

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Final Outturn Report for 2017/18

The Cabinet have received details of the final financial outturn position of the county council, including delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, at the end of 2017/18.

At the First Quarter, the forecast was for an overspend of £8.6m but services have made tremendous efforts to identify and deliver additional savings to mitigate this overspend. This has now been achieved with services delivering a small underspend of £0.205m which is just 0.04% of the budget, effectively a breakeven position. In addition, it has not been necessary to allocate further amounts from contingency and therefore this budget is unspent and can be put into balances to be available to support the MTFS in future years.

The capital programme shows total expenditure of £142.189m. This reflects our continued investment in school places, highways and economic regeneration with development projects such as Branston Locks, Redhill and Four Ashes Business Park; and includes the construction of a new secondary school and a new primary school in Burton; extensions to a primary school in Rugeley; and significant investment in highways projects, including the Stafford Western Access scheme.

(Cabinet – 21 June 2018)

2. Adoption of Revised Civil Contingency Policy for Staffordshire County Council

The Cabinet have approved an up-dated Civil Contingencies Policy for the County Council. The new Policy reflects current guidance, learning and ways of working and is once again based on ensuring that the Council's civil contingencies arrangements continue to deliver three key outcomes in the event of an emergency:

- To safeguard people and assets;
- To maintain business critical services; and
- To restore full services as soon as is practicably possible.

(Cabinet – 21 June 2018)

3. Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2018/19

The Cabinet have approved the Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2018/19. The programme is made up of:

- i. Highway Maintenance (including Bridges)
- ii. Integrated Transport improvements.

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 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 – 21 June 2018)

4. Whole Life Disability Strategy 2018-2023

The Cabinet have approved the Whole Life Disability Strategy which sets out the Council's vision and key principles that will underpin the way we will meet the eligible needs of people with physical or learning disabilities in Staffordshire.

In brief, the Strategy has the following at its heart:

- To build on the strengths disabled citizens have by focusing on their skills and qualities, those of their family or carers, and those of their community. Helping people do things for themselves as far as possible, rather than routinely doing things for people is a core principle.
- To ensure appropriate support is available for people with a disability to maximise their independence, and prevents, reduces or delays additional needs.
- To ensure that the Council can continue to meet people's eligible needs in a way that is financially sustainable.

The Strategy for 2018-2023 has been developed following a comprehensive engagement and consultation process that has helped inform and shape its content.

(Cabinet – 21 June 2018)

5. HS2 Construction

With the main civil engineering works expected to start next year, our HS2 project team continues to work with HS2 Limited to try and mitigate the impact of the work on our communities.

The reality is that although we are the highways authority, we have limited powers to prevent any routes, so it is important that we do everything we can now to influence the path of traffic during the construction phase and ensure the roads are suitable to carry the increased traffic.

There will of course be some disruption and it is important communities raise any concerns they have directly with HS2 Limited.

6. Wider Financial Position

We are all aware of the huge financial pressures facing councils like ours and a lot of hard work is being done behind the scenes to try and reduce the shortfall and press for long term funding solutions for both adult social care and children's services.

In the last nine years we have reduced our running costs by £240 million and the options for further savings without impacting on key areas and outcomes we all want to see have become increasingly limited.

At the same we have recognised the need for example to invest more in recruiting extra social workers to help manage workloads, which although absolutely essential, adds to the overall financial challenges we have to meet.

7. Economy

With the increasing financial challenges it is more important than ever that we continue to grow our local economy, support business development and help create the right conditions for much needed housing development.

So it is certainly good news that the development and infrastructure projects so far completed by the county council as part of a decade-long growth project could see the creation of nearly 20,000 jobs.

The total value of the 15 projects completed since the growth programme began in 2014 is £160 million. Projects which are currently being carried out are valued at £204 million – £15 million of which is from direct county council investment

Among the completed projects are Liberty Park in Lichfield, Redhill in Stafford, Four Ashes Business Park in South Staffordshire, i54 South Staffordshire and most recently Branston Locks near Burton. We will be submitting a planning application for the western extension of i54 South Staffordshire imminently. These projects have paved the way for multi-million pound business developments.

8. World Cup

While it is all over now...I am sure we are all proud of the performance of the England team in the World Cup. As home to St George's Park, Staffordshire is not just home to the England World Cup team, but home to our 28 national teams.

It is a fantastic facility which is helping to develop football from the grass roots to the world stage and of course is home to FA education and two World Cups, the U17 and U20.

9. Staying Safe This Summer

With the school summer term now at an end, it is important that children keep themselves safe over the summer holidays.

The unusually hot weather on some days has already seen a spate of moorlands fires and I am sure you would like to join me in thanking both the fire service and our own county council staff who have been supporting them in tackling these fires.

It is really just about being sensible, for example we have asked people not to light barbecues on our land for the time being as a spark can easily start a fire, which can quickly spread on parched land.

Likewise, the recent tragic event in Stoke is a sad reminder of how dangerous swimming in open water can be.

Every summer we urge people not to swim in the county's reservoirs, lakes or quarries, no matter how inviting they may appear to be, as even the strongest swimmer can quickly find themselves in difficulty.

So the message to everyone is please do enjoy the summer, but make sure you and your family do so safely.