

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer: The Future of Learning Disability Services directly provided by Staffordshire County Council

The purpose of Staffordshire's Adult Learning Disability Community Offer 2022 Programme is to establish the assessed eligible care and support needs of adults with a learning disability and/or autism and ensure that there are appropriate and sustainable services across the county to meet them.

In June 2019, Cabinet requested that proposals for the future of services directly provided by the Council for adults with a learning disability and/or autism be developed and evaluated.

The Cabinet, at their meeting on 16 October 2016, considered and approved proposals for the future of services directly provided by the Council for adults with a learning disability and/or autism together with proposals for the residential replacement care services currently provided by Lifeways, as the current contractual arrangements with them will expire on 2 July 2020.

The proposals have been developed following engagement with a range of key stakeholders (including users, staff and carers); and consideration of current and anticipated future demand, the state of the market, and the quality of current services. The proposals approved by the Cabinet will ensure that the Council continues to meet peoples assessed eligible care and support needs.

The Council will commission services where it is confident the market can offer quality and value for money; and will continue to provide services directly where necessary, with modernisation of these services to improve quality and reduce operating costs.

The proposals include:

- The continued direct provision of residential replacement care in Newcastle-under-Lyme; providing 10 beds for countywide use.
- The relocation, and subsequent refurbishment, of directly provided residential replacement care in Newcastle-under-Lyme to Wilmott Drive (alongside the Specialist Day Opportunities Service) subject to the assumptions and values not significantly changing.
- The commissioning of residential replacement care services in Cannock and East Staffordshire from the independent market for countywide up to a total value of £4.5m.
- The preparation of a residential replacement care policy to ensure that the basis for access is clear and equitable and that block booked capacity is maximised.

- The continued direct provision of residential care in Lichfield; providing 15 beds for countywide use be approved.
- The relocation, and subsequent redevelopment, of directly provided residential care in Lichfield to the Scotch Orchard site subject to the assumptions and values not significantly changing.

(Cabinet – 16 October 2019)

2. All Age Carers: Strategy and Future Options

The Cabinet have endorsed the implementation of an all age Carers Strategy: 'All Together for Carers', developed by the Council and the five Staffordshire CCGs, which sets out the statutory duties of the Council and the NHS for Carers under the Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014 and the NHS Constitution.

The Strategy outlines seven priorities, based on national research, the NHS 10 Year Plan and learning from earlier consultations with carers:

- Improving information, advice and guidance
- Identifying carers
- Staying healthy
- A life outside of caring
- Assessment and support
- Crisis management
- Recognition and value

The Carers' Hub has undertaken assessments and provided support to 5,035 adult carers and 645 Young Carers in Staffordshire from contract commencement in October 2015 to April 2019. The service has been operating for four years and is now in its fifth and final year of the contract. Officers are therefore in the process of conducting a service review and mapping out the carer's pathway to inform future planning and commissioning requirements and have devised three high-level options for future service delivery for further exploration and public consultation:

- Option One: Externally commission one or more providers to provide carers assessments and support services.
- Option Two: Bring carers assessments and support services in-house.
- Option Three: Hybrid model – provide some services in-house and commission one or more provider to deliver the remainder.

The outcome of this options appraisal and engagement, together with recommendations for the future of carers services, are to be brought to the Cabinet meeting in February.

(Cabinet – 16 October 2019)

3. The Staffordshire Strategic Structure Plan

The Cabinet have approved the Staffordshire Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP) which provides a holistic and cumulative view of the wide range of infrastructure delivery plans for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent geography and picks-up cross-boundary issues of strategic importance. The SIP is framed around key themes that consider 'Transport, Education, Health, Community, Green Infrastructure, Utilities and Flood Defences'.

The SIP is to be issued to statutory providers to form evidence base material to underpin the preparation of their investment and delivery plans. It will also be used to forge Strategic Relationships with key infrastructure providers, funding agencies and policy makers to ensure that their plans are aligned to meet the growth ambitions for Staffordshire.

(Cabinet – 16 October 2019)

4. Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Investigation resulting in a Formal Report

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has issued a formal report against Staffordshire County Council following its investigation of a complaint in relation to a citizen who has mental and physical health problems. The recommendations contained in the Ombudsman's report have been agreed by the Cabinet.

(Cabinet – 16 October 2019)

5. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2019/20

The Cabinet have received the quarterly Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 2 2019/20 which provides an overview of the Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They noted that the latest revenue forecast outturn for Quarter 2 showed a forecast overspend of £4.268m (0.9%), compared to the forecast overspend of £0.651m (0.1%) at Quarter 1. This was largely due to an increase in the forecast overspend in Children's Services.

(Cabinet – 16 October 2019)

6. Staffordshire County Council Property Strategy

The Cabinet have approved the Property Strategy which sets out the Council's aims in relation to the management and use of its property assets.

The ambition of the Strategy is for all to recognise the importance of effective use of the Council's property assets, set within the wider changes and challenges. It sets out the need to ensure value for money, meet the needs of customers, maximise opportunities for integrated and partnership working, support regeneration and economic growth across the county, including the disposal or reconfiguration of assets, promote efficiency and effectiveness and ensure compliance with related statutory and regulatory codes.

The strategy also links to the key strands of the MTFS (Medium Term, Financial Strategy), specifically creating the right conditions for the Staffordshire economy to grow; encourage housebuilding to meet growing demand; using council assets such as land and buildings or money held in reserve to generate income; and continuing to reduce costs by finding new and more efficient ways of working.

(Cabinet – 16 October 2019)

7. Schools Capital Programme 2019/20

The Cabinet have approved the Schools Capital Programme for 2019/20. The Programme is made up of:

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

The funding available to deliver the 2019/20 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. Healthy Pupils Capital Fund (HPCF)
 - iii. Special Provision Capital Fund

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 – 16 October 2019)

8. Children's and Families System Transformation Part 2

The Cabinet have approved a new operating model for the Children's and Families System based upon a district footprint which will better support the child and family, enable a more flexible approach to resource allocation and facilitate more equitable demand/workload management. The model will embrace all parts of the existing children and families' system and will improve outcomes including educational achievement, emotional wellbeing and stability for our children and families.

The Cabinet have also approved an additional investment in the service of £8.1m; the first element of this investment will embed a change in culture and practice which will reduce and manage demand within the looked after cohort by April 2021; and the second element will enable the Council to create an operating model on a district footprint from April 2021 which is underpinned by the change in practice and culture.

(Cabinet – 20 November 2019)

9. Clear Streets Partnership and Car Parking Strategy

Since the decriminalisation of parking enforcement in 2008, enforcement powers had been shared between local authorities and the police. Prior to April 2015 onstreet enforcement was carried out on behalf of the County Council by each of the eight district/borough councils. In April 2015 the arrangements changed, and the County Council entered into a single arrangement with Stoke-on-Trent City Council (SoTCC) for enforcement and back office services. The district/borough councils remain responsible for offstreet enforcement in their public car parks with four districts using the services of SoTCC for enforcement and all using the back-office services of SoTCC for processing of penalty charge notices.

The current agreement with SoTCC is a Service Level Agreement for the provision of civil parking, bus lane enforcement and associated services and is made pursuant to s.101 of the Local Government Act 1972 (Arrangements for the discharge of functions by local authorities). This agreement is due to expire on 31st March 2020 and, following consideration of a range of options, have decided to renew the existing Service Level Agreement with Stoke-on-Trent City Council for a period of five years from 1st April 2020.

The Cabinet have also approved a Car Parking Strategy which aims to provide:

- A consistent approach to on and off-street parking;
- A well-structured regime for the management (and charging) of on-street parking;
- Parking facilities, arrangements and charging structures that reflect the needs of the individual towns (including free parking); and
- A charging structure that reflects the varying demands of all the users of the services.

(Cabinet – 20 November 2019)

10. Staffordshire Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP)

The Cabinet have approved the Staffordshire Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP), a non-statutory document that sets out the County Council's strategic approach that identifies the optimal allocation of resources for the management, operation, preservation and enhancement of the highway infrastructure that meets the needs of businesses and all stakeholders using the network.

Having a documented approach is good practice and allows the Council to gain maximum available funding from the Department for Transport Self-Assessment process.

The HIAMP requires a suite of individual supporting operational process documents to be developed and/or reviewed. It is therefore proposed that these documents when available are approved under delegated powers by the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and skills, in conjunction with the County Treasurer and County Solicitor.

(Cabinet – 20 November 2019)

11. Infrastructure+ Performance Update

Infrastructure+ is an outcome-based public-private-partnership delivery model between the County Council and Amey LG Limited ('Amey'). As well as the management and delivery of routine highway operations and services, the arrangement provides Amey with exclusivity for the delivery of maintenance schemes up to £1m and improvement schemes up to £0.5m.

The Cabinet have considered the latest contract performance for the Infrastructure+ partnership and have noted that, since the contract went live on 1 October 2014, it had:

- Successfully delivered over £150m of highway maintenance operations and projects;
- Achieved over £30m of front-line service cost savings; and
- Implemented more than £100m of inward investment highway and transport infrastructure improvements to support the creation of over 10,000 new jobs and 8,500 new houses across Staffordshire.

(Cabinet – 20 November 2019)

12. Treasury Management Report for the Half-Year Ended 30 September 2019

The Cabinet have considered a summary of the Council's borrowing and investment activities during the first six months of the year. They noted that the Council maintained a cautious approach to investments, its policy of using cash instead of borrowing continued to generate significant savings, helping reduce the average interest the Council pays on its debt. Overall the report showed that the Council's borrowing and investment activities were being undertaken prudently and sensibly.

(Cabinet – 20 November 2019)

13. Winter

Winter spells the busiest time of year for much of the public sector and especially for the NHS and local authorities like ourselves.

We are playing our part with our winter highways operations in helping keep the county safely on the move on those frosty winter mornings and icy nights.

We have also been reminding people to make sure they take up the offer of a free flu jab if they are eligible. This not only helps them to protect themselves, but also minimises the risks to the frail and elderly; in turn easing the pressure on hospitals due to winter admissions. There is still to get the vaccination – so we are encouraging people to take up the offer this winter.

Another key way to help stay well is to keep warm over winter. Hopefully, you are all already aware of Staffordshire Warmer Homes. This is a fantastic scheme which offers free first-time central heating fitted in eligible homes across the county. Although it may sound too good to be true, in this case it actually is true. So, if you know any residents who may benefit then please encourage them to find out more.

14. End of 2019

As we head rapidly towards the end of 2019, it is a time to reflect on what we have achieved and what we of course still need to do.

I know that every member of this chamber is committed to doing the very best they can for the communities they serve and for Staffordshire as a whole - and will continue to do so.

I would also like to take the opportunity to mention two groups of people in Staffordshire – our band of wonderful volunteers and carers.

The selfless support they give is immeasurable, not only in financial terms, but to the real benefits they bring to people. I never fail to be amazed by the truly inspirational difference they make every year.

15. New Year

Next year we return to the chamber at the start of a new decade and as Leader, I remain hugely optimistic for the prospects for this council and for this county.

Undoubtedly there will be challenges ahead including: Funding for both adults' and children's' care, funding for special educational needs and disabilities and lobbying on plans for HS2. We will be continuing to work with our MPs, both new and old, to press the Government for action on these issues.

But there will also be huge opportunities too; to continue to grow our economic programme, attract new investment and create better jobs and ultimately to improve the lives, health and wellbeing of Staffordshire families.

Finally, I would like to say thank you for all your hard work for this council, for residents and for businesses and to wish you and your families a merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous New Year.