

## **Statement of the Leader of the Council**

### **1. Award of the Construction Project Framework Agreements (REF IA1585 and IA2060)**

The Cabinet have approved arrangements to procure and manage two Framework Agreements for Construction Projects – Ref IA1585 ('traditional' build) and Ref IA2060 ('modular' build). This will enable the Council to carry out new build works, alterations, extensions, refurbishment and fit-outs to county council-owned buildings. These will mainly be schools, academies and education projects and occasionally corporate estate construction and refurbishment.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

### **2. Keeping Staffordshire Moving - Highway Permit Scheme**

The Cabinet have approved arrangements for the introduction of a permit scheme which will enable the authority to grant permits to works promoters to undertake works on the highway and which will provide greater control over works enabling: the promotion of better working practices; improved asset protection and coordination of works; better informed residents and highway users; and reduced impact whilst essential works to the highway or utility apparatus is taking place.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

### **3. Renewal of the Contract for the Provision of Agency Workers**

The Cabinet have approved arrangements to recontract for the supply of agency workers to provide cover for the Council's vital frontline services. A 2 +1+1 year call-off contract from Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework agreement 653F – Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR3) is to be entered into with Comensura Limited.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

### **4. Staffordshire Autism Joint Implementation Plan 2020-2023**

The Autism Act (2009) places a duty on all Local Authorities to produce an Autism Strategy. Cabinet have endorsed the Staffordshire Autism Joint Implementation Plan 2020-2023 which is a joint plan between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). It covers Children and Young People and Adults and has been based on the 15 "I Statements" from the national Autism Strategy. A comprehensive engagement was undertaken to inform development of the Plan. This included an event for professionals and providers, and two events for people with lived experience of Autism. An on-line survey was also conducted to capture the views of people who were unable to attend the events or wished to contribute in this way. The Plan will be used to inform future planning and commissioning of services.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

## **5. The County Council's Response to COVID-19**

The Cabinet have considered the progress made to date on assessing the current Coronavirus pandemic's impact on the Council services and finances. They have noted that in order to free up staff to maintain critical services and to implement 'social distancing' some services had been suspended in line with Government advice. These include day services, libraries, educational residential centres, children's centres, day centres for older people, facilities at country parks and school crossing patrols. The Council's smart working policy has also enabled the majority of staff to work from home or switch to other roles.

The Council had also launched the:

- I Count campaign encourages staff working in non-critical roles to volunteer to switch to supporting the Council and our residents in critical services such as care or children's services. So far more than 750 staff have signed up; and
- I Care campaign, a public facing campaign, recruiting members of the public to step up and help us deliver personal care in people's homes. As of April 3, more than 400 people (including Council staff) have volunteered.

Care providers continue to face financial pressures from COVID-19 and there remains considerable concern nationally about the sustainability of the care market. The Council has reacted swiftly and decisively to this with extra funding of £13.6m for care providers in 2020/21: £10.6m from the first grant of £22.3m and £3m as planned in the MTFs. To meet the ongoing financial pressures facing care providers the Cabinet have agreed proposals to offer further extra non-recurrent funding of £4.3m

Whilst it was far too early to predict the full cost of the pandemic on the Council's finances, work was on-going to understand the short, medium- and long-term impacts.

*(Cabinet – 15 April and 20 May 2020)*

## **6. Staffordshire County Council's iCare Campaign**

A key element of Staffordshire County Council's response to the coronavirus pandemic is to safeguard the most vulnerable people and residents in the County. As part of this response the Local Resilience Forum and Staffordshire County Council's Incident Management Team have been planning for how to bolster social care provision in the event that the market starts to fail, through a Rapid Response Workforce, known as the iCare Campaign. The Cabinet have given their support for the actions that have been and will need to be taken to ensure suitable social care (especially personal care) provision can be maximised to support vulnerable people and residents across Staffordshire, particularly throughout the peak of the virus, via the use of volunteers and new employees sought via the iCare process.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **7. Integrated Performance Report 2019/20 - Quarter 4**

The Cabinet have considered an overview of the County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against the Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They have noted that at the end of Quarter 4, the overall assessment on Staffordshire County Council's performance and financial position is Amber. Particular areas of risk are in Adult Social Care and Children's and Families.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £1.728m (0.3%), compared to the forecast overspend of £4.360m (0.9%) at Quarter 3.

The latest capital outturn projection is £116.1m, compared to the quarter 3 position of £123.0m, a decrease of 5.6%. This projection is a fully funded position. This decrease is mainly due to the removal of Railway Station projects from the programme of £4m as these assets are not held by the County Council.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **8. Schools Capital Programme 2020-21**

The Cabinet have approved the Schools Capital Programme for 2020/21. The Programme is made up of:

- Maintenance/Improvement projects
- Basic Need/pupil place provision projects

The funding available to deliver the 2020/21 capital programme includes:

- Government Capital Grant School Condition Allocation (SCA)
- Government Basic Need Capital Grant
- Section 106 contributions from developers
- Contributions from schools (DFC)
- Third Party contributions
- Contributions from other Government grants and bids including:

- i. Free Schools Wave 13
- ii. Special Provision Capital Fund

The DfE are yet to confirm the 2020/21 SCA allocations so the School's Capital Programme 2020/21 is based on an estimated SCA of £4m. The programme will need to be reviewed once the funding allocation is announced to ensure affordability and that investment is targeted in SCC maintained schools (excluding Basic Need).

The Head of Commercial and Assets will monitor progress of the programme and, subject to the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability, will make any necessary in-year alterations.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **9. Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2020/21**

The Cabinet have approved the Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2020/21. The programme is made up of:

- i. Highway Maintenance (including Bridges)
- ii. Integrated Transport improvements.

Additional capital funding for Highways and Transport comes from other government bid grants, the County Council's own investment decisions, contributions from developers and other stakeholders.

The Programme provides for a £42.7 million investment over the current financial year. This will enable the Council to deliver a comprehensive package of improvements that will bring long-term and value for money improvements.

The Council's Commissioner for Highways and the Built County is to monitor progress of the Programme and make any necessary in-year alterations in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **10. Executive Responses to All Party Working Groups Recommendations on Isolation and Aspiration**

The Cabinet have considered the initial Executive Responses from the portfolio holders with regards to the recommendations from the two All Party Working Group investigations focusing on Aspiration and Isolation.

The Aspirations All Party Working Group undertook an Overview approach looking at the question of "How can communities raise the level of aspirations across Staffordshire?", focused on younger people.

The Isolation All Party Working Group undertook an Overview approach considering "How can communities ensure that no-one is lonely and isolated?"

The findings and recommendations of the All Party Working Groups were submitted to the relevant Cabinet Members for consideration and Action Plans have been developed in response to the agreed recommendations. The implementation of the Action Plans will be monitored as necessary on behalf of Cabinet, helping to plan for and address some of the long-term issues that affect the communities of Staffordshire.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **11. Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

There has become a global shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This equipment is a vital resource in Staffordshire's response to the impacts and effective infection control management of the Covid-19 pandemic. Care Homes and frontline

workers need PPE beyond their normal stock levels, and their existing supply chains are often late with deliveries, have increased their prices significantly, or their orders are not accepted or delivered.

In order to ensure that no care provider in Staffordshire goes without the PPE it needs if it runs out, the Cabinet have approved proposals to procure supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) with a view to maintaining a rolling supply sufficient to last 12 weeks based on usage.

*(Cabinet – 20 May 2020)*

## **12. Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisational and Recovery Approaches**

Your Cabinet have been informed that, in order to ensure that the Council moves forward to a new normal following the COVID-19 emergency, a timeline is being developed for re-setting the Strategic Planning and the MTF process, which will include engagement with Cabinet and SLT, and senior managers across the organisation. Work is also being undertaken with the leads of the five council priorities and four principles to reassess plans, mitigate risks and exploit new opportunities.

Each directorate is leading recovery for its own area, and recovery which cuts across all the directorates is being led through recovery groups linked to the four principles – communities, digital, people and climate change. Any coordination of activity required is managed through the Council's Planning and Recovery Group. The Cabinet have endorsed the high-level priorities and plans from each of the recovery areas.

*(Cabinet – 17 June 2020)*

## **13. Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy**

The Cabinet have approved the Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy which sets out Council's priorities to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and subsequently recover, renew and transform the local economy.

The Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for the next five years through four non-linear phases:

- Respond – support our businesses and residents through the COVID-19 crisis.
- Recover – create the conditions to support our businesses and residents to return-to-work as soon as possible.
- Renew – continue to progress those priorities that will play an important role in achieving our ambitions to develop the local economy beyond the current crisis.
- Transform – utilise the opportunities presented by the current economic conditions by supporting the transformation of the local economy to be digital, clean and higher-value.

The Strategy will both support and shape the wider recovery planning through both the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Resilience Forum and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. In addition, it will feed into and shape wider regional and cross-boundary approaches such as the Constellation Partnership and the Midlands Engine.

As part of early delivery of the strategy, extensions to the Cannock Chase and Silverdale Enterprise Centres have been reviewed and remain an important part of the future development of the local economy. In support of the response to the crisis and in support of the local recovery, a business start-up scheme has also been developed to enable and support residents at risk of redundancy in starting their own business.

*(Cabinet – 17 June 2020)*

#### **14. Final Financial Outturn Report for 2019/20**

The Cabinet have received details of the final position for both revenue and capital budgets at the end of the 2019/20 financial year. They have noted that the quarter 4 forecast was a small overspend of £1.728m and since then the coronavirus had become a global pandemic which was having a severe impact on the economy. The government had issued two payments of grants to local authorities in order to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services during the pandemic while protecting both workforce and local residents. The first grant payment was received at the end of March and was £22.3m. This was carried forward for use in 2020/21, apart from £0.680m which was used to fund those Covid-19 related costs that were incurred prior to 31st March. Following the use of this grant, a small saving of £53,000 on services was left and was transferred to general balances.

They also noted that no further amount had been required from the Contingency budget and therefore £4m remained unspent at the end of the year, which could be transferred to reserves to be available for future investment requirements.

The capital programme showed total expenditure of £110.464m. This reflected the Council's continued investment in school places, highways and economic regeneration.

*(Cabinet – 17 June 2020)*

#### **15. Local Outbreak Control Plan**

At the start of the month, we published our Local Outbreak Control plan, which sets out how we are working with partners to identify, manage and contain any localised outbreak of Covid-19.

We have seen from areas like Leicester, how quickly spikes can occur, and we are doing everything we can to prevent a second peak of infections here in Staffordshire.

We are mapping cases, including the Pillar 2 community tests, to ensure we can identify any likely hotspots and areas of concern.

With an outbreak classed as two or more cases in a setting within fourteen days there have and will be more outbreaks to manage over the coming months.

It is, therefore, as important as ever that everyone sticks to the rules. This means washing your hands regularly, following the latest advice on social distancing and co-operating with the test and trace service.

## **16. Economic Recovery**

Now the lockdown restrictions have eased, focusing on kick-starting the economy must run alongside our efforts to prevent a second peak in Covid-19 infections.

As a county council, we have put measures in place to support our businesses as part of our “Back to Business Campaign”.

While it was great to see the Chancellor Rishi Sunak announce measures to help get people spending, to encourage businesses to take on young people and to help companies rehire furloughed staff, these are very much short-term measures and we need to look ahead to the medium and longer-term.

With the loss of big brands such as John Lewis in Tamworth for example, we need to play on the strengths of Staffordshire.

As part of this we are working with business leaders, our universities and other public sector partners to grow Staffordshire’s economy and create more, better paid jobs for our people.

This work includes an exciting project to create a new place brand to build local pride and confidence in our great county, and to help us promote Staffordshire as a place to live, work, study, visit and invest in.

So, if you haven’t done already, please do share your thoughts.

## **17. Dignity in Care Awards**

We all know what an amazing job our carers, both paid and unpaid, do to support the most vulnerable people in Staffordshire.

Our Dignity in Care Awards Ceremony is our way of recognising the contribution each and every one of them makes.

This year we have even more reasons to say thank you and, although we have had to rearrange the date of the event, people can still nominate a carer until July 31.

If you do know somebody who always goes above and beyond then please to do tell us their story.

## **18. Long-Term Legacy**

Finally, none of us could have predicted 12 months ago what 2020 would bring and what toll Covid-19 would take on families, on businesses and on livelihoods.

Normally at this annual general meeting we reflect on what we have achieved in the previous year. This year, as we meet four months to the very day since the start of lockdown, I think we can all be incredibly proud of what this council and what this county has achieved together to tackle Covid-19.

And it is this spirit, resilience and the endeavours of Staffordshire people which will come together over the coming months to make us even prouder of the county we all call home.