

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

### **1. Staffordshire's Mental Health Challenge**

The Cabinet have received an overview of the current activity taking place across the County Council, predominantly within the Health & Care Team, in relation to mental health. They have agreed to sign up to the Local Authorities' Mental Health Challenge run by Centre for Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation, Mental Health Providers Forum, Mind, Rethink Mental Illness, Royal College of Psychiatrists and Young Minds. The Cabinet have also agreed to appoint Councillor Ann Edgeller as the elected member to act as 'mental health champion' across the council and Andrew Jepps (Care Commissioning Lead) as lead officer for Mental Health until the new Lead Commissioner for Learning Disabilities and Mental Health is in post.

*(Cabinet – 18 October 2017)*

### **2. Staffordshire's Libraries Strategy**

The Cabinet have received an update on the progress of the model for the library service which was agreed by Cabinet on 18 February 2015.

They have approved proposals to consult on the next phase of the Strategy which includes the introduction of self-service libraries; an increased number of community managed libraries; options for any community libraries that have not yet transferred to Community Management; and reviewing and re-modelling the Mobile and Travelling Library Service. This public consultation during 2018 will provide additional insight and information which will inform a further Cabinet report which will make final recommendations to enable the service to re-align their offer, take advantage of new technology and realise £1.3m MTFS savings by 2020-21.

*(Cabinet – 18 October 2017)*

### **3. Staffordshire Transforming Care Partnership Financial Update**

As part of a national Transforming Care programme, Staffordshire County Council is required to work with the local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to support plans to deliver improvements in services for citizens with a Learning Disability (LD) and/or Autism, including those with a Mental Health condition and challenging behaviour. This national programme provides an opportunity to transform the life chances and deliver improved services for an identified cohort of people with these needs. One of the key aims of the national programme is to move long-term in-patients out of hospital care into more appropriate local community settings. As this could place a very significant financial pressure on the local authority as patients transfer from health to the care budget, the Council is seeking to mitigate this risk through the establishment of a financial Risk Share Agreement with local CCGs.

The Cabinet have approved the principle of a Staffordshire Transforming Care Partnership Financial Risk Share Agreement and have given delegated authority to the Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing, in consultation

with the Director of Health and Care and the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Families and Communities, to finalise the details of the agreement.

*(Cabinet – 18 October 2017)*

#### **4. Second Quarter Budget Monitoring Report**

The Cabinet have received an overview of the county council's performance (including the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy) and the progress being made in delivering the Council's three priority outcomes at the end of the first quarter 2017/18. They noted that the latest revenue forecast outturn showed an overspend of £5.6m (1.1%), compared to the quarter 1 position of £8.6m (1.7%), a reduction of £3m. The pressures related to delays in implementing the new Children's System (£3.7m), SEN Home to School transport (£1.0m), and HR Terms and Conditions (£1.6m).

With regard to the Capital Programme, it was noted that the latest capital outturn projection was £154.4m, compared to the quarter 1 position of £150.2m, an increase of 2.8%. This increase was mainly due to an increased number of developer funded schemes within Strategic Infrastructure of £3.8m. There had also been an increase in Carbon Reduction Initiatives in Schools of £1.099m.

On 1 September, DCLG published an invitation to local authorities to pilot 100% business rates retention in 2018/19 and to pioneer new pooling and tier split models. A pilot would enable 100% of any growth to be retained by the area, offset by Revenue Support Grant and Rural Services Delivery Grant. The Cabinet have agreed in principle that the County Council should participate in the Business Rates Pilot. The final detail of the bid has been delegated to the Director of Finance and Resources in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

The Cabinet have also agreed to allocate £0.250m from the contingency budget to support the costs of a Business Case for Children's Services initiatives including; providing support to the Emergency Duty Service, enabling intensive interventions during 'out of hours' periods, expanding work with Court and Care Planning teams, and to work with Fostering Intensive Intervention teams.

*(Cabinet – 18 October 2017)*

#### **5. Quarter 2 2017/18 Performance Report**

The Cabinet have received an overview of the county council's performance (including the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy) and the progress being made in delivering the Council's three priority outcomes at the end of the second quarter 2017/18. They noted that:

- In July 2017, the percentage of working age Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants (including Universal Credit claimants) in Staffordshire (1.0%) continued to be below both the West Midlands (2.45%) national rates (1.9%).

- In June 2017, 88.4% of all schools in Staffordshire were rated as 'Good or Outstanding' by Ofsted, which was similar to the national average (88.9%) and had increased since June 2016 (84.4%). The target was for 92% of Staffordshire Schools to be rated as "good or outstanding" by August 2017.
- Provisional, un-validated results for Key Stage 2 in Staffordshire in 2017 show that 74% of pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, exceeding the national "all schools" and "state funded schools" average (71%); 78% of Staffordshire pupils achieved the expected standard in "Writing", exceeding the national "all schools" and "state funded schools" average by 2%; and 76% of Staffordshire pupils achieved the expected standard in "Maths", exceeding the national "all schools" and "state funded schools" average by 1%.
- In 2015/16, the prevalence of excess weight at reception age (4-5 years) in Staffordshire (22.5%) was similar to the national average (22.1%). Although the prevalence increased significantly to 33.8% by the time children were aged 10-11, this remained in line with the national average (34.2%).
- In June 2017, there were 1,009 (59.8 per 10,000) looked after children in Staffordshire, 83 of whom were unaccompanied asylum seekers.
- The number of children subject to a child protection plan at the end of June 2017 increased to 595 (35.2 per 10,000), however this remained lower than the 670 children who were the subject of a Plan in June 2016.

*(Cabinet – 18 October 2017)*

## **6. Staffordshire Better Care Fund (BCF)**

After considerable work, the Better Care Fund plan for Staffordshire has now been approved by NHS England. There is an awful lot of work to do but with the plans and funding in place, we can get on with joining up health and social care services, providing more care in people's homes and reducing the time they spend in hospital.

*(Cabinet – 15 November 2017)*

## **7. Outturn Report for Treasury Management for half year ended 30 September 2017**

The Cabinet have received a summary of the County Council's Treasury Management activities for the half-year ended 30 September 2017. 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 – 15 November 2017)*

## **8. Staffordshire Supported Bus Network**

The Cabinet have considered the outcome of the recent public consultation on bus journeys subsidised by Staffordshire County Council which included the following options relating to the future shape of the supported bus network in Staffordshire: Option 1 - Revised Local Supported Bus Services, (no Connect or Demand Responsive Services); Option 2 - Revised Local Supported Bus Services with Two Connect Services (South Staffordshire Connects and Moorlands Connect); Option 3 - Revised Local Supported Bus Services with Existing Connect Services Retained (Border Car excepted); and Option 4 - County-wide Connect and Demand Responsive Services, (no local supported bus services).

Having considered the comments and feedback gained from the public consultation exercise, together with the authority's statutory duty as set out in the Transport Act 1985, Section 63(1)(a), the Cabinet have decided that Support Bus Network Option 1 should be implemented in April 2018. They have also given approval for further discussions to take place with relevant stakeholders in order to attempt to mitigate the impact of bus service changes within the overall budget of £1.3m from 2018/19 onwards.

The Cabinet's decision was called in and referred to the Corporate Review Committee at their meeting on 5 December 2017. After careful consideration of the reasons for the call-in, and the Cabinet Member's response thereto, the Committee resolved that the decision be implemented as set out in the original decision notice.

*(Cabinet – 15 November 2017)*

## **9. Stafford Western Access Route - Land Acquisition Update**

The Cabinet have received an update on the land acquisition and Compulsory Purchase Order process for the Stafford Western Access Route (SWAR). They noted that both the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and the accompanying Side Roads Order (SRO) were made on 20 June 2017 and served on all affected land owners on 23 June 2017 with the objection period ending on 31 July 2017 for the CPO and 17 August 2017 for the SRO. There were seven objections received to the CPO and four objections received to the SRO. Officers were working to reach agreement on the points of objection where possible, prior to the planned CPO Public Inquiry.

*(Cabinet – 15 November 2017)*

## **10. Budget**

Since we last met we have had the Chancellor's Budget, which did offer good news in terms of more cash for the NHS this winter, extra investment in education and skills, increases in personal tax allowances and housing stamp duty deals for first time buyers.

However, I think we all still recognise the biggest challenge remains funding for the care of a growing, ageing population, which is something which still needs to be addressed at a national and not just a local level.

As a county council we do have to live within our means and we will be examining our draft Local Government Financial Settlement as we finalise our own budget

## **11. Industrial Strategy**

The Government also published its Industrial Strategy and it was good to see this focus more on what areas outside London and the South East can deliver.

Here in Staffordshire our own Economic Growth Capital and Development Programme has not only contributed to low unemployment, but has helped create the environment for the creation of the well paid, skilled jobs needed in a modern economy.

The total financial value of the Programme is around £383 million. This represents an excellent level of funding leverage, with around £15.35 worth of funding secured from for every £1 of Staffordshire County Council investment in the Programme

Since the Economic Growth Programme commenced in 2014, seven employment generating projects with a total value of around £130 million have been completed to date. Between them, these projects are anticipated to create around 11,500 jobs when they have been fully built out and developed.

## **12. Broadband**

Important to businesses great and small is access to decent broadband speeds, so I was delighted to see Staffordshire pass another milestone with 95 per cent of households and businesses now able to get superfast fibre broadband.

The major milestone was announced by ourselves and BT Group, which spearhead the Superfast Staffordshire partnership, at the start of the month.

## **13. HS2/Rail**

Moving on to connections of a different kind, I attended to the launch of Sir David Higgins' latest report HS2: Getting the best out of Britain.

As a council, we remain committed to getting the best deal we can for the county and our communities from HS2 in terms of mitigation, compensation, improved connection and a share in the economic benefits.

It is important that the voice of Staffordshire continues to be heard and we ensure that residents and businesses can benefit from access to HS2 via the Stafford hub and other HS2 stations.

Although HS2 is the biggest infrastructure project we are likely to see delivered in our lifetimes, it is important that we don't lose sight of the importance of making improvements via other rail and road schemes.

West Midlands Rail for example welcomed the £680 million order for new trains by West Midlands Trains to accommodate extra passengers, with many of these having free Wi-Fi and air conditioning as standard.

West Midlands Trains began running the trains on behalf of West Midlands Rail and the Department for Transport from Sunday after winning the franchise.

#### **14. Communities Fund**

As local members, I am sure that like myself, you have seen some fantastic work in your own communities, with many people giving up their time to help local groups and activities.

So I am pleased to say that groups and organisations working with vulnerable families can now benefit from the new Children and Families Fund.

Extra funding is now available to organisations, charities, or community groups if they use Crowdfund Staffordshire to fundraise and their project helps vulnerable families and children avoid getting into a crisis situation.

The county council could invest up to £5,000 into a project if the local community also supports it by pledging at least 50% of the fundraising target.

#### **15. Christmas and New Year**

As we head toward the end of 2017, it has been a year of some highs and, of course some sad lows.

In May we welcomed back some old, if I can say that, and many new faces to the council and I would like to thank each of you for your continued contribution to helping make Staffordshire a better place for Staffordshire people.

Undoubtedly there are some tough challenges lying ahead and we can't shy away from those, but I know we all share a commitment to do the very best job we can.

So on that note, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year and I look forward to welcoming you all back to the chamber in 2018.