on weekdays to minimal numbers of visitors if they can't contact us by any other means.

Customers will deal with reception staff in the first instance but if a face to face meeting is needed on the day, reception staff will know who to contact within relevant departments and set up a virtual meeting.

Community Development, Placemaking & Infrastructure – Cllr. Robert Mocatta

Place-Making Update June 2021

I am pleased to report continued good progress with place making projects across the district and ongoing liaison amongst all tiers of local government to support delivery of projects:

- The Alton Station Forecourt project continues, moving through design stage approval from the various landowners including Network Rail, South Western Railway and Hampshire County Council.
- Work continues with developers CALA as the redevelopment of the of the former Molson Coors brewery site in Alton progresses from demolition towards construction of the new development.
- The district council, Hampshire County Council, Petersfield Town Council and South Downs National Park Authority continue to work together on pre-feasibility work for improving pedestrian safety and promoting active travel in Petersfield. This work compliments what EHDC has done in the LCWIP and continues to do in helping re-open the high street safely. Priority projects are being identified to take forward for delivery.
- Officers continue to work on Southern Parishes Place Making. The Land East of Horndean site is close to completing the S106 legal agreement. Discussions on planning applications are ongoing in regard to Havant Thicket, between the Highway Authority, Environment Agency, Natural England and Ecologists and put forward to the Planning Committee in June.
- Work across various teams in the council has been taking place as we progressed through the government's re-opening road map and providing information and support to re-opening businesses, particularly in our town centre and high street areas across the district. The next stage of the programme becomes the "Welcome Back Fund" aimed at welcoming people back to our places across the district, which will involve the same co-ordination of work between teams in the district council as well as town and parish councils, South Downs National Park Authority and Hampshire County Council.
- Domestic retrofit 2020-21- £107,000 of ECO funding has been levered from suppliers and installers through the Energy Company Obligation scheme; In total 112 measures including boiler replacement and smart thermostat installation have been installed into people's homes across the district to help make them more energy efficient.

Climate Change Update June 2021

- **Communications Plan:** The UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow is the inspiration for a local "Community COP26" event. Planning has started on this event, aimed at raising awareness and the level of debate, and focusing on practical local actions. This is likely to have two stages, initially a series of 3 local action groups, followed by a hybrid (in person and on-line) one day event in early October. I am working closely with Damian Hinds MP to attract high profile speakers. We plan three strands: Transport, Buildings and Land use & Agriculture. We plan an inclusive approach and involve local groups like ACA (Alton Climate Action Network) and PeCAN (Petersfield Climate Action Network), to reach out to a wide range of local stakeholders.

- **Embedding Climate in decision-making:** In line with EHDC's Climate and Environment Strategy 2020- 2025, we are proposing that EHDC follow the lead of Hampshire County Council and incorporate climate change objectives into all papers that come to EHDC's Executive Board. A climate awareness programme for EHDC's officers will be rolled out so that our staff can incorporate and evaluate low-carbon options.
- **Biodiversity and open green-space management:** Following a presentation organised by PeCAN, we have started an initiative inviting volunteers to gather GIS-compatible data on greenspace areas and road-verges. Initially, verges in Alton and Petersfield suitable for alternative mowing regimes to protect and enhance biodiversity will be trialled, subject to negotiation with the relevant contractor and availability of machinery. The Climate Liaison Panel (CLP) received a presentation from EHDC officers on the current verge management and an explanation of the issues involved with contractors, including NORSE.
- **Transport:** Hampshire County Council officers attended the CLP in May, to present the County perspective on 'Active travel' cycling and walking and covered their approach for supporting the switch to Electric Vehicles (EVs). They shared the experience of limited trials going on elsewhere in Hampshire using lampposts and bollards for charging.
- EHDC has secured £310k Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHG LAD Phase 2) funding for retrofitting homes with poor energy performance. Officers aim to work with local groups to find and target appropriate homes/households and plan to generate a pipeline of projects in anticipation of future funding.
- **Climate Champion**, to be appointed.

Economic Development and Rural Affairs – Cllr. Ken Moon

Business Support – Covid-19 Business Grants

The Economy Team continues to provide a direct advice and support service to our local businesses on sources of grant funding and assistance during the current pandemic. The team is also playing a key role in helping businesses apply for the current round of Restart Grants and Additional Restrictions Grants which opened in April. Overall, the team has handled enquiries from over 500 businesses since the initial restrictions were announced in March 2020.

Re-Opening High Streets Safely

The retail consultancy project is progressing well. At the time of writing, the consultant has received 1,496 consumer responses and 200 business responses. The survey closed on 31 May.

Kickstart Scheme – Building Control

Building Control are the first council service to benefit from the national Kickstart Scheme which provides funded work placements for 16-24-year olds for six months. It has now provided an opportunity for the service to take on a new employee at very little cost to the council. The process for applying to the Kickstart scheme is very simple and we are working to promote the benefits to other council services and local businesses to increase take-up.

Apprenticeships

East Hampshire Economic Development has seen a welcome upturn in the number of new apprenticeship applications which demonstrates renewed confidence among businesses in taking on new staff. Applications received by the council include roles in:

- Joinery and carpentry
- Plumbing and heating
- Printing and design
- Hairdressing
- Marketing and admin

Neighbourhood Quality – Cllr. Ingrid Thomas

Planning Enforcement

The team are currently dealing with a huge number of cases which despite the necessary restrictions placed on the operating procedures of the team have seen several injunctions issued and enforcement cases reaching the courts.

The past year has seen an increase in demand on enforcement services as more people work from home and indeed undertake improvement works often without fully understanding the rules and regulations associated with change of use or development.

The team's professional approach to service delivery during the past year despite the challenges faced has resulted in them all being recognised by a team "you're a star" award.

Community Safety

The team has seven active fly tipping investigations that are reaching the prosecution stage. We continue to pursue people who fly tip which is such an unacceptable antisocial behaviour.

Trees

A new EHDC tree strategy is currently being drafted in consultation with key stakeholders. This comprehensive piece of work covers all issues dealing with trees in the district and will be brought to full council as soon.

Environmental Health

The team are continuing to monitor compliance of the COVID regulations. We are trying to support businesses as best we can and give sound advice to allow them to operate within the law. There has been the need for some interventions although usually informally. We are also continuing with a COVID marshal presence whilst the regulations are in place. This provides a reassuring presence to the public and they support the Env Health service with our operations.

There are some ongoing discussions around tables and chairs licensing on pavements we are working to try and ensure we apply the law appropriately whilst also ensuring any potential impacts on surrounding businesses and the public are mitigated.

The rest of Environmental Health are working hard towards trying to reduce the backlog of work that accumulated during the lockdown periods.

Any queries can be directed to ehealth@easthants.gov.uk

Parking and Traffic

The Traffic Team are continuing to work on the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO)

programme agreed for 2021/2022. All proposed schemes are consulted upon before being formally advertised to the public. It is important that all Councillors respond to these communications as soon possible so that all comments can be considered at the appropriate time and to reduce any unnecessary delays to the process.