

Annual Delivery Report

| 2020



Published December 2020

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Introduction

In December 2017 the County Council agreed a four-year Strategic Plan and Outcomes Framework to 2022. The Plan focused on the things that make life better for people in Leicestershire. We also developed a shared vision across the Council of what we want people to experience in their daily lives. Whilst the outcomes are, in places, aspirational they outline the sort of end results we want to see for the people of Leicestershire.

In October 2019 we reported on responses to a major consultation on priorities for the county. 4,300 people took part in a survey which highlighted that support for vulnerable people, such as residential and community support for older people and mental health, plus special educational needs and disabilities, child protection and children in care were in the top 10 priority services. The survey also showed 86% supported protecting the environment by using renewable energy and reducing carbon. The survey was the biggest exercise we've run since 2013

In July 2020 the Council agreed an updated Strategic Plan to 2022 to further enhance our commitment to vulnerable people and supporting the environment and minimising climate change. Whilst supporting the most vulnerable remains our top priority, the Council's Strategic Plan sets out 5 revised high-level priorities –

Key Priorities

A Strong Economy - Leicestershire's economic prosperity benefits everyone and supports resilient, clean growth;

Wellbeing and Opportunity – that the people of Leicestershire live in a healthy environment and have the opportunities and support they need to take control of their health and wellbeing;

Keeping People Safe – that people in Leicestershire are safe and protected from harm;

Great Communities – that Leicestershire communities are thriving and integrated places where people help and support each other and take pride in their local area; and

Affordable and Quality Homes - Leicestershire has a choice of quality, sustainable homes that people can afford

The Council is here to make a positive difference to the lives of Leicestershire people. We want Leicestershire's economic prosperity to support clean growth that creates the best life chances for all. That Leicestershire is a place where people are well and safe, living in a healthy environment as part of great communities where people enjoy life and work together to enhance their local area. That there is a good supply of quality, sustainable homes that provide maximum independence and are affordable to own and run. We aim to be a carbon neutral organisation by 2030, use natural resources wisely and contribute to the recovery of nature. We are a green council and as a key place leader we will work with our partners to deliver our ambitious environmental goals.

The global coronavirus pandemic which took off in early 2020 has further highlighted the vital role that we play in keeping people safe, particularly vulnerable people, supporting public health and wellbeing and working closely with communities and partner agencies to support communities. The aftermath of the initial coronavirus wave has also underlined the importance of our efforts to help business and rebuild a strong and sustainable economy.

The last year has provided the biggest challenge of a lifetime and the challenge continues. The Council has supported the efforts in many ways, many set out in this report, including ensuring that thousands of volunteers and communities needing help were brought together, distributing a £1.6m communities fund to help sustain local community groups, supporting 25,000 people on the Government's shielded list, providing daily support to care homes, keeping vulnerable children safe, advising and supporting schools staff and working to ensure that vulnerable people didn't fall victim to scams and substandard goods.

Indeed, in July 2020, the Communities Secretary praised the "*absolutely heroic job*" done by councils during the crisis, saying they had played a central role in recent months. In September the Prime Minister also paid tribute '*to everybody in local authorities who have been the unsung heroes of our fight against the pandemic*'.

This Annual Delivery Report summarises the work that the Council has undertaken over the last 12 months to both progress its priorities, but also, in the second half of the year, to significantly reorient itself to manage this once in a generation public health and economic crisis.

A separate and related Performance Compendium sets out current comparative performance data using a wide range of performance measures. The compendium also includes information on the Council's low funding position and critical impact that the virus has had on finances, the service pressures and risks now faced and the campaign for Fairer Funding. Soaring demand for services plus uncertainty over the national economy and funding means that the Council is needing to look at all options to respond.

Financial Context, Challenges and Fair Funding Campaign

Delivering on priority outcomes and ambitions for Leicestershire continues to be hampered by low funding levels, and the coronavirus pandemic has added significantly to the service and financial challenges faced. The Performance Compendium sets out our comparative low funding position and how this translates into low funding for local services. The Council now faces a critical financial scenario. Over the medium term the combination of an ageing and growing population and reduced income means there is a need to continue to save money. The Council has already saved £210m since 2010 with a further £80m to save by 2023/24.

The OECD estimates that the global economy will contract by 6% this year. The UK economy is expected to be hard hit with a forecast contraction of 11.5%. The impact on the wider economy and council income and expenditure has added to the seriousness of the council's financial position and threatens the continued provision of services and delivery of outcomes. Over the last year the coronavirus pandemic has further escalated the crisis in local government finance with many authorities warning of significant job losses, further major budget reductions and formal notices of the inability to balance budgets. The financial situation facing the Council is challenging on all fronts.

Covid-19 Impact - our previous four-year financial plan set out the need for £80m savings. £24m of detailed savings have been set out and a plan to reduce SEND costs by £17m. However, the financial impact of the pandemic will now be profound. In September we reported that the pandemic would significantly push up the Council's budget gap from £39m to £50m by 2024. Extra costs and loss of income have increased costs by £90m in 2020/21 alone – which after Government grants and guidance reducing the need for extra bus services, leaves an £18m gap this year. Key covid-19 costs include in supporting vulnerable people through increasing care fees to providers, higher costs of keeping services going such as IT and construction and lost commercial income, council tax and business rates. To meet the changed financial environment the Council has also had to reduce resources available to its capital programme by £115m.

The financial position faced by the County Council is extremely serious and challenging. This is a particularly difficult situation for a low-funded authority such as Leicestershire as room for further savings is limited. The financial difficulties experienced pre-Covid, relating to demand for services, have not gone away and the mitigations have been disrupted by the crisis. Additional financial pressures are expected to continue after the current financial year due to reduced council tax and business rates income, a continuation of costs to maintain infection control and the economic impact upon suppliers who may request further support, for example bus operators.

Based on current information, it is very unlikely that the County Council, when it rolls forward the MTFs into 2024/25, will be able to identify sufficient savings to bridge the funding gap in the later years. To balance the budget without a significant impact on services will require a major efficiency initiative and a successful outcome to the fair funding campaign. The financial situation also requires the Government to deal with the structural national issues such as funding for social care and the relentless growth of demand for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services. The Council has already made savings of £223m (excluding DSG), to the end of 2020/21.

Therefore, the identification of new savings will be very challenging and is likely to require much more radical service transformation. Further efficiency/productivity targets for services will drive the focus for identifying where additional savings can be delivered. Inevitably, though, further service reductions will be needed to ensure the Council can operate within the increasingly tight budget envelope.

Fair Funding – given low comparative funding and the financial crisis it is vital the Council is given a fair share of overall national resources for local government services. A number of low-funded councils have got behind the call for fairer funding from the Government. The County Council’s Network has also backed the campaign for reform.

The Council report, looking at the issue of Fair Funding, showed that if we were funded at the same level as Kensington and Chelsea we would be £366m a year better off or £135m compared to Cumbria. The current system of funding is broken, and we need a new approach which matches funding with need, based on a smaller number of cost drivers, which produce a fairer distribution of resources.

With social care pressures rising, a new fair system matching funding with need is essential. We’ve drawn up a new model which would unlock millions of pounds for under-funded councils, including £132m for Lincolnshire and £29m for Kent. The funding crisis is leading councils to service and financial failure. Our proposed new model allocates money using factors such as the number of older people, the length of roads travelled by HGVs and the number of school-age children.

National funding reform remains key to future plans. Our campaigning secured a Government review and it is very disappointing the Government has delayed plans to implement a new model. We are continuing to do all that we can to shape a new funding formula and get a better deal for residents. A move to a fairer funding model is an urgent requirement to help tackle the Council’s financial challenges.

Local Government Structure – local government now faces severe, long-term financial challenges and these are likely to get worse. In October 2019 the Council published a detailed road map setting out the benefits of re-shaping local government in Leicestershire. The draft, 100-page blueprint compares different options and concludes that one, single unitary council – bringing together the eight county and district councils - offers the best opportunity to save money, reduce duplication and protect front line services. The report concluded that creating a council fit for the 21st century would save £30m each year, improve services, reduce confusion and duplication and get a better deal for residents. An independent review of the draft strategic business case by Price Waterhouse Coopers says it represents a sound basis for presenting potential savings and planning next steps.

A Strong Economy

Our economy outcome focuses on ensuring that there is a thriving, balanced and inclusive economy in Leicestershire that manages resources sustainably, and provides employment, business opportunities and growth that works for everyone. Leicestershire remains well placed to become a centre for jobs in science, technology and engineering. Ensuring access to the latest digital infrastructure and the development of skills will support uptake of digital technologies, enabling businesses to improve productivity and remain competitive in future markets.

Impact of Covid-19

Analysis by the Centre for Economics and Business Research indicates that the economy of the East Midlands is likely to be hit harder by Covid-19 than any other part of the UK, due to its sizeable manufacturing sector. During the early stages of the pandemic, three out of five (63%) of businesses were forced to suspend operations temporarily, while 93% reported a negative impact on sales. The immediate impact can be seen in the increase in the number of people claiming out of work benefits, from 7,125 in March to 18,340 in July. This represents an increase from 1.5% to 4.3% of the working age population, although these figures remain below regional and national levels.

The Leicester and Leicestershire Business Survey interviews carried out during August and September indicate that 55% of businesses had been closed or operating at significantly reduced levels between mid-March and the end of June 2020. Of those that had closed, 80% had re-opened for business at the time they were interviewed, with a further 15% expecting to open soon. Two-thirds of establishments had used the Government furlough scheme. Survey interviews carried out prior to Covid-19 restrictions and during August and September indicate that 31% of businesses think that general business conditions would improve over the next two years, compared with 27% in the 2017 survey.

Job postings data, a useful gauge of economic activity and optimism, show a significant drop between April and June, followed by a rapid recovery across the County in July. The level of postings does, however, remain slightly below that of July 2019.

Economic Recovery Strategy and Cell – a partnership response is key to recovery and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP), working closely with the County and City Councils, has led on the development of an Economic Recovery Strategy for the area, using the foundations in the Local Industrial Strategy. The focus has been on creating short-term economic recovery plans with a following long-term Economic Strategy. An Economic Recovery Cell was created to coordinate across partners and identify potential interventions. The LRFs Business Cell has also provided advice and support to local businesses and carried out planning for economic recovery. The Council's Economic Growth team has also supported this work including providing sector-specific support to the tourism, hospitality and creative sectors.

Local Industrial Strategy – following on from the publication of the UK's Industrial Strategy in November 2017, the Council is working with the LLEP to develop a strong and robust Local Industrial Strategy which will help set out our economic vision and identify things we need to do to grow our economy further. The LIS will identify the

important growth sectors for Leicestershire such as life sciences, advanced logistics and advanced manufacturing.

Midlands Engine – is a coalition of local authorities and LEPs set up to help the region compete with London and the South East as well as the Northern Powerhouse, based in Greater Manchester. We are continuing to engage fully with, and influence, the Midlands Engine, raising the profile of the Midlands both nationally and internationally and securing increased government funding to boost economic growth. In September 2017 the Midlands Engine Partnership launched its ‘Vision for Growth’ focusing on five areas of collaboration which support economic growth and prosperity across the East and West Midlands. These include: Connect the Midlands; Invest in Strategic Infrastructure; Grow International Trade and Investment; Increase Innovation and Enterprise and Shape Great Places.

Strategic Growth Plan – over the past two years we have worked in partnership with Leicester City Council, the seven district councils and LLEP to take a strategic, long term approach to growth. Underpinned by a comprehensive Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment, the Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) identifies the need for 190,000 new homes and sets out ambitious plans for supporting road infrastructure. The plan sets out a long-term strategic planning framework for future housing and economic growth and associated infrastructure provision, looking forward to 2050. This will help to build and support better communities in the future.

Infrastructure for Sustainable Growth

To support economic recovery and growth, people and businesses need infrastructure that provides excellent connectivity to meet their everyday needs. By building quality premises we want to help firms take their first step on the ladder, and to grow. We had committed to spending £289m on roads, schools, broadband, supporting new homes and boosting the local economy, funded by one-off government grants and land and property sales. We set out our largest ever capital investment programme in vital infrastructure. However, the crisis in local government funding means we are having to revisit a number of areas moving forwards.

Growth Unit - Leicestershire’s population is projected to rise to 860,618 by 2043 – an increase of 162,350 (23%) from 2018. Just under 200,000 new homes are set to be built in the city and county by 2050. There is a need to ensure that the growth is matched by new roads, schools, transport and other infrastructure – which are estimated to cost £600m over the next 25 years. In June 2019 we approved the establishment of a new team to help coordinate the Council’s role in supporting growth. The team will also help to secure millions of pounds of funding from the Government and developers to help deliver infrastructure – the costs of which would otherwise fall on the local tax-payer.

Enterprise Zones – we are continuing to support work to develop and deliver the county’s Enterprise Zones. During the year there have been some significant developments, including; at Loughborough Science and Enterprise Park (LUSEP) in November a topping out ceremony took place to celebrate the latest milestone in the creation of a new HQ for a leading software company. The Access Group’s 100,000 sq. ft. office on the Enterprise Park (LUSEP) is due to open in November 2020. The innovative venture is expected to generate £1.6m per year for Council services and create more than 500 jobs. The project represents a pioneering partnership between

the council and Loughborough University. As one of the UK's top employers and innovators and a Tech Unicorn – valued at \$1 billion – Access' continued expansion at LUSEP is good news with potential for future collaboration with the University and LUSEP's community of over 90 startups to established businesses.

Loughborough Town Deal - Loughborough was invited by the Government to develop a Town Deal and bid for up to £25m funding to support town centre regeneration, broadband, further and higher education and skills, social and cultural facilities and transport infrastructure. The Council is ready to work with partners to ensure this brings real benefit to the town. Loughborough is also an area of innovation, an initiative led by the university to help drive local growth.

Apollo Court Business Park, Coalville - in October 2019 a new £5.5m industrial park in Coalville, set to create 120 jobs, opened for business. Apollo Court Business Park aims to boost business in the town by supporting start-ups and firms looking to expand. A range of high-spec industrial units ranging from 1,000 to 9,000 sq. ft. were built by construction company, Willmott Dixon. The venture is part-funded by a £2.4m allocation from the Local Growth Fund, a pot of government funding awarded to the LLEP for projects that benefit the local area and economy. During its construction £437k was invested into local communities through engaging with schools and colleges and ensuring 91% of spend and 78% of labour were within 40 miles of the facility. The first business, Sella Controls Ltd, moved into the site in early 2020.

Airfield Business Park - work to create a £5.2m business park in Market Harborough was completed at the end of November and the site opened in December. Airfield Business Park will create more than 200 jobs while boosting business and employment opportunities in the town and local economy. The scheme offers a range of high-spec industrial units to let. Several companies expressed an early interest in renting the units, with 6 of the 12 units reserved by prospective tenants. The site also features 692 solar panels, which are part of our ongoing commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030. In March 2020 it was announced that Airfield Park had been awarded a coveted regional prize at the National Energy Efficiency Awards 2020 – being named the Regional Large-Scale Project of the Year. The award recognises firms involved in delivering a successful large-scale project which costs more than £250,000 to build and demonstrates a high standard of quality workmanship.

Leaders Farm Development – in May 2020 Cabinet approved proposals for the £8.2m development of the Leaders Farm site near Lutterworth. The proposals make provision for a 50,000 sq. ft light industrial unit, further light industrial units and two drive through restaurants. The plans would generate a good rate of return to reinvest in service delivery as well as supporting the creation of new jobs.

Superfast Leicestershire and Better Broadband – ensuring that Leicestershire is equipped with the latest digital technology will drive economic growth and innovation. In April it was announced that some of Leicestershire's most rural primary schools were using new, full-fibre broadband to connect teachers, students and parents during the coronavirus lockdown. The schools, all part of Learn Academies Trust (Learn-AT), were keeping essential services running following an upgrade to some of the fastest broadband available in the UK. The improved connectivity was made possible through a grant scheme from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, Openreach and Leicestershire County Council. This was the largest broadband grant given to a single

organisation in the UK. Across the County, 96.5% of premises now have access to high speed broadband.

Development Corporation – in March 2020 we agreed proposals to support the establishment of Project Alchemy – the Midlands Engine Development Corporation and the submission of a bid for an Inland Freeport. The ambition of the Development Corporation is to deliver outputs across three connected areas in the East Midlands including East Midlands Airport and land around it, including additional homes, jobs, freight capacity, a green corridor connecting the areas and £4.8bn GVA growth for the region.

M69 Junction 2 Strategic Development Area – in March 2020 we agreed a proposed approach to the promotion and delivery of the M69 Junction 2 Strategic Development Area. By collaborating with others, the Council can ensure that the appropriate infrastructure is provided for any development. The proposals would support delivery of growth in line with the Strategic Plan and Strategic Growth Plan.

A Highly Skilled and Employable Workforce

Ensuring that people have the skills and aptitudes to access employment will help them to find decent employment opportunities and help businesses to recover and begin to grow and provide a more inclusive economy which in-turn supports a good quality of life for everyone. The most recent Leicester and Leicestershire Business Survey, carried out in early 2020, found that 27% of businesses had experienced recruitment difficulties, similar to the 2017 result. These were often linked to skills issues with 42% of businesses concerned about skills shortages or finding staff, higher than in the 2014 and 2017 surveys. The business survey results were obtained prior to Covid-19 restrictions.

European Social Fund – we have worked with key partners, including the LLEP, to help influence priorities and effective delivery of the current European Structural and Investment Fund programme. We are strategic delivery partners in a number of projects that support people to enter the labour market and upskill once in work, these include MoneyWise Plus and Work Live Leicestershire (WiLL).

Skills for Local Development Sites – the Council works closely with partners to ensure that local people are able to access new job opportunities through large scale development sites. SEGRO Logistics Park East Midlands Gateway is a 700 acre site and includes the creation of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange. An Employment and Skills Group is supporting apprenticeships and work placements on the site during the construction and end user phases. HS2 is another key development and the Council is supporting the HS2 Skills and Supply Chain Delivery Board to make sure local people have the skills required to access future employment opportunities.

Skills for the Future – the Council works with the LLEP to forecast future skills needs, including considering new and growth sectors, and skill requirements emerging from advancements in technology and artificial intelligence. The role of Universities and Colleges is crucial to link business to knowledge and to local talent, and this will be further exploited through the development of the Local Industrial Strategy. Universities and colleges are integral to much of the partnership work we undertake in relation to key sectors and developments.

Health and Social Care – working with relevant partners the Council has adopted a Health and Social Care Sector Growth Plan which identifies key priorities for the development of health and social care providers and their workforce. There was a review of the delivery plan in autumn 2019 and a list of activities produced that aligns the relevant Local Workforce Action Board subgroups and partners with the priorities in the Health and Social Care delivery plan. The main gap identified was around communications and the Steering Group is coordinating communication activity. A new plan for the sector will be developed once the Economic Recovery Strategy has been finalised. The new plan will fall within the economic recovery work being led by the LLEP. New governance arrangements will be put into place for the Economic Recovery Strategy and will incorporate work on this sector.

Unemployment and those furthest from the labour market – the Council continues to provide support to residents in CV development, job search and digital skills through library-based work clubs. We are working with local partners to deliver the £2.4m European Social Fund project, Work Live Leicestershire (WiLL) which targets those furthest from the labour market living in rural areas. The project provides training and volunteering, self-employment advice, work experience, job and apprenticeship opportunities. This is the only national ESF programme which specifically targets rural areas and will deliver until December 2020.

Adult Learning – funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, our Adult Learning Service (LALS) aims to engage adults and provide the learning they need to progress into work and deliver courses that support personal development and wellbeing. During 2019/20 LALS enrolled 6749 learners to programmes, down from 8,310 the previous year. Courses, delivered in 54 venues across the county, provided targeted support to those with low skills and furthest away from the labour market. In March 2020 most activities were moved online following the closure of learning centres. Where this was not practical, tutors continued to provide other forms of remote support. To encourage those who had the opportunity during lockdown to study, a range of free online resources were uploaded and promoted through the GoLearn website. Our Family Learning teams also developed packs of resources to support parents to deliver home schooling.

Apprenticeships - our Leicestershire Adult Learning Service apprenticeship programme delivers apprenticeship training to a number of employers including the Council. The service is currently training 39 LCC employed apprentices in roles such as administration, finance and customer services. In addition, the service is providing training for 11 apprentices working for external employers.

Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme - our Adult Learning Service has continued to work with Charnwood Borough Council to resettle refugees through the Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme. A range of discrete courses, designed to support families develop their language skills, have proved valuable in helping these learners access employment and become independent. The service will continue to work with partners and support the new UK Resettlement Scheme when the programme is resumed.

Information, Advice and Guidance – we have commissioned service providers to ensure that vulnerable 16-19 year olds are able to remain in education or find suitable employment or training. Through our Matrix accredited Adult Learning Service, adults are provided with individual support to enable them to make informed choices about their best options to find work and progress up the career ladder.

Supporting Business to Flourish

We aim to support activities which encourage and support businesses to invest, grow and flourish in Leicestershire. It will be particularly important as we manage recovery from coronavirus and the implications of Brexit that we work with partners and businesses to plan effectively for changes in trade, regulation and workforce.

Supporting Businesses – we are working with the City Council, LLEP and East Midlands Chamber to ensure there is high quality and targeted business advice for our local SMEs. Collectively we have secured over £5.5m European Regional Development Funds (ERDF) to provide 1-2-1 business advice, a series of workshops covering a wide range of subjects, and £2.5m for business growth grants. Work is now underway to secure further ERDF funds that will enable partners to deliver intensive and targeted business support up to 2021.

The Council also provides advice to businesses through its Trading Standards service and is an active partner in the Better Business for All Programme which aims to reduce the regulatory burden on businesses. Our Resilience Team supports local businesses to prepare for disruption in order to increase resilience in the event of major incidents. It's important to us that local businesses are able to maximise the benefits of public sector procurement and we therefore attend and host events which promote the opportunities available.

Growth Hub and Digital Growth Programmes - businesses in Leicestershire are benefitting from county-wide support projects designed to assist them with their growth and expansion plans. The Growth Hub and Digital Growth Programmes, funded through ERDF and partners, are supporting small and medium sized businesses through grants and tailored advice. The Growth Hub Programme also provides an inward investment service for businesses looking to relocate. The Digital Growth Programme offers technology grants from £2,000 to £40,000 providing around a third of the total investment for eligible businesses. In August 2019 the Digital Growth Programme was extended with £5m of additional funding to enhance the digital skills of businesses across Leicestershire. As at 30 August 2020 this programme had worked with 641 businesses and had given out 91 Grants.

In August 2019 a new Growth Hub Project was approved with £8m of additional funding to provide business support via workshops, seminars, 1-2-1 support and grant funding and a dedicated programme for scale up and investor ready businesses. Over 255 businesses have received 1/2/1 support through the programme and 64 businesses have received a grant through the Growth Hub. The County Council employs a business adviser funded through the programme who is specifically working in the east of the County. Numbers of enquiries increased hugely to 200+ per month as businesses struggled to survive through the pandemic.

Business Grants – local authorities across Leicestershire made grant payments to 15,000 businesses (84% of the 16,740 eligible businesses) through the Small Business Grant Fund and Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund.

Business Recovery Fund - in July 2020 the Council launched a brand-new fund to help businesses get back on their feet. The £750,000 Leicestershire Business Recovery Fund was aimed at small businesses within the county to help them recover from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Applications could be made for grants between £2,000 and £10,000. Businesses could use the money to ensure their survival by, for instance, developing online selling and diversifying into new product areas. The Council is committed to helping businesses get back on their feet, so that the economy of Leicestershire can continue to grow and prosper. Grants were open to businesses with 50 employees or less. All small businesses from every sector were encouraged to apply including those from the tourism, retail, agriculture, and creative sector. Businesses who apply were able to talk through their business plans with an advisor who assisted with the application. At the 23 September 47 applications had been approved to a value of £296,000 from Agriculture, Tourism and Hospitality, Creative, Retail and Independent businesses with a mixture of COVID recovery projects and business growth.

Creative Industries – more than 100 businesses from across Leicestershire’s art and creative sector applied for specialist support to develop and grow. Creative Leicestershire, a County Council initiative which offers advice, support, and growth for creative enterprises across the area came together with partners across the East Midlands to offer WebinArt. Webinart is a one-year professional development programme which connects new and improving creative businesses with industry giants and mentors. It offers help and support in everything from financial and business growth advice, to confidence building and help with covid-19 related concerns. Not only do creative people contribute to the rich culture of Leicestershire but encouraging them to become experienced in the business market will create jobs and help boost the local economy.

Market Town Covid-19 Preparedness – in June 2020 high streets in Leicestershire and Rutland geared up for increased trade as lockdown restrictions started to ease. Councils in Leicestershire worked with local businesses, partners and the NHS to ensure high streets were safe places for customers, traders, staff and visitors. They included issuing guidance to traders to help them protect customers and employees inside their premises, introduction of one-way systems for pedestrians and traffic, suspension of some parking bays to provide more pedestrian space and closure of some streets. Doing all we can to support a safe return to shopping and trading and provide a much-needed boost to the local economy. The Council also developed ‘pop-up’ walking and cycling routes and bid for funding from the Government’s Emergency Action Travel Fund to progress the plans.

Rural Economy and Market Towns – chaired by the Council, the Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) continues to champion the importance of the rural economy and market towns. The LRP are currently working with the LLEP on the development of a Natural Capital Plan which will look at opportunities to improve, sustain and better utilise our natural assets. The Partnership has sponsored a number of projects to support rural businesses including the Council run East Leicestershire LEADER programme which has supported 21 projects with over £600k of EU grant funding since 2015; a further 38 projects have been invited to full application. The LRP has

also advised the LLEP on priorities for the £3m European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) which has supported 9 projects since 2015, with a further 12 in the pipeline. The County Council worked with District Councils and the LLEP to install free consumer wi-fi in 9 towns and this technology has proved invaluable in collecting consistent data on the impact of footfall due to Covid and measurements to improve safety in town centres.

Inward Investment and Trade – the County and City Councils work collaboratively to provide an Inward Investment service across the sub-region. The service is part funded through ERDF and recent activities have focussed on attracting investment from outside the EU including from China, India and the US, working alongside the Department for International Trade. A Leicestershire China Strategy was developed to boost trade and investment. The Council has a particular focus on developing trade links with Sichuan Province; and following celebration of its 30-year twinning anniversary with Sichuan, has hosted further meetings with Sichuan government representatives to explore opportunities and investment.

Tourism – is an important asset for any area to increase visitor spend and to make the place attractive for businesses to invest and people to live, study and work. We worked with partners to establish a Tourism Advisory Board which has key public and private sector members from across the industry. The Board aims to raise the profile of the sector's positive contribution to the local economy, identifying key priorities for future investment and lobbying Government and local stakeholders to ensure that policies and plans are in place to support the tourism sector. Our joint Place Marketing Team with the City Council delivers place marketing, inward investment and strategic tourism services across the sub-region. We have agreed a new Tourism Growth Plan which provides a framework for future sector growth by setting down key priorities, activities and projects that partners feel offer the best prospects to increase competitiveness of the destination and the wealth it can generate. One of these activities is the establishment of a business tourism service to realise the full economic potential of the business tourism sector.

Tourism Awards – in October 2019 five county attractions were shortlisted for tourism awards. The Bosworth Medieval Festival, Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, the 1620s House & Garden, Charnwood Museum and Melton Carnegie Museum were all shortlisted as finalists in the Leicestershire Promotions Tourism and Hospitality Awards 2019. The awards are a tribute to the depth and breadth of our cultural offer, as well as to the hard work of the staff and volunteers involved.

Economy – Transport

People and businesses need infrastructure that provides excellent connectivity that meets their every-day needs. Transport infrastructure is a key enabler providing access to opportunity and opening up sites for growth. We aim to ensure good connectivity within the county and across the UK through working closely with partners to realise the Midlands Connect Strategy. We also continue to progress delivery of our local transport priorities to help business recovery and growth, reduce congestion, allow safe travel and support more sustainable travel options.

Midlands Connect – the Midlands Connect Strategy outlines the region’s vision to become an engine for growth through investment in transport infrastructure. It proposes a 25-year programme of investment in strategic road and rail improvements to reduce congestion, improve journey times and support housing growth. We are currently involved in a number of Midland Connect projects that are directly related to the successful delivery of our Prospectus for Growth. These projects include improvements to rail services to places such as Coventry and Birmingham and upgrades to the A5 and A42. These projects will greatly enhance people’s ability to travel efficiently and safely around and through Leicestershire in the context of much needed houses and jobs to meet the demands of the area’s growing population.

Transport for East Midlands (TfEM) – through our involvement in TfEM we have set out our top priorities for transport improvements across the East Midlands including making the most of the HS2 development, securing a Midland Mainline fit for the 21st century, improving access to East Midlands Airport, the A5 Improvement Corridor and transforming East-West connectivity.

Strategic Transport Priorities – in February 2020 we launched consultations on a new 30-year transport blueprint for Leicester and Leicestershire. The Strategic Transport Priorities (STP) set out where the city and county will work together, particularly around tackling poor air quality and the effects of climate change, alongside continued support for the local economy and jobs and the delivery of new houses. Improvements in rail and public transport and better provision for walking and cycling schemes are among the priorities set out. The STP acknowledges a drive to attract greater numbers of car users on to public transport and on to cycling and walking routes. The ambition is to continue to encourage use of the commercial bus network, of electric vehicles and to increase the number of bus lanes and cycleways/pedestrian routes developed over the past few years. The county will develop its own cycling and walking strategy as part of the list of priorities. Another key thread of the STP is a big push to improve rail services. The report outlines that while services to East Midlands cities such as Derby and Nottingham are good, improvements are needed in reaching West Midlands cities such as Coventry and Birmingham.

Rail Strategy – developed with the City Council and LLEP it sets out rail priorities up to 2043. We have used it as a basis for working with Midlands Connect, who are developing business cases for the reinstatement of direct rail services between Leicester and Coventry and for the improvement of services to Birmingham, which would result in significant improvements in journey times to these places. We have used it also to inform our input into the HS2 project and the wider considerations of the Infrastructure Commission who have been asked by Government to consider an integrated package of rail improvements that would be associated with delivery of the

Eastern leg. Potentially this package could include completion of the Midland Main Line electrification, which we are continuing to push for because of the service improvements that it would deliver but also because of its carbon reduction benefits.

HS2 - will bring significant benefits to Leicestershire and the wider economy and radically improve connectivity to cities in the north. We are committed to playing an active role to ensure Leicestershire gets the most out of HS2 as well as mitigating its impacts. In January the Council considered work on preparations to manage the impact in Leicestershire of the proposed HS2 rail link. The benefits of pro-actively engaging with HS2 on many issues including developing opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses in Leicestershire to win HS2-related contracts; work with ecological and environmental partners to enhance the natural environment and minimise impacts of climate change; avoid proposed 12-month long road closures on key county roads, and seek adequate advance notification of disruptive work. Also, to seek a classic compatible connection of the Midland Mainline at the proposed high-speed rail station at Toton, giving more journey choices for Leicestershire residents and businesses.

Ivanhoe Line - we are providing our support, including financial, to the group the Campaign for Reopening the Ivanhoe Line (CRIL). CRIL are currently working with the Department for Transport to develop a business case to bring back passenger services on the line.

Major Road Schemes Supporting Growth

The Council has a strong record of securing funding to deliver transport infrastructure to enable growth, supporting the delivery of outcomes to promote a strong economy and ensure a supply of quality and affordable homes. We will continue to lobby to secure vital funds to invest in homes, regeneration and infrastructure across Leicestershire.

Coalville Transport Strategy - in June 2020 we set out work to support the delivery of successful growth and evolution of Coalville and Ashby de la Zouch, including a list of projects covered by the Coalville Transport Strategy.

Ashby Road, Coalville - in January we unveiled proposals to improve Ashby Road in Coalville. The proposed scheme involves improving the street scene and creating on-street parking to improve traffic flow. The £250,000 scheme, jointly funded with North West Leicestershire District Council, is also designed to create additional on-street parking facilities and improve vehicular and pedestrian access with the focus on vulnerable road users. The proposed scheme represents part of a wider initiative to invest in Coalville, including a revamp of Snibston Country Park.

Coalville – A511 - in August 2019 the Council's A511 Coalville Growth Corridor plans were included in a priority list for government funding by sub-national Transport Body Midlands Connect, with a request for £42m to deliver it. The scheme was among 11 in the Midlands submitted to the Department for Transport, as part of a £3.5 billion fund available for local road improvements from 2020-2025. The proposals include junction improvements at nine locations between the A42 Junction 13 at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and the M1 Junction 22, some localised widening and a new link road, connecting the A511 to Bardon Link Road, creating a new north-south link across

Coalville. The proposals will help cut congestion and improve bus journey times, as well as support the M1 and M42 as a major gateway to East Midlands Airport. The proposals will also include improvements to the pedestrian crossings and cycle-ways along the road. Public consultation on the proposals took place in October 2019. It was announced that the Council had been awarded almost £1.3m in development funding for the scheme on 30 September 2019.

Loughborough A512 – in September 2019 work started on a £25m County Council road scheme involving improvements at Junction 23 of the M1 to improve overall journey times and road safety in the area. The scheme aims to reduce traffic on the A512 and some residential roads and support commercial and residential development in Loughborough, by increasing employment and providing new, more accessible development. A stretch of the A512 between Junction 23 and Snells Nook Lane, Loughborough, is changing from a single to dual carriageway with a new roundabout for two large housing and employment sites. The scheme is being funded by developers, with an additional £5m from Highways England and through a £12m allocation from the LLEP's Local Growth Fund.

Melton Distributor Road – we are continuing with work to deliver this multi-million pound project (which is key to delivery of nearly 4000 new homes and to addressing the town's existing traffic and environmental conditions), including recent publication of the necessary Statutory Orders for the Northern and Eastern sections. As part of work towards the Melton Mowbray Transport Strategy a broader package of measures will complement the distributor road, including possible improvements to walking and cycling infrastructure and the town centre highway network. The Melton Mowbray Distributor Road scheme took the top award in the Natural Environment category in October 2019 at the East Midlands Town Planning Institute. The collaborative work between the county council, AECOM, Natural England and the Environment Agency in developing the diversion for the River Eye was particularly highlighted during the ceremony. The planning application included substantial environmental mitigation including tree and hedge planting, ecological enhancement areas and sustainable drainage.

Anstey – A5630 and A46 - in September 2019 work commenced on the delivery of improvements involving a range of measures on the A5630 Anstey Lane and A46 to increase capacity and improve journey times. The scheme sees the existing single lane section of road between the A46 interchange and Bennion Road roundabout turned into a dual carriageway. Additional lanes will be created at the approach to the roundabouts at both junctions with new traffic lights installed. Pedestrian and cycling routes along the busy stretch of road will also be improved as part of the scheme. The improvements are designed to help accommodate extra traffic that will be generated by the 3,000-home Ashton Green development. It will also support growth anticipated from future housing developments in the north of Leicester and in the county. In March it was reported that the £10.7m scheme was progressing well and on track for delivery, with the scheme finished on schedule in July 2020.

Nailstone Junction – in October 2019 a £2m scheme to reduce congestion, provide improved transport links and manage the extra travel demand created by the new country park development at Nailstone commenced. The Council led on delivery of the scheme on behalf of the colliery developer, which saw a range of measures including new traffic signals, a new roundabout and traffic calming introduced at a number of junctions linking the B585 with the A511 to the north. Improvements to these junctions

provide access to homes and employment, and the new country park development site.

Hinckley - in October 2019 consultation commenced on £5m plans to improve Rugby Road and Hinckley town centre. Proposals include plans to improve both the Hawley Road and Brookside junctions. There are also plans to improve safety for pedestrian and cyclists in the Granville Road, Spa Lane/London Road and Coventry Road areas, introduce new traffic signals, signage, and a review of resident and town centre parking facilities. The £5m scheme aims to maximise the area's economic potential by reducing congestion and shortening journey times. It also aims to improve air quality by encouraging more people to walk and cycle. In March 2020 we approved improvements to Rugby Road and Hinckley town centre. The scheme will support growth and the economic performance in Hinckley, improve journey times and air quality, better cycle facilities and reduced congestion.

Lutterworth East - £2.4m to design highways improvements and provide access to proposed new housing development in Lutterworth. The programme was paused until further funding could be secured.

Fosse Park Improvements – in June 2020 we launched a series of road improvements to support the development of Castle Acres, a large expansion of Fosse Park on the site of the former Everards brewery. The area is one of the busiest routes in Leicestershire and will only get busier as Fosse Park develops. The improvements will ensure Fosse Park can expand and bring economic growth to Leicestershire without negatively affecting congestion and journey times.

Highways Capital Programme – in March 2020 Cabinet agreed a new highways capital programme and works programme. The highways and transport elements of the programme comprised of £267m of capital works over the four years to 2024. The transport asset management programme in 2020/21 has an indicative cost of £16.32m in 2020/21 for capital maintenance of roads and footways. Zouch bridge replacement construction and enabling works. Advanced design works include the Melton Mowbray transport strategy, Loughborough Growth Area Strategy and development of a Cycling and Walking Strategy with accompanying Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

Traffic Management and Safety

Average Speed Cameras – there are communities across the county who feel that speeding motorists are having a negative effect on life in their local area. A successful trial scheme saw cameras installed at seven locations; Sharnford; Walcote; Oadby; Groby; Measham, Woodhouse Eaves; and Freeby. Since the cameras have been operational, just over 17million vehicles have passed through the sites in Sharnford, Walcote, Measham, Oadby, Woodhouse Eaves and Groby, with 0.09 per cent of those vehicle owners (15,300) issued with notices. Proposals to roll out more average speed cameras across Leicestershire were approved by the Council's Cabinet in October 2020. The Authority is considering introducing a further seven average speed camera sites across the County. The proposals would see the average speed cameras move locations yearly to change driver behaviour in towns and villages across Leicestershire. The Council and the Police will review sites where communities have previously raised concerns about speeding. Once sites have been identified assessed and any other measures introduced that can influence driver behaviour, the Council

would consult with residents about the proposed locations. The County Council is also continuing to press the Government to consider a new approach to funding the camera sites. At present, funds generated through camera fines are retained by HM Treasury. The council has made several requests for the revenue to be retained to cover the capital cost of the speed cameras, after which the revenue would revert to government coffers. This would enable further roll-outs of this type of enforcement measure across the County.

Reducing Rural Speeds – in March 2019 we announced that we were expanding our speed reduction scheme to include a further 24 rural routes. The project sees stretches of roads with a speed limit of 60mph reduced to 50mph. The move follows a study in 2017 which found that around 60% of collisions which caused injury on rural routes involved motorists exceeding the 60mph limit and the routes chosen all had well evidenced collision reduction reasons to reduce the speed limit. The speed limit reductions also incorporate reviews of the existing road markings and signs to ensure that they provide adequate warnings of the road conditions.

Driver Education - we have continued to offer our popular pre-driver days in 2019 to promote safety and highlight potential risks. They include an introduction to driving and cover issues relating to speed, safety and also a practical driving session, accompanied by a qualified driving instructor. Our older driver scheme Safer Driving with Age (SAGE) has also continued. The scheme encourages safe responsible driving by providing older drivers with a practical driving assessment in their own car with a qualified driving instructor. Driver education is an increasingly important part of speed management and driver behaviour change. The council facilitates the running of national driver education workshops on behalf of Leicestershire Police. In 2019/20, 25,880 drivers opted to attend courses as an alternative to receiving a fine and points on their driving licence. The aim of the courses is to help drivers understand the adverse consequences of their driving behaviour and give tips and advice to improve compliance and improve safety.

School Keep Clear Scheme – in September 2019 schools across Leicestershire were encouraged to sign-up to a scheme to combat the problems of inconsiderate parking. The School Keep Clear scheme aims to address concerns that parents, residents and teachers have about parking during the school run by using a camera car to enforce mandatory zig-zag zones outside school entrances. A total of 68 new schools became enforceable in September 2019, in time for the new school term. Since it launched in September 2018, the scheme has seen 146 schools sign up, with a further 11 schools set to join the scheme later this year, subject to consultations. We know that inconsiderate and dangerous parking outside schools can be a real problem, and the School Keep Clear scheme has gone some way to alleviate concerns in communities. Since the beginning of the scheme, 22 warnings have been issued and 241 penalties have been processed to motorists parking illegally.

Parking Enforcement - with traffic levels rising, parking enforcement teams have been increasing patrols to keep vehicles moving and keep the roads safe.

Motorcyclist Safety - we remain supporters of The Shiny Side Up Partnership (SSUP) an East Midlands motorcycle safety partnership. Originally set up to try and drive down casualties relating to sports-bike riders, this has now broadened to include lower capacity scooters and motorcycles. The Council uses a variety of roadside posters at sites that have a poor motorcycle casualty history. These messages include

Bike Crash Site Ahead and Think Bike. The roadside posters are bright yellow and have become a regular seasonal way of reminding riders and other road users to take extra care and look out for each other.

Community Speed Watch – this scheme continues to be a popular initiative which encourages local communities to get involved in identifying speeding motorists; and thereafter encouraging them to drive at more appropriate speeds. In 2019 there were 13 schemes and the details of more than 2,000 speeding vehicles were passed through to the police who, where possible, wrote to the registered keeper of the vehicles reminding them of the dangers associated with speed.

Sustainable Travel

Choose How You Move – in January the Choose How You Move initiative, a joint venture between the Council and City Council, launched a new-look website to help the county and city travel smarter, through more sustainable and active methods. On ChooseHowYouMove.co.uk walking routes, cycling maps, bus timetables, and park and ride information can be viewed and downloaded, as well as finding out and signing up to cycling courses, and active travel events. Businesses have their own dedicated page where they can receive help and advice to introduce active and sustainable travel. Teams also work alongside schools to offer fun activities and competitions promoting active travel. They regularly visit schools to teach cycling skills, road safety, and encourage pupils to keep active.

Transforming Cities Fund and Air Quality – in October 2019 we supported proposals by the City Council for a bid to the Transforming Cities Fund in response to the Government's Air Quality Directive. They have been awarded over £32m, which will enable initiatives in Leicester to improve public transport, cycling and walking provision to improve overall air quality. This will benefit both city and county residents.

Active Travel – in September 2019 a free, family-friendly event promoting active travel took place at Watermead North Country Park. The Council's safe and sustainable travel team led activities including treasure trails, and competitions. The council aims to encourage and help more families take advantage of the benefits of active travel, including improving levels of physical activity, reducing stress, and helping reduce pollution levels. Getting children involved in active travel at an earlier age is also helping to support adults to stay healthy. In October 2019 businesses were urged to apply for funding of up to £5000 to help them implement active and sustainable travel initiatives in the workplace. The grants, which were available from the council and funded by the Department for Transport, aimed to help businesses increase levels of activity amongst their staff by promoting active and sustainable travel as part of everyday life. The council also leads the way in sustainable travel by offering staff car-sharing spaces, electric charging points, as well as an electric pool car and pool bikes to use to and from meetings, all of which helps the council meet its targets of lower carbon emissions.

In September 2020 we reported that Travel clinics were being held across Leicestershire to encourage residents to cycle or walk to work or school where possible. The Council held three free travel advice events to help more residents make the change to walking, cycling and scooting for everyday journeys. Free bike checks and security markings were available at the events, along with electric bike trials and

travel advice. Since lockdown there has been a huge increase in people cycling, and we want to support them.

‘Pop Up’ Cycle Lanes – in the summer the Council started to introduce ‘pop-up’ cycle lanes and other measures supporting walking and cycling, fulfilling the requirements of the Government’s £250m Emergency Active Travel Fund initiative as part of the response to Covid-19 (EATF). Funded by £335,000 of EATF monies, the cycle lanes were part of a mix of temporary and permanent schemes aimed at encouraging more people to walk and cycle rather than take public transport or a motor vehicle. The schemes introduced over an eight-week period, include Birstall – a ‘pop-up’ cycle lane on the A6 Loughborough Road in both directions. Leicester Forest East – extending existing cycle lanes on the A47 Hinckley Road in both directions. Market Harborough – Kettering Road’s existing cycle lanes widened, and traffic flow improved by installing temporary traffic signals. ‘Park and Pedal’ sites – new facilities available at Enderby and Meynell’s Gorse park and ride sites and at County Hall with new facilities including secure, overnight bike shelters. The council is awaiting a Government decision on the award of a further £1.2m EATF monies to roll-out more schemes.

E-Bike Scheme - electric bikes for loan to workplaces across the county is another initiative by the Council to encourage active and sustainable travel to and from work. The loan scheme is already proving to be a hit at fashion giants Next, with 10 bikes now being used by staff at their Enderby base. The bikes are available for staff to use to commute to work as well as for travelling to meetings or events during the working day. The Council is encouraging businesses to take the opportunity to borrow the electric bikes free of charge.

Public Transport – the Council supports public transport in a variety of ways including by providing or supporting 100,000+ concessionary bus passes to help elderly and disabled pass holders travel free on local bus services. School transport is provided for 6,000+ school children, both mainstream and for those with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). Over 33,000 blue badge permits are provided to allow disabled residents to have preferential parking closer to their destination. Three park and ride bus services provide fast and frequent buses in to Leicester and around 30 supported local bus service contracts are provided carrying bus passengers where commercial operators do not operate. Over 40 demand responsive transport services as an alternative to buses are provided and we also support community transport providers across the County to provide services for those residents unable to use bus services or who are rurally isolated.

On Demand Travel - in April 2019 the first use of a Section 106 planning gain agreement was used to finance an on-demand bus service in Leicestershire. Bus operator Arriva began providing the demand responsive, ride-sharing service, named ArrivaClick at the New Lubbethorpe development. Passengers book journeys using an app showing their preferred pick up point and destination and are matched with others and provided a seat on a 15-seater minibus.

Passenger Transport Changes – since the adoption of its Passenger Transport Policy and Strategy in October 2018 the Council has been progressing a comprehensive review of all of its contracted bus services to make savings of around £400k per year. Proposed changes to bus services follows careful assessment of current bus usage in a bid to deliver value-for-money services. In addition, communities were invited to help find solutions to local transport issues that may either

complement, improve or replace the council's transport offer. Good progress has been made on the review with changes made to over 50% of the services to improve efficiency, provide better value for money and ensure access to essential services. The next phase of service reviews was due to commence, however, following the COVID-19 outbreak and significant impact on passenger numbers and provision, it has been decided to pause work on the reviews until Summer 2021.

Covid-19 School Bus Support - in September 2020 we announced extra funding to provide extra school buses across the county to help youngsters to socially distance on their journeys. Where students use ordinary public bus services to get to school extra services were provided at the beginning and end of the school day so that demand can be met while still ensuring enough space for social distancing. Precautions are also being taken on the services run just for children by the Council and schools themselves. All public buses running in Leicester and Leicestershire have social distancing measures in place, with limited seating available.

Highways Maintenance and Management

The County Council faces significant challenges in looking after its highways' assets. Present levels of government funding are insufficient to maintain even Leicestershire's A roads in their current condition.

Highways Maintenance - a total of £14.9m was invested in highways asset maintenance including £12.5m on carriageways, £0.6m on footways and rights of way, £0.6m on bridge maintenance and strengthening, £0.4m on flood alleviation, £0.2m on traffic signal renewal and £0.6m on other activity. In July 2020 we announced that a £5m government funding boost would see major maintenance carried out on three key routes in the county in late autumn 2020. The cash injection through the local highways maintenance challenge fund was awarded to go towards improving the state of roads and support Covid-19 recovery efforts. Resurfacing work will be carried out on the A6 Market Harborough bypass on the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire sections; the A426 Blaby Bypass – including the four roundabouts; and the A47 Hinckley in two locations - the Dodwells Road section between the A5 and the Triumph roundabout and the Normandy Way roundabout with Wykin Road. Footway and cycle track improvement work will also take place. The Council also continued with vital road maintenance works across its 2,789 miles of road to take advantage of the reduced traffic levels during the Coronavirus lockdown and ensure minimum disruption. All our highways teams observed Public Health England guidelines on social distancing, hand sanitising and safe working guidelines where possible.

Flood and Storm Response – in September 2019, crews were called out to more than 88 reports of flooding across Leicestershire and we dealt with 250 calls across highways, police and fire. Our crews were out distributing sandbags, clearing gullies and closing flooded roads following a period of heavy rain. Police and fire crews attended badly affected areas. Areas particularly affected included Stoney Stanton, Earl Shilton, Loughborough, Sileby, Mountsorrel, Barrow-on-Soar, as well as Hugglescote and Worthington. Extra staff were called in overnight to deal with flooding issues. In February 2020 the Council's highways teams again worked round the clock in response to the effects of both Storm Ciara and Storm Dennis. Extra gangs had already been drafted in ahead of the storms to support the clearing-up efforts – with five teams dealing with forestry work while highways and street-lighting teams also supported the response.

As a result of storm Ciara, highways responded to 170 call outs, mainly for fallen trees and branches. Storm Dennis saw heavy rainfall and high winds with a total of 82 call outs. The Highways Control Room remained open throughout the weekend, with 13 gangs responding to 124 incidents. Increased rainfall resulted in 65 residential properties and 9 commercial properties flooded. 33 roads were closed due to floodwater. In order to address the impact of severe weather events an additional £550k was allocated to the highways budget for the coming year. Government has included in its manifesto £4bn for a new flood defence programme over five years and we continue to press the government to maximise funding to help us address the substantial flood related issues across the county.

Winter Gritting – during the winter our gritters and drivers were out treating key routes to keep the county moving, spreading approximately 312 tonnes of rock salt across 3900 miles of road to combat the drop-in temperature. Keeping the county moving and motorists safe is our top priority each winter. Our gritting crews are on standby 24 hours a day, seven days a week – including Christmas and New Year – and ready to respond to the forecasts. We monitor the weather constantly and if freezing temperatures are forecast, our fleet of gritters go out at night to treat major roads and key routes which equates to almost half of the county's road network. The Council has a fleet of 23 gritters available, three of which were recently replaced with new state of the art vehicles. The other twenty vehicles have also been fitted with the latest sat-nav technology, to ensure all routes are gritted correctly. This year, the council's grit barns were stocked up with 18,000 tonnes of rock salt.

Snow Wardens - in addition to winter gritting, there are also a number of snow wardens based in communities across the county who grit paths, as well as farmers who during deep snow, fit ploughs to their tractors and assist the council in clearing roads. The authority is working with parish and town councils to train and encourage more people to sign-up to its Snow Warden Scheme to help keep the county moving during the winter. The council also has a team of carers and health visitors who can reach their patients if there is prolonged heavy snowfall.

Grass Cutting - the grass-cutting season commenced in April 2020 with the council's teams mowing the equivalent of 532 football pitches each month. The authority maintains nearly 3.8million square metres of urban grass in residential areas. Residents who want to find out when verges are scheduled to be cut in their area can use the council's interactive grass-cutting map. Work is also ongoing with communities around areas to be maintained as wildlife verges rather than being cut.

Gully Cleaning - to tackle blocked drains we are applying a new 'risk-based' approach to gully cleaning that includes increasing the number of roadside drains treated from 64,000 per year to 92,000 without costs rising. The change follows a seven-month trial to find a more cost effective and focused way of cleaning the county's 130,000 gullies. The trial found that it would be beneficial for more regular visits to roads at high risk of flooding due to the drains filling faster with silt. Previously drains were cleaned on an 18 to 24-month fixed programme, whether the road was at risk of flooding or not. The changes are part of our new highways asset management plan and were rolled out across the county from early 2019.

Parish and Communities Fund – our Highway's Parish and Community Fund was a one-off grant scheme made available to parishes and communities to help support them on issues with social distancing and active travel due to the Covid-19

pandemic. As part of this fund we gave parishes and communities the opportunity to apply for a grant of between £2,000 to £10,000 dependent on population, which they could use on variety of projects, specifically relating to areas that supported village recovery including the installation of temporary road closures; temporary speed restrictions in urban areas; the creation of pop cycle lanes; additional signage; and the removal of overgrown vegetation, that would not normally meet our criteria for maintenance. As of the end of September over 90 parishes and communities had applied to take advantage of this fund.

Affordable and Quality Homes

Housing is a key enabler to delivering other outcomes as a secure, quality, and affordable home in the right location is essential for a good quality of life. Housing matters, it influences people's security, resilience, health, access to education and employment and can enable the effective provision of care.

We have established a much stronger focus on the delivery of homes through a Chief Officer Champion, Lead Delivery officer and supporting Outcome Advisory Board. Our aim is that Leicestershire has a choice of quality, sustainable homes that people can afford, and that development contributes to the health and wellbeing of existing communities. Also, that there is enough suitable housing to support independence for those with care needs and that both existing and new homes will be low carbon and environmentally sustainable.

Impact of Covid-19 - in the short term, a package of government measures is protecting tenants from eviction, mortgage lenders are offering payment holidays and the "Everyone In" scheme has helped to house rough sleepers. In the longer term, however, the impact of Covid-19 on the wider economy is likely to have an impact on a wide range of housing issues.

Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire (SGP) – the ten partners (City Council, County Council, seven Leicestershire districts and the LLEP) approved the SGP in late 2018. The SGP sets out a long-term strategy for the delivery of planned growth up to 2050. Thousands of new homes will be needed in the city and county between 2031 and 2050, and the strategy enables us to help choose locations, protect environmental and historic assets, and bid for money to put the right roads, transport and other infrastructure in place. Without planning ahead, we could face dispersed, developer-led development, making it harder to put the right infrastructure in place and secure funding for it. We've worked closely with the city and district councils and this collective approach is important to the process.

Planning Award - in October 2019, at the East Midlands Town Planning Institute, the Strategic Growth Plan for Leicester and Leicestershire was announced as winner in the category for Excellence in Plan Making. The plan focuses on four key matters: delivering new housing; supporting the economy; identifying essential infrastructure; and protecting the environment and built heritage. This award-winning plan is testament to the forward-thinking proposals for future developments in housing to support population change, major infrastructure improvements to allow for new growth and congestion relief and rail improvements to improve connections.

New Homes Needed - the Strategic Growth Plan states that Leicester and Leicestershire needs 96,580 new homes and 367-423 hectares of employment land from 2011-2031. Some of these homes have already been built or have planning permission. Beyond 2031 the plan identifies the need for a further 90,500 dwellings and additional employment land, which is why further land needs to be unlocked. Local Plans deal with the detailed allocation of which sites will be brought forward.

Areas for Housing Growth - key areas for potential growth are the city of Leicester and land to the south and east of Leicester. A secondary area for growth is identified in the north of the county, called the Leicestershire International Gateway. New housing would be built closer to where people work, to minimise congestion from commuters. In spring 2019 the Whetstone Village proposal was announced by

Government as a successful Garden Village, one of two garden villages in the Midlands.

Supporting Infrastructure - draft proposals put forward in the Strategic Growth Plan include major infrastructure improvements on which new growth is dependent. These include new infrastructure to the south and east of Leicester. The A5 and A42 would also be upgraded, supporting growth in these areas. Rail improvements are also proposed. These road and rail improvements would require significant Government investment and would relieve congestion pressures along the M1 and more widely across the Midlands. It would also unlock land for the required housing and employment.

Affordability and Affordable Homes – the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) considers the extent of households who require financial support to meet their housing needs and thus who would be eligible for affordable housing. This identifies an annual net need for 2,238 such households per year across the housing market area for 2011-36. The HEDNA identified that to deliver the affordable housing needs of 2,238 new homes per year with an average delivery of affordable housing of 24% would require 9,293 homes per annum. This is over twice the need shown in the demographic analysis, justifying upward adjustments to boost affordable housing delivery in all of the local authorities in the housing market area.

Promotion of Development Land - over the past three years consents for in excess of 450 houses and 170,000sq ft of employment space have been achieved. Planning permission is expected for two further applications in respect of an additional 3,040 houses and 1m sq. ft of employment space on completion of the necessary Section 106 Agreements, including the East of Lutterworth SDA which is now wholly owned by the County Council. Further opportunities, including a number where planning applications have been submitted or are in the course of preparation (with the potential to deliver an additional 3,250 houses and employment space on County Council owned sites) have been identified and are being progressed through the planning system enabling long term housing delivery into the next two decades.

East of Lutterworth Expansion - in April 2020 the Council's plans to help deliver 2,750 new homes, community facilities and business space near Lutterworth were put forward. The 550-acre development on land east of the town will deliver nearly 250 acres of green space, two new primary schools, a community hub and a network of foot and cycle paths connecting to the town centre. Sustainable design, community and life-long living are at the heart of the plans. The development would offer a broad range of high-quality houses, including around 1,100 affordable homes. It also incorporates a wide-range of green features designed to maximise renewable energy and support low-carbon living, underlining our commitment to tackling climate change.

The proposed scheme features 50% green space – including Swift Valley Community Park, playing fields, allotments, woodland, trees and hedgerows and new ecological habitats. It also includes nearly 60 acres of retail and business space, creating 2,500 jobs. Roads and transport improvements to main roads and the M1 will boost capacity, including a new M1 bridge, a new spine road to reduce town centre traffic and new bus routes. The community hub would accommodate shops, restaurants, cafes, health centre and community hall. Harborough District Council's planning committee resolved to grant permission (subject to signing of a s106 Agreement) for the scheme at the end of July 2020. The permission is expected to be granted by December 2020.

Rural Housing Enabler – the Council together with the District Councils, EMH Group, Waterloo Housing Group and Nottingham Community Housing Association jointly fund the Leicestershire Rural Housing Enabler Service. Since 2014 this has been run by Midlands Rural Housing and has led to the development of a robust rural housing need evidence base for Leicestershire and facilitated the delivery of rural housing where a need is identified. Since its establishment the Rural Housing Enabler Service has helped secure homes for local people, completed local housing need surveys, supported neighbourhood plans and raised awareness of rural and affordable housing needs across the county.

Mitigating the Impact of Development - the Council's Planning Obligations Policy sets out a variety of requirements to help mitigate the impact of new developments on local communities and the environment. So that developments make a positive contribution to services and infrastructure in the area. The Council in July 2019 published a revised Policy which identifies improvements and enhancements. In May 2019 the Council included a commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030 for our own operations. The Council aims to 'lead by example' working through how we are going to deliver services in a carbon neutral way including working with developers and others to build 'green' new homes.

Housing to Support Independence

Our aim is that people with social care needs have access to well-located and suitable housing which promotes their independence. The number of older people is forecast to increase significantly over the next few years, leading to a greater need for specialist accommodation. Both dementia and mobility problems are projected to increase significantly. Some of these households will require housing adaptations to meet their changing needs, some will need more specialist accommodation or support. Our older people and working age adult strategies consider what appropriate housing provision might look like for adult social care client groups and our 'Place to Live Board' is looking at how this provision is delivered.

Social Care Accommodation Support - in June 2019 we approved a Social Care Accommodation Development Plan and Investment Prospectus 2019-2037 to increase the supply of social care accommodation-based support services.

Extra Care Housing - we are looking to extend our offer to older adults seeking to live independently in accessible, telecare enabled housing with flexible on-site care and support, as an alternative to residential care. We successfully contributed towards the provision of 62 new extra care places in Loughborough, with the scheme opening on schedule. We will make an important contribution to the allocation process for a new Extra Care Housing scheme in Ashby-De-La-Zouch developed by East Midlands Homes with support from our colleagues in North West Leicestershire District Council, first tenants should move in in Spring 2021. Our social care investment strategy includes opportunities to extend our extra care offer in Leicestershire further. The Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment estimates a need for an additional 9,460 specialist dwellings for older people in Leicestershire over the period 2011 to 2036.

Social Care Investment Plan (SCIP) – where people cannot remain within their own home, community-based accommodation options in the form of extra care and supported living can provide a cost effective and positive alternative to residential care.

In October 2019 we agreed an additional £10m capital to fund properties to meet needs identified within the Social Care Investment Plan. The money will support priority supported living properties and a specialist dementia care facility. At the time of writing five schemes have been secured offering up to 50 units of accommodation and a further three schemes are being explored offering a further 14 units of accommodation.

Box Tree Farm – the Council is developing housing for older people, adults with learning and physical disabilities and adults with mental health needs as a priority. In September 2019 a new scheme to provide homes for adults experiencing mental health needs was launched in Ratby. Box Tree Farm provides accommodation for six people with mental health needs, prioritising those moving out of residential care. This scheme underlines our commitment to providing the best care that we can across the County. Box Tree Farm provides residents with the opportunity to develop their independent living skills in a supported environment before securing a long term home.

Dementia Care - in October plans were approved for a specialist dementia care facility in Leicestershire. The £5.5m scheme will see an element of a council-owned site at Snibston Colliery transformed. The ambitious scheme will see specialist accommodation for up to 36 people built, with the aim of supporting those with complex dementia to live as independently as possible. The scheme forms part of a wider plan to provide more choices for older people and will see an Extra Care Housing scheme developed on adjacent land.

Hinckley Care - Housing - in November 2019 it was announced that a new housing scheme enabling young adults with disabilities to gain valuable life skills and live as independently as possible was to be launched in Leicestershire. The Council has worked with a registered provider to provide a six-bed bungalow in Hinckley, for people with autism or learning disabilities moving from children's social care to adult social care. The first in Leicestershire, the scheme will see people aged between 18 to 25, who are not used to living on their own, get support to help develop daily living skills to manage their own home in the future. Support staff will be on site and provide night time support.

Warm Homes - the council is working with E.ON Energy and Age UK to help people across Leicestershire improve their heating. The work involves the installation of 500 first-time gas central heating systems in eligible residents' homes. The Leicestershire project follows a successful funding bid by the Council to the Warm Homes Fund. In addition to the first-time gas central heating, eligible residents may be able to receive free insulation measures for their homes and can also benefit from free energy efficiency advice and support on how to better manage their income from Age UK Leicester Shire and Rutland.

Over the past two years, the Warm Homes Service, which is part of our Public Health Department, has provided more than 3,700 Leicestershire households with free, impartial advice to help them stay warm at home and keep their energy bills down. Many of these households have benefited from the support needed to switch energy supplier. On average, these households have saved £233 a year, with the highest saving for a single household being £1,341 a year. In addition, over 1,900 referrals have been made to access grants, benefits, energy discounts and related services. We're committed as a council to tackling fuel poverty.

Lightbulb – lightbulb offers practical housing support, keeping vulnerable people independent in their homes, helping to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions and facilitating timely hospital discharge. It offers a range of help with issues such as aids and equipment, major adaptations, assistive technology, and advice and support to choose the right housing option. The Lightbulb Housing Support Co-ordinator offers a holistic housing need assessment, single point of contact for practical housing support, signposting and helps to arrange solutions in response to any needs identified. They work at each site across the districts in conjunction and supported by Occupational Therapists. The Lightbulb Hospital Enabler Team offer housing specialists, working directly with patients, relatives and hospital staff to identify housing problems that are a barrier to discharge and putting in the right steps to address this. They also assist with the transition from hospital to home and provide support with setting up a new tenancy or managing the existing home, support with furniture packs and rent deposits, working across 3 hospital sites and the Bradgate Mental Health Unit.

Homelessness Prevention – being homeless has significant negative impacts on both physical and mental health. We currently commission services to support people at risk of becoming homeless in Leicestershire. This includes a 30-bed hostel in Loughborough and an outreach service. In May 2019 we began consultation on proposals to replace the current outreach provision with a redesigned in-house community-based service which will enable us to provide a range of specialist, holistic support to individuals and families most in need. The 30-bed hostel in Loughborough will not be affected by the plans.

Health, Care and Wellbeing

We want people to be enabled to take control of their health and wellbeing throughout their lives and to be as independent as possible. To do this, people need the right support in the right place at the right time. Although some people can fulfil their potential by themselves, others need help, sometimes throughout their lives.

Health and Care Integration

Leicestershire's vision for health and care integration is to create a strong, sustainable, person-centred and integrated health and care system which improves outcomes for our citizens. Our model of care is designed to deliver more care outside hospital, provide integrated and holistic services and work in partnership to maintain health, wellbeing and independence for as long as possible.

In order to transform and integrate health and care we are working intensively in partnership across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR). We are making a difference by committing to joint plans, delivering change using blended teams across organisations, and pooling funds across NHS and local authority partners. We are increasingly providing care and support in a more consistent way, modernising how care is delivered, providing care which is easier to access and navigate, and moving more integrated care into community settings.

Better Care Fund - our Better Care Fund (BCF) plan, spanning both the NHS and local government, supports the joining up of health and care services so that people can manage their own health and wellbeing independently in their communities for as long as possible. This involves providers and commissioners of health, care and housing services to ensure integrated services are planned and delivered effectively in partnership. We agreed a refreshed BCF plan for 2020/21 worth c£62.4m, setting out our approach to integrating care around the person; integrating services at county and neighbourhood level; effective use of disabled facilities grants to help meet housing needs and changes to the wider health and care system.

Integrating Care Around the Person – our approach includes integrated neighbourhood teams, integrated teams for hospital discharge and reablement, a new target operating model for adult social care, redesigned NHS community services, 'Lightbulb' housing service, unified prevention offer, easy access to urgent care, and technology enabled care.

Person Centred Approaches – our integrated reablement and crisis response service has a joint holistic person-centred assessment which directs care planning across community nursing and adult care. Work continues to develop this approach to ensure services are fully integrated as part of an end-to-end approach to delivering care.

The current jointly commissioned domiciliary care service has integrated, person centred approaches built into the process of assessment, placing and review of care packages. This service is currently being redesigned with a view to implementing a new service from the autumn of 2021 that is better aligned to our vision for integrated services. The operating model of integrated teams is focused on person-centred care planning for patients who are frail, multi-morbid or who have high health needs, investing further in care coordinators for this cohort of patients. The multiagency frailty

check has been adopted into assessment and care planning in the acute sector and integrated teams.

Leicestershire's model of personalised care includes the 'home first' philosophy, LLR Carers' Strategy, supporting learning disabilities through the LLR Transforming Care Programme and council's accommodation strategy, and personal budgets and direct payments. There is also the Unified Prevention Board, Local Area Coordinators, First Contact prevention hub and approach to social prescribing.

Unified Prevention Offer – the Leicestershire BCF has, since its inception, placed a high priority on developing a Unified Prevention Offer for local communities, making the best use of community assets and building community capacity. It is recognised that many of these interventions should be non-medical and can be provided by a range of partners, including the voluntary sector. The menu of prevention interventions includes lifestyle services, housing support, local area coordinators, support for carers, home safety and falls prevention.

Prevention at Scale Project – evidence shows that up to 30% of GP appointments are taken up by patients seeking non-medical interventions. Leicestershire's 'prevention at scale' project worked with a number of GP surgeries to develop better insights into the reasons for these types of attendances, how the local prevention offer can be improved and how best to support patients and GPs with easy access to the most suitable support for their non-medical needs. This support may come from a GP, self-referral into First Contact Plus, via other agencies or the community itself. The aim is to release more GP capacity for those activities that only GPs can deliver.

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams – the implementation of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, whereby community nurses, GP practice and social care staff work hand in hand to support the same cohort of people in their locality, continues to be embedded. This delivers multiagency care planning and improved care coordination in the community, keeping people at home as long as possible. Neighbourhood teams are currently testing integrated working for people with frailty, multiple long-term conditions and other complex needs.

Hospital Discharges – health and care partners across LLR are working hard to deliver improvements to transfer patients out of hospital and reduce delays in Leicestershire, through focused efforts across partner agencies, we have seen a significant reduction delays from hospitals – helping reduce pressure on hospital beds. An LLR-wide action plan is in place which has been based on analysing LLR's position against the high impact changes framework for hospital discharge, including key initiatives to help the D2A guidance. This includes Home First, which focuses on services designed to provide rehabilitation and reablement in people's homes. The programme has supported the development of an integrated discharge team at University Hospitals of Leicester and has developed a blueprint for integrated intermediate care services. Work to implement the integrated health and care reablement offer including referral and access points, skill mix, triage and service delivery commenced in 2018, and aligned to the redesign of community nursing and therapy services. The integrated approach is offered to adults when they have a change in need, requiring additional or new interventions that if not met, will result in admission to hospital or care home, or the person having to remain in hospital when they are medically fit for discharge.

Integrated Discharge Team – the Integrated Discharge Team (IDT) encourages and promotes an integrated way of working across all organisations to ensure smoother and faster resolution of delays to discharge. There has been a significant improvement to multi-agency working with a discharge hub where all professionals working on discharge can be co-located.

Integrated Domiciliary Care – since November 2016 home care in the county has been delivered principally through the Help to Live at Home service. The service is commissioned jointly by the Council and CCGs with lead providers appointed to lead the delivery of home care services.

Adult Social Care - Covid-19 Response

Social care teams at the Council went above and beyond to support Leicestershire's most vulnerable residents during the coronavirus pandemic. During Easter, just under 240 additional staff members worked across the Bank Holiday weekend, with over 120 staff and managers on standby to provide extra support. This included staff from adult learning and library teams redeployed to new roles - such as providing care and support to those in need, working in our customer service centre to make essential calls to vulnerable people, and supporting the council's care worker recruitment drive. Across the adults and communities department, more than 100 people were redeployed into different roles.

Adult Mental Health professionals (AMHPs) were on call and worked closely with partners in the Leicestershire NHS Partnership Trust (LPT). Customer service staff provided support, where needed, in processing referrals and advice on support available. Staff in the 'Discharge Hub' worked with University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and out-of-county hospitals to ensure timely discharge and care support to people. First Contact Plus worked on ensuring that vulnerable people, who have registered for help, got the support they needed. Contracts and commissioning staff supported independent sector providers to care for people at home and in residential care, including emergency access to Personal Protection Equipment. Social care staff supported people with a learning disability and their carers to understand and practice government guidelines on social isolation and protection. For many people with a learning disability and/or autism the measures put in place to protect people from COVID-19, for example social distancing, represented a significant risk to their health and wellbeing. Through the COVID-19 Learning Disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder Sub Cell, social care worked alongside health colleagues, providers and other partners to put in place the interventions necessary to keep these people safe and well.

In April 2020 we backed calls to urge companies to donate personal protective equipment (PPE) for key workers, to bolster the equipment for staff in the NHS, social care, children's homes, homeless shelters, community pharmacies and more. Firms were asked to donate any new and unused items such as fluid-resistant surgical masks, nitrile gloves, goggles, disposable aprons or overalls, sanitising gel and overshoes, and to consider using their factories or equipment to produce more of these specific PPE items. Drop off centres were set up at various locations across the county, where businesses can take their donations and we had support from Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, which opened up six fire stations as drop off

points. The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) took on the role of distributing PPE to key workers in preparation for a national mechanism coming on-line. The LRF worked 24/7 to build stock, prioritise and distribute PPE, using scientific and technical advice.

Care homes across the county did everything asked of them to keep people safe and to ensure their care needs have continued to be met through the pandemic. Staff have worked tirelessly in often very difficult circumstances and at personal risk to themselves in order to care for residents. Care homes were supported to receive additional and repeat whole care home testing for all residents and staff. Care homes also received online training on testing and how to use test kits.

Adult Social Care

We want people to be cared for at home, in their own community, wherever possible and for as long as possible. We commission and provide a wide range of services to support people to maintain their independence, enable them to be part of society, protect them and meet a variety of care needs. Ensuring that eligible support needs are met, and people can exercise choice and control over their lives. We have used extra resources provided through the Improved BCF to meet increased pressures on adult social care, tackle delayed transfers of care and help stabilise the local social care provider market.

In October 2020 we launched a new Adults and Communities Strategy. The aim is to improve wellbeing and opportunity for people and communities including happier, more prosperous, connected and fulfilled lives.

Enabling Choice and Control – our Personal Budgets Service offers advice and guidance to direct payments recipients in being an employer and managing their budgets. We encourage people who use our services to take an active role in their assessment and support planning. We have one of the greatest take-up rates for direct payments in the country.

Improving Adult Care Information – we reviewed all key areas on our website and content to reflect our strategy to provide residents with the choice and information to self-serve and developed new online tools. We have developed an online service directory with Children and Family Services - the Leicestershire Information and Support Directory. In December 2018 we were shortlisted in the Driving Efficiency through Technology category in the LGC Awards for our work to improve online self-service opportunities for residents in need of adult social care services. The changes have already demonstrated benefits to people and will also save c£50k a year.

Technology Enabled Care – ‘Care TEC’ is emerging as an inclusive term to describe a range of IT and digital solutions that can be used to support service user outcomes across the care pathway. It includes assistive technology, aids and adaptations, telecare and telehealth. We are planning to modernise and increase the utilisation of digital solutions that help service users achieve their planned outcomes. Work is being undertaken to better understand the positive impacts on outcomes, and potential digital partners in this area of work.

LLR Carers’ Strategy – unpaid carers are invaluable, and this year’s situation has really highlighted the need to continue to develop the ways we support them. The joint LLR carers strategy was due for renewal in 2021 however COVID-19 has impacted

plans for engagement and consultation throughout this year. Plans are to now complete this engagement over the course of 2021 and roll out the renewed Carers' Strategy in 2022. The current strategy is still very relevant and respective organisations are working consistently to ensure unpaid carers of all ages are identified early and feel valued, respected and supported. During the autumn of this year the LLR partners will be releasing a carers' passport scheme which will ensure carers are visible and supported appropriately within their communities.

Support for Carers – we continue to encourage unpaid carers to come forward for an assessment of their support needs, and the facility to allow carers to submit their assessment online at any time of day, has proved a huge success. Continuous monitoring and review of our offer has led to agreement for expansion of the dedicated carers Customer Service Centre team. The Support for Carers service has been recommissioned to continue providing telephone advice, telephone befriending, local carer support groups including specified evening groups to allow attendance from working carers and we have become a referral partner to Carefree for provision of carers breaks to be launched in autumn/winter 2020.

Strengthening the Social Care Workforce – we have created the 'Inspired to Care' team to support the resilience and growth of the sector by offering expert advice to care providers on attracting a high-quality workforce and developing and retaining the current workforce. The initiative also promotes social care careers to members of the public by actively improving the image of careers within the sector, through engagement activities and the Inspired to Care website, as well targeting the future workforce by working with education establishment and students across the county.

Improving Care Quality – ensuring that high quality care and support is being delivered by care homes is a priority, providing important reassurance to relatives and friends. We monitor all contracted services to ensure they are compliant with their contract, and seek feedback from people who use the services, staff and family members. We monitor information from a range of other sources including staff, whistle-blowers, council services, and from partners such as the Care Quality Commission and health bodies. Officers within our Quality Team support providers with areas of non-compliance as well as areas where they want to improve the quality of the service. The team offers training in falls management and positive behaviour support, and providers can receive best practice support in any area of care delivery including the Mental Capacity Act, medication, support planning, health and safety and auditing. The team is currently running a pilot with care homes on improving care for people who are living with dementia.

Social Care Recruitment – in September 2019 job seekers and students from across the city and county considering careers in social care were invited to attend a specialised careers event. The Social Care Experience was open to people of all ages. The event, run by the Inspired to Care team and Leicester City Council, aimed to inspire people to consider a career in adult social care.

More than 30 employers from across the city, county and Rutland, with vacancies in all areas of social care; including older people, mental health services and learning and physical disability services were on hand to answer questions and demonstrate the value of pursuing a career in care. Those who attended had the chance to take part in workshops on dementia, autism and practical social care skills. There were also interactive activities, demonstrations, a film and photography exhibition and

opportunities to talk to people in front line care roles about their roles and career journeys.

Inspired to Care – in October 2019 a project to inspire people in Leicestershire to consider a career in adult social care was shortlisted for a regional award. Inspired to Care was nominated in the Care Innovator Award category of the East Midlands Great British Care Awards. Inspired to Care is a project which supports people to explore the different pathways into careers into the sector and the different types of social care roles available, to meet a growing demand for care. We invested in the Inspired to Care programme and website to help develop the workforce in the care sector, by improving the sector's image; developing and retaining current staff; and attract new staff. In April, Inspired to Care launched a campaign to increase provider capacity, in response to the COVID pandemic, to recruit people in a variety of adult social care roles, in particular supporting people discharged from hospital back into the community and home care providers. This support to the home care sector made a big difference to local people and communities. By the end of July, over 2000 people had enquired or applied for positions with 200 interviewed and 96 offered jobs. Social care support has never been so important, and the roles give Leicestershire residents the opportunity to make a difference in their local communities.

Helping People Stay Well and Independent - Adults Aged 18-64

Transforming Care – meeting the housing and support needs of individuals presenting with complex learning disabilities, Autism and mental health difficulties under the Transforming Care agenda is a priority for LCC and the wider LLR Transforming Care Partnership. A four-unit specialist housing scheme is being developed in Markfield by a partner agency, Affinity Trust. The scheme, due to complete in spring 2021, will offer housing and support to Leicestershire people traditionally excluded from housing due to their complex needs.

Learning Disabilities – Transforming Care - the LLR joint health and social care Transforming Care Programme continues to work with providers of social care and housing to support individuals with complex learning disability and/or autism spectrum disorder, with behaviour that is challenging, to resettlement within the community from an in-patient setting. Through co-ordinated work across statutory, non-statutory, third sector and local community provision, individuals are enabled to live as independently as is possible for them and be a tenant in their own home. Furthermore, work is ongoing to put in place the awareness, processes and interventions needed to prevent individuals from being admitted into mental health in-patient units. The programme is being supported by significant investment from the Better Care Fund.

Learning Disabilities – in March 2020 we agreed a new partnership arrangement with the CCGs to manage a pooled budget to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes for people with learning disabilities in Leicestershire. The council under the arrangement will act as lead commissioner and manager of the pooled budget. The current budget supports the health and social care of c200 people with a learning disability in Leicestershire.

Whole Life Disability Strategy – in May 2019 we launched a new plan to support people with disabilities to live as independently as possible, access support and develop skills. The plan, shaped following engagement with more than 1,000 people, aims to help prevent and reduce the need for long-term care services and support

people to lead independent and fulfilling lives. The plan also focuses on young people who have an EHCP, with the aim of achieving a smooth transition from school to further education, training and work, together with the continuation of support to meet health and care needs.

Disability Services in North West Leicestershire - in June 2019 we agreed plans for the re-development of short breaks services, supported living accommodation and Community Life Choices at a site in Coalville. The development responds to demand analysis which suggests an additional 39 supported living units are required in the area by 2027. Plans include a new £3.7m adult social care facility in Coalville involving supported living properties for up to 16 adults with learning disabilities to live as independently as possible as well as a six-bed short breaks building. The plans will also see suitable space used on the site to provide the council's Community Life Choices service. Work is due to complete in summer 2021.

Supported Living - we continue to support around 360 individuals within supported living across the county. Providers work with individuals in an enabling way with household and community experiences, to promote the opportunity to live a more independent lifestyle within their local community. We are also committed to supporting those people who can to move out of residential care into supported living or other independent accommodation. To meet the growing demand for Supported Living in June 2019 we committed to a Social Care Investment Plan (SCIP) 2019-2037, which proposes major capital investment in Leicestershire into accommodation-based support options, including supported living.

Community Life Choices - community life choices supports around 750 individuals of all ages to maintain and build on existing roles and skills, natural support and community involvement, through the delivery of tailored support activities. Delivered via group-based or individualised support, individuals are encouraged to gain more independence, actively engage within their local community and develop confidence and skills to move into employment, education, training or volunteering. Through community life choices support, individuals are currently working within social enterprise schemes, volunteering at local charity shops, taking part in land-based activities, singing and disability sport. The Council ensures that the Community Life Choices framework reflects people's needs and interests.

Shared Lives - shared lives involves a carer using and sharing their home and their family (or community) life with the person using or living in a shared lives arrangement. It can be offered to any adult with any type of care and support needs. During 2018/19 between 105 and 116 service users were benefitting from shared lives. Support for all shared lives carers now includes manager visits to all carers within their own home, an ongoing training programme, a quarterly carer network meeting, telephone advice, local carer support groups, support to complete carer assessments and signposting to other useful services.

Helping Older People to Stay Well and Independent – 65+

Frailty – our approach to frailty across LLR includes a number of proven interventions that should take place in the community, in hospital, and on hospital discharge if someone is assessed as having certain frailty markers. The LLR area has adopted the Rockwood scale for assessing frailty consistently across the health and care system, and all practitioners will be using the same set of prompts to check how someone's care could be managed most effectively at every opportunity.

Dementia Services and Strategy - there are 9,458 people over the age of 65 years with a diagnosis of dementia, and 184 people between the ages of 30 and 64 diagnosed with early onset dementia in Leicestershire. The number is predicted to rise to 17,028 by 2035. In October 2018 we adopted a new strategy aimed at improving the quality of care, access to information and advice and training for staff. The joint LLR Living Well with Dementia Strategy 2019-2022 uses the guiding principles developed by NHS England named the 'Well Pathway for Dementia'. The five principles of the pathway are Preventing Well, Diagnosing Well, Supporting Well, Living Well and Dying Well. A jointly commissioned Dementia Support Service began in October 2017, offering a single point of access for people with dementia, carers and professionals. Other support includes advice, information, training and carer respite. Advocacy and safeguarding services are in place, assistive technology solutions are widely offered, and a variety of social opportunities such as activity groups and memory cafes are available to support people and carers to live well with dementia.

Re-procurement of the Dementia Support Service, jointly commissioned between the CCG and Leicester and Leicestershire County Council, was paused due to the impact of COVID-19 and the current service, provided by the Alzheimer's Society, was extended by 6 months. Tender evaluations for the new service are due to commence in October 2020 and a new service will be in place in April 2021. Commissioners have had regular meetings with the Alzheimer's Society to ensure that people living with dementia are still being supported through online groups and telephone services. The Alzheimer's Society will also be supporting people waiting for appointments at LPT's Memory Clinic as the waiting list has increased significantly since COVID-19 forced the temporary cessation of memory clinics at LPT.

Extra Care Housing - our social care investment strategy includes opportunities to extend our extra care offer in Leicestershire. We are also continuing to work on our advice and information offer for prospective extra care applicants and existing tenants, to promote extra care as a positive alternative to residential care in later life. We work in partnership with community health and hospital discharge teams to avoid hospital admissions, offer reablement within extra care, and speed up discharges for those returning to extra care following a period of treatment or ill-health. Extra Care Schemes are linked into their local area enabling them to be actively involved in their local communities.

Public Health

Leicestershire County Council's vision is for its residents to be able to make informed and healthy choices for themselves, contributing to a reduction in health inequalities and an improved healthy life expectancy. We support the population to stay well through prevention and early intervention and through influencing the wider determinants of health and wellbeing such as the environment, housing, employment and education. Our public health function plays a key role in contributing to these aims. A number of public health issues are prioritised in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

This year the vital importance of effective local public health services has been highlighted by our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In early March the first case of covid-19 was reported in the county. Close contacts were given health advice about symptoms and emergency contact details to use if they become unwell in the 14 days after contact with the confirmed case. The second confirmed case was reported on 9 March.

In May 2020 it was announced that LLR had been chosen among the local authorities to lead work and share best practice on the Government's new trace and test service. This was a positive step for local people to support the fight against Covid-19. The council also received around £6.6m to support care home providers to tackle the spread of Covid-19 and accepted additional funding to support the role in the trace and test service.

On 29 June 2020 the Secretary of State for Health reported a high number of positive cases in Leicester. The Council confirmed its commitment to keeping residents safe following the decision to institute the first local lockdown of Leicester as a result of the spike in a number of areas within the county. Some areas that bordered the city were included in the lockdown zone as a result of local case levels, and risks of further increases in positive cases. We worked closely with Leicester City Council and the Government to bring down the overall number of cases. The Council also produced a map and a postcode checker detailing which parts of the county would be impacted by the increased restrictions. It has supported the closure of schools in the affected areas as well as a range of service changes such as a pause of birth registrations and ceremonies. Baroness Harding and the Secretary of State, Matt Hancock, spoke of the impressive local partnership working.

Incident Management Teams (IMTs) - have been established in areas in the County where there has been a high incidence of Corona virus (Covid-19) positive cases, these meetings have been led by the Director of Public Health involving colleagues from different organisations to implement rapid local actions to restrict further spread of infection including: communications, testing, contact tracing contacts of positive cases and outbreak management.

Public Health Services

The Council has been moving to a social model of public health with greater involvement of public health across other services and a strong emphasis on prevention for a number of years.

Online Health and Support Information Hub - we want people to get support as quickly as possible when they need it. Our online information hub provides an access point for immediate support. First Contact Plus enables people to search from their own home through a broad range of wellbeing information, all in one place. The service includes information and links to organisations which provide support around topics such as health, falls, feeling safe, living independently, debts and benefits, work, learning, volunteering and families and relationships. First Contact Plus also signposts people to community groups, national charities and public health services.

Unified Prevention – our Unified Prevention Board (UPB) oversees the development and delivery of Leicestershire’s prevention offer, a key part of the Health and Wellbeing Board’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The UPB coordinates activities across a wide range of partners, ensuring everyone collaborates to deliver our prevention priorities, services and communication plans. The UPB has continued to develop links between the prevention/social prescribing offer and the new Integrated Teams across Leicestershire. Work has focussed on strengthening engagement between partners and Integrated Teams in each locality. District Council and Public Health representatives are now part of each Integrated Team’s board, helping shape the prevention focus in each area.

Social Prescribing - the board has worked on the social prescribing model for Leicestershire. In January 2019, further work began to develop the social prescribing model as the wrap-around prevention offer to support Integrated Teams. This initially focussed on the needs of 3 cohorts of people, those who are frail, those who have multiple long-term conditions, and those with high health and care costs. The UPB partners are focusing on achieving a joined up social prescribing model across Leicestershire that supports the framework for social prescribing in primary care in the NHS Long Term plan. Continuing the development of the wrap-around prevention offer for Integrated Teams is one of the core activities of the UPB with Social Prescribing Link Worker roles starting to be established within the new Primary Care Networks.

Integrated Healthier Lifestyle Services - helping people live healthy lifestyles is vital. Our weight management and stop smoking services are designed to give people the right support that will have a positive impact on their overall health and wellbeing. The services include the support of friendly advisors offering free, tailored support to help with weight loss, giving up smoking and becoming healthier in general, either via text, Skype, phone or face-to-face appointments. The weight management service offers tailored support and intervention for people who are overweight that can fit into daily routines straight away. The team offers advice to people struggling to achieve and maintain a healthy weight and nutritional advice together with becoming more physically active. The service consists of a two-part approach and includes adult and children weight management services. The Quit Ready stop-smoking service offers a range of behavior intervention, medication and support. Both services consist of a 12-week intervention with the patient.

Stop Smoking – in April 2020 we reported an increase in people wanting support to give up smoking. Covid-19 acted as a catalyst for this increase in demand. More than 200 people contacted our Quit Ready service in March and received tailored digital support and intervention from the comfort of their homes. Quit Ready offers a 12-week, evidence-based treatment programme run by a team of specialist advisers via the service’s helpline and digital service. In addition to weekly advice sessions, service users – including those who were self-isolating or shielded due to coronavirus – could also receive nicotine replacement therapy or e-cigarettes through the post, with no face-to-face contact required at any stage.

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) – LACs support vulnerable people by developing networks of community-based support and utilising existing community assets. They operate in local neighbourhoods, closely linked to housing and community health services and to recreational and social opportunities. There are now 16 LACs covering 23 locations. By improving the quality of life and independence of individuals and building stronger community links, LACs help to prevent people from reaching crisis point and reduce demand for health and social care services.

NHS Health Check – this is part of a national mandated programme in England. It is aimed at 40-74-year-olds to help reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, stroke, kidney disease and some forms of dementia. In Leicestershire, residents who are GP registered are invited every 5 years to take up their free health check via an invitation from their GP practice. It’s free, and helps people understand the chances of getting health problems as they get older and what they can do to improve their health. The health check programme in Leicestershire is the responsibility of our Public Health Department.

Healthy Weight and Diet – good nutrition is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. Diet combined with physical activity can help people reach and maintain a healthy weight, reduce the risk of chronic disease and promote overall health. To help combat overweight and obesity we commission Tier 2 Leicestershire Weight Management Service that sits within the Integrated Lifestyle Service and makes one part of the provider arm service. As part of the weight management offer we also provide the Cooks4Life programme that works with schools and families in Leicestershire and the Master Gardeners programme helps people to learn to grow nutritious food

Weight Management - the weight management service offers support to Leicestershire residents who are overweight. Its programmes set a 5% body weight loss goal, giving a results-focused approach that enables service users to track their progress. The service features a team of senior dieticians and nutritionists who help those looking to manage their weight, through a 12-week intervention programme. The service also offers low level support for those who are not in need of intensive support i.e. Weight Watchers App support together with 3 contact telephone support sessions from a Nutritionist. The service has been operating since January 2020 and have received approximately 500 referrals to by mid- May. The Childrens’ weight management programme supports children who are overweight and provides group interactive sessions called *Healthy Eating Healthy Activity*. This group support offer provides parents and children with advice and support on making healthier food choices, nutritional information and recipe ideas to maintain a healthy weight. This is also in collaboration with the National Child Measurement Programmes and working with schools and School Nurses in providing support to children who are considered

not having a healthy weight. This, together with the Cooks4Life programme in schools provides for an overall healthy eating offer for families.

Good Food Charter and Plan – food is important for Leicestershire’s health, economy and sustainability. In December 2018 we approved a new Good Food Charter and Plan for Leicestershire. The Food Plan provides a strategic approach that values and prioritises sustainability, local provenance and healthy food in policies and procurement, whilst also developing community capacity and assets in relation to food growing, cooking and eating. The Good Food Charter provides an over-arching ambition to drive the future of food in Leicestershire. The plan includes supporting Melton Borough Council and Harborough District Council in the national Sustainable Food Cities scheme by promoting healthy and sustainable food and alleviating food poverty and diet-related ill health and improving access to affordable healthy food. It will mean Leicestershire can become a member of the Sustainable Food Cities network which would open up funding opportunities and support from national experts.

Substance Misuse - this year has been dominated by the response to the Covid-19 pandemic for both the Public Health Department and our commissioned providers. The focus in the early part of the year was to support substance misuse treatment services to adapt their service delivery whilst continuing to deliver safe, high quality interventions for people with alcohol and/or drug related problems. We are pleased to say that both our community substance misuse treatment service and in-patient detoxification service remained open and accessible to service users. Where safe to do so interventions moved to digital and remote applications including e-modules and video, and phone calls. All service users were re-assessed and where clinically indicated face-to-face support was continued with all Covid-19 safety precautions strictly in place. The annual Substance Misuse Recovery Week of events planned, organised and delivered by the local recovery community during September moved to a digital festival and staff both supported and took part in the ‘virtual festival’ which has been a great success. The planned re-procurement of substance misuse treatment services due to take place throughout this year in readiness for 2021 has been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the joint work with commissioning partners continued and is now preparing for new contracts for April 2022.

Sexual Health Strategy – poor sexual health can affect anyone, often when it is least expected. In April 2020 we commenced consultation on a new Sexual Health Strategy for the next three years. The Strategy was approved in June 2020. It will see us continue to work with partners to ensure services meet the needs of residents. The proposals focus on giving people the right information to make positive decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and reducing health inequalities by focusing on the needs of people at high risk of poor sexual health. There is continued focus on supporting schools in their work around relationships and sex education and in access to services through new technology. The 2020-23 Sexual Health Strategy which was approved, will build on the progress of the previous strategy and will aim to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on people’s sexual health and wellbeing. A new integrated sexual health service model has been implemented, incorporating more self-service access such as online services and vending. This provided a good base to promptly respond to service changes required in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Workplace Health Programme - the top priorities for our workplace health programme include poor sleep management, low physical activity levels and poor fruit and vegetable consumption. As the work continued, the programme is addressing

these priorities with organisations to achieve better outcomes for the Leicestershire workforce with a workplace health tool being developed for use by partners and staff within their organisation and the workplace charter.

Homelessness Prevention and Housing Related Support - in October 2019 following consultation we agreed a revised approach and new model for homelessness prevention and housing related support. The model provides a combination of 30 beds of hostel-based accommodation and outreach housing-related support for people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, with 3 full time specialist housing-related support workers.

Warm Homes Fund – the Warm Homes Service supports and educates members of the public and organisations to reduce fuel poverty and provide practical advice. In December 2019, following a successful funding bid which resulted in a £3.4m award, we entered into a contract with E.ON. to deliver a 2-year project to address fuel poverty in Leicestershire. The project aims to reduce excess winter mortality and ill-health caused by cold homes. It will provide physical improvements to the home and financial and behavioural advice to ensure residents maintain a level of resilience and independence to keep warm at home. There will be an additional advisor post within the Public Health First Contact Plus service.

Children Get the Best Start - Child Health

Ensuring that our children get the best start in life is a priority and also an investment in our future. We want to support parents to get it right in the 1001 critical days after birth and to ensure that children are prepared and ready for school, whatever their background.

0-19 Healthy Child Programme - our service model for the Healthy Child Programme comprises a combined health visitor and school nursing service. The service prioritises the health of looked after children, children with SEND, traveller families and those at risk of exploitation.

Breast Feeding and Maternity Support – low breastfeeding rates are linked with inequalities in health, deprivation and reduced life expectancy. Breastfeeding peer support services are available in 6 areas and breastfeeding champions have been nominated in both health visiting and family wellbeing centre teams. The ‘baby buddy’ app and ‘meals on heels’ app have been embedded across the county.

Early Years Support - in spring 2018 we brought together our Early Years Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Service, our Early Learning and Childcare Service and our Early Years Autism Team into a single Early Years and Child Care Service in order to pool our early years expertise. The single service provides support to ensure that young children get the best start in life and that their health, development and learning are the best they can be. The service works directly with children and families as well as with early years’ providers and schools.

Healthy Tots and Healthy Schools – following the launch of new websites in 2018, the Leicestershire Healthy Schools programme (LHSP) will launch a new and updated accreditation process. The new process is aligned with the most recent evidence and guidance and provides schools with the best guidance to improve pupil wellbeing. Both LHSP and Healthy Tots programmes continue to provide a range of evidence-based

workshops for school staff, including staff and pupil mental health, bereavement, RSHE and much more. LHSP is also supporting the delivery of the DfE Wellbeing for Education Return to ensure pupils mental health and wellbeing is supported during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Oral Health Promotion – the Oral Health Promotion Team moved in house to the Public Health Department in August 2018. The service provides oral health training in supervised tooth brushing for pre-school settings, training for frontline staff, oral health resource library and advice and displays. The service works with professionals to promote oral health and prevent tooth decay.

Mental Health

The considerable burden of mental illness means that strengthening individual resilience and helping people with mental illness to recover remain priorities for us. We are a partner in the Better Care Together Mental Health work-stream. The supporting programme incorporates a range of interventions aimed at helping people avoid becoming mentally ill and at mitigating the impact of mental illness in those who experience problems.

Mental ill Health Prevention - our RU OK? website provides information about sources of support. As part of the local Mental Health Partnership group we have developed supporting practices. Mental Health First Aid training is offered to front line staff. Our adult learning service has also designed a number of opportunities for adult social care users including those anxious and depressed. Healthier in Mind is progressing a mental health strategy for LLR owned with local communities. During Mental Health Awareness week in May 2020 councils, police and the NHS across the area came together to encourage residents who were experiencing mental health concerns during the pandemic to seek support. Tailored mental health information, advice and support was available via the Start a Conversation website on a three-tier basis: for those in crisis, who require urgent or emergency help; for those experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, who are struggling to cope; and for those who are more worried than usual and wish to improve their mental wellbeing. The resources help to signpost people to the most appropriate support for them in a clear and effective way.

Children's Mental Health - as part of the approach a toolkit has been launched for schools and an emotional wellbeing curriculum pack developed by young people on our County Youth Council. The pack has been launched to Leicestershire Secondary Schools as part of their Mental Health Awareness campaign and includes a variety of activities for work with young people aged 11 to 18. Through 'routes to resilience' we have supported an evidence-based approach to helping schools and families in their work developing the character, resilience and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. The programme has been offered to all state maintained and state funded primary schools, secondary schools and colleges across the county.

Suicide Prevention - local suicide prevention plans are led and delivered by the LLR Suicide Audit and Prevention Group (SAPG). The group consists of key partners and stakeholders from the Council, local NHS trusts, Leicestershire Police and many more. The group also lead the collective suicide awareness and prevention campaign, Start a Conversation.

Start a Conversation is a suicide prevention campaign that aims to build a community that is committed to the mental health and wellbeing of residents. A non-judging environment where care and support is available to those in distress or those bereaved or affected by suicide. Through a raised awareness and open and honest conversations about suicide we believe that every person has the potential to make a difference and save a life. The campaign is led by the council, working in partnership with a number of organisations, from a variety of sectors from the community, that have come together with a commitment to prevent suicide. We would like residents and communities to be more aware of the warning signs of suicidal behaviour and to have an open and honest approach to conversations about suicide.

In September 2020 we delivered a week-long series of events over World Suicide Prevention day to raise awareness of the LLR suicide prevention campaign. The events were taken up by more than 400 people and events ranged from exploring novel research in suicide first-responders to providing suicide bereavement training. The Suicide Audit and Prevention Group also continues to meet regularly and have been meeting weekly since the start of official Covid-19 lockdown, in March 2020. The group are providing a rapid response to support residents throughout the pandemic and are continuing efforts to deliver the local suicide prevention strategic approach, agreed in June 2020.

Physical Health - Sport and Physical Activity

The role of physical activity in improving our health and wellbeing is increasingly acknowledged, helping to reduce the major causes of premature death and illness, as well as the prevention and management of chronic diseases. Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport (LRS), working closely with the County Council, play a key role to deliver sport and physical activity opportunities which support communities in achieving the UK Chief Medical Officers physical activity guidelines.

Physical inactivity directly contributes to one in six deaths in the UK. In November we supported recommendations in the Director of Public Health's Annual Report, on physical activity. This involves a coordinated approach to promote healthy weight across the life course by a range of different organisations, including an active environment, travel, early years and schools, people and families, workplace and workforces, active communities and physical activity as medicine. A strong overall systems leadership approach being essential. LRS led on developing Leicestershire's Physical Activity and Sport Strategy, which sets out a long-term vision for physical activity and sport and a framework for local action.

Working with the Council LRS, in partnerships with wider organisations implements range of services.

Sport and Physical Activity Grant - the Sport and Physical Activity (SPA) Grant Agreement represents a collaborative commissioning approach in Leicestershire to link up the physical activity related work of the County Council, Leicester-Shire and Rutland Sport (LRS) and the district councils and their local leisure, sport and physical activity providers. Each year, districts produce a commissioning plan, based on the Public Health Commissioning plan, outlining how they will deliver local programmes and campaigns.

Early Years Physical Activity - purposeful physical play/physical activity: high quality training course opportunities and an annual Conference with Awards, that Early Years practitioners or anyone that works with children under the age of 5 can access. Also supporting early years settings to deliver active travel interventions and to promote walking, cycling to parents.

Active Travel - working with the Safe & Sustainable Travel Team to support the School Sport & Physical Activity Networks and local Schools to implement Active Travel Initiatives such as Active Travel Month, Active Travel Grants, School Banner Competitions and Bike-ability.

Active Families - Active Families is a 4-year project funded by Sport England to engage inactive families in physical activity, creating behaviour change and encouraging families to become more active. In relation to weight management, supporting the Leicestershire Weight Management Service to integrate physical activity into the children's group-based sessions.

Workplace Wellbeing - public health and six local authorities have also funded LRS to develop a Wellbeing @ Work package which organisations across LLR can access free of charge to support the implementation of workplace health initiatives. One of the major programmes is the Workplace Health Needs Assessment which provides practical advice on workplace health and standardised survey questions to identify the key priority areas including healthy eating, physical activity, smoking and alcohol awareness and sleep and stress management.

Getting People Active – during 2019/20 £580,294 was invested into County Locality Sport and Physical Activity Plans. £798K DfE funding was also secured for holiday activities and food programmes within Leicestershire and £569K secured for 77 local clubs and organisations resulting from funding officer support. 43 organisations were supported to complete a Workplace Health Needs Assessment, engaging with 6,100 employees. £80,619 was invested in the development of 25 new Satellite Clubs. 58 clubs have been sustained since the beginning of the programme.

Healthy at Home - as the COVID-19 pandemic saw the country fall into lockdown, the Healthy at Home online offer was developed to help support the public get and stay active safely. The Healthy at Home landing page has seen over 8,500 page visits with the 4 key sub-pages on Working at Home, Wellbeing at Home, Active at Home and the virtual activity search engine totalling over 13,000 page visits. A partnership with BBC Radio Leicester saw over 2,016 hours of activity logged by the public on the LRS Activity Tracker during the Active Foxes Challenge. Creative social media content featuring videos, staff imagery and staff blogs was developed to engage the public during the lockdown. Over 4,300 Healthy at Home activity bags containing information and support along with activity equipment were delivered to targeted groups across Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland.

Sports Organisational Support - the Sports Organisation Support (SOS) initiative was designed to provide assistance to sports clubs and organisations to help them navigate through the COVID-19 restrictions. Specialist financial, risk management and health and safety advice was provided to over 100 sport and physical activity organisations to help them continue to operate and re-open safely. The SOS grant fund was established to help clubs and organisations pay essential costs to ensure

they were able to continue operating and provide an invaluable service to the many people that attend them. Nearly £50,000 was granted to support 35 sports organisations in the county through the fund.

School Games Virtual Summer Championships - COVID-19 meant the School Games Championships could not run in its traditional format, however this didn't stop school children from across the county coming together, virtually, to take part in the first School Games Virtual Summer Championships in June. With over 3,000 young people putting forward their best score in a range of challenges, and there were over 15,000 entries into the 4 sports categories. The week-long championships started in mid-June during National School Sport Week and ran throughout the week, with young people able to take part in the challenges and upload their scores to represent their school. The virtual Championships gave even more young people the opportunity to participate and represent their school in this interactive county-wide competition, as the challenges were open to all and accessible, whether they were taking part individually at home, or back in a school environment. 123 schools were represented in the competition over the week.

Active Together - is a physical activity movement designed to support the residents of Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland to become more active. Whilst central coordination of Active Together is driven by LRS, it is designed to be owned and utilised by a wide range of partners to support them to promote consistent physical activity messages which link to their own organisational programmes and outcomes. The focus during this time has been on developing a public facing campaign supported by our partners. Active Together along with the straplines of "My Way", "Let's Do This" and "Welcoming You Back Safely" have been used via social media to promote being active in your local place, return of the leisure facilities and active travel to school. October and November will see an offline offer being develop through use of billboards, ad-vans and radio.

Keeping People Safe

In 2020 we agreed a new Children and Families Plan setting out our priorities for the next three years. We want Leicestershire to be the best place for all children, young people and their families. We also want children and young people to be safe and living in families where they can achieve their potential and have their health, wellbeing and life chances improved within thriving communities. We want to ensure that all children are given opportunities to be happy, healthy and to achieve their best outcomes. We also want children to enjoy positive experiences in safe and supportive families, well connected to their local communities and where necessary well supported by a wide range of targeted support services.

Safeguarding

We continue to work in close partnership with other agencies through the Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Children Partnership to implement strong interagency arrangements for the protection of children from harm and provide a range of support for children in need.

Safeguarding Children – in September 2020 we agreed a new Safeguarding Children Plan to 2021. Areas of development last year include embedding new safeguarding partnership arrangements, a quality assurance and performance framework, engagement approach with schools and young people and safeguarding practice review policy. The partnership also carried out an assurance process regarding mental health and safeguarding children and continued work on Case Reviews. The partnerships multi-agency safeguarding training programme has seen 44 courses delivered to around 1,200 participants across agencies.

In April 2020 residents were urged to be extra vigilant of children's welfare during lockdown and report any concerns they had. The 'Their door is shut. Ours is open' campaign launched following a fall in calls to local safeguarding teams since the introduction of social distancing measures. The Leicester and Leicestershire and Rutland Safeguarding Partnerships were concerned that, despite this fall, cases of child abuse may be on the rise, with fewer opportunities for it to be seen, reported and stopped, with additional pressures on families potentially leading to increased safeguarding concerns for children. Residents were asked to look and listen for signs that may indicate abuse. The campaign was recognised as good practice by the LGA.

During the pandemic children's social care teams continued to carry out vital visits and online contacts to keep vulnerable children safe. Schools staff continued to provide innovative teaching with on line programmes and opened schools including school holidays so essential workers could continue to work. Schools have also provided support to families in need. Our educational psychology service also helped parents and carers support children during lockdown

Ofsted Improvements – in November 2019 Ofsted published a report on the Council's Children's Social Care Services. The report identified considerable progress made since the last inspection in 2017 with ratings for supporting children in care and leadership improved to good. The report also identified that services for children in need of help and protection and overall effectiveness of the service was still undergoing some further improvement to be good. In February 2020 we considered a report on the inspection and agreed an action plan to address the recommendations in the report. Action is being taken to address issues identified, including more

consistent oversight of care plans, quality of case recording, and tackling the timeliness of assessments for children, who are not identified as being in immediate risk of significant harm. This is driven through our continuous improvement plan – Road to Excellence.

Keeping Children Safe and Cared For

Our aim is that all children are living in stable environments and have secure attachments and that families are self-sufficient and able to cope. Like other local authorities we have seen the number of children in care increase significantly over the last few years. Leicestershire had c620 young people in care in 2020. Children considered to be at risk of Significant harm (Section 47, The Children Act 1989) or in need (Section 17) are referred into the service through First Response, who screen contacts and if they meet the threshold for intervention assess their needs. First Response is also the front door into Children and Family wellbeing services. Children and Families requiring longer term social care involvement are supported via Locality based Children Social care teams or the Disabled Children's teams.

The Service has continued to work with partner agencies to identify and support children at risk of criminal exploitation (including Child Sexual exploitation), and children living with the risk of domestic abuse via the Vulnerability Hub based at Wigston police station. Out of hours services are also based at The HUB. Children whose long-term plan is to be in the care are supported by dedicated Children in Care teams. The Care Leavers team supports our older children post 18 to successfully transition into adulthood.

Children's Innovation Partnership – since forming a partnership with Barnardo's to work together on the Innovation Partnership we have successfully bid for £798k for the Holiday Activity and Food Programme to specifically focus on school hunger and to run holiday activities. 2023 children accessed the programme over the summer. Youth engagement funding has been secured to work with around 3,000 children over 2 years on advanced life-skills for 11-14 years olds. We have also secured £234k DfE funding for 18 months to deliver 102 Family Group Conferences, though implementation has been delayed due to Covid-19.

Children's Placement Strategy - the placements and homes where children, young people and their families live are key to achieving our priority outcomes. For our children in care we provide good quality care and placements to help them reach their potential. Our Care Placement Strategy outlines how we design and commission services of a high quality that place children and their needs firmly at the centre. Our Care Placement Strategy also determines what services may be necessary to meet the needs of children both on the edge of care and in care and how permanence for children and young people can be achieved at an earlier stage in the child's journey. The Strategy acknowledges the need to co-invest and co-deliver services with partner organisations to optimise outcomes for young people. Our partnership with Barnardo's is also reviewing and looking to strengthen our commissioning of best value placements for children and young people. A key priority for this partnership is the residential redesign and the establishment of high-quality residential provision for our children in care whose needs are best met, for a period of time not to live in a family-based placement.

Care Placements Support - as part of the Care Placement Strategy, MISTLE, a wraparound therapeutic support project, has been developed and implemented with Action for Children to support some of our most challenging young people in care to successfully experience family-based placements and support their stability moving forwards. This project will end in December 2020 with the establishment of the ART team as part of the residential redesign.

The Department's well-established dedicated placements support team has been instrumental in targeting improving placement stability for young people living in foster care who present the most challenging behaviour. There has also been an expansion of the specialist foster carers scheme and increase in capacity of the independent visitor scheme. Providing children with additional support, mentoring and role models.

Fostering – we aim to ensure that Leicestershire children in care remain locally in the county and to recruit more in-house foster carers. We have been working hard to increase the number of foster carers, recruiting carers for specific groups and to retain carers once they foster. In October 2019 a new fostering campaign was launched focused on what children in care want from a foster carer, all in their own words. The campaign is designed to help people who are curious about fostering to understand the little things which make all the difference for children in care.

With more than 600 children and young people in care across the county, the campaign is a catalyst to help spur on new foster carers looking to make a big difference to a young person's life. The council also hosts monthly events to give prospective foster carers an insight into this hugely rewarding role. In May 2020 a fostering campaign was launched during Foster Care Fortnight. The thirty second video, was shown on Sky TV channels to county residents, and voiced by one of Leicestershire's children in care.

Adoption - in October 2019, residents were urged to consider adoption as part of a week-long campaign. There were 22 children waiting for adoption in Leicestershire. The Adoption Week aimed to find forever families for some of the most vulnerable children across the country. This year the campaign focused on finding permanent, loving homes for children who wait the longest, including sibling groups, older children and those with complex health needs.

Leicestershire has been working in partnership with Leicester city, Lincolnshire, North Lincolnshire and Rutland to establish a formal partnership to meet the requirements of a Regional Adoption Agency. The Partnership will formally launch in October 2020 following extensive collaborative working over recent years to align practice and processes. The Partnership will ensure a strengthening of work across the partnership to provide high quality adoption services.

Corporate Parenting Strategy – in February 2020 the Council approved a revised Corporate Parenting Strategy underlining the Council's commitment to its responsibility to be a good parent to children and young people in care and care leavers, so that they grow up happy, achieve well and lead successful lives. Children in care and care leavers have been working closely with children's social care teams in developing the revised strategy. The report also looked at progress in extending the role of elected members as corporate parents with 'champions' looking at three areas, education, training and work, housing and accommodation and health. The strategy outlines the vital role played by the council's Virtual School in promoting the education

of children in care through working closely with schools, alternative settings and wider services within and beyond Leicestershire.

Care Leavers – the Leaving Care Team is well established and has been working hard to support Care Leavers. Care leavers across Leicestershire also supported their communities in key worker roles during the coronavirus pandemic. Vital areas the county's young people worked in include roles in healthcare, delivery services and retail. We support them in a number of ways, including with finances and housing as they leave care and begin their adult lives; starting careers and having families of their own. Care leavers are visited regularly by their personal assistant/social worker who will provide advice, listen, and signpost to the right services if they are experiencing difficulties.

Leicestershire Virtual School – the school, also known as The Fox Academy, promotes the education of children in care, working with schools, alternative settings and wider services within and beyond Leicestershire to secure prompt access to quality education, appropriate to their needs. The virtual school support this work through personal education plans, and monitoring including the use of Pupil Premium Plus. The school also leads a broad spectrum of engagement and learning opportunities including music workshops, university experience days, theatre trips and independent living courses. In November 2019 the Department hosted a visit from the DfE National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers who noted the rapid progress made in relation to care leavers, with his view being the authority was in the top ten of improving local authorities.

Homelessness – we provide timely responses to young people who are 16/17 and homeless to support them to remain in their friends and family network. We have worked with housing commissioners to improve the range of options available to ensure the individual needs of young people can be flexibly met and to assist transition to adulthood.

Support for Vulnerable Children

We have agreed a SEND Strategy setting out our vision and priorities for developing support and provision for children and young people with SEND. The Strategy is overseen by a Strategic SEND Board. Priorities include supporting schools to develop their provision and developing local specialist services to ensure sufficient places across a variety of needs.

SEND Local Offer and Advice – our local offer brings together details about local health, education and social care services in one place for children and young people aged 0-25. This one stop shop provides a valuable resource and experiences of services and facilities can also be submitted via the site. Our SENDIASS service continues to provide free, impartial and confidential advice and support on all matters relating to SEND including education, health and social care issues. Its aim is to empower parents, carers and children to voice their thoughts about the support they need in place.

Early Help SEND – our SEND Early Help Service supports and manages referrals for a specialist summer play scheme and has successfully supported families to access the scheme. The team have also supported a range of families of children with SEN and early feedback from these families is positive.

SEND Family Support Team – our SEND Family Support Team has been established to support parents and carers of children and young people aged 0-19 who have a disability. SEND Family Support and Assessment Workers help with information and advice, applying for early help short breaks and specialist summer play schemes and parenting support including managing family routines and boundaries.

Specialist Teaching Service – we reviewed our Specialist Teaching Services and brought them together into a single service including the Autism and Learning Support Team, Hearing Support Team and Vision Support Team. The Specialist Teaching Service has supported children with SEN over the last academic year to successfully engage with education and to reach their outcomes. From September 2019 schools can access early advice regarding autism free of charge, thus preventing the potential escalation of problems.

Educational Psychology Service – we carried out a review of our Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to ensure that we maximise the opportunities for schools and other providers to benefit from expert psychological input into whole school activity as well as timely statutory support. The EPS also supports schools in helping children with emotional needs through a very successful emotional literacy programme (ELSA).

SEND Inspection Improvements - in May 2020 the Council and partners announced preparation of a plan of action and further service improvements following an inspection of the area's SEND offer by Ofsted. The report identified many strengths, as well as areas for improvement, such as the way partners work together to identify and meet the needs of children and their families, the value parents put on the county's specialist educational units and special schools, and the range of health and leisure services available to young people with SEND. There were two main areas for improvement: the way education and health care (EHC) plans are assessed, planned and monitored, and that a clearly defined joint commissioning strategy needed to be drawn up.

SEND Inclusion Strategy to 2023 - in September 2020 we unveiled further plans to improve support available to Leicestershire children with SEND. The Council has developed a range of improvements for services and the offer for families with a child, or children, with SEND. These include the introduction of a handbook for parents and professionals working with SEND children, plans to improve the way education and health care (ECH) plans are delivered and the development of the inclusion service, which offers early support to children and young people. The plans form part of a new SEND and Inclusion Strategy.

Investing in SEND Provision – in October 2019 we reported that ambitious plans to develop local provision for children with SEND across the county were on track. Planning, building and refurbishment work at 15 new 'resource bases' was progressing as part of our commitment to invest over £30m in SEND and create almost 700 extra places, some of which opened for the start of the academic year. The resource bases will cater for pupils with communication and interaction needs which includes Autism Spectrum Condition or social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). Selected schools in towns such as Loughborough, Melton, Hinckley and, Ashby are either having existing space refurbished, or extensions built. A new 80-place communication and interaction school in Barwell also opened in September 2020. In November 2019 Forest Way School opened a new extension to provide extra space for pupils to learn, as well as increasing capacity by an extra 12 pupils. 11 schemes started admitting

pupils in September 2019 with a further opening from Easter 2020. The council is progressing the expansion of all six existing local special schools. The new provision is geared around local placements. A 15-place centre 'The Shine Centre' for students with SEMH at Winstanley School. Braunstone is also progressing.

New Special Schools - in March 2020 we announced that a new academy sponsor had been selected to run a new special school in Leicestershire. The new 50-place school for pupils with SEMH needs is being developed on the former Oakfield School site in Blaby. The Community Inclusive Trust (C.I.T) has been approved as sponsor. The C.I.T currently has 12 academies across Lincolnshire and an excellent track record in supporting young people with SEND. The school is due to open in autumn 2020. In July 2020 we announced that a new special school had been approved in Shepshed. The new school, which is also being set up by the Community Inclusive Trust (CIT) is due to open in September 2023. Bowman Academy will also be for children with social, emotional and mental health needs. The school will meet the needs of 50 children from across Leicestershire. It will ensure SEND provision is available to families in the county, as close to their homes as possible.

Ashmount Special School - the school was highlighted for its best practice in the 2019/20 parliamentary review. The school was designated as a National Support School by the DFE and headteacher recognised as a national leader in education.

Anti-Bullying – in November 2019 the council was recognised as one of the country's leading local authorities for tackling LGBT bullying and celebrating difference in its schools. The authority was awarded gold Stonewall Children and Young Persons Service champion status - one of only five authorities to receive the recognition. The award success for the council's Beyond Bullying team is a sign of the continued hard work put in by the team and testament to the work being done to promote diversity and equality in schools.

Supporting Families and Early Help

We seek to intervene early, when children are assessed as requiring services above universal provision and provide a range of targeted early help and preventative services to support children and families and ensure that problems don't escalate. Doing this helps save the costs of more expensive interventions for a range of agencies.

Family Information Service and Directory – our Family Information Service aims to provide information, advice and guidance to all families and families to be. Our Family Information Directory provides information on many useful organisations and activities such as childcare, children and young peoples' activities, support groups, providers offering advice, support services across education, health and care and the SEND local offer.

New Children and Families Wellbeing Service – in April 2019 we launched our new Children and Families Wellbeing Service. The service focuses on supporting the most vulnerable families in Leicestershire and brought four existing services into one. The integrated service is delivered from 21 family wellbeing centres across the county and provides targeted support to families in need in a more joined up way. Making the best use of staff and resources. The new 0-19 service is delivered through drop in clinics, group work and/or casework.

Children and Family Wellbeing Services - the service (incorporating the Supporting Leicestershire Families Programme) helps people tackle a range of issues including drugs, truancy, unemployment, domestic violence, health problems and anti-social behaviour. Last year it reached its target to claim for 2,770 families that achieved positive outcomes and surpassed this figure at the end of March 2020 by 82 families. The Authority was the first in the region to meet its government target. Of the 2,770 families claimed for, 2,102 achieved sustained and significant progress across the 6 headline outcomes and 668 families achieved sustained employment.

The Children and Family Wellbeing Service has also continued to provide a wide range of services to families during the Covid-19 pandemic. A mix of face to face visits, video calls, on-line groups and skype sessions have been provided to families and to young people throughout. At the start of the pandemic in March, the Service was able to deliver over 1000 food parcels to families who were struggling to access essentials – these were delivered to families either in receipt of support through the service or who were open to Children’s Social Care.

School Support and Place Planning

In April 2020 schools and early years' providers were praised for the efforts of staff as they continued to support children and young people through the Covid-19 pandemic. Schools and childcare providers continued to provide care for vulnerable children and youngsters whose parents were 'key workers'. Teachers and support staff generously took care of families in need – by providing care, food and vital supplies when it was required. Schools also donated equipment, such as gloves, masks and aprons, to support hospitals and other services at the front-line of the COVID-19 response. Staff at the County Council helped to support Leicestershire’s schools to keep going through advice and guidance, round-the-clock, to ensure the county’s children could go to school if they needed to.

From June nearly 13,500 primary school children across the county were back at their desks, with most primary schools in the position of being able to open for a wider age range. Secondaries were planning to welcome back years 10 and 12. On 29 June there were 18,217 pupils attending schools across Leicestershire, 21.3% of the total school population. 5,215 children of key workers were attending on 6 July and 2,480 vulnerable children.

New School Places – we want children to have access to first-class local schools and remain committed to creating more places where there is growing demand. To create additional school places, we successfully completed projects at 12 different schools. 1000 new primary school places and 32 new secondary school places were delivered. SEND saw five new units for pupils with either social, emotional and mental health needs or communication and interaction needs delivered alongside expansion of existing specialist provision across the county. Work also commenced on two new special schools and a number of additional units will be completed during 2020/21.

New Ashby School - in August 2020 a ground-breaking ceremony took place to officially mark work on an ambitious scheme that will see a new 210-place primary school built in Ashby. The state-of-the-art Holywell Spring Farm Primary School, in Burton Road, is being created as part of a new 400-home development being built in

the area. The school is expected to open for the start of the 2021-22 academic year and will reduce pressure on school places in the area.

First Choice Secondary - in March 2020 it was confirmed that around nine out of ten young people across the county have secured a place at their first choice of secondary school. A total of 89.2% - around 6,600 students - have been offered their preferred place, 5.1% their second choice and 1.2% had received their third-placed choice. The figure for securing a place at one of their top three choices stood at 95.6%, with around 7,400 applications received.

First Choice Primary - figures released in April 2020 showed that 92.4% of children across Leicestershire had secured a place at their first-choice primary school – an increase of 2.1% on last year's figure. Also, more than 7,600 applications had been received - an increase of 0.33% compared to 2019 – with 98% of applicants being offered one of their preferred options.

Safer Communities

We place high priority on keeping Leicestershire communities safe by helping minimise crime and anti-social behaviour, reducing youth offending, supporting victims of crime and providing consumer protection services.

Community Safety Strategy – in February 2020 we agreed a new Community Safety Strategy. Priorities to reduce crime and disorder are coordinated by the Leicestershire Safer Communities Strategy Board. The Council's Community Safety Team works with other agencies to plan and coordinate the work and helps provide a coordinated response to emerging threats such as serious organised crime, child exploitation and cyber-crime. The Strategy sets out a number of priorities including protecting the most vulnerable, reducing crime and the fear of crime, reducing anti-social behaviour, reducing harm from alcohol and substance misuse, reducing the risks of cybercrime and bullying, increasing reporting of domestic abuse and protecting the vulnerable and increasing confidence in reporting hate crimes.

Youth Crime – young people being drawn in to violent crime is an issue of huge concern for communities across the country. In October 2019 the Council was awarded c£480K over two years, through the Home Office's Youth Endowment Fund, to tackle violent youth crime. The funding is supporting the innovative Advanced Life-skills programme in schools across Leicestershire. From intensive family therapy to street-based and school mentoring programmes, 30,000 young people between the ages of 10-14 will directly benefit from the interventions that the Youth Endowment Fund will support.

Youth Justice – during 2019/20 our youth offending team was integrated into a new Youth and Justice Service, embedded within the Children and Family Wellbeing Service. In July 2020 we agreed a new Youth Justice Strategic Plan to 2023. During the last year there has been an increase in staff to focus on providing consistent and intensive support to the most complex children through Project Responsive. This offers intensive youth support to those young children at risk of and involved in Child Criminal Exploitation. A joint project with the CCGs and City YOS has also led to the introduction of a clinical psychologist and a forensic psychologist to offer direct work with children with adverse childhood experience and provide advice to practitioners.

The plan highlights continued positive performance of the YOS in relation to first time entrants to the criminal justice system. The rate of young people receiving custodial sentences is also low compared to others. There still continues to be challenges concerning the % of young people in employment, education or training at the end of their period of work with the YOS. Also risks linked to child criminal exploitation with a variety of work linked to the risk. The service works closely with colleague in children's social care to support children at risk of criminal exploitation and children in care at high risk of offending.

IMPACT Project – the IMPACT project continues to work with young people involved in Anti-Social Behaviour. The IMPACT team carries out street-based work with young people in areas where ASB has been identified as a problem. The team undertakes work in relation to drugs, knives, sexual health, risks of exploitation on line and on the street. YOS has also worked with the Police and other partners to develop a response to knife crime. A knife crime awareness programme has been developed and is being delivered in schools. Multi-agency work has also progressed to seek to tackle 'county-lines' drug dealing activities.

Domestic Violence and Abuse – in February 2019 we approved a revised delivery model for domestic abuse and sexual violence services following a review of need across the area. The revised delivery model aims to meet increased demand on services. In relation to our First Response Services a specialist resource is in place to deal with domestic abuse notifications since October 2017 and is successfully delivering a joint approach with the police. The Partnership arrangements have been strengthened by co-location. Ofsted found that the resource had resulted in tangible improvements to the speed and quality of response to domestic abuse concerns and better safeguards for children. In April 2020 we were selected to receive a £700k share of government funding to support survivors of domestic abuse. The funds are supporting the Hope Project, a multi-agency provision that delivers an all-round support service for men and women from all backgrounds with complex needs, together with dedicated specialist services for BAME groups who may be at risk from honour-based violence and forced marriage. The services include refuge provision for women and their children within the city and county, outreach domestic abuse support for men and women across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, mental health support to suit a variety of needs, substance misuse support and emotional management programmes.

Hate Incidents and Crime – the council operates alternate reporting centres for hate incidents through local libraries. There is also a 'Stamp IT Out' website which has online reporting. Leicestershire Police has a dedicated hate crime officer who provides advice and support to those dealing with hate crime and incidents. In February 2020 we adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism. Hate crime of any sort is unacceptable and adopting the definition helps show that the Council is taking the issue seriously.

Prevent – our Leicestershire Corporate Prevent Group delivers our responsibilities for stopping people becoming involved in or supporting terrorism, in support of the Government's national Prevent Strategy. The group leads on the departments work on Prevent and associated counter terrorism under the national counter-terrorism strategy Contest3.

Safeguarding Adults - in September 2020 we agreed a new Safeguarding Adults Plan to 2021. Areas of delivery last year include implementing the signs of safety approach used in safeguarding children. Safeguarding and mental capacity has also been a focus including through a joint safeguarding conference, and work has been carried out to develop a partnership approach to adult criminal exploitation. Work has also been carried out to review transitions between children's and adult's services for a range of different needs.

Consumer Protection

Our Trading Standards Service continues to play a key role in ensuring a good level of consumer protection, that businesses are able to trade in an environment that is fair and that consumer goods are safe. The Service has also played an enhanced regulatory role as a result of a range of new Covid-19 regulations that have affected businesses in a variety of ways.

Intelligence-led enforcement - the Trading Standards Service adopts and intelligence-led approach in supporting local businesses by identifying and proactively engaging with those that produce or supply high risk products. Complaints levels are monitored to ensure that the Service can intervene as early as possible to reduce the risk of non-compliance, addressing causes of harm and prevent a recurrence.

Safer consumer goods - Trading Standards Officers have continued to examine goods entering the country at East Midlands Airport (EMA) and since October 2019 have seized and recycled more than 185,000 items with a value of over £6 million. In the last three months alone Trading Standards has prevented over 82,000 unsafe consumer items from entering the supply chain, amounting to a saving to society (based on a calculation relating to fires, serious injury and fatalities, and other societal costs resulting from unsafe goods) of over £2.5 million.

Items examined and tested included small electrical items, toys, jewellery and cosmetics. At the start of the pandemic in the UK and owing to immediate high demand for PPE items such as face masks and hand sanitiser, Officers dealt with large quantity of unsafe and incorrectly labelled goods. However, volumes of PPE arriving at EMA have reduced in recent months as more goods arrive via sea rather than airfreight, given that speed of delivery has become less crucial as stocks are more readily available.

Protecting the food chain and food hypersensitive consumers - officer's complete inspections of business and undertake the sampling of feed for farmed animals to ensure it is safe and high standards of animal welfare standards are maintained. This work also ensures that traceability within the food chain is conserved to help prevent or control the spread of disease. Work continues to be undertaken with food business operators to ensure they understand their legal obligation to supply accurate information about allergens in the food they sell so that hypersensitive customers can make informed decisions about whether food is safe for them to eat. Samples of food are also taken to confirm that correct allergen information has been provided.

Covid-19 – identifying compliant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - as the need for PPE increased following the current pandemic, Trading Standards officers provided support to the Council's procurement team to ensure safe and compliant equipment was purchased for staff to use. Since this work began, over 1300 hours of officer time at almost all levels within the Trading Standards Service have been spent undertaking the review of PPE items offered to the Council or associated activities, including advice to local businesses seeking to enter the market place or diversify their business model.

Covid-19 – ensuring businesses comply with restrictions - the Service is also playing an important role as a result of the range of new and evolving Covid-19 regulations aimed at regulating trading premises, public outdoor spaces and events. Officers have been tasked to investigate matters that in the opinion of the Director of Public Health pose a serious and imminent threat to Public Health. The investigations may require the service to issue, enforce and review closure or restriction notices. Once a direction closing or placing restrictions on a business is in place, the situation continues to be monitored and a process of consultation with the business followed. Directions are reviewed weekly with partner agencies that include Public Health, Environmental Health and the Police.

Scams and financial abuse - having seen a significant increase in scams, particularly those relating to Covid-19, Trading Standards has issued numerous warning messages to the public and businesses via its Facebook page and other channels such as community radio and newsletters published by District Councils. Examples included scams offering discount vouchers from supermarkets that don't exist (14,256 Facebook engagements and callers e posing as health officials to gain financial information (11,537 engagements). These messages not only raised awareness of current scams but also advised residents and businesses how they could protect themselves.

Investigations are also ongoing in relation to a number of complaints about home improvement work where consumers suffer harm to their physical and mental health as well financial detriment. It is estimated that up to £5 million has been saved for local residents or prevented from being lost by residents and the local economy following our interventions in relation to scams and with rogue businesses.

Great Communities

We want Leicestershire communities to be thriving and inclusive places where people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities participate and help each other; feel included; are resilient and safe and take pride in their local area. We also want to support communities to embrace diversity and maintain a strong sense of place, celebrating culture and heritage.

Recent work carried out with our communities has included a focus on developing active, resilient and inclusive communities, helping to manage demand for services through prevention and early intervention and supporting communities to design and deliver services locally, sometimes with the support of grants and funding. We have also agreed a partnership statement which sets out how the council will work with the voluntary and community sector in a mutually supportive way to deliver improvements to quality of life.

Community Emergency Management - the Local Resilience Forum - LLR Prepared – has coordinated the response to Covid-19 across LLR. A Gold Command Group has led the response, supported by a Tactical Coordination Group and number of topic and task specific cells. The Council is a key partner on LLR Prepared and officers were heavily involved in each of the Groups. LRF Recovery was also supported including a Strategic Recovery Group, Tactical Recovery Group and variety of supporting cells. In addition to supporting the Covid-19 response the Resilience team also provides a 24/7 365-day emergency response first point of contact for local authorities, assesses and coordinates community emergency information such as flood alerts, flood warnings and severe weather warnings and supports communities in responding to and recovering from incidents. A further area of work is the continuing roll-out of Community Emergency Stores which has encouraged communities to produce Community Response Plans focussed on developing resilience. The Council is working closely with partners through the Resilience Forum to ensure the county is prepared for a No Deal Exit from the EU transition period should that happen. The County Council has in particular to secure effective traffic management around East Midlands Airport, a priority port for Brexit purposes.

The Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority has worked with residents, parishes and the flood risk management authorities to investigate flooding, the priority being to investigate areas where properties have flooded. We have also worked with the LLR Resilience Partnership to ensure adequate plans are in place to deal with sudden extreme weather events.

County Council Communities Fund – in March 2020 the Council announced a £1 million fund to support voluntary and community sector organisations in the county to manage the financial impacts of the coronavirus outbreak. This hardship fund was established to enable local groups, impacted by reduced income from sales/trading, room rental or donations, to keep on providing essential support to vulnerable people, including those isolating and with reduced social contact. Charities, constituted voluntary and community organisations, and social enterprises were able to apply for a maximum of £25,000 and the first awards were announced in April 2020. A homeless prevention service, a centre to support youngsters with autism and an independent foodbank based in Coalville were among the first community groups to be awarded funding.

Towards the end of April 2020, the Council announced it was increasing the amount available through the fund to £1.5m following a very high level of demand from the sector, with more than 180 voluntary organisations applying by mid-April. In total 245 organisations applied for funding and 160 were supported through the initial £1.5m. Some of the community groups that received funding were the Melton Learning Hub, a diverse charity supporting young, older and vulnerable was awarded £17,500 provide foodbank services supporting those in need. Two community groups in Leicestershire that joined forces to cook and deliver 200 meals a week to the most vulnerable during the pandemic. The Coalville Education Partnership (CEP), which delivers education to excluded students, after school activities as well as community lunches to people facing poverty, is one group that carried out vital work and received £22,700 from the fund. While the CEP created hundreds of meals a week, a team of 60 volunteers from the Hugglescote, Donington Le Heath and Coalville Community Response Hub delivered the meals. A voluntary group that responds to medical emergencies which thanked the Council for helping it to save lives in Leicestershire during the pandemic. The National Forest Responders, a small group of trained ambulance medics, received £6,000 to help them continue going out to emergency 999 calls ahead of East Midlands Ambulance Service when required.

In July 2020, in response to the local Leicester lockdown, we announced that we were committing another £100k to the Communities Fund to help community groups supporting vulnerable people in the areas of the county affected by the extended lockdown. This additional funding was well received by voluntary and community groups delivering vital work to support people who were vulnerable or shielding as well as delivering activities which help to improve mental health and wellbeing. In addition to providing grant support to the voluntary sector, the Council has also loaned £90k to the Bradgate Park Trust to help compensate for the loss of income during the pandemic.

Together We Care Award - in recognition of the efficient and responsive way the Communities Fund has supported the voluntary sector, the County Council received an award from the charity Leicestershire Cares, for our role in continuing to support local communities in challenging times. The pandemic has also offered many examples of positive community spirit and shown the vital role played by our communities. With the willingness of many people to volunteer to help others and provide support to their neighbours, particularly the most vulnerable.

Shielding Vulnerable People – we set up a dedicated team to ensure that people identified as ‘shielded’ by the NHS had support and care in place, if required, and delivered hundreds of emergency food parcels and prescriptions. Work was carried out to support and ensure that 14,450 of 25,000 Leicestershire people on the Government’s shielded list registering for support were contacted and provided with the support they needed. 25,059 Leicestershire residents were identified as shielded as at 15th July. 14,450 people on the Shielding List registered for support, of whom 5,301 registered for support obtaining essential supplies and 1,203 registered with basic care needs. The Council made 14,018 calls to people who registered as shielding, and district councils contacted an additional 9,181 people of those responding to say that they had existing food networks, and no identified care needs. 5,658 people received a Government food parcel, with 349 County Council emergency food parcels delivered. 68 volunteers engaged through Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) undertook activities including ‘safe and well checks’.

Food Support for those in Need – in July 2020 we reported that over £0.5m was being given to food banks and community groups to support Leicestershire residents most in need. The Council used a £540k government grant to help vulnerable people and those shielding access food, toiletries, and other essential supplies through local foodbanks and community hubs across the county. The money also bolstered the work of voluntary groups, supporting vulnerable people and those self-isolating, and helped the council to deliver emergency food parcels to people who were shielding.

SHIRE Community Grants – the SHIRE Community Grants programme continues to be a successful initiative which provides grant funding to VCS organisations for projects that improve the health and wellbeing of people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. In 2019/20 90 community-based projects were awarded a total of £368,715. Community grants empower communities to take responsibility for local issues and develop and strengthen the local VCS. They also help reduce the demand on council and other public services. Rural Coffee Connect were awarded £10k towards a pop-up mobile coffee van that will travel to 20 rural locations to engage with rurally isolated people, breaking down social barriers and connecting them to other members of their community. The New Life Community Church in Loughborough established a food bank in December 2019 providing emergency food for over 130 people. Extra capacity was required, and a grant given to support its expansion.

Supporting Volunteering – we continue to support people to volunteer, to help their communities, meet new people and learn new skills. Volunteering is promoted and supported by our Communities Team. Our Volunteer Managers Network has helped to coordinate and promote practices and policies and guide new managers working with volunteers and developing volunteer programmes. The Network helps support hundreds of volunteers in various roles. The Team also took a lead role in working with partners to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting volunteers during the pandemic.

Countywide Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Support Services - support for the VCS in Leicestershire is provided by an infrastructure service contract held by Voluntary Action Leicestershire. The service supports the shared objectives of the Council and CCGs, specifically around managing demand through early, community level intervention and prevention, increasing community resilience and more effective delivery of services by community groups. The service brings together commissioners and sector groups in information, advice and learning events, provides advice and support around topics such as governance, group development and funding and promotes, develops and supports volunteering.

Leicestershire Communities Website – the website provides a range of useful information to help support and facilitate social action in communities and to help people to actively participate in their communities. The website includes resources on setting up a community group and accessing grants and funding. Use of the website has grown steadily and in 2019/20 it attracted 76,000 page views and 17,000 users. The website also now provides an online presence for the Youth Council for Leicestershire and has supported effective delivery of the Communities Fund through promotion and enabling the submission of online applications and grant monitoring information.

Social Enterprises - the Cooperative and Social Enterprise Development Agency (CASE) provide a social enterprise support service across Leicestershire. In 2019-20 CASE supported over 40 existing and emerging social enterprises to develop their businesses through help with: strategic planning; partnership links; developing robust income streams and accessing other sources of funding. As a result of CASE's input, over 100 jobs were created or saved in the social enterprise sector.

Community Libraries Support – there are 35 community managed libraries embedded in local areas and offering a wide range of hub services including adult learning, work clubs, keep safe places, café facilities, meeting areas for community groups and bases for Local Area Coordination, in addition to traditional library services. The Communities Team has continued to work with colleagues in the Communities and Wellbeing Service and with Voluntary Action Leicestershire to support service delivery, collaboration between libraries, sustainability and financial management.

Parish and Town Councils – we continue to support parish and town councils in their role as community leaders and providers of community services. We have made good progress on the development of a Devolution Framework which will guide our future working relationship.

Neighbourhood Plans – the Communities Team continues to support Neighbourhood Plan development. Well-designed plans help communities to take responsibility to develop a shared vision for local neighbourhoods and to shape the development and growth of local areas. There are now 123 active neighbourhood planning groups in Leicestershire which have produced 38 Adopted Plans and 64 designated areas. There are also 250 members signed up to the Neighbourhood Planning Network.

Leicestershire Rural Partnership (LRP) - the Partnership brings together a range of stakeholders to improve services and to support rural communities and businesses. During the past year the Partnership has championed issues relevant to rural communities including rural inclusion and skills, supporting those furthest from the labour market to move closer to work. The Work.Live.Leicestershire (WiLL) project led by Vista, in partnership with the Council and LRP, has enabled access to employment in rural areas of the county. The Partnership has also supported the rural housing enabler project which is increasing the supply of affordable houses in rural areas.

East Leicestershire LEADER - since its launch in 2015 until closure in October 2019 there were 45 contracted projects with a total grant value of £1,147,128. 18 of these projects supported farm diversification and small and medium sized enterprises, 18 increased farm productivity, 6 developed rural tourism, 2 have provided rural services and 1 has supported culture and heritage. Of the 45 contracted projects, 7 remain live this year and are due to be completed by December 2020 when all the grant funding will have been allocated. Despite the Covid-19 crisis causing delays to the completion of the remaining projects, all remain on track to be completed by the end of the year and will receive their grant payments.

Time-banking - an innovative scheme where residents are rewarded for helping others in their community launched across Leicestershire in January 2020. Time4Leicestershire is a skills exchange initiative, which sees people carrying out good deeds for others and being rewarded in return by having somebody do a good deed for them. Part of the national Time-banking UK initiative, Time4Leicestershire is

run by our Public Health team, who encourage people to sign up, register what skills they can offer and see what expertise they could benefit from. The scheme is designed to help people swap skills, connect with their community by meeting new people, contribute to their local community and receive help or support with practical tasks, such as gardening. The benefits for people from being connected within their community include improved mental health and wellbeing as well as improved physical health from engagement in activities.

Tackling Loneliness – the Council has an established priority and strategy to help tackle loneliness in Leicestershire. In 2019/20, the Council has made further progress in its work including a social media communications campaign undertaken during the winter months, to promote the principle of looking out for others, using the strapline ‘within your gift to give’. A Council Loneliness Project Team was established with associated programmes of work. A VCS Stakeholder Group was also established to help take forward some of the recommendations which arose at a Loneliness Summit in 2018. The Council’s Communities Board approved the development of a new Loneliness Toolkit and the document and associated resources were launched in December 2019.

Friendly Communities of Leicestershire – this open and innovative approach aims to support social action and scale up existing initiatives such as the Friendly Bench, autism friendly environments and dementia friendly communities, to help lessen isolation and loneliness. During the year the Communities Team have continued to work with communities to support inclusive community initiatives.

Equalities – a new four-year Equalities Strategy 2020-24 was approved by the Council in July 2020. The Strategy sets out our commitment to equalities through evidence-based decisions, increasing participation of under-represented groups, and providing inclusive services. We aim that Leicestershire is a place with good relations, equality of opportunity and outcomes for everyone. The Strategy is underpinned by more detailed action plans. Progress over the final year of the Equality Strategy 2016-20 included maintaining a Top 100 rating in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index as one of the top 5 local authorities represented in the Index in 2020. The council also gained Gold level in the new Stonewall Children and Young People Champion Awards in 2020 to build on its work in tackling anti-LGBT+ bullying in schools under the previous Education Equality Index. A further area of work was with partners to develop the first LGBT+ Inclusion Award scheme to recognise the commitment of local business and other organisations to LGBT+ equality. These and ongoing activities such as participation in Leicester Pride support LGBT+ staff and residents. Support has been provided to faith and belief communities during covid-19 through the LRF Faith Cell, to share guidance about funeral and other important life cycle practices, that were impacted during lockdown restrictions.

Leicestershire Interfaith Forum - jointly organised a public event with the unit for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement (DICE) at the University of Leicester in October 2019 with the suffragan Bishop of Loughborough, the Rt Rev Guli Francis-Dehqani, as keynote speaker on the subject of ‘Justice, faith and belonging in a changing world’. The Forum supports a range of umbrella and local faith and belief communities through sharing news about their activities and services that promote good relations and shared values across a range of cultural backgrounds.

Armed Forces Covenant - the Council continues to support the Armed Forces Covenant and Armed Forces Family in Leicestershire and beyond. Work is focused on encouraging local communities to support their local armed forces community and vice versa, promoting public understanding and awareness of issues that affect that community, recognising the sacrifices made and encouraging activities which help integrate the armed forces community into local life. The Council has a strong track record of supporting the armed forces and in the past year has supported a regional Civil and Military Partnership Board to develop and deliver a regional action plan co-ordinating the work of local authorities, universities, military charities and our armed forces. The Council has also worked with the National Defence Rehabilitation Centre to design a programme of work experience placements for service personnel to help them gain experience of working in a civilian environment and to support their transition out of the military. In Summer 2020 the Council was successful in securing the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold award for its armed forces covenant work.

Great Communities – Libraries, Heritage and Culture

Our aim is that our cultural and historical heritage and the natural environment are enjoyed and conserved.

Libraries – in October 2019 Libraries Week showcased the resources that local libraries offer to connect communities, combat loneliness and support people with their digital skills. Libraries Week highlighted the variety of free newspapers and magazines in our digital library, the extended opening hours available through Smart library technology and the types of digital support offered. The range of digital services available across the county's libraries include a free digital library of over ten thousand books, magazines and newspapers offering something for everyone. Visitors to their local library also had the chance to find out about regular digital coffee mornings, offering assistance with devices, getting set up to access the digital library or simply updating skills.

Community Managed Libraries – over 30 sites continue to be managed by local communities. Communities have undertaken valuable work to sustain and develop these libraries as important community assets. In September we outlined how community managed libraries, affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, were being supported. A grant of nearly £60,000 will support the 35 community-managed libraries emerging from the pandemic, with many of them being community hubs supporting the needs of local people. The additional one-off grant towards the libraries' running costs is on top of existing contributions the council is making in financial support. Community libraries have worked enormously hard to generate income through coffee shops, room hire and other activities. That income has been greatly affected, but the libraries are showing tremendous resilience as they recover. The council has supported community libraries with a package of measures since they were launched, including support with some running costs. In September we also increased our support offer to the libraries to allow for a 10-year lease extension and to provide more officer visits for support and training, including for volunteer recruitment, business planning and income generation.

Digital Library Services – in April 2020 digital library services saw an increase in demand during the coronavirus lockdown and the council therefore purchased additional eBooks and eAudiobooks. For every month which libraries remained closed during the pandemic, around 700 new titles and additional copies were added to the collection for adults, young adults and children to access. As well as expanding the selection, it reduced the waiting times for the most sought-after items. Figures showed a 12% increase in digital loans, a 35% rise in eBook loans, and that Borrowbox eBooks and eAudiobooks' users went up by 20%. Members can access thousands of digital books, audiobooks, magazines and newspapers for free through their phones, tablets or computers.

Library Click and Collect - in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, from July 2020 we announced details of a new click and collect library service which was made available across a range of libraries. Selections of books were hand-picked by library staff based on customers preferences, with a loan period of four weeks. Library users were able to request items using a form on the council's website or by ringing their local library. This was followed up from September 2020 by re-opening the library network on a managed access basis where people were invited to book a visit slot.

Summer Reading Challenge Online - the hugely-popular Summer Reading Challenge in Leicestershire's libraries moved online this year because of the pandemic. At the time of writing the 2020 challenge has engaged with 2,000 children and is in its final stages. The year's theme, Silly Squad, was a celebration of happiness, laughter and funny books. Working online, children set their own reading target and collected digital rewards as they worked their way through the books over the summer holidays, collecting additional games, videos and activities along the way. The aim was to encourage children to read whatever made them happy, either books from home or from the libraries vast array of eBooks. It supported their confidence in reading, in what was a time of disruption and change to routine.

Virtual Code Clubs – in May 2020 the Council's libraries' first virtual code club saw more than 25 youngsters create their own animations and games during the pandemic. The county's libraries regularly run code clubs, however lockdown restrictions encouraged the activity to go completely digital. Children, aged between eight and 13 years old, were given a week to complete each self-led session and make their own animations and games, with themes including Rock Band, Boat Race and Lost in Space. The club enables youngsters to learn about coding and practice their skills using a tool that many children use at school.

Isolated but Inspired - a community social media project was supported to collate and curate pictures, videos, artwork and sounds representing how people spent their time during the coronavirus pandemic. The 'CV-19 Isolated but Inspired' campaign project, run by the council's heritage and libraries participation team, invited people from across the county to share their photos and video clips, showing how they lived through the lockdown. The shared contributions create a film to act as a time capsule, demonstrating how people adapted and evolved, both socially and creatively. The project sought out the positivity and sense of community that was evident during the pandemic.

Snibston Redevelopment – major work to revamp the park at Snibston has progressed through the year. Part of the old Snibston Colliery mineral line was moved to lay the groundwork for Snibston Park's redevelopment and to improve access from the town centre through better cycle paths. Work also progressed on planning a new heritage trail, improved country park, a play area, open space and picnic site. Visitors will enjoy cycle routes, mountain bike trails, a new interpretation of the historic colliery site and a new café at the Century Theatre. Work also progressed with the Snibston Heritage Group to provide interpretation and access to the historic colliery buildings and the story of Coalville. In February a ground-breaking ceremony took place to mark the building work starting on the £3m scheme. Not only will the work make the park more attractive for families, dog walkers and cyclists, but it will also reconnect the site with the town and in future provide much needed housing to the area. As part of the plans, the site will also feature solar panels and electric vehicle charging points.

Volunteers Award – in autumn 2019 a project for young people with autism picked up a top award. Project Digby picked up the award for 'Volunteers for Museum Learning' at a ceremony at the British Museum in London. Presented to Project Digby's young volunteers by the British Museum and the Marsh Christian Trust, the award recognises the best and most innovative ways in which volunteers work within local and national museums to engage the public with collections and exhibitions. Developed by the Council and Autism East Midlands, Project Digby was a free five-week programme based at the 1620s House and Garden in Donington Le

Heath. Since the award, more than 30 staff have received autism awareness training. In addition, a guide on autism-friendly activities and how to make autism-friendly adaptations has been created for independent museums across Leicestershire.

Melton Steeplechase Exhibition – in September 2019 a new exhibition on the history of steeplechasing in and around Melton was held at Melton Carnegie Museum. A Day at the Races: Steeplechasing in and around Melton from 1820 to 1938 explored the area's links to steeplechasing, with a focus on the now-vanished Burton Lazars racecourse. The exhibition featured artworks and objects from the County Museums collections and the Melton hunt steeplechase archive from the County Record Office. Visitors to the exhibition learned about how Melton and the wider area played a role in the development of the sport.

Ladybird Books - over 150 people came together at Charnwood Museum to share their memories of the cherished Ladybird books, which were produced and published in Loughborough from 1914 to 1999. The event was part of last year's UK-wide 'Being Human Festival' which celebrates the importance of arts, literature, history, and language in the human experience. Ladybird books conjure up fond childhood memories for many and a new film also offered residents the chance to revisit their favourite titles.

Thomas Cook Archive – in January 2020 it was announced that an internationally significant archive of business and travel history was to be preserved and secured for the future in the county, after the County Record Office was selected as the new permanent home of the Thomas Cook archive collection. The entire Thomas Cook archive, which encompasses records from the earliest days of package travel right up to the modern day, is being transferred to the Record Office in Wigston. The huge collection is made up of thousands of individual items, including minute books and staff records, posters, travel guides and timetables. It also features 60,000 photographic images and souvenirs from Thomas Cook's 178-year history. In addition, the Record Office has also secured a grant from The National Archive to support the cataloguing of this archive.

1620s House – Virtual Tour - in April 2020 mini virtual tours, focusing on the fascinating exterior and architecture of the house were posted on the 1620s House's Facebook and Twitter pages. Armchair historians could watch a new episode every Thursday on the 1620s House's social media pages, where each week a new part of the house, its heritage and secrets was revealed. An expert guide talked viewers through a different room in the house. The 1620s House & Garden is a rare example of a family home built in the 13th century and modernised in 1618, set in beautiful 17th century style gardens.

Bosworth Online Medieval Festival - the annual event at the Council's Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre was affected by the pandemic, but history buffs were still able to enjoy the event through a digital version. The Virtual Bosworth Medieval Festival 2020 took place towards the end of August. Visitors to the website and social media channels from across the world were able to immerse themselves in the virtual festival with specially-recorded videos from re-enactors and traders, including music, cooking demonstrations, a knight school and the Battle of Bosworth re-imagined as a war game by the Battlefields Trust.

Harborough Museum – 2020 marks 20 years since the discovery of the amazing Hallaton treasure near to the small village of Hallaton in South-East Leicestershire. The find includes over 5,000 coins, mysterious offerings and a beautiful and unique 1st century Cavalry Helmet. An online exhibition on the museum website celebrates the discovery through images and description of key items.

Tourism Awards – in October 2019 five county attractions were shortlisted for tourism awards. The Bosworth Medieval Festival, Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, the 1620s House & Garden, Charnwood Museum and Melton Carnegie Museum were all shortlisted as finalists in the Leicestershire Promotions Tourism and Hospitality Awards 2019. The awards are a tribute to the depth and breadth of our cultural offer, as well as to the hard work of the staff and volunteers involved.

Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre - was named the best small attraction in Leicestershire, after winning the accolade at a ceremony celebrating the best of the county's tourism. The award sends a message that we tell the Bosworth Battlefield story in a range of interesting and engaging ways for visitors of all ages at an attractive and family friendly site. Visitors to the heritage centre have a wide range of activities to keep them occupied, including an award-winning exhibition with eight interactive galleries, a programme of guided and self-led walks around the battlefield trail, Bosworth Discovery Zone for younger visitors, shop and the 1485 Tithe Barn restaurant.

Project Enlightenment - a pilot for a new education programme, which brings together arts, science and history, was delivered at one of Leicestershire's heritage attractions using a £78k grant from Arts Council England and work with partner Charnwood Arts. Project Enlightenment, ran at the 1620s House & Garden and involved schools, artists, young people and family groups collaborating with a diverse range of artists to explore the 17th century Age of Enlightenment. The project used the history and heritage of the council run 1620s site, and its links to the Age of Enlightenment, as a basis to explore the arts and science, technology, engineering and maths.

Green Plaques – in September 2019 a green plaque was unveiled at the former school where a soldier, who wrote poetry in the trenches during the First World War, was a pupil. The plaque was unveiled as a tribute to Hugglescote-born Arthur Newberry Choyce, who became known for his war poetry much of which was written during or inspired by his service in the trenches of France and Flanders. In October 2019 two of Loughborough's renowned suffragettes were honoured with a plaque. Kathleen and Nora Corcoran were prominent supporters of the women's right to vote and helped to establish what became the suffragette movement in Loughborough. The sisters organised many functions to encourage women's involvement in the movement. In January 2020 a clergyman and astronomer, who was one of the founders of the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS), was honoured. The Rev. Dr William Pearson became rector of South Kilworth in 1817 and lived there from 1821 until his death in 1847. During his time in the village, he carried out decades of astronomical observations, first from the rectory where he built a new wing to house his telescopes and later from a purpose-built observatory in the village.

In March 2020 a Leicestershire Regiment soldier who was awarded the Victoria Cross for bravery and went on to be a leading surgeon, was honoured with a green plaque. A lieutenant at just 21, John Cridlan Barrett was recognised for his bravery after leading an attack on enemy positions at Pontruet in France, just three weeks before the end of the First World War.

VE Day Commemorations – on 8th May 2020, on the 75th anniversary of VE Day, County Hall was illuminated in red, white and blue. The Union flag was also raised in a show of support for all our armed forces. The official VE Day commemorations marked a national moment of remembrance with a two-minute silence and residents were encouraged to celebrate from the safety of their homes. Leicester Cathedral also played host to a virtual service streamed from the cathedral via YouTube. The council also invited residents to share their Second World War stories, family histories and messages of remembrance on its social media channels.

Armed Forces Day – in June 2020 the County and City Councils, in partnership with the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire and local armed forces units, supported the national Armed Forces Day #SaluteOurForces campaign. This encourages people from across county and city communities to pay tribute to the armed forces community including serving personnel, veterans, reservists and cadets. It's important for us to recognise our armed forces, their service to the country, and the sacrifices that they make to keep us safe. In addition, a new website was launched paying tribute to our armed forces and allowing the counties Armed Forces Day celebrations to move online.

Great Communities – Environment and Waste

Our aim is to ensure that we protect our environment by minimising our environmental impact as a council, tackling climate change and embedding environmental sustainability into what we do. We also aim to enhance the environment across the county and improve the quality of life of residents. In May 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency and made commitments to achieve carbon neutrality for its own operations by 2030. We also committed to work with others and lobby government to achieve carbon neutrality for Leicestershire by 2050 or before. We want to lead the way in creating a clean and green future which will bring economic, social and environmental benefits. A new Environment Strategy was approved in July 2020 reflecting our new commitments.

Net Zero Carbon - in September 2019 the Council agreed to invest £450,000 of funding to develop plans on how to meet our Climate Emergency commitments. A good start has been made by switching to a green electricity tariff, launching a major tree planting programme and working with developers and others to build 'green' new homes. We've already seen real change and initiatives such as LED streetlights and solar panels have enabled us to cut our wider greenhouse gas emissions by 64% to the end of 2018/19 compared to 2008. Signing the UK100 pledge and our membership of the Countryside Climate Network to demonstrate the valuable contribution from rural counties also underlines our commitment to clean energy. A new investment of £16m and a long list of projects signals the Council's determination to tackle climate change. Plans include a 10MW solar farm aiming to create a carbon-neutral industrial estate and replacing some diesel vehicles with low carbon alternatives.

Green Energy and Energy Efficiency - we have switched to a green electricity tariff, so all our electricity is now coming from renewable sources. We have installed electric vehicle (EV) charging points at Council sites which are available for council vehicles, staff and visitors to use. We are also expanding the network of EV chargers at council sites to support the growth of council and privately-owned 'plug-in' electric vehicles. £300k was invested in upgraded lighting, boilers and heating controls at County Council premises last year. The Property Energy Team continues to find ways to reduce the Council's energy consumption and carbon emissions. There are projects in the pipeline to double the amount of solar PV at County Hall and to upgrade lighting to LED at County Hall. The Council has now produced a Zero Carbon Policy for construction projects which includes enhanced building specifications aimed at increasing energy efficiency and working towards the Council's 2030 Net Zero Carbon target. Energy is now incorporated into all construction projects and as a result many projects have had additional energy measures delivered including solar PV, heat pumps and EV chargers. The Energy Team continue to work to deliver low carbon upgrades to all building projects and to embed energy into property processes.

New Solar Farm – in November 2019 we published further details of ambitious plans to develop a solar farm and one of the first carbon neutral industrial sites in the country. The solar farm based on Barrow Road, Quorn, would generate almost 10 megawatts of electricity a year. As part of the plans, the authority is also looking to build a carbon neutral industrial site. The development could include solar roof panels, LED lighting, rainwater harvesting and electric vehicle charging. The development would produce clean, green energy, while building new units would offer local businesses the chance

to get their foot on the ladder or expand. The returns would also generate more than £800k a year, which will benefit services from social care to highway maintenance. Plans for the scheme were formally lodged to the Planning Committee in May 2020. The planned zero-carbon industrial site would be only the second carbon neutral industrial site in the UK.

SHIRE Environment Grants – in November 2019 the Council launched a new 'SHIRE Environment Grant' scheme to help community groups and organisations fund innovative projects to improve their local environment. The scheme is focused toward projects that help reduce the amount of household waste and greenhouse gas emissions produced, improve biodiversity or support the creation and protection of sustainable green spaces in Leicestershire. Community groups and organisations can apply for grants of up to £3k. Projects that have been funded include planting new, wildlife-friendly hedgerows; the creation of a 'green gym' to create a food growing space based on permaculture principles; improving the mix of species of plants on four roadside verges; and a community composting facility. A second round of funding was launched in July 2020.

Vision for Country Parks – in October 2019 the Council announced its ten-year vision for Leicestershire country parks. Over the next ten years we aim to enhance visitor facilities, support more people to get physically active, engage more with communities and community groups, grow volunteering and reduce carbon. We are committed to maintaining and developing our green spaces, which are vital in tackling the climate emergency, improving health and boosting wellbeing. As part of the new strategy, six destination parks, at Beacon Hill, Broombriggs Farm, Bosworth Battlefield, Market Bosworth, Watermead and Snibston, will have dedicated five-year action plans to help deliver the ambitious goals.

Ashby Canal - in September 2019 proposals to transfer part of the Ashby Canal route between Snarestone and Measham to a local charity moved a step nearer. We approved the submission of an application to the Secretary of State for consent to transfer part of the Order to the Ashby Canal Association (ACA), following a consultation which showed widespread support for the proposal. Since 1994 the council has led restoration work on the stretch of canal, with a 500-metre section from Snarestone to the new bridge 62 completed in 2015. However due to limited third-party funding and our own resource constraints the council hopes to transfer the ownership so further restoration of the canal can be progressed.

Tree Management Strategy - in March 2020 the Council agreed a new Tree Management Strategy which will see more trees planted and a greater emphasis on recognising their importance in promoting Leicestershire as an attractive place to live and work. The strategy sets out plans to ensure the long-term conservation, sustainability and development of the precious tree stock for the people of the county and future generations. Trees are an essential resource which provide a wide range of environmental, economic and social benefits, and our focus is to continue to build upon our ever-growing green infrastructure. The Council is responsible for managing approximately 82,000 individual tree specimens and over 400 hectares of woodland on its land holdings. The Council is also working in partnership with the National Forest Company to produce an overview document outlining a countywide approach to tackling climate change and creating a sustainable place through more tree planting.

Tree and Hedge Planting – in October 2019 and in a bid to increase the number of trees across Leicestershire, the council again teamed up with the Woodland Trust to offer local landowners and farmers free tree packs. Designed to help renew and restore existing woodland and vegetation, the packs aim to help regenerate countryside that is under threat from diseases such as Ash Dieback. Each pack includes 45 native trees, and applicants can choose between two different packs. Trees and hedges have an important role to play in keeping our air clean, helping to prevent flooding and providing valuable habitats for local wildlife.

Biodiversity - nature recovery and climate change are at the forefront of the Environment Strategy. In May 2020 Leicestershire residents were urged to stay on the look-out for local wildlife as part of World Biodiversity Day. Recording what they saw on their daily walks using NatureSpot, a website that helps maintain up-to-date county wildlife records. Several other projects aimed at strengthening biodiversity across Leicestershire include the Charnwood Forest Landscape Partnership securing £2.7m of investment from the National Lottery to promote, protect and enhance the Charnwood Forest landscape through a programme of eighteen interconnected projects.

Urban Roadside Verges - we have been working with parish councils to give them the opportunity to turn urban roadside verges into dedicated wildflower verges. The Urban Wildlife Verge Project aims to improve biodiversity and encourage wildlife. A total of twelve parish councils signed-up to take part in the project, which will involve volunteers giving up their time to make a difference in their community by weeding, planting seeds and developing more effective management practices to encourage wildflowers at identified locations in the county. The Council have also changed the management of rural verges between towns and villages. This year marked the largest reduction in the areas of rural verges the council has cut, all to allow wildflowers to thrive and encourage pollinators.

Great Crested Newts – in May 2020 we announced that work had begun to restore ponds and provide habitats for endangered Great Crested Newts in Leicestershire. Great Crested Newts, one of the UK's three native newt species, have seen huge decline in their populations over the last 60 years, despite being heavily protected by law. This is largely down to the loss of their natural habitat. The project aims to make existing ponds more attractive to the Great Crested Newt and introduce new ponds, expanding the habitat range of the species. Brabazon Farm in Mowsley and a Kibworth Schools Trust site were identified by Natural England as being areas that could help improve the numbers of and habitat for the species. Further sites located in Leicestershire's country parks are planned for future habitats.

Waste Management

Resources and Waste Strategy – the National Resources and Waste Strategy was released in December 2018 and sets out how the Government will preserve material resources by minimising waste, promoting resource efficiency and moving towards a circular economy. During May 2019, we responded to several government consultations including consistency in household and business recycling collections in England, a Deposit Return Scheme and Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging.

Environment Bill - we are also engaging with Defra on the Environment Bill which introduces a series of measures that will fundamentally change the way government, businesses and individuals produce and consume products including new legal powers allowing resource efficiency standards to be set for new products and clear labelling enabling citizens to make fully informed purchasing decisions.

Waste Education - in January 2020, we provided theatre sessions to schools with the aim of inspiring the next generation of recyclers to think about reducing, reusing and recycling and to encourage more sustainable behaviours. We offered 50 two-hour sessions to all primary schools in Leicestershire who received an interactive and fun workshop. We also offer free educational workshops, activities and talks to community groups in Leicestershire.

Composting – each year Leicestershire residents produce more than 300,000 tonnes of rubbish and recyclables, some of which is uncooked fruit, vegetables and garden waste which could have been composted rather than put in the residual waste bin. To help we continue to offer cut-price compost bins to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill. During 2019/2020 we sold over 900 subsidised bins to Leicestershire residents. Residents can also call on the support of a Master Composter, volunteers who use their own skills to raise awareness of the benefits of home composting.

Food Waste Prevention – we continue to promote the Love Food Hate Waste campaign in association with WRAP (Waste Resources and Action Programme) and its national campaigns, including the ‘Keep crushing it’ campaign which highlighted the importance of not wasting food. During the national lockdown due to Covid-19, household food waste in the UK reduced dramatically and the campaign aimed to help citizens to Keep Crushing It and reduce food waste for good.

Recycling – in September 2019 the council teamed up with Recycle Now as part of Recycle Week and lit up its headquarters and shared recycling tips to encourage residents to think about what they throw away and how to recycle right. Just under half of all household waste in Leicestershire is currently recycled or composted, however items such as used nappies and food waste are still being disposed of incorrectly in recycling bins across the county, which can spoil recycling. The council wants to inspire residents to make small changes, like rinsing jars, tubs and containers before recycling, or reusing plastic tubs for storage before recycling them, in order to have a big impact on our environment. These messages were accompanied with a video highlighting the recycling process and the problems associated with contamination. During August 2020 we took part in some research to understand why people contaminate their recycling and we will utilise the findings to inform our messages.

Real Nappies – the average child can need 5,000 to 6,000 nappy changes before potty training is complete. We offer a free reusable nappy trial kit to Leicestershire residents to reduce the amount of disposal nappies which make up approximately 6% of the household waste bin. The kit contains a variety of different nappies along with wraps and liners and allows the opportunity to see which nappies suit best over a period of four weeks. During 2019 we distributed over 60 nappy lending kits to Leicestershire residents.

Environment Action Volunteers - during 2019 we consolidated our separate volunteer schemes under one brand, called Environment Action Volunteers. We offered modular training and continued ongoing development opportunities. The Environment Action Volunteers can specialise in a variety of topics such as food waste prevention, composting, biodiversity and carbon reduction and help Leicestershire residents establish positive environmental behaviours.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic our engagement activities have been suspended with more digital events and engagement opportunities being developed and delivered in order to inform and engage on waste prevention, reuse and recycling and home composting.

Recycling and Household Waste Sites – the Council provides 14 sites across the county. A programme of works at the Recycling and Household Waste Sites (RHWS) and Waste Transfer Stations (WTSS) has continued to ensure ongoing environmental compliance and efficient service provision. This includes improvements and a range of preparatory work for future projects. In November 2019 our Shepshed RHWS reopened on schedule following essential maintenance and improvement works. We have also been focusing on raising standards and reducing risk; we have commenced the development of a Quality Management System and Occupational Health and Safety Management System.

Waste Treatment - the Council continues to make efforts to reduce reliance on landfill and increase the use of treatment through existing arrangements. We have also commenced the procurement of additional waste treatment capacity. This will ensure the Council's reliance on landfill as a disposal method for residual waste continues to reduce and we will be able to meet targets set in the National Resources and Waste Strategy.

Waste Transfer Station – in October 2019 we agreed to use part of the land at Interlink Business Park, Bardon for a waste transfer station. The planning application for the waste transfer station was submitted in August 2020; we expect the application to be considered by the Development Control and Regulatory Board by the end of 2020. The new waste transfer station will significantly improve our service resilience and support future service changes likely to arise out of the National Resources and Waste Strategy.

Corporate Enablers – Ensuring a Sustainable and Successful Organisation

Over recent years we have been dealing with major funding cuts and pressures by transforming service delivery and working with partner agencies to integrate and share services. The Council this year has also had to respond to the biggest crisis since the Second World War - the coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic has had and continues to have a profound impact on local government and on the Council's finances. Current estimates are that the pandemic will cost the Council £90m in 2020/21.

Covid-19 - Corporate Response - the Council has worked hand in glove with the police, NHS and other partners, to do everything it can to support and protect residents. Whilst a variety of contingency plans are always in place, the more detailed Council planning for COVID-19 began in earnest in early February. Business continuity plans were implemented across the Council, which included the identification of the most vulnerable service users to ensure that there was capacity to support them. Non-essential work was risk assessed and put on hold to free staff capacity to enable the Council to deploy rapid responses to ensure core services were delivered and that residents and businesses continued to be supported.

The Council's Crisis Management Group (CMG) met frequently to oversee the Council's response across key issues. CMG was supported by a corporate Resilience Planning Group (RPG) which met four or five times a week including dedicated meetings focused on preparing for 'recovery'. The Council has worked closely with partners on a range of challenges including the supply of PPE, shielding of vulnerable people, co-ordination of volunteering, public health, regulatory and economic advice and excess deaths planning, and has been chairing many of the Resilience Forum cells responding to specific issues.

Thousands of the Council's staff working in areas such as adult social care, school support, children's care, transport, public health, communities, emergency management and back room support staff continued to make a big difference to people's lives despite often having to work remotely and in new ways. 90% of staff were working from home in the early stages of the pandemic. A range of staff were also quickly redeployed into new roles to continue to deliver the support required. County Hall was lit up in blue and green on a number of occasions to thank and celebrate the work of carers and key workers during the pandemic.

Covid-19 Recovery Plans - in June 2020 the Council agreed new recovery plans in response to the pandemic. Supporting communities and the local economy were put at the heart of the plans to help Leicestershire recover, as well as financial stability, tackling climate change and making the most of digital services. Given its major financial challenges the council is also updating all its service plans to minimise costs and ensure a range of options for future service delivery are considered. The council also re-prioritised its capital programme to cover key priorities only and is identifying new savings and spend reduction options. It will not be sustainable for all services to return to levels and outcomes that were being delivered before the pandemic. The first service recovery plans were completed at the end of June 2020 with expected iterations as and when services can transition to a new business as normal. Milestones are also being guided by the UK's national government Recovery Strategy. The Council will also carry out a review of its Strategic Plan linked to a review of the MTFs and Capital Programme.

Transformation Programme – we are continuing to transform local services in order to deliver significant savings whilst seeking to maintain or improve outcomes. However, the scale of the financial and transformation challenge is increasing. The simple changes have been made and the straightforward savings long-since delivered. What remains is complex change, often involving multiple partners and many risks. During 2019/20 the Transformation Portfolio comprised of over forty initiatives across Council services including support to the new integrated sexual health service, the Early Help and Family Wellbeing service, Smart Libraries and reviews in social care direct payments and personal budgets. Efforts have continued on the High Needs Block Programme, including the completion of the school’s capital programme, development of the inclusion offer and improvements to key decision making processes.

Covid-19 has given greater urgency to the underlying drivers for change set out in the Council’s Strategic Change Portfolio – financial, environment/carbon reduction, digital value and new ways of working. In recent months, the latter programme has refocussed to make all Council buildings and services COVID-secure – ensuring clear guidance is in place for managers and staff to work safely.

Corporate Asset Investment Fund – our Strategy sets out the basis on which we invest some of our financial resources to generate income to support front line services. The Strategy was updated in 2019 to reflect the Declaration of a Climate Emergency by the Council and so future developments will be energy efficient with a low carbon impact. In September 2020 a report showed that we generated £7.1m income from our asset investment fund over the previous 12 months (a slight increase to last year) along with £39m of capital growth in value. The innovative but prudent management of council’s assets and money means that the Fund can grow carefully and ensure that it can provide opportunities for new jobs and supporting the economy. Our Investment Fund portfolio now totals £171m, compared to last year’s £132m – a 26% increase. It includes buildings at LUSEP, Apollo Business Park (Coalville), Airfield Business Park (Market Harborough). New developments at Lutterworth, Market Harborough and Quorn are in the pipeline as well as longer term housing land schemes around the county.

Commercial Services – the Council approved a Commercial Strategy in June 2018 and considered progress in June 2019. The Council has recently been shortlisted in the Best Commercial Council category in the Municipal Journal Awards, highlighting the development of the commercial traded services operation and related skills. The finalist’s brochure also references how the service supports the wellbeing of the community by improving quality of school meals and ongoing accommodation through the Social Care Investment Project. Most services were closed or significantly affected by the impact of Covid 19. Beaumanor Hall, our cafés and the Century Theatre were closed, School food continued a limited service providing meals to the children of key workers, while LEAMIS continued providing their services remotely. Over time venues have reopened and the meals served by school food are increasing week by week over the Autumn Term.

Strategic Property – our Strategic Property Services continue to proactively manage all property and land to ensure that the council has the property it needs to support service delivery in the most effective and efficient way, supporting performance improvements and increasing productivity. Recently the role played by the council’s asset investments has supported housing, infrastructure and economic development.

Workplace Strategy – our Workplace Strategy sets out how the Council will maximise the use of its property portfolio and reduce operational property costs. Savings are progressing through the rationalisation of our use of satellite offices and increasing usage of County Hall, as well as the potential to rent out further areas of the building.

Digital Strategy and ICT – last year saw investment in the ICT infrastructure of £0.9m with a new storage area network, completion of the rollout of Windows 10 and Microsoft Office 365. There was also significant investment of £1.4m in the Fit for the Future Oracle system replacement. Major IT support was deployed to implement mobile and home working in response to the covid-19 pandemic, including provision of laptops and other technology to a wider range of staff, as well as enhancements to the speed of the council network and servers.

Website Rating - in July 2020 our website was ranked the most accessible among all county councils. The website climbed 34 places to be placed fifth out of more than 400 councils, whose sites were audited as part of the Silktide Index, a public list of websites graded for accessibility. The audits take samples of up to 125 web pages from each website and tests these against around 200 key criteria. The Council's website achieved a 95% score. Between April and June 2020 more than a million visits were made to the website. The website has been more popular than ever during the coronavirus pandemic as people need clear, transparent information.

Business Intelligence - in 2020 we launched a new Business Intelligence Strategy for the Council which sets out our vision and priorities for the next four years. We have come a long way since the first data and business intelligence strategy was introduced in 2015. We now have a more modern and effective approach to business intelligence centred on the use of Tableau dashboards. We provide daily data to support the delivery of front-line services as well as producing insight to inform strategic decision making, planning and commissioning. The Council is a data rich organisation and we need to maximise the insight we can gain from our data assets to help us make better decisions and plan for the future. The strategy sets out how we intend to build on the firm foundations established over the last four years.

People Strategy - an evaluation of the Council's current People Strategy 2017-2020 was undertaken earlier this year which involved the engagement of a number of key stakeholders in the organisation. The results showed that overall the strategy has been implemented well and has achieved a number of positive results. Further work is required to embed some areas to support the Council in achieving its Strategic Plan and Strategic Change Portfolio. This will be achieved within the new People Strategy – 2020-2024.

Staff Wellbeing – the number of days lost to sickness absence during 2019/20 was 10.07 per FTE. This remains higher than our target. The number of referrals to the staff counselling service has also increased with 2,051 counselling sessions provided during 2019/20. Work continues on the implementation of extra support to employees as well as Attendance Management Support Action Plans, to support the drive to help staff with reduced sickness. Earlier in the year, to provide additional support to employees with stress and wellbeing issues, the Council launched a new support programme that can be accessed by all employees. The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides a confidential telephone counselling and self-help service. The EAP works alongside the current counselling service and provides a service on a 24 hour, 365 days a year basis.

Equalities - in July 2020 the Council agreed a new Equalities Strategy to 2024 and supporting action plan. The Council is aiming to make Leicestershire a place where equality is at the forefront of council services as well as the experiences of everybody in our communities. We want to have high levels of leadership and continue to improve our performance in advancing equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity and inclusion. We also want Leicestershire to be a place where there is equality of opportunity and good relations with and within its communities. The Council has been proactive in enabling discussion on the issues arising from the Black Lives Matter movement. There has been a special staff newsletter, a “Big Conversation” staff seminar, e-training on unconscious bias, and services have held their own events. Work continues to focus on improving equalities evidence, BAME staff progression, improving EHRIA processes, making information accessible and stronger and more visible communications. We are committed to challenging discrimination in all its forms, providing inclusive and responsive services and strengthening community relations. The new strategy will help us to deliver on these aims.

Financial Planning and Strategy - our last four-year financial plan set out the need for £80m savings but also £16m of investment to tackle climate change, an extra £34m to support vulnerable people and £7m to top up road maintenance budgets. Supporting vulnerable people, tackling climate change and delivering infrastructure were at the heart of the 2019/20 budget. Last year’s budget also included a £100k increase for Shire Grants and £75k extra to help trading standards protect residents from scams. The Council in February 2020 also approved a £600m capital plan featuring a range of investment supporting homes, new roads, school places and social care accommodation and further rolling out broadband as well as maintaining roads and drains. Plans included creating 6,400 more school places, 5,900 mainstream and 500 SEND places, expanding adult social care accommodation and rolling out high speed broadband. Since the MTFs was approved the Council’s financial position has been impacted significantly by the pandemic. A revised capital programme has been approved which reduces the programme by £115m over the four years.

Most Productive Council – in November 2019 the County Council was named as the most productive council in the country for the third year running in the table compiled by consultancy firm IMPOWER. The Index measures the performance of 149 councils against outcomes per pound invested, through seven different service lenses. The Council is one of the lowest funded in the country and this has meant it needs to ensure innovation to drive down costs so that we get the most out of each pound.

Overview and Scrutiny – one impact of the pandemic has been on public meetings. The Council has adapted quickly to make use of technology to hold public meetings virtually, with meetings webcast live allowing the public to engage in the process. Committees have also moved to paperless meetings following a successful trial. The work of overview and scrutiny is critical in ensuring the council’s budget and performance is closely monitored, that services are being delivered effectively and efficiently and that they meet the needs of local people. Environmental concerns have been at the top of the agenda for a number of committees including in plans for economic development, major transport infrastructure, or in the health and care economy. Issues raised include clearer delivery plans for major infrastructure, biodiversity and emissions, cancer waits and delayed transfers of care, completion of child assessments in 45 days and the progress and impact of transformation projects.

Recovery from the impact of covid-19 will take years rather than months given the social, emotional, physical and economic consequences. Scrutiny will play a key role in monitoring how the recovery plans impact on service users and local communities.