

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Quarter 2 2018/19 Integrated Performance Report

The Cabinet have received an overview of the county council's performance and the progress being made in delivering the Council's three priority outcomes at the end of the second quarter 2018/19. They noted that, at the end of Quarter 2, the overall assessment on the council's performance and financial position is Amber. Particular areas of risk are in Adult Social Care and support for Staffordshire's most vulnerable children, together with organisational challenges in terms of the capacity to deliver both in 2018/19 and future years.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast underspend of £1.578m (0.3%), a better position than at Quarter 1, where there was a forecast overspend of £3.210m (0.6%). At Quarter 1, it was agreed that £2.160m of contingency would be used to support Children's Services, reducing their forecast overspend. This reduces the centrally held contingency from £3.5m to £1.340m.

In terms of the longer term financial position, plans to bridge the £35m funding shortfall and deliver a legally balanced budget in 2019/20, while still delivering the county council's Strategic Plan were presented at Cabinet in September 2018. One-off resources will be required to balance the budget in 2019/20 and some of these will come from any underspend achieved in 2018/19.

(Cabinet – 17 October 2018)

Treasury Management Report for half year ended 30 September 2018

The Cabinet have received a summary of the County Council's Treasury Management activities for the half-year ended 30 September 2018. They have noted that:

- A cautious approach to investments was maintained.
- The policy of using cash instead of borrowing continued to generate significant savings, helping reduce the average interest paid on loans.
- Overall the report showed that the Council's borrowing and investment activities were being undertaken prudently and sensibly.

(Cabinet – 21 November 2018)

Pan Staffordshire Approach to Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

The Cabinet have considered the strategic vision for the future approach to Children and Young People's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health in Staffordshire.

The local approach to children and young people's emotional well-being and mental health outlined in this Strategy has been designed, considered and consulted on with all stakeholders. This includes children and young people, their parents and carers, over 400 professionals across the whole workforce, Commissioners and Senior

Officers within Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-On-Trent City Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG's), the wider children's partnership including over 60 Providers and NHS England.

The Strategy will focus on:

- tackling stigma and improving attitudes to mental illness;
- establishing integrated and clear pathways to support in the communities where the children and young people live;
- promoting resilience, prevention and early intervention;
- improving access to services – a system without tiers;
- care for the most vulnerable;
- accountability and transparency;
- developing the workforce.

(Cabinet – 21 November 2018)

Budget

Turning to both national and local budgets, we are now in the process of going through the detail of the draft Local Government Finance Settlement ahead of bringing our final budget and MTFs back to this chamber in February.

During the year, together with partners such as the County Councils Network and the Local Government Association, we have been lobbying the Government hard on the mounting pressures councils like ours are facing in supporting both a growing ageing population and increasing numbers of children in our care.

It was therefore good to see the Chancellor acknowledge these pressures by announcing an extra £650m for social care for local authorities in 2019/20.

While any additional funding is always welcome, this is a one-off contribution for next year and a long-term solution for the funding of care still needs to be addressed. We will continue to lobby on this area, especially through opportunities such as the publication of the Government's Green Paper on Adult Social Care.

Highways Investment

Also, in the Autumn Budget was extra funding for potholes/road maintenance, this will be around £9m for Staffordshire; (our colleague Helen Fisher has more details).

We all know that good roads are important for residents, for businesses and for growing our economy, but maintaining the condition of local roads is always going to be a challenge – not just for Staffordshire, but nationally.

So I certainly welcome the fact the Transport Select Committee has recently opened its enquiry in to current governance and funding regime for local highway maintenance, which is much less favourable than motorways for example.

In the meantime, on-top of the base annual road maintenance grant, we have also seen benefits from the extra £10m we have invested providing an extra:

- 100,000m² of pothole patching repairs
- Over 100 miles of highly cost-effective surface dressing;
- 30 local resurfacing schemes, including Barton Turns
- £1m of local drainage improvement schemes

Winter Pressures

Before I move away from Government funding, I do want to also mention the extra funding for social care to help ease winter pressures on the NHS. Matt Hancock, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, said £240m will be used nationally to help free up beds over the winter months. We have a strong improving story to tell in Staffordshire on our approach to making sure people who are well enough to leave hospital with the help of a social care package do so as soon as possible. Since January 2018, we have seen a 25 per cent reduction on Delayed Transfer of Care levels, which is a remarkable achievement and the extra £3.5m for Staffordshire will help us manage these levels during the winter.

Winter operations

Focusing still on winter, with temperatures starting to fall away our 40 plus gritters will be hitting the roads where needed. This year four new gritters have been added to the fleet. Our crews always do a fantastic job even in very difficult conditions and I know they will be doing everything they can to ensure the county is kept safely on the move once again this winter.

Allied Healthcare

Following concerns on the financial stability of Allied Healthcare, the county council acted swiftly to safeguard the continuity of care for some of our most vulnerable residents. Residents in Cannock, Stafford and Newcastle who received care from Allied are now being transferred to new providers with current carers likely to transfer with them.

Jobs and Growth

Our focus on growing a strong economy, creating better jobs and improving training and skill levels continues to be a huge priority for this council. It was therefore good to hear that not only does Staffordshire continue to see near full employment, but the number of people without qualifications in Staffordshire has been reduced by 50 per cent over the last four years. Skills leaders say close working between the county council and the local enterprise partnership means that the rate of people gaining qualifications in Staffordshire is now growing faster than it is nationally.

2018

Undoubtedly 2018 has been one of the most challenging to date. We all came into politics to make lives better for our communities and I know that for many in the

chamber some of the proposals we have had to look at in order to close a £35 million budget shortfall have been very difficult to accept.

While the pressures and challenges will undoubtedly continue into 2019, sometimes it is easy to overlook some of the great work being done not only to manage the challenges, but to deliver priorities particularly around the economy.

In 2018 we have seen for example:

- Near full employment
- The average full time weekly gross wage increased to £551
- Completion of a major project to safeguard St Peter's Bridge and Burton Bridge – after securing more than £5m of Government money
- The opening of The John Taylor Free School – the first brand new high school for more than 25 years
- The completion of Branston Locks
- Plans announced for the proposed extension of the i54 site
- Infrastructure works start on the new £160m McArthurGlen Designer Outlet – which will see up to 1,000 new jobs created and £15m invested in roads
- Another successful Ironman competition
- Broadband passing 50 per cent take up
- Work coming to a close on the A50

In Staffordshire, the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War was marked in towns and villages across the county. As home to the National Memorial Arboretum we are incredibly proud of our military links past and present and the role people from Staffordshire played in the name of peace and freedom,

So, there is undoubtedly much to be celebrated and much to be proud of here in Staffordshire.

I would therefore like to thank each of you for your hard work on behalf of your communities and this council and take this opportunity to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year.