

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

### **1. Countryside Estate Review**

The Cabinet have approved the final proposals for a financially sustainable operating model for the countryside estate and public rights of way network. Early in the process Cabinet confirmed that there would be no sale of country parks, local amenity sites or greenways, the review therefore focused only on management models. Based on a detailed options appraisal, the management proposals will maximise the contribution the estate makes to communities and visitors and ensure the delivery of statutory and legal requirements, while offering greater financial sustainability in the longer term. The estate includes six country parks, nine local amenity sites and three greenways. Also included in the scope of this review is the maintenance of the public rights of way network which the council has a statutory duty to maintain in a safe and usable condition.

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2019)*

### **2. Staffordshire County Council People Strategy**

The Cabinet have approved the Council's "People Strategy" which sets out the strategic approach to investing in the skills and aptitudes needed by its workforce in order for the council to successfully meet its ambitions for the future. The strategy was developed in consultation with the workforce, council managers, the Senior Leadership team, Wider Leadership Team and a representative of volunteer groups. It draws upon data and research collected both locally and externally and has been subject to external challenge from the Local Government Association. The strategy identifies four key areas of focus; keeping and attracting talent; developing an excellent working environment; developing skills and ensuring that leaders and managers are equipped to lead the organisation over the next few years, as it evolves and reduces in size. For each of these areas of focus there are a number of key actions proposed for the period 2019 –2022.

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2019)*

### **3. Public Health Commissioned Services**

There are three main public health services for adults - Healthy lifestyles; Drug and alcohol; and Sexual health. These, along with public health services for children and other public health programmes and interventions are funded from the Public Health Ring Fenced Grant, which has been reducing by £1m annually over the last three years. This, along with the Council's overall financial position, has required a range of changes to services.

The Healthy Lifestyles service provides a range of interventions for people aged over 50 in the 52 Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) where there are the greatest health and care needs, including NHS Health Checks, weight management, smoking cessation and falls prevention. Active promotion of the service will be extended to enable selected practices refer all eligible people within their practice population, and to provide subcontracted services to these individuals. Practices have been selected

based on those that have 20% or more of their practice population living in the 52 LSOAs.

With regard to Drug and Alcohol services, the current contracts with the charity Addiction and Dependency Solutions (ADS) and North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust ends in April 2020. To ensure compliance with procurement regulations, a service redesign and tender exercise will be carried out during 2019/20, with consultation starting in February. One of the intentions will be to improve integration of drug and alcohol services with other organisations working with the same people, such as mental health and Job Centre Plus.

With regard to Sexual Health services, in order to make financial or operational improvements there may be a need to renegotiate or retender some of the sexual health service contracts during 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Delegated authority has been given to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing to award Public Health to award contracts for Drug and Alcohol services and Sexual Health services during 2019/20 and 2020/21.

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2019)*

#### **4. Development of a Regional Permanency Arrangement**

The Cabinet have approved proposals to create a regional arrangement across Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council for the creation of a joint service delivery model with a focus on finding local, caring, stable and loving homes where Looked After Children achieve permanence.

The Partnership came together because of the four Local Authorities' shared vision to create an arrangement which goes beyond Adoption (as required in the Education and Adoption Act 2016) and includes Fostering, Special Guardianship and Connected Persons. The Partnership has a shared mission to lead the local, regional and national agenda in respect of achieving permanence for all Looked After Children who require it.

The Partnership will be a unique arrangement, creating a sustainable system which operates on a regional footprint, maximising resources, capacity and flexibility, which leads to improvements in service delivery, effective practice and long-term outcomes for children, whilst maintaining the independence of each individual Local Authority.

*(Cabinet – 17 April 2019)*

#### **5. Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2019/20**

The Cabinet have approved the Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2019/20. 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 Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) and District Transport Strategies (DTS) will ensure that capital spending is clearly aligned to corporate priorities and delivers value for money.

The Programme includes, for the third year running, an extra £5m to help tackle potholes. In addition, each county councillor has been allocated an extra £20,000 to prioritise local highways improvements in their area which will benefit local communities.

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 – 17 April 2019)*

## **6. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 4 2018/19**

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 fourth quarter 2018/19. They noted that:

- At the end of Quarter 4, the overall assessment on the council's performance and financial position is Amber. Particular areas of risk continue to be in Adult Social Care (with a continuing trend for the cost of new nursing care placements to be higher than existing placements) and Children's and Families (with the overspend on Independent Sector Placements in external residential homes, supported accommodation and with independent fostering agencies increasing from just over £2.8m in Quarter 3 to £3.3m in Quarter 4), together with organisational challenges in terms of the capacity to deliver.
- The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast underspend of £0.939m (0.2%), compared to the forecast underspend of £0.997m (0.2%) at Quarter 3. The forecast outturn assumes the carry forward request from Health and Care (£3.3m) is approved and that an agreed contribution is made to the Exit & Implementation / Transition Fund (£3m), which has been approved as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The actual sums transferred are subject to the final outturn position.

As a first step to providing short term funding to help with the first two years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Cabinet considered that it would be prudent to start to identify savings in the current financial year which can be carried forward to 2019/20. It was therefore decided that a spending controls exercise, similar to that adopted in 2016/17, commence with immediate effect in 2018/19.

*(Cabinet – 17 April 2019)*

## **7. Celebrating Staffordshire**

At the start of the month, we celebrated the fourth Staffordshire Day on May 1. The annual event really is growing from strength to strength and not only helps showcase what is so special about Staffordshire, but also generates more than £1m for the local economy.

I know many of you supported the day on social media by sharing your own “mugshot” too, so thank you for that.

## **8. Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire**

Another return visitor to this year will be Ironman for the fifth time, which arrives on Sunday, June 9. This year the course will take in Stafford Castle for the first time, which clearly appealed to many as the event quickly sold out.

The council’s Deputy Leader, Alan White, is hoping to remain injury free to represent all of us here in the chamber on the day. We of course wish him well for the day...and I am sure he won’t let us down!

## **9. Community Fund**

Later on in today’s agenda, we will have a report on the Local Community Fund which includes lots of great examples of initiatives you as members have supported.

It is also the perfect time to launch the new People Helping People Fund, a targeted fund which members will allocate locally to groups and projects working with children and families or those in health and care services.

This new fund is a fantastic opportunity for groups to receive support towards running new projects that will make a difference to people who need it most, and I hope you will promote it among your communities and spend the money to get the biggest impact.

You will receive lots of information about this during May, ahead of the fund launch in June.

## **10. Staffordshire Highways**

Earlier I referred to the Highways and Transport Capital Investment programme for the next 12 months – and it is really worth having a look at the detail of this if you haven’t already – to see just how much is being invested - and where - this year. (Details are in the appendices to the April Cabinet papers).

Now prolonged good weather is hopefully on the cards, our operational crews will also be ramping up the pothole repair programme. This year we will also once again be investing an extra £5m to help keep on top of the challenging maintenance programme.

This year we all also have £20,000 each to identify further local projects, which although may not fall into the high priority category, are important to your local communities and will benefit residents and local businesses once completed.

## **11. Staying with Roads**

While the capital investment programme focuses on local improvements, we also have some major highways programmes getting underway in earnest. Not least the Stafford Western Access Route, right here on our doorstep.

These are strategic infrastructure projects which are funded separately to the highways maintenance schemes and are hugely important in helping deliver our economic growth ambitions.

## **12. Local Elections**

I think it is fair to say that there were mixed fortunes for all parties in Staffordshire, with many good local councillors undoubtedly being lost to national politics, rather than local matters.

Although all the councils need to hold their AGMs still, it is clear that there will new faces and new relationships to develop.

I hope I can speak for everyone in this chamber when I say that as a county council, we work hard to put aside any political differences for the overall good of this county and the people who live and work here. This commitment remains undiminished and we look forward to continuing to work closely with our partner authorities.