

Leader's Statement

2021 - 2022



My statement this year takes a look at the four key themes of our Council Plan for 2021-24, and reflects on the progress we have made in delivering against the priorities we set out for the last year.



Our People



Our Places



Our Economy



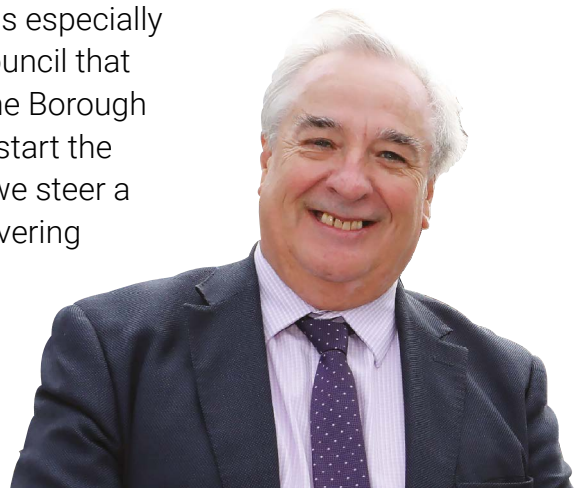
Our Council

Introduction

I cannot look back on the 2021 - 22 Municipal year without of course recognising the ongoing impact and challenges of COVID-19. Throughout the year we have continued to see the impact of the pandemic across the Borough and we have continued to work closely with colleagues in health and in the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to provide testing, vaccination, communications and advice across the Borough and to provide community support to our vulnerable residents. This work has been vital and, whilst we end the year with signs of optimism, we remain well-prepared and vigilant should we need to respond again. We are working hard to ensure that people in the Borough are supported to cope with adapting to the new challenge of living with the ongoing impact of COVID-19.

I am also pleased when I reflect on the last year, to celebrate all that has been achieved in the Borough and to report the progress we are making in delivering the ambitious plans we set out in our 2021 - 24 Council Plan. The significant steps in the realisation of our ambitious regeneration plans across our six towns, the agreement of the ambitious "A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework" to tackle inequality, and the agreement of the 10 - year Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy are important developments this year which will bring lasting benefit and value to the Borough for years to come.

We continue to operate in extremely challenging circumstances with the impact of COVID-19, the ongoing uncertainty around Local Government funding and the growing demand for services especially for social care services. However, I am proud to lead a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve the people of the Borough and we are dedicated to taking on these challenges. We start the 2022 - 23 year committed to supporting the Borough as we steer a path through the ongoing COVID-19 challenge and to delivering the exciting plans we have set out in our 2022 - 2025 Council Plan. I look forward to another period of growth and prosperity for the Borough and do so with an ongoing commitment to ensuring that this success is built in a way that is inclusive and fair.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bob Cook".

Councillor Bob Cook
Leader of the Council
May 2022

Our People

Our vision is for the Borough to be a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm.

This means creating a place where people live in cohesive and safe communities, people are supported and protected from harm, and people live healthy lives.

During the last year we have:

Improved the support we give to families to help them stay together where they can and built more capacity in the Borough to support children where this isn't possible. We have set up a strategic partnership for families covering volunteering, support and family time, and have approved investment to support the development of additional children's homes

Helped schools to improve pupil wellbeing, reduce exclusions, improve careers advice and continued the drive to improve educational attainment for all pupils. We are continuing with the development of a new approach to commissioning children's mental health services and have agreed a strategic action plan for those with special educational needs and disabilities



Developed a new approach to support every child to achieve the best start in life. The new "From Conception to Reception Strategy" has been developed to support families from conception, through pregnancy and the child's early life until they are five. As part of this plan we have already launched a new speech and language programme delivered in partnership with those in our community and rolled out a programme of evidence-based training to early years settings to support them to improve speech language and communication development

Developed more services to help people to remain safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible and to make sure that they are not lonely. We have developed the "Social Lights" volunteering service with Catalyst that supports vulnerable people to access communities, commissioned the Wag & Co visiting dogs charity to provide support for vulnerable older people in their own homes and in care homes, and enhanced the "out of home" activities and support provided to people who are rehabilitating

Expanded our "Time Out" service to provide additional support to informal carers in the Borough



Worked to improve the quality of care within adults' residential homes in the Borough. We continue to provide support and guidance to the sector and have supported care homes to take up the opportunity to play an active part in research to improve care for all. We have continued to support the "Well-Led" programme delivering leadership training to 18 care home managers this year

Reviewed out of area placements and day options provision for adults to ensure as many services as possible are provided within the Borough. We have identified additional local opportunities for residential provision for people with a learning disability and autism. We have also identified changes to the Changing Places grant application and enhanced the way our in-house day opportunities are provided

Launched a new in-house Home Improvement Agency to support residents to live safely and independently in their own home to support with minor adaptations, a handyman service and information and advice

Developed an Arson Reduction Strategy in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade

Continued to lead the public health response to COVID-19 including public health and infection control advice and promoted vaccinations to education settings, workplaces, social care settings and members of the public

Worked with the NHS on the proposals outlined in the Integration and Innovation White Paper and the forthcoming Health and Care Bill

Developed the "A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Framework". This new 10-year framework sets out an ambitious multi-agency approach to tackling inequality in the Borough

Developed a new Community Safety Strategy with key partners as part of the Safer Stockton Partnership

Developed an Arson Reduction Strategy in partnership with Cleveland Fire Brigade

Carried out a scrutiny review of Public Space Protection Orders and agreed a new multi-agency approach to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour, including aggressive begging



Our Places

Our vision is for the Borough to be a place that is clean, vibrant and attractive.

This means creating great places to live and visit, clean and green spaces, and rich cultural experiences.

During the last year we have:



Developed an ambitious 10-year Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction strategy for the Borough. The Strategy includes a commitment as a Council to be net zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2032 and commitments to:

- protect and enhance the natural environment, improving air and water quality and creating habitats that sustain diverse species and lock in carbon
- using all our resources efficiently and minimise waste, helping our businesses and residents to consume less and recycle more
- adapting to climate change, making services and operations more resilient and strengthening preparations for extreme weather

Commissioned a needs assessment of the demand for specialist and supported housing to enable the development of options to increase the number of affordable and specialist homes in the Borough

Continued the successful development of The Sycamores Estate in Stockton with Keepmoat Homes. The neighbouring Elm House bungalows are now complete and all 14 have been let

Started a Selective Licensing option appraisal to ensure that we continue to support the improvement of the quality of private rented homes in the Borough

Continued to work in partnership with the other Tees Valley, Durham and Newcastle local authorities on the major project to procure new waste management arrangements





Developed and adapted our events programme across the Borough. Reflecting the changing levels of COVID-19 restrictions. The Autumn and Winter event programme saw a return of a number of large-scale events with the fireworks and Stockton Sparkles events particularly well attended

Continued to attract high levels of visitors to Preston Park throughout the pandemic. The museum has now reopened fully to the public and exhibitions delayed by COVID-19 are now being restaged, including the “Behind the Seams” show

We have started work on developments at Preston Park Museum and Grounds

Made additional investment in priority areas including additional street cleaning and grounds maintenance and additional investment in repairing roads and potholes. The successful programme saw 60 roads repaired, that’s more than 80,000 square metres and around 14km of highway. We have continued the trial of the new asphalt mix using recycled end-of-life car tyres



Our Economy

Our vision is for the Borough to be a place with a thriving economy where everyone has opportunities to succeed.

This means creating a growing economy, improved education and skills development, job creation and increased employment.

During the last year we have:

Delivered a new place branding campaign for the Borough to encourage inward investment and development. The new Invest Stockton-on-Tees campaign has been successfully launched this year

Continued to develop and implement the exciting plans for our town centres:

- Billingham - an updated valuation report is being prepared in preparation for a Round 2 bid to the Levelling Up Fund to be submitted in July 2022
- Ingleby Barwick - public engagement work has been undertaken to inform the detailed design of the Romano Park extension
- Norton - improvements were completed to the duck pond and fountain in September. Public engagement has been undertaken to inform further improvement plans for the Green and for traffic improvements at the southern end of the High Street
- Stockton - the radical transformation to provide a high-quality environment with safe accessible spaces that safeguard the traditional function of the High Street and capitalise on its closeness to the River Tees are progressing well. Transition of businesses from the Castlegate Centre is progressing well. The procurement for design and demolition has been undertaken with work scheduled to begin with the demolition of the Swallow Hotel in the summer
- Thornaby - the Town Deal priorities and funding have been approved by Cabinet with a full business case to be submitted to Government in May 2022. Demolition of Phoenix House has been approved, along with a new swimming pool to join the Pavilion Leisure Centre. The plans also include the relocation of the NETA training facility, new cycle and pathways and improvements to Victoria Park and Community Centre





Developed local supply chains and social value in contracts to stimulate local economic activity. Social value measures are incorporated into Council contracts with other opportunities being reviewed, particularly within large construction contracts

Continued to develop major transport-related projects:

- Yarm - a planning application for the refurbishment of the Town Hall was submitted in January and work has begun on the provision of new public toilets within the library
- Portrack Relief Road - design complete and land negotiations ongoing, planning application on hold. It has been confirmed City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement funding cannot be used on road schemes so alternative funding will be required to enable the scheme to be delivered
- Billingham Station - new bridge and lifts planned for completion by end of 2022
- Eaglescliffe Station - full business case submitted. Bridge to be delivered by Network Rail, car park and access road by the Council in 2022 - 23. Planning application for car park submitted
- Elton Interchange - planning permission granted, developer funding received, contract signed with a start on site in 2022
- A689 - awaiting a decision on Major Route Network bid submitted to DfT which includes an upgrade to the A19/A689 junction

Analysed the impact of changes in travel patterns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This work will be used to develop post-COVID plans

- Yarm - a planning application for the refurbishment of the Town Hall was submitted in January and work has begun on the provision of new public toilets within the library

Continued to develop options for increasing the availability of employment land. A draft options appraisal for Durham Lane Industrial Estate was completed in January, and other potential sites across the Borough have been explored

Worked to increase skills and employment prospects by developing a new Employment and Training Hub to support people into work. Two temporary hubs have been operational during the year and construction work has started on site on the permanent solution within Wellington Square



Our Council

We are committed to being a Council that is ambitious, effective and proud to serve.

This means we will provide financial sustainability and value for money, dedicated and resourceful employees, strong leadership and governance.

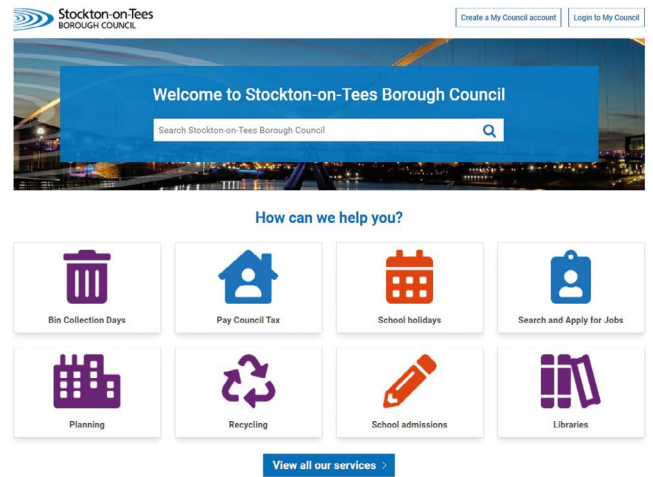
During the last year we have:

Reviewed our office accommodation and completed the purchase of Dunedin House. As part of our plans to rationalise and reduce our office requirements

Continued to review surplus land and assets and develop plans for disposal or development

Launched new website developments including additional online services and a new “My Council” feature which allows residents to create an account which allows a tailored view of the website content

Taken a significant step forward this year with the Shaping a Brighter Future programme as all elements of the programme were transferred into permanent ongoing services from October 2021. The mainstreaming of the programme signifies the permanent commitment to the agreed workforce culture statement and to the activities and policies which make it a reality



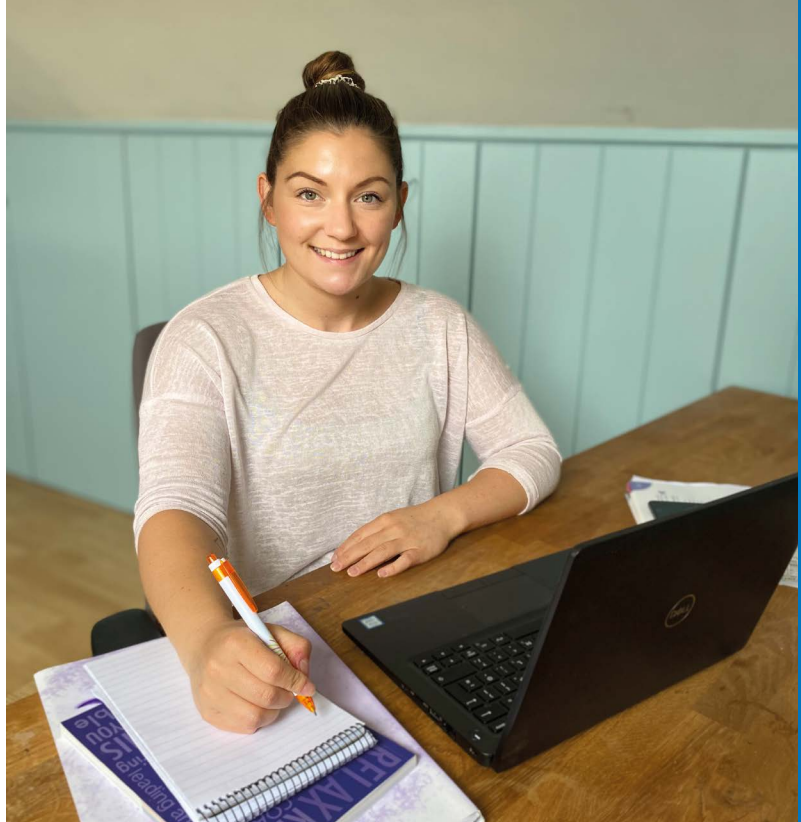
Responded to the Boundary Commission Local Government and Parliamentary boundary reviews. We expect to implement the Local Government recommendations following Parliamentary approval at the 2023 Local Elections. The Boundary Commission continue to consider and consult upon the proposed Parliamentary constituency boundaries, their recommendations are expected in 2023



Led on the COVID-secure delivery of the Tees Valley Combined Authority Mayor, Cleveland Police and Crime Commissioner elections and five local by-elections in May 2021

Continued with the successful apprenticeship programme with 41 new apprenticeship appointments made as part of our annual apprenticeship programme in September 2021

Reviewed and approved the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as part of the budget setting cycle. A wider review of the MTFP will be required once there is further clarity around the Fair Funding Review and on the future of business rates retention



Looking forward

I hope you have enjoyed reading this review of 2021 - 22. We start the new Municipal Year committed to continuing to deliver the very best services despite continuing to face challenging circumstances and additional vulnerabilities and inequalities that COVID-19 will mean for our communities. Our new Council Plan 2022-25 sets out our ambitious plans for the future and we move forward with a determination to see them through.



Councillor Bob Cook

Leader of Stockton-on-Tees
Borough Council



Councillor Jim Beall

Deputy Leader of the Council
and Cabinet Member for Health,
Leisure and Culture



Councillor Nigel Cooke

Cabinet Member for
Regeneration and Housing



Councillor Lisa Evans

Cabinet Member for Children
and Young People



Councillor Ann McCoy

Cabinet Member for
Adult Social Care



Councillor Steve Nelson

Cabinet Member for Access,
Communities and Community Safety



Councillor Mike Smith

Cabinet Member for
Environment and Transport