

The EAST HAMPSHIRE story

BIG HEART, BIG IDEAS,
BIG DIFFERENCE!



THE EAST HAMPSHIRE STORY

MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE

All successful places

All successful places have their challenges and the early 2020's saw a number of unprecedented issues that impacted East Hampshire; a global pandemic, a cost-of-living crisis, continued climate change, war in Europe, an aging population, a technological revolution, rising costs, increasing needs and diminishing funds and so, to meet these challenges, the District needed to reinvent itself once more.

10 years later

10 years later, the area is, objectively, prosperous, clean, healthy, inclusive and sustainable, and its residents, businesses and visitors are proud of the place and enjoy a good quality of life. No one has been left behind in communities that include everyone, and enable people to be active and fulfilled citizens.

Looking back

Looking back, the Council knew it needed to change to help the district to thrive. It faced the future as a single, united organisation, with its leadership team solely focussed on the transformation of the Council and the District it serves. It empowered its own workforce to deliver the transformation programme - Shaping East Hampshire's Future, creating an organisation capable of transforming itself, continually driving efficiency and securing pathways to improvement. This transformation fundamentally changed the organisation and the experience of all those it touched.

People can get things done

People who needed to get things done could now do so more easily: people building houses and running businesses, people entitled to payments, people applying for licences, people needing housing, all benefitted from being able to serve themselves 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year, enabled by a single virtual 'front door', the way they were served was continually refined and improved. For people who could not access online, video link facilities were available in local settings, so residents who really needed to talk face to face could still do so, and council staff taught them to use the online processes, meeting needs whilst closing the digital divide. As a result, public satisfaction increased whilst costs reduced.

Improved standards

Councillors kept close to the experience of their constituents and provided the policy drive and the scrutiny that saw standards improve and failures eliminated, and the public came to value the reliability and responsiveness of services. Providing the best services for customers and communities needed the best teams, working together with efficient systems and common values and the Council attracted and retained them. New roles were developed based on common skills not professional silos, and this was apparent in examples like the District Team, with multi-disciplinary officers out and about helping to make the district a safe and orderly place to live and work. The Council led by example in pioneering modern working practices. Technology was harnessed so engagement and productivity increased as bureaucracy reduced.

A symbol of hope

The district grew as a symbol of hope and practical action in working against climate change. Residents and businesses took action to help communities reduce emissions increase the use of solar power, be more resilient to extreme weather events, and reduce fuel consumption and pollution. Looking back people recognised that the Council led by example, 'walking the talk' of the actions necessary to become a net zero Council, honouring its commitment to the emergency it declared in 2019, hence inspiring other East Hampshire based organisations to do the same.

Sustainable and inclusive growth

New businesses arrived and existing ones grew in the Districts key sectors; manufacturing, engineering, professional and scientific industries. The market towns and rural areas, so important in the cultural and economic life of the district, enjoyed a new lease of life. The Council played a key role in kick starting the drive, creating the conditions for sustainable and inclusive growth; a single front door for investment and enterprise and much needed space to incubate new businesses. The vision persuaded providers to install the fast connection speeds needed by high value businesses and market town high streets. It worked with skills providers to match programmes to the growth sectors, so that this prosperity helped to benefit all the people in the area. It had a history of commercial endeavour, and its ownership of a commercial property portfolio allowed it to approach the difficult financial situation from a position of strength. Responding to market conditions it changed the game, and pivoted to divest, over time, from its then external properties and reinvest in the district.

More and better housing

More and better housing became available, particularly for those at risk or in need. Improvements to planning services ensured that more and greener homes were built, keeping people healthy and independent. The Council was relentless in its drive to prevent homelessness and deliver enough affordable, high quality, and sustainable housing, attracting the developments that were needed. With increased income from business and domestic rates, the area derived the benefits of economic growth.

The spirit of community

The pandemic had devastating effects, but perhaps the most inspiring part of this story was the way that the public built on the spirit of community that was rediscovered through that time. The Council helped this to happen, it mapped the physical assets that played a key role in local community life, but were often owned or controlled centrally. Over time, working with those who were both willing and able, it placed these under local control, and the communities used these along with targeted funding, to prevent people becoming lonely or isolated, to increase connectivity, to reduce worthlessness, to enable people to feel safer and more able to participate. Working alongside the NHS and Police, helping people to live longer and happier lives.

Reflecting on the journey

Reflecting on the journey the Leader said: "What is so heartening is the way in which this is a story of everyone pulling together to make the difference. So the story of economic development joined together with the story of tackling climate change, so that our growth was sustainable. We focussed on our disadvantaged people, so our growth was inclusive. We responded to those people who wanted to use technology to work on line, and then used the same technology to help vulnerable people talk to us face to face, so we closed the digital divide. The story of our ownership of property and assets became one of investment and devolution, so that everyone shared in the strength we had built. It was amazing to see the way our businesses and communities responded, and we are proud of the way we led by example."



EHDC Council Strategy 2024-28

This narrative tells the story of how we will deliver our new Council Strategy and how our actions will be experienced by our residents.