

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Third Quarter Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18

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 third quarter 2017/18. They noted that the latest revenue forecast outturn showed an overspend of £4.6m (0.9%), compared to the quarter 2 position of £5.6m (1.1%), a reduction of £1m. The pressures relate to delays in implementing the new Children's System (£3.7m), Looked after Children's pressures (£3.8m), and HR Terms and Conditions (£1.6m).

With regard to the Capital Programme, it was noted that the latest capital outturn projection is £152.7m, compared to the quarter 2 position of £154.4m, a decrease of 1.1%. This projection is a fully funded position. This decrease is mainly due to slippage of project spend into 2018/19 including Pye Green & Netherstowe, Maintenance and Replacement Schemes, the A50 Project, Newcastle HWRC site, Solar Panels and the Infrastructure Refresh. There have been some additional forecast spends for Keele IC6 Smart Innovation Hub, Families First Mobile Working Project and Shugborough works.

(Cabinet – 21 February 2018)

2. Quarter 3 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 third quarter 2017/18. They noted that:

- In December 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 (2.3%) and national rates (1.9%).
- In 2017, 74.5% of Staffordshire pupils achieved a Good Level of Development at the Early Years Foundation Stage. There was an improvement compared with 2016 (73.8%) and results were again ranked within the top quartile nationally. Staffordshire had the highest proportion of pupils achieving a Good Level of Development out of all of its statistical neighbours; a pattern also evident in 2015 and 2016.
- The number of delayed transfers of care in Staffordshire that were attributable wholly or jointly to social care in November 2017 was higher than the national average, with Staffordshire having 1,452 delayed days (a rate of 239 delayed days per month per 100,000 population compared to the England average of 145 delayed days per 100,000 population). However this was the third consecutive month that recorded a reduction in social care delays, which

peaked at 277 days per month per 100,000 in August. The latest position is in line with the Better Care Fund target trajectory agreed with NHS England.

- In December 2017, there were 1,092 looked after children in Staffordshire, which is a rate of 65 children per 10,000 population. Recent information released by the Department for Education has shown an increase nationally in the number of looked after children and this increase has also been seen in both Staffordshire's statistical neighbour comparator group and across the West Midlands as a whole. However, the year on year increase in Staffordshire is lower than the average across the West Midlands (formal comparator and national figures are not yet available.) In December 2017, 8.0% (87) of looked after children were Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), compared to 8.9% (89) in December 2016.
- The number of children subject of a child protection plan at the end of December 2017 increased to 683, which is a 13.3% increase in comparison to the number of children who were subject of a plan in December 2016 (603). At the end of December 2017, the rate of children subject of a child protection plan per 10,000 (41) was below the national and regional rates based on most recent data.
- In December 2017, the rate of recorded crime reduced to 4.1 crimes per 1,000 population and the rate of reported anti-social behaviour incidents remained stable with 2.0 incidents per 1,000 population.

(Cabinet – 21 February 2018)

3. 30 Hours Childcare

Staffordshire was one of the first places to offer 30 hours funded childcare and it has made a real difference to helping parents who want to work cover some of the childcare costs.

We were therefore pleased to welcome Families and Children's Minister Nadhim Zahawi to the county to see for himself the positive impact of the 30 hours' childcare scheme.

As well as meeting some of the team at the county council, he also went on to a local nursery here in Stafford to chat to staff.

4. School Places

March 1 is always a nail-biting day for Staffordshire parents as they wait to find out which secondary school their son or daughter will be going to. In Staffordshire, I am delighted to say nine out of ten parents were allocated their first choice.

Of the 7494 applications made for transfer at age 11, just over 92.5 per cent of parents have been allocated their first preference school; with nearly 97 per cent allocated one of their top three preferred schools. This is despite increased demand for secondary school places putting pressure on schools.

5. Highways Operations

Although Spring appears to be finally here, that wasn't the case at the beginning of March, with not only freezing conditions, but snow on the ground in some areas.

As always our highways crews did a great job and I think it is important to remember that these crews are out working in sometimes quite treacherous conditions in the middle of the night, helping to make sure we can get to where we need to go the next day. So a huge thanks to them for their efforts.

And as we move into the milder weather, it will be these same crews who will now be switching to tackling potholes.

In such a huge county like ours, you are never going to be able to fix every pothole in every road, but in 2018/19 we will be investing a further £5m to not only help tackle the problem, but also in preventative measures to help stop them occurring in the first place.

6. Housing

Investment in infrastructure is key to growing a strong economy and also in creating the right conditions to build homes in the right place with the right infrastructure.

In my capacity with the County Council Network, myself and representatives from other partner organisations, have made it clear that the current planning reforms do not go far enough.

We want to see counties given a formal role, to work even more in sync with district and borough colleagues to support future housing development.

7. Mipim

The theme of the Midlands UK showcase at Mipim this year was "Made for Partnerships" – something which when it works, works really well in Staffordshire.

At this year's event we launched the M54 Wolverhampton – Staffordshire High Growth Zone and highlighted the Stafford Gateway and New Garden settlement, both hugely important for Staffordshire's economy.

8. Oscars

Finally, Staffordshire also made the headlines a little further a field – in Hollywood, where actress Rachel Shenton from Caverswall and director Chris Overton from Cannock picked up an Oscar for the best live action short film with *The Silent Child*. I am sure you will join me in congratulating Rachel and Chris both for their win and in helping to raise awareness of the affect deafness can have on families and ensure help is accessible to help deaf children communicate in our county.