

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Better Care Fund 2019/20

The Cabinet have received a summary of the Better Care Fund (BCF) progress during 2017-19 and have considered the policy framework for 2019-20 as well as the key aspects of the proposed BCF plan for 2019-20.

In line with NHS advice, there will be no substantial change to the BCF Schemes included in the BCF Plan for 2017-19. The proposed schemes for 2019-20 are therefore:

- Admission Avoidance / Discharge to Assess
- Ensuring the Sustainability of Adult Social Care
- Enhanced Primary and Community Care

The Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board will be asked to approve the Staffordshire BCF Plan for 2019-20 in principle and delegate final approval to the Chairs, including the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Well-being.

(Cabinet – 20 February 2019)

2. Changes in Charging and Deferred Payments Policy

The Cabinet have approved proposed policy changes to adult social care financial assessments which aim to streamline and clarify the process whereby people are assessed to pay towards the cost of their care, in line with the Council's ambition to provide more services online.

These policy clarifications and changes will be implemented on 1st April 2019 and applied to all new financial assessments or reassessments from that date. In respect of the two changes that may impact on existing clients' assessed financial contributions (capital limits and the DRE bandings), this will not be applied until their next financial reassessment, at which stage they will be able to appeal. To minimise the financial impact on individuals, if the increase in their contribution is significant it will be phased in by applying the council's mitigation policy which limits changes to £40 a week for a maximum of three years.

(Cabinet – 20 February 2019)

3. Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 3 2018/19

The Cabinet have considered an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They have noted that at the end of Quarter 3, the overall assessment on the council's performance and financial position was Amber. Particular areas of risk were in Adult Social Care and Children's and Families, together with organisational challenges in terms of the capacity to deliver both in 2018/19 and future years.

The latest revenue forecast outturn showed a forecast underspend of £0.997m (0.2%), compared to the forecast underspend of £1.578m (0.3%) at quarter 2. At Quarter 1, it was agreed that £2.160m of contingency would be used to support Children's Services, reducing their forecast overspend. This reduced the centrally held contingency from £3.5m to £1.340m.

The latest capital outturn projection was £137.8m, compared to the quarter 2 position of £149.2m, a decrease of 7.8%. This decrease was mainly due to rephrasing on the maintained schools unallocated basic needs funding (£14m).

(Cabinet – 20 February 2019)

4. First Review of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (2010 – 2016)

Regulations require the Council to complete a review of its waste and minerals local plans every 5 years, starting from the date of adoption of the local plan. The conclusions of the First Review of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Joint Waste Local Plan (2010 – 2026) were that the Plan is performing well and is providing an effective planning policy framework for the determination of planning applications for waste development in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Waste Local Plan is also in conformity with national waste planning policy and guidance and there have been no changes to local circumstances or our strategic priorities which would suggest that revisions to the waste planning policies are necessary.

(Cabinet – 20 February 2019)

5. Staffordshire Warm Homes Fund

Staffordshire County Council has secured a £3.795 million for a Staffordshire Warm Homes Fund. The Fund will lift 1,000 households out of fuel poverty by installing mains gas connections, central heating systems and insulation. It will also enable low level house adaptations and energy advice to enable people to live at home independently for longer. Three options have been considered for administration of the Fund. The Cabinet have decided to establish a Staffordshire Warm Homes Limited Liability Partnership to administer the Fund as well as develop bids for further funding.

(Cabinet – 20 February 2019)

6. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Review – Move to Incorporated Body

The government's National Local Growth Assurance Framework requires Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to move from informal partnerships into an incorporated body structure by 31 March 2019. Stoke and Staffordshire LEP ('SSSLEP') proposes to move to a company limited by guarantee structure. At this point, it is proposed that this will be a non-trading body which will seek to minimise costs to the company through use of 'hosting'; arrangements to employ its staff and in continuing to use its accountable body (Staffordshire County Council) to hold and administer its core funding under the instruction of its company directors. The

Cabinet have agreed that the County Council will join the SSLEP company as a member; the Leader of the Council be appointed as a director of the SSLEP company initially (with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth providing the nominated alternate); the County Council will continue to be the nominated Accountable Body for the company; and officers be requested to consider the implications of the County Council undertaking the administrative role (Company Secretary) for the company, on a temporary or permanent basis with the final decision being delegated to the Leader in discussion with the Chief Executive.

(Cabinet – 6 March 2019)

7. Secondary School Places

We started this month with some good news when the allocation of secondary school places was announced on the 1st.

More than nine out of 10 parents learned they had been allocated their first-choice secondary school.

Of the almost 8,000 applications made for transfer at age 11, nearly 92 per cent of parents were allocated their first preference school, with 95 per cent allocated one of their top three preferred schools.

Our proactive measures to manage future demand for school places, means this was achieved, despite increased pupil numbers putting pressure on secondary school admissions.

In 2019/20, the county council plans to deliver 360 extra secondary school places, at a cost of nearly £10 million.

8. Ofsted Report on Children's Services

There was further good news this month when following an Ofsted inspection of our children's services we have retained our overall rating of 'Good' - one of only three authorities in the West Midlands to achieve this rating.

This is a significant achievement given the pressures of supporting increasing numbers of children in our care and is a testament to the dedication of our children's team.

While as a county council we are continuing to transform our services to focus on keeping more children out of care when it is safe to do so, together with our MPs and local authority colleagues we continue to press for a long-term solution to the funding of both adult and children's social care.

9. Community Pothole Funding

As we head towards longer and milder days, the focus of our highways operations will switch from gritting to repairs, maintenance and road improvements.

The pothole repair season traditionally starts around April and, this year, each of us as members have been allocated an additional £20,000 to focus on highways work which is important to our local communities.

Of course, potholes for example will continue to be prioritised as normal on safety grounds, but this extra funding will allow us some additional flexibility to fund projects.

The funding is for the upcoming financial year and, if you haven't done already, I would encourage you to work with the highways teams, local partners and parish councils to help schedule the work over the year and maximise the return and benefits for your residents.

10. Staffordshire Day and Ironman

We all know what a fantastic place Staffordshire is and, looking a little further ahead, there are two events which will help us celebrate and showcase what is great about our county.

On Wednesday, May 1, Staffordshire's industrial heritage will be celebrated with a packed programme of events, activities, special offers and competitions to mark the fourth Staffordshire Day.

This year's event, coordinated by Destination Staffordshire, with the help of Staffordshire County Council and other local authorities, has the theme Made in Staffordshire,

In 2018, more than 60,000 people attended Staffordshire Day events, generating more £1 million for the county economy.

A little later in the year, on June 9th we will see the fourth Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire.

More than 2,500 athletes will take on a 1.2-mile swim at Chasewater Country Park, followed by a 56-mile bike through the Staffordshire countryside and Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, finishing with a 13.1-mile run through Stafford town centre, which will also now also include taking in Stafford Castle on the route for the first time.

11. Financial Year

Finally, as we come to the end of one financial year and the start of a new one, it is good to see the county almost in full employment once again.

In 2019, we are looking forward to seeing more investment to support the economy, jobs, improved connectivity and more homes for Staffordshire families.

Highways investment on the start of Stafford Western Access Route and the final section of the Lichfield Southern Bypass and the completion of Project A to upgrade the A50 this year will all help improve journeys and support local, regional and national economies.

In addition to this we will see sites such as Liberty Park in Lichfield, Four Ashes in South Staffordshire, Meaford near Stone and the McArthurGlen Designer Retail Outlet at Mill Green will not only support business development, but will bring in around £10.3m in business rates when completed. Half of this will be retained locally and help to fund public services.