

## **Erewash Borough Council**

### **Annual Report 2020/21**

#### **Cllr. Carol Hart**

This was my 4<sup>th</sup> year as Leader of the Council and what a year it has been, I don't think anyone could have envisaged what we have all been through.

As far as the Council was concerned it was surprising how quickly we adapted to change, so many instructed to work from home where possible, that was o.k. in principle but then they would all need extra IT equipment, then the councillors needed up-dating in some cases as we would be carrying out meetings by Zoom, Skype or Microsoft Team and of course there were many workers such as the refuse collectors who could not work from home and special measures had to be put in place so that they could continue to carry out their work but respecting social distancing, credit must go to the teams as I believe there were only a couple of days during the whole year when they could not collect the bins and that was not due to Covid but to snow. I know that many households appreciated them carrying on regardless and they received many thank you cards and letters and pictures of rainbows from the children usually left on their bins, they took them back to the depot and pinned them on the walls.

As most of our meetings at the Council are public meetings we also had to sort out how we could include the public and we have been streaming our public meetings on YouTube. It was surprising how quickly how councillors got used to holding their meetings virtually although some did have trouble with their videos and microphones, forgetting to switch them off and not realising that either everyone could see them or hear them, did create some interesting events.

Extra pressure was put on our Finance Department as we fairly quickly received substantial grant money from Government to help businesses who were having to close due to restrictions, it was a balance on getting the money out as soon as possible to businesses but also having to check that all claims were genuine. Over the months we received various types of grants as with the first tranche of money some who needed help had slipped through the net, overall with the various grants coming in we have distributed over £30M to our

local businesses and I know that many would have closed down without this help. We still continue to deliver grants as there is now money to help some to re-start their businesses, it has been heartening to receive letters saying without this financial help many businesses would have closed and many would have lost their jobs.

Another department that went above and beyond was our team down at Merlin Way, with the Pandemic they got involved in delivering food parcels for vulnerable and shielding residents but they also had to contend with a major fire in Sandiacre at Springfield Mills, many residents were displaced and our Neighbourhood Wardens and our Home Options Team sorted temporary accommodation out at the Novatel until more permanent homes could be found, both of our teams again went well above their normal duties and again it was nice to receive letters of thanks from grateful people they had helped. Not only dealing with the fire they also had to contend with floods, areas in Erewash affected were Breadsall, Sawley and Cotmanhay, again our teams were on hand to help residents with sandbags and also helping them clean up their houses when flood waters had got into some properties. Along with all of these things we continued to work with Derbyshire County Council putting in place measures to protect shoppers in the towns and our Environmental Team checking premises that were allowed to open were following all of the rules and guidelines to keep people safe and towards the latter part of the year working to help set up test and trace and testing stations in the Borough.

Needless to say Covid-19 caused some of our lovely community events to be cancelled such as Bonfire night, Chestnut and Charter Fairs and the Christmas light switch on, such a shame but we had to follow the rules. As some of these events are the highlight in the Mayoral calendar it was felt it would be a shame for the new Mayor to take office and then not be able to be involved in many things so it was decided that Cllr Sue Beardsley would carry on for a 2<sup>nd</sup> year and her Deputy would take up the position in May, 2021 when hopefully things are returning to normal.

Our Planning Team have been very busy this year as along with the day job, and many planning applications continue to come in even during lockdown, they also had to work on the Long Eaton Town Bid, this was some funding given by the Government for regenerating Long Eaton, we could bid for various schemes to the tune of £25M, it was all down to a very tight timescale and a board had to be set up with an independent chair person, the bid is still with a

Government department and we expect the results in the next month, we have also been offered up to £20m to bid for in what is called the Levelling Up Fund, we will be concentrating on the Ilkeston and surrounding area for this grant, again this is on a tight timescale but we will be putting a bid together.

Finally we are now starting to get back to some normality and we will be commencing physical meetings, socially distanced for the time being, but I am sure in certain circumstances we will continue to use virtual meetings, it does save time and travel costs and for some meetings that will be useful but I am still looking forward to meeting up with fellow councillors and staff in the person.