

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

### **1. Joint Second Quarter Performance and Budget Monitoring**

The Cabinet has received the joint finance and performance report covering the second quarter of 2010/2011 which focuses on the delivery of the new Strategic Plan – “Staffordshire Unites 2010 – 2015” and the associated Medium Term Financial Strategy. Based on these six months it is predicted that the Council is on course for a budget overspend for the year of £6.279m (1.6%). This is a significant improvement over the Quarter 1 projection (which highlighted a potential overspend of £9.177m) and reflects improvements in the budgets in Children, Young People and Families and in Social Care and Health.

*(Cabinet – 20 October 2010)*

### **2. Treasury Management report for the half-year ended 30 September 2010**

The Cabinet have received a summary of the County Council's Treasury Management activities for the first six months of the year which contained details of both borrowing and investment decisions and the performance of internally managed funds and those funds managed by external cash managers.

In the last six months steps have been taken to save around £100,000 in interest payments through debt rescheduling (replacing existing loans with new loans at a lower rate of interest).

In the light of revised interest rate forecasts, which suggest that interest rates will remain “low for longer”, it is proposed to increase risk marginally to take advantage of longer term investment interest rates (up to one year) that are around 0.80% higher than three month rates.

**RECOMMEND TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL** - That the Approved Investment Strategy (AIS) for 2010/11 be amended to allow investments up to 12 months for nationalised banks in the UK only.

*(Cabinet – 20 October 2010)*

### **3. Improving the Way We Work**

The Cabinet have considered the progress being made in relation to the introduction of the new operating model for the County Council which came into effect on 1 October 2010 and is based on a “one council” approach.

This new model will transform the county council into an organisation which: provides better value for money for tax-payers; puts customers' first; and improves the prosperity of the county by supporting families, communities and enterprise, underpinned by the Council's five core values.

As part of this new approach, a number of initiatives have been introduced including more effective partnership working, a new single access number and longer opening hours to county council services.

*(Cabinet – 17 November 2010)*

#### **4. Staffordshire Public Sector Network**

The Council is in the process of purchasing a new telephone and broadband internet network to replace the existing network which has reached the end of its life. Rather than just seeing this as a County Council issue, we are approaching this from the point of view of purchasing a network that will be available for the whole of the public sector in Staffordshire as well. By doing this we are able to provide much better value for money for the people of Staffordshire, and we will be working hard to encourage our partners to take advantage of this opportunity to work better together.

*(Cabinet - 17 November 2010)*

#### **5. Staffordshire Travel Concessions Scheme**

On 1 April 2011, the County Council will take over responsibility for concessionary travel for elderly and disabled persons. This is a national scheme that was previously administered by the District and Borough Councils in Staffordshire but which the Government has now asked the County Council to carry out instead.

The scheme entitles pass holders to travel without charge on local buses throughout England between 0930 and 2300 (Monday-Friday) and all day on Saturdays, Sundays, and Bank Holidays. Some districts and boroughs have chosen to offer additional concessions in addition to the national scheme and they continue to have the power to do so if they wish.

The Cabinet have also approved arrangements for free travel at the above times for a companion travelling disabled people who would be unable to travel unaccompanied.

*(Cabinet – 17 November 2010)*

#### **6. Staffordshire Cares - Development of a Single Community based Health and Wellbeing Service - Progress and Next Steps**

The Cabinet have noted the progress of the negotiations with the three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in Staffordshire to establish a single service to deliver community health and social care services.

The benefits expected from integration include: -

## LEADER'S STATEMENT

- Ensuring an integrated approach to the assessment, treatment and care of service users, leading to more appropriate services that will better serve the needs of the population of Staffordshire
- Enabling holistic, individual assessment, care planning and care delivery within a whole system framework, resulting in greater opportunities for independent living and recovery
- Providing a seamless interface for citizens, users of services and their carers, securing, wherever possible, a single point of access
- Providing the vehicle for unified contracting arrangement for service agreements with SSPCT and NHSNS, leading to better value for money.

It was envisaged that the new integrated service would come into effect from 1 April 2011.

*(Cabinet – 17 November 2010)*

### **7. Portfolio Holder Delegated Decisions**

Portfolio holders have recently taken decisions in respect of the following matters:

- The granting of a 5-year fixed term Farm Business Tenancy in respect of Holding No.7 Manor Farm.
- The disposal of 5 parcels of former highway land in Hednesford (totalling 0.141 acres) to Cannock Chase District Council.
- An amendment to the Constitution of the Schools Forum to include representation from Academies within the local authority area.
- The granting of a 12 year Farm Business Tenancy in respect of Holding No. 44 Plardiwick.
- The granting of a 25 year lease of 2,538 sq. m. of land at Merryfields School, Hoon Avenue, Newcastle-under-Lyme for the provision of a Nursery for children with special needs together with associated family support.
- The removal of pre-reception (nursery) places at Western Springs Community Primary School, Rugeley and Manor Hill First School, Walton, Stone from maintained provision from 31 August 2011.
- To lower the age limit at Henry Chadwick Community Primary School, Hill Ridware, Rugeley in order to create a Foundation Stage Class from 1 January 2011

### **8. Forward Plan**

The Cabinet have approved the Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2010 to 31 March 2011, which contains details of the decisions which the Cabinet are expected to take during that period.

## **9. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

I was delighted that on 28 October 2010, Vince Cable announced that our LEP had received the go-ahead. We are one of just twenty-four successful applications. We have worked hard with Staffordshire business and other public sector partners to sell our case. I am grateful to all those who have helped us to make progress. There is still a lot to do but I am convinced that this partnership will bring jobs and prosperity to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Shadow Board met for the first time on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2010 and we will be preparing bids to the Regional Growth Fund as a priority.

## **10. Staffordshire Good Food Awards**

I was delighted to attend the prestigious awards ceremony which celebrates "local enterprise" in promoting the excellent taste of top quality food sourced from the county. It is a real showcase for home grown talent with local companies flying the flag for Staffordshire. My congratulations to all the winners and to those shortlisted for awards.

## **11. Peri-Urban regions**

During early November 2010 I visited Brussels to address the European Commission. Together with colleagues from France and Holland, we challenged the commission to develop considered policies for "peri-urban regions". These are areas such as Staffordshire with sizeable populations but no major urban centres; areas where the proximity of large cities such as Birmingham and Manchester bring economic benefits and challenges. I hope that the Commission pushes this work forward and that it at least can develop a more meaningful description than "peri-urban".

## **12. Seasons Greetings**

This is the last County Council meeting of 2010 and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members of the County Council for their hard work and dedication in representing their communities during 2010. Despite political differences, the common issue that binds us together is our passion for improving the lives of those that we represent. I look forward to working with all Members during 2011 to achieve our ambitions for the county of Staffordshire.

I hope that all County Council Members, all County Council officers, all of our partners and all those who live and work in Staffordshire have a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**P.E.B. Atkins**  
**Leader of the Council**