
Environment and Communities Committee

Date of Meeting:	1 st July 2022
Report Title:	2021-22 Annual Performance Review - Environment and Neighbourhood Services
Report of:	Paul Bayley, Director of Environment and Neighbourhood Services
Report Reference No:	EC/06/22-23
Ward(s) Affected:	All wards

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with a review of the performance of the Environment and Neighbourhood Services department for 2021-22 against the relevant priorities, actions, and measures of success within the Council's Corporate Plan 2021-25.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This report gives an update on performance across Environment and Neighbourhood Services for 2021-22.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Committee note the performance of the department.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The Environment and Communities Committee is responsible for reviewing and scrutinising the performance of the Environment and Neighbourhood Services department.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. Background

- 6.1. Environment and Neighbourhood Services is responsible for delivering a range of Place based front line customer facing services and statutory functions. These include Waste and Recycling, Street Cleansing, Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health, Licensing, Trading Standards, Leisure Services, Libraries, Anti-Social Behaviour, Community Enforcement,

Bereavement Services, Parks, Play Areas, Playing Pitches and Green Spaces, and Emergency Planning.

6.2. Several of our services are commissioned through the Council’s wholly owned companies Ansa Environmental Services and Orbitas Bereavement Services, and the independent leisure trust Everybody Sport & Recreation.

6.3. The Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 sets out our vision for an open, fairer, greener Cheshire East with three broad aims to be an open and enabling organisation; a council which empowers and cares about people, and a thriving and sustainable place. The Environment and Neighbourhood Services department contributes to several of the priorities under the aim of a thriving and sustainable place:

- A great place for people to live, work and visit
- Welcoming, safe, and clean neighbourhoods
- To reduce the impact on our environment
- To be carbon neutral by 2025

6.4. The department provides leadership and management for the Council’s Environment Strategy and associated action plans, including the Carbon Neutral Action Plan to deliver the commitment to be a carbon neutral council by 2025. An update on the delivery of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan is reported to the Committee in a separate report on an annual basis, most recently in January 2022.

6.5. The department also contributes to the priority to be an open and enabling organisation, increasing transparency in decision-making through the Environment and Communities Committee during the year and undertaking borough wide consultations on draft policies and plans. We have also engaged with residents on projects and initiatives at a local level. The department has been engaged in the development of the Council’s Customer Experience Strategy and Customer Charter. The ongoing implementation of modern ICT systems for Building Control, Planning and Regulatory Services will help to significantly improve digital services for customers.

6.6. Environmental Services

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Welcoming, safe, and clean neighbourhoods	Improved green spaces for all, enabling people to exercise and socialise in our parks and open spaces
To reduce our impact on our environment	To have minimised overall waste generated in the borough and maximised our levels of recycling To improve biodiversity and natural habitats in the borough

Key Performance Indicators	2020/21 Outturn	2021/22 Outturn	2021/22 Target
Residual household waste collected per household (kgs)	481kg	477kg (estimate)	<481kg
Increase the % of all waste collected sent for recycling, reuse and (to achieve 65% by 2035)	57.5%	57.2% (estimate)	>50%
Maintain volunteers in waste awareness	Approx. 100	Approx. 100	25

- 6.7.** Ansa Environmental Services, a company wholly owned by the Council, are a critical delivery partner in the effectiveness and customer experience of environmental services such as waste and recycling collections, household waste and recycling centres, street cleansing, and the maintenance of parks and green spaces. They also play an important role in delivering some of the council's strategic objectives, such as reducing overall volume of waste, and in developing and delivering improvement plans and projects for our parks and green spaces.
- 6.8.** The pandemic placed strain on the waste collection system with crew shortages and increased tonnages. Despite the numerous pressures Ansa have been able to continue to always empty all three bins. This equates to over 13,000,000 bin lifts and over 160,000 tonnes of waste collected and safely managed. We recognise however that missed bins and rounds not completed increased during this period and Ansa is striving to return to normal levels of service.
- 6.9.** The increased tonnages of all waste streams over the last 2 years presents an ongoing financial risk to the service if waste levels continue at that level. Our recycling levels remain encouragingly high and keep us as the top unitary authority in the northwest and in the top ten nationally.
- 6.10.** The lifting of restrictions in April enabled the waste prevention team and volunteers to get out again into community with 'Love Your Park' events held in 8 parks focusing on an anti-litter campaign. Other highlights included Tatton Foodies Festival, a community litter pick in Holmes Chapel with Brownies & Cubs, a Waste reduction living stand at Macclesfield indoor market, One World week – Alsager, Congleton Green fair and the promotion of the new recycling bins at Queens Park. In all 52 events were attended over the year.
- 6.11.** From a strategic perspective the service is mindful of changes likely to be required by the Environment Act affecting the ways we collect recycling and waste from 2024. With the benefit of funding from the Waste Resources Action programme we have undertaken analysis of the effectiveness of our existing food waste collection system and are beginning feasibility work on options for future compliant collection systems which we will consult on with residents in the coming year. In addition, Ansa is progressing procurement for the Household Waste Recycling Centre contract and Materials Recovery Facility contract for service from March 2023.

- 6.12.** In parks and open spaces grant funding and new partnerships have seen the implementation of the playing field improvement project, jointly funded by the Football Foundation, the Council and ANSA. A new partnership project funded through NHS and public health has provided the groundwork to see Health Education Rangers and Social prescribing through GPs to commence during 2022/23. The project enables GP prescribed individuals to join organised volunteer groups in green spaces focused on sustainability projects to deliver healthier communities.
- 6.13.** As part of the Council's Carbon Neutral Action Plan approximately 300 trees have been planted in our parks and open space. Ansa have trialled low emission grounds equipment with a continued commitment to purchase low emission items in 2022/23. Following the adoption of the Council's tree risk management strategy, zoning work and surveys continue to identify risks to public safety from failing trees on land within the council's ownership. If following inspection trees are required to be removed, where possible a 3:1 ratio for replanting has been implemented. Wider sustainability changes to parks management are being implemented through the development of site management plans and are contributing to an update to the parks strategy to be brought forward next year.
- 6.14.** We are heavily engaged in developing projects to be funded through the Crewe Towns Fund. Primarily we are focussed on the Pocket Parks Improvement Initiative, but we are also involved in the Valley Brook River improvement projects.
- 6.15.** There are several improvement projects that have been completed during the year. Each of these projects undertake engagement and consultation with including:
- Banbury Close, Macclesfield – works completed following contribution from Macclesfield Town Council to improve accessibility to both the Multi-Use-Games-Area and the open space by installing better drainage.
 - South Park, Macclesfield - the installation of new wheelchair accessible equipment at South Park funded by Macclesfield Town Council.
 - Rotherhead Drive, Macclesfield - Work completed on a full replacement of the play area and new connecting footpath to make the equipment more accessible.
 - Meriton Road Park, Handforth - Following a Masterplan consultation earlier in the year, a new path was installed to provide access from a new housing estate into the park.
 - Hassall Road, Alsager – Following on from the new play equipment installed earlier in 2021, a second phase was completed which included the installation of a footpath connecting with the entrance gates and installing an additional piece of equipment.

- New Town Playing fields, Disley - new changing facilities
- Station Road, Wrenbury – Play area fencing has been improved. The old timber fence has been replaced with new play safe steel fence.
- Sandbach Park - Safety surfacing improvements at the park
- Wynbunbury Road, Willaston – Resurfacing works completed which has improved accessibility to the play area.
- Lansdowne Road, Crewe - Crewe Town Council have provided funding to upgrade play equipment. Majority of the refurbishment has been completed with the remaining to be finished in April 2022.
- Queens Park, Crewe – works completed to update and refresh the play area following a grant awarded by the FCC Communities Foundation.
- Works are also under development or in progress at Victoria Park, Weston Playing Fields, and Robin Lane in Macclesfield; Jim Evison Playing Fields and Little Lindow in Wilmslow; Pheasant Walk in Mobberley; Village Hall in Chelford; Lansdowne Road in Crewe in addition to the Town Fund project on the 8 pocket parks and Jubilee Gardens MUGA in Crewe.

6.16. The Council’s Bereavement Services, cemeteries and crematoria are managed by Orbitas Bereavement Services, another company wholly owned by the Council. The demand on bereavement services returned to normal levels in 2021-22 following an increase in demand in 2020-21 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The contract for the delivery of bereavement services has been re-procured with Orbitas from 1st April 2022 for a period of 5 years with an extension option for a further 3 years. However, the service will be re-branded to Cheshire East Bereavement Services in the future to reflect the nature of the company’s operations more accurately as an agent delivering services on behalf of the Council.

6.17. Planning

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
A great place for people to live, work and visit	<p>Enable access to well designed, affordable, and safe homes for all residents</p> <p>New development to be appropriately controlled to protect and support our borough</p>
To reduce our impact on our environment	To improve biodiversity and natural habitats in the borough
A transport network that is safe and promotes active travel	Improvements in the strategic infrastructure that support sustainable

	<p>and inclusive growth across the borough</p> <p>Safer and well-maintained roads</p> <p>More residents to use walking routes</p>
Thriving urban and rural economies with opportunities for all	<p>Delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Crewe</p> <p>Delivery of a strategic regeneration plan for Macclesfield</p> <p>Maximise the commercial and regeneration opportunities associated with HS2 for the whole borough</p>

Key Performance Indicators	2020/21 Outturn	2021/22 Outturn	2021/22 Target
Number of major applications registered	130	126	-
Number of non-major applications registered	3,410	3,329	-
Major applications determined within 13 weeks or agreed time	95%	96%	>90%
Non-major applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed time	87%	81%	>90%
% Planning appeals allowed	34%	36%	<30%
Supply of deliverable housing land	6.4 years	6.3 years*	5 years

(*base date March 2021)

- 6.18.** The Planning Service has been under pressure for several years, with a consistently high level of demand and challenges in retaining and recruiting resources. During 2020 a significant backlog of planning applications started to build up as productivity and recruitment was further disrupted by the pandemic. The backlog peaked at 2,882 in October 2021 but only marginally reduced to 2,654 at the end of March 2022. This is double the normal level of around 1,300 and has had an impact on the capacity of Planning officers to engage effectively with customers.
- 6.19.** The calendar year of 2021 saw an 11% increase in all applications compared with the previous year with notable increases in submissions of smaller householder and prior approval applications. The figures reported in the table above only include applications which are reported to DLUHC and so does not include other minor applications such as prior approvals which have increased significantly due to changes to permitted development rights.

- 6.20.** The % of applications determined within 8 weeks for non-major applications has reduced to 81%. However, this includes applicants/agents who agree to one or more extensions to time. Most applications are actually taking 4-6 months to determine. This has led to a large volume of “failure demand” chasing progress.
- 6.21.** The table below provides the numbers of applications determined (using the same Government statistics as the table above).

Year	Total determined Major	Total determined non-Major
2019-20	135	2,761
2020-21	118	2,580
2021-22	90	2,881

- 6.22.** The number of planning applications determined by Cheshire East is the largest in the northwest of England and within the top 10 for Local Planning Authorities across the country.
- 6.23.** The ‘holding’ process for applications remains in place with applications validated and registered and the appropriate publicity and consultations are taking place but allocation to a case officer is being delayed to manage workloads. Pre-application services have been suspended since the start of 2021 for all but major proposals. Customer expectations are managed through correspondence on receipt of applications, targeted communications to agents and regular updating of information on the website. While it is clearly regrettable, service complaints about delays and lack of communication have inevitably increased over this period.
- 6.24.** An external provider, Capita, have been procured to provide additional capacity of 4-5 officers to assist with the backlog of applications. The contract has been in place since September 2021 and so far, their officers have determined over 500 applications out of 850 allocated to them, the majority of which are householder applications. The contract covers up to 1,000 applications and has been extended for a further period.
- 6.25.** The Service continues to try and recruit staff to fill vacancies and retain current staff. It remains a difficult and very competitive market for both the public and private sector to recruit experienced planning officers. Staff have recruited into the team over the last 12 months, but this is balanced with some leaving. There are currently 6 vacancies within the planning applications team.
- 6.26.** To identify ways to reduce the backlog as quickly as possible, a deep dive review of the Planning service is being undertaken with a Members Advisory Panel to support the review. The review will also recommend actions to improve customer engagement and service standards and deliver against the corporate plan priority to be an open and enabling organisation.

- 6.27.** Enforcement complaints increased during the pandemic and in the earlier part of the year with more people working at home and having greater awareness of the environment around them. The table below shows the number of complaints opened and closed over the last three years, which indicates new cases have slightly tailed off but there remains a legacy of open cases.

Year	Enforcement cases opened	Enforcement cases closed
2019-20	1,062	1,023
2020-21	1,091	593
2021-22	1,033	777

- 6.28.** The Enforcement team have issued 11 Enforcement Notices, 12 Planning Contravention Notices and 2 Breach of Conditions Notices and 1 Temporary Stop Notice during the year.
- 6.29.** The notable case in Mobberley for the unlawful change of use of land for residential caravans was a significant success which resulted in a dismissed appeal at the end of March. The unauthorised works began some two years earlier and involved numerous officers from the Planning Service and Legal in both Court proceedings alongside the handling of a planning application and serving an Enforcement Notice for the Green Belt site. This is a good example of collaborative working across the Council but also working with the local community. It also highlights the impact a large enforcement case can have on resources.
- 6.30.** Recruitment in Enforcement was successful in filling vacant posts to the established structure for a limited time but unfortunately vacancies also remain within the enforcement team.
- 6.31.** Notwithstanding the pressures on the Planning Service, it continues to approve significant strategic developments in accordance with development plan policies to ensure they are sensitive to their surroundings but also achieving good sustainability. Key strategic housing/mixed use developments at Basford, Leighton, and employment sites in Middlewich have been approved. Significant progress has been made in bringing forward both residential and employment sites at North Congleton as a new community becomes established. Key sites in Crewe town centre as part of wider regeneration work have now also begun with the Royal Arcade site receiving planning approval.
- 6.32.** The strong emphasis on the urban design quality of schemes which has been embedded over the last few years, is now starting to become the norm. Through the hard work of the Environmental Planning team developers now understand the quality required for Cheshire East – particularly for the larger schemes with the emphasis on creating places and character areas with good connectivity and accessibility for all modes of travel.

- 6.33.** The Council's Ecologists have consistently sought to secure appropriate mitigation for developments either for on or off-site mitigation. Biodiversity net gain is therefore already well engrained within the Service to capture the future requirements of the Environment Act.
- 6.34.** Consultations on draft Conservation Area Appraisals for parts of Macclesfield, Ollerton and Alderley Edge have been launched, and an Urgent Works Notice was served on a property in Congleton to protect its heritage value. The number of 'works to protected trees' applications has suffered a similar surge and backlog as mainstream applications due to shortage of resource.
- 6.35.** Planning Appeal performance has slightly decreased for the year, but the Service is making soundly based decisions and there are no significant adverse trends. More appeals are starting to come through the system as the Planning Inspectorate work through their backlog which adds to pressures for the team.
- 6.36.** The five-year housing supply figure remains at a robust level of 6.3 years with 2,376 net completions during the 2020-21 monitoring year.
- 6.37.** The examination of the Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) was held in October and November 2021. The Inspector's interim comments were received in January and were largely favourable, and subject to some amendments to policies (termed 'main modifications') the Plan was likely to be considered sound. Consultation on these modifications will run until the end of May 2022 after which time the Planning Inspector will consider comments and produce his final report. It is hoped adoption of the Plan will take place by early Autumn.
- 6.38.** Work has continued to produce the first draft Minerals and Waste Plan for Cheshire East.
- 6.39.** There has been significant progress on several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which provide further advice and guidance alongside planning policies. Consultations have been undertaken on draft SPDs for Jodrell Bank, Housing, Sustainable Drainage Systems, Biodiversity Net Gain, Environmental Protection and Forward Funded Infrastructure have all taken place. 7 Neighbourhood Plans have also been made during the period.
- 6.40.** Implementation of the Tree Risk Management Strategy, to manage the risk to public safety from the failure of trees on land owned by the council, has continued since adoption in April 2021 and the action plan is being progressed. Work has so far included identifying specific categories of land for 'zoning' for inspection frequency and method, training, and guidance for staff and confirmation of inspection periods.
- 6.41.** Significant progress has been made on the implementation of the new IT system for Planning, Building Control and Land Charges. Final testing of the data mapping and data migration is taking place, after which work will move on to the proposed workflow for new applications and data. There has been

some slippage to the original programme, but it is planned that the first phase of the new system will be operational in September 2022.

6.42. Building Control faces similar challenges to other services in terms of resources but has continued to respond to demand. Throughout the year the team has experienced the exit of 6 professional members of the team to the private sector, representing 50% of the resources available. Whilst some recruitment has been possible this has placed greater pressure on those who remain. Additional training has also been undertaken to ensure the team has the required competencies to meet the needs of the Building Safety Regimes (post Grenfell).

6.43. Over the year the Building Control team has dealt with 1,785 applications of which 93% of full plans were assessed within 15 days of receipt. Officers have inspected 17,500 elements of construction whilst undertaking 9,382 visits. The team responded to 78 reports of dangerous structures, some of which being out of hours. The team also continued to maintain statutory registers associated with works undertaken by the private sector.

6.44. Regulatory Services

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
Welcoming, safe, and clean neighbourhoods	Crime and anti-social activity and anti-social behaviour to be reduced Victims of crime and exploitation to be supported effectively by the council and partners through collaboration To protect residents and improve our environment

6.45. The Regulatory Services team were responsible for ensuring local businesses complied with the Covid-19 restrictions introduced by government to help reduce transmission of the virus. During the year the service dealt with 153 Covid compliance complaints and requests for advice and followed up on 724 positive Covid cases within a workplace setting. Although most legislative requirements were removed on 19 July 2021 and then more completely in February 2022 the service has continued to provide advice and guidance to businesses on the changes and to support those that wished to maintain ongoing control measures as part of their own company policy.

6.46. The service also signed up to the Health and Safety Executive spot check service which ensured that 3,900 businesses received additional contact either in the form of telephone survey and/or inspection follow up.

6.47. Following the publication of the Government's *Living with Covid* strategy, the removal of all restrictions, the reduction in testing requirements, and the cessation of contact tracing services the team are maintaining their close links with the Public Health Team as they plan for their next phase of work. This will be to provide support to any public health initiatives focussed on local

businesses where we have significant experience and close working relationships.

- 6.48.** The Licensing Team has been progressing a comprehensive review of the Cheshire East Taxi Licensing Policy in response to the release of the Department for Transport's 'National Minimum Standards' document. The amended draft policy has been subject to consultation with the trade, public and other relevant stakeholders. Proposed changes include setting emission and age limits for vehicles and extending our data sharing arrangements with partner agencies to support safeguarding. A report outlining the proposed final Policy is scheduled for Licensing Committee in June and will be presented to Environment and Communities Committee in August 2022.
- 6.49.** The Licensing Team has responded efficiently to changes in process imposed by Government. Checks are now being made to the tax status of various licence holders through HMRC. It has also been necessary to implement and communicate changes to documentation required for 'Right to Work' checks. Information in relation to vehicle emissions, to support Clean Air Zones, continues to be communicated to the Department for Transport.
- 6.50.** The Food Safety/Standards Teams have been working to the requirements of the Food Standards Agency 'Recovery Plan' which was published in June 2021 to provide a work plan for local authorities outside of the usual inspection regime. The national Recovery Plan became the basis for our Food Law Enforcement Plan, a two-year plan, that was approved by Environment and Communities Committee in November 2021. The first 'milestone' in the Recovery Plan (March 2022) has been met by the teams and further 'milestones' are scheduled at strategic points up to 31 March 2023. It is anticipated that in the coming months the Food Standards Agency will start to release information on its anticipated food inspection delivery model to be implemented from 2023/2024 onwards which will inform future delivery and priority areas.
- 6.51.** In addition to inspection work the Commercial Services Team continue with their reactive work including the investigation of service requests, workplace accidents and food poisoning/infectious disease notifications which have remained at a consistent level throughout the pandemic (2,700 contacts during 2021-2022).
- 6.52.** Following the UK's exit from the EU there is additional work that is being picked up by the Team. This includes an increased number of enquiries relating to food export and approval requirements and having to issue a higher number of Export Health Certificates; this work is particularly complex and is now the subject of specialist training for officers involved with this work to improve both the local and national response. From a Trading Standards perspective the team have been responsible for following up referrals from Port Authorities where consignments of unsafe products bound for Cheshire East have been identified and stopped at port.

- 6.53.** Joint working between the Trading Standards and Commercial Services teams continues to ensure the ongoing promotion of 'Natasha's Law' to businesses that sell prepacked food for direct sale (PPDS) including changes to labelling requirements that were extended to a wider number of businesses in October 2021.
- 6.54.** Work has continued with Macclesfield Football Club, who have just been promoted following their first competitive season. The focus is to ensure that they meet their obligations and that the ground is safe for all who attend. This has included 'During Performance Inspections' to monitor safety management procedures in a match day environment and an ongoing review of permissible supporter numbers. This work is supported by the wider Event Safety Advisory Group including representatives from Police, Fire and Ambulance services.
- 6.55.** In year, the Trading Standards Team have undertaken a variety of activities to stop fraudulent, illegal, and unfair trading. This has resulted in the seizure and destruction of over 3,300 unsafe high-risk products and the successful sentencing of a prolific rogue trader. In parallel with this work our Financial Investigator will assess the suitability of action under the Proceeds of Crime Act and instigate appropriate action. The team has also completed 37 age restricted operations to ensure goods are not sold to underage consumers.
- 6.56.** The Team also has a focus on protecting the most vulnerable from predatory crime including rogue trading, mass marketing and scams. Interventions such as rapid response protocols and the Banking Protocol project has helped save over £970,000 of consumer detriment in year. Individuals who have found themselves the victim of scams and doorstep crime are subsequently supported by the Older Person's Scams Awareness and Aftercare Project (a partnership between Age UK and Cheshire East) where they are provided with aftercare, support, and advice. This project achieved a national award from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute as an *'outstanding example of collaborative work between key stakeholders engaging with the most vulnerable members of the public'*.
- 6.57.** The Environmental Protection Team deal with complaints in relation to issues such as noise, smoke, dust, and odour from both domestic and commercial premises. During the pandemic the service saw a significant increase in the number of these complaints, with numbers only starting to decrease during the third and final quarters of 2021-2022. A total of 2,600 complaints were received, a 14% reduction on 2020-2021. To address demand the service has had to increase its target response times although is now able to implement a return to a first response target of 5 working days. An online form for the reporting of noise complaints has also helped to manage complaint numbers and customer expectations.
- 6.58.** During 2021-2022 the service submitted both its Air Quality Annual Status Report and Air Quality Action Plan to Defra in line with statutory requirements, both of which were approved. The Action Plan provides a clear vision on how the Council is aiming to improve air quality within the Borough. The plan

includes general action measures which aim to improve air quality across the entire borough and site specific measures to help tackle poor air quality in the twelve air quality management areas declared within the borough.

- 6.59.** The Contaminated Land team have been working closely with the Cheshire East Assets team to assist with several Council owned sites where there is potential land contamination. This work has included detailed assessments to help identify the scale of any issue and provide information on any further work required. This work on our own estate is part of our priority work within the Cheshire East Contaminated Land Strategy which was approved by Committee in July 2021.
- 6.60.** The Environmental Protection Team have undertaken a joint project to deal with the problem of rodents in and around Memorial Square in Crewe, an issue that attracted significant social media attention. This has included work with the Assets team to install a permanent bait station on the square. A letter was sent to several businesses on Sandon Street in Crewe advising of the problem and reminding them of their responsibility regarding waste management. Ansa agreed to clear any residual waste in the area to help identify any new waste deposits following engagement with the local businesses and therefore aid any necessary enforcement action. Other businesses in the wider area have been contacted and provided with advice on the treatment of rats within their own property boundaries. This action has seen an overall reduction in complaints about rodent activity in the area.
- 6.61.** Changes to Animal Welfare Legislation in 2018 are continuing to impact upon the work of the Animal Health and Welfare Team. The Team have seen an increase in the number of applications linked to the pandemic and an increase in complaints about what are subsequently found to be unlicensed breeders. During the year the service has refused two applications for breeding licenses one of which was appealed to the First Tier Tribunal and was successfully upheld. There are several ongoing investigations around illegal breeding that will continue to enforcement action as appropriate. Animal licensing activity is also set to increase during 2022-2023 when the legislation is extended to include a wider range of business models including rehoming and charity animal shelters.
- 6.62.** From April 2022, the dog warden service, previously provided by the Animal Health and Welfare Team has been transferred to the Community Enforcement team where it will have greater integration into existing work around dog fouling, responsible dog ownership and dog related antisocial behaviour.
- 6.63.** In January 2022 the Animal Health and Welfare Team dealt with two outbreaks of Avian Influenza (AI) within the Borough; over 100 outbreaks were dealt with nationally. The two incidents in Warmingham and Calverley, which occurred only two weeks apart, ultimately led to the destruction of several thousand birds. Officers were involved with foot patrols in the Protection Zone, liaising directly with poultry keepers to ensure that poultry was securely housed, and

approximately 7,000 letters were sent to all properties within the Surveillance Zone providing general advice and guidance. A close working relationship with our colleagues in Cheshire West and Chester has also meant that officer resources have been shared in those areas where the Zones overlap or are contiguous with the Authority boundaries. The national restrictions relating to poultry keeping are scheduled to be lifted at the beginning of May 2022 and plans are already being developed to update and train Local Authorities in advance of the 2022 AI season.

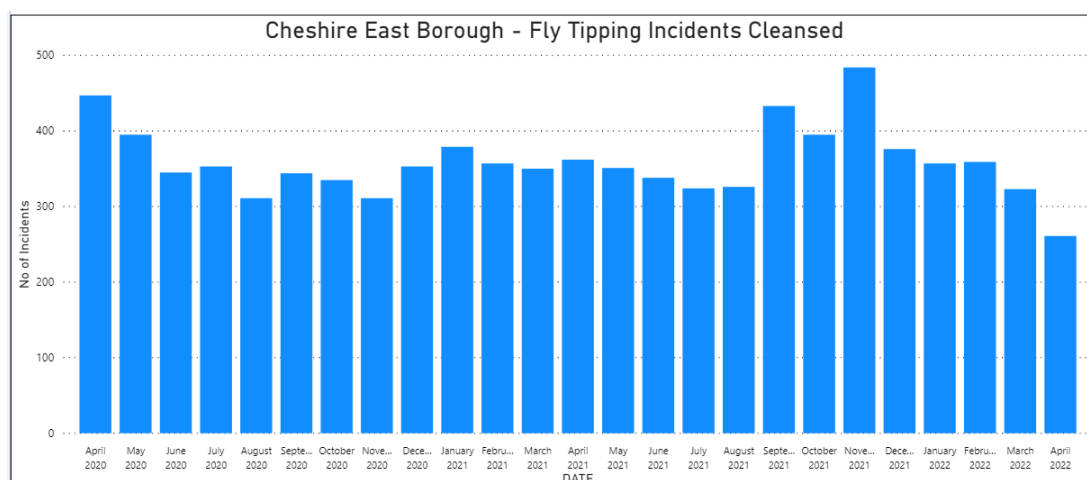
- 6.64.** The CCTV service provides 24 hour a day visual oversight to our towns and works closely with the Police and enforcement services to share information, review specific areas on request and provide recorded evidence as appropriate. In 2021-2022 the service responded to 32,400 incidents. Work is ongoing to replace our ageing analogue system to a wireless infrastructure. This will improve our response to system faults, reducing the amount of down time and reducing service costs.
- 6.65.** The Home Office has awarded a top British Standards accreditation to the CCTV service. It is the second time in a year the team has received recognition for the quality of its operation, its high standard of security and the service it delivers to the residents of the borough. The British Standard 7958 means the service has been independently audited by the Home Office. The accreditation states the data collected in the form of video images, are gathered ‘in the most professional, proportionate and ethical manner.’ This accreditation supports plans for the service to expand its range of chargeable services in the future.
- 6.66.** During 2021-22 there has been continued resource shortfall across several teams within the service despite recruitment work. Most notably this has impacted the Commercial Services Team who are responsible for food safety and health & safety functions and is reflective of a national shortfall in qualified officers. This is being partially managed through a contract for the provision of food hygiene inspections by an external provider which will continue into 2022-2023. Elsewhere in the service work is ongoing to provide development opportunities to increase qualified resource through apprenticeship and graduate qualification schemes.
- 6.67. Neighbourhood Services**

Corporate Plan 2021-25: Key priorities	
A great place for people to live, work and visit	<p>A high-quality accessible library service that remains relevant to the changing needs of Cheshire East residents and delivers value for money</p> <p>High quality leisure and sports provision across the borough that delivers good value for money</p>
Welcoming, safe, and clean neighbourhoods	Crime and anti-social activity and anti-social behaviour to be reduced

	<p>Victims of crime and exploitation to be supported effectively by the council and partners through collaboration</p> <p>To protect residents and improve our environment</p>
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Key Performance Indicators	2020/21 Outturn	2021/22 Outturn	2021/22 Target
Number of visitors to libraries	286,040	684,574	800,000
Number of visitors to leisure centres	426,651	2,082,213	2,000,000

- 6.68.** New enforcement policies for Community Enforcement, Anti-Social Behaviour and body worn cameras were approved by the Committee in July.
- 6.69.** The Community Enforcement Team has responded to and cleared, with the assistance of Ansa, 4,428 incidents of fly-tipping. In 2020, 78% of reported fly-tipping incidents within the borough were within Crewe with over half of that within 20 streets and alleyways in central Crewe.
- 6.70.** The Cleaner Crewe project, a pilot scheme to make the streets and alleyways in central Crewe cleaner and tidier, has been successful with several alleyways being cleaned and further enhanced with plants and artwork. Other preventative actions are also being used such as bins being supplied to households, alongside a greater present of Enforcement Officers following the 4 E's approach – engage, explain, and encourage compliance, but enforce when there is a failure to cooperate or persistent breaches. The project has seen collaborative working between various departments within the council, the local MP, Crewe Town Council, and residents, with the Town Council funding an extra Community Enforcement Officer. The project has resulted in 49% reduction in fly-tipping since November 2021 in the pilot area. This has contributed to an overall reduction of 15% in fly-tipping across the borough.



- 6.71.** As well as responding to fly-tipping, the Community Enforcement Team also deal with abandoned vehicles and in the last 12 months issued 21 Fixed Penalty Notices and seized 121 abandoned vehicles.
- 6.72.** The Anti-Social Behaviour Team during 21/22 have opened 227 new cases and closed 232. The team has seen an increase in the submission of Anti-social behaviour Alert youth notifications received from the Police which has resulted in approximately 744 warning letters being sent out to the parents/carers of young people who have been involved in early stages of anti-social behaviour across the borough. As a result, the team have also seen an increase in Acceptable Behaviour Discussion and Acceptable Behaviour Contract meetings, so far none of which have resulted in progression to a Criminal Behaviour Order/ Civil Injunction.
- 6.73.** A proposal to implement a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) within the Town Centre area of Macclesfield was nominated to the North Multi Agency Action Group (MAAG). A draft order was agreed and has recently gone out for public consultation. The proposal is due to be considered at the Environment and Communities Committee in July 2022. The proposed order will give police officers and authorised officers of the council the ability to request open or closed vessels of alcohol are handed over to assist in tackling the ASB displayed within the town centre.
- 6.74.** The libraries service is adjusting to changes in the way people access libraries following the pandemic. Children's usage continues to grow and informal learning activities for adults are very popular. We continue to offer a comprehensive book stock and wide range of e-resources for both adults and children. Adults coming in to browse the book stock and borrowing of books has not returned to pre-pandemic levels yet. However, we are seeing more people in crisis and more people needing low levels of support to enable them to help themselves.
- 6.75.** In 2021-22 1,528,857 books were borrowed, 782,115 by adults and 735,395 by children. 91,506 e-books, 59,877 e-audio titles and 44,645 e-magazines were downloaded.
- 6.76.** Winter wellbeing resources were delivered to all Cheshire East libraries enabling other agencies working in communities and library staff to provide residents in need with much needed equipment including duvets, hot water bottles, gloves, and slow cookers. One family that came into Nantwich library to pick up some food and other things expressed how grateful they were to the library for helping them and as a result they have been moved from their tent into a B&B and are awaiting a permanent move into a rented flat in Crewe.
- 6.77.** Pre-school activities programme resumed in its entirety and proved to be as popular as previously. In addition, all frontline staff have participated in "Stories and Songs" training delivered inhouse in conjunction with Speech & Language Therapists.
- 6.78.** Weekly face-to -face drop in work clubs have resumed at Crewe, Macclesfield and Sandbach libraries with work coaches available by appointment at other

sites. Staff from each library have had additional training in supporting people looking for work and staff from Springboard and Journey First use libraries to meet with residents they are supporting into employment

- 6.79.** The Summer Reading Challenge took place in person and this year's theme of 'Wild World Heroes' saw 4,390 children participating in person with an additional 326 participating virtually. An additional 398 pre-school children took part in the Mini Challenge. 78 volunteers helped support the challenge with 64 the volunteers were under the age of 24.
- 6.80.** The programme of children's events proves very popular, Our Science Technology Engineering Arts and Maths (STEAM) skill activities are increasing with more regular Coding Clubs and Mini Maker sessions and new Reading Sparks activity sets available for loan.
- 6.81.** During February half term Wilmslow library partnered with Wilmslow's Way Better to host a day of STEAM workshops introduced by giant size Transformers. 1,449 people visited the library to participate. One Mum emailed in to say "A massive thank you for the wonderful fun day to all concerned, my son described it as an 'amazing day' he found it inspiring and enthralling"
- 6.82.** A 'Crafternoon' Tea was developed at Congleton Library once a month to enable people to learn a new craft. The idea has now been rolled out to other libraries. Feedback from people attending has been positive some comments received being: "this group clears my mind and helps me stop thinking about my problems", "I was lonely and anxious when I first came to Crafternoon, now I have made friends and go to other clubs with them" and "I've recently had brain surgery and the craft makes me concentrate which the doctor says is important for my recovery"
- 6.83.** Arts Council England funding was received for the Luminare Youth project at Crewe library. Young people between 11-16 years living in wards in Crewe were able to benefit from this light themed creative digital and arts skills project which taught a variety of critical thinking and creative skills through face-to-face workshops over an 8-week period and culminated in a light installation and exhibition.
- 6.84.** The face-to-face Cheshire East Council Customer Service Points within libraries continue to add significant value for many residents. A gentleman came in for help with emergency assistance and said "I don't know what I would have done without you being open", Another example is a 94 year old lady came in for help with her pension that hadn't been paid, the staff phoned DWP and were able to sort the issue, she comment that she has been a library customer since the 1960's and she didn't know where else to go.
- 6.85.** Library services continues to support the wider organisation when required with 6 members of library staff recently temporarily re-deployed to support Adult Social Care in business administration tasks around grants the Council had received.

- 6.86.** Everybody Sport and Recreation reported an encouraging position in terms of recovery of memberships and participation by the end of 2021-22, after the Covid-19 restrictions were fully lifted at step 4 of the Government's Roadmap to Recovery from 19th July. There were 2,082,212 visitors across the sites during 2021-22, compared with 426,651 in 2020-21. Although this still reflects a significant reduction from 2019-20 with over 3,500,000 visitors to the council's leisure centres. With membership levels now returning to near pre-pandemic levels, we are hopeful that we will see overall visitor numbers also return to pre-pandemic levels in 2022-23.
- 6.87.** Learn to swim has exceeded pre-pandemic levels with over 8,000 active learn to swim participants. Everybody has also engaged with 110 local primary and high schools to support catch-up swimming sessions to enable those children that were impacted as part of the pandemic to access swimming lessons. These will take place during the summer and autumn terms.
- 6.88.** Everybody also delivered a range of targeted health and wellbeing initiatives for local residents including a 'long covid' scheme, rehabilitation for cancer, and hundreds of children enjoying multiple HAF funded active holiday schemes.
- 6.89.** The investment in the council's leisure centres continues. Work on the refurbishment of Nantwich swimming pool has concluded and the centre has been renamed 'Nantwich Leisure Centre' to reflect the enhanced offer. Work has also started on the refurbishment and new pool at Congleton Leisure Centre, which is due for completion late November 2022 and should be fully open by February 2023. In addition, a planning application has been approved to extend and enhance the leisure and sports provision at Sutton Lane in Middlewich. Business cases for the redevelopment of Poynton and Knutsford Leisure Centres are in development.
- 6.90.** Everybody Sport and Recreation has been renamed as Everybody Health and Leisure from 1st May 2022 to reflect the way their services have evolved to deliver a range of health and wellbeing services, for people of all ages and abilities.
- 6.91. Emergency Planning**
- 6.92.** The department is responsible for the Council's emergency planning responsibilities to ensure the Council has the capability to respond effectively to any major incident or emergency in support of our communities and the multi-agency response. The service is commissioned through the Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team, a shared service with Cheshire West and Chester Council.
- 6.93.** The Emergency Planning team have played a key role throughout the Covid-19 pandemic coordinating the Council's response. The Council's CEMART (Council Emergency Management and Response Team) was first stood up in March 2020 to co-ordinate the Council's preparedness and response to the pandemic. Whilst the frequency of meetings varied reflecting the ever-changing situation, CEMART was not stood down until April 2022.

6.94. Alongside coordinating the response to the pandemic, the team also coordinated the Council's response to 11 other major incidents during 2021-22 including power outages, flooding and other impacts of Storms Arwen, Dudley, Eunice and Franklin, and a series of bird flu outbreaks. The team have also continued to implement emergency management training and exercises alongside partner agencies from the Cheshire Resilience Forum and ensure that statutory planning obligations under COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations), PSR (Pipeline Safety Regulations), and Flood and Water Management legislation are met.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

7.1.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. The financial implications of changes in performance requirements or responding to current performance levels will be provided in separate Finance Review reports to the Committee.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. The report sets out how the department is contributing to the Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan 2021-25.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7.5. Human Resources

7.5.1. There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

7.6. Risk Management

7.6.1. The performance reporting process provides opportunities for the Council to identify and focus on areas for improvement to support achievement of its strategic ambitions. Timely performance reporting mitigates risk of the Council not achieving its outcomes by providing the opportunity to review outputs, identify trends and areas for improvement, and introduce corrective and/or preventative actions wherever necessary to address areas of poor - or under – performance.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no implications for rural communities arising from this report.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. There are no implications for children and young people arising from this report.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. There are no implications for public health arising from this report.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. The department's performance contributes to several of the strategic goals set out in the Council's Environment Strategy including:

- Cheshire East Council will be carbon neutral by 2025
- Reduce Waste
- Improve Air Quality
- Ensure new development is sustainable
- Protect and enhance our natural environment

Access to Information	
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Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None