

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Staffordshire Means Back to Business

(i) Supporting Our Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Employment Sectors

The Cabinet have approved proposals to enhance assistance to the Destination Management Partnership (DMP), both immediately and for the longer term, including the County Council's own tourism team, to lead a transformation of our visitor economy and its businesses. The proposed measures include:

- Support for targeted marketing and campaigns to maximise Staffordshire's profile and to attract more visitors, most notably through bringing in house the County's Digital Marketing Officer post to be integrated with the work of the DMP.
- To oversee and commission research and intelligence to inform the activities of the visitor economy sector and to shape our offer and future priorities.
- Through the Place Board, and with the assistance of all key stakeholders, to develop our lobbying and advocacy work to influence key policy makers, to shape the direction of the sector and maximise Staffordshire's role and profile.
- To work towards greater integration with district and borough councils across Staffordshire and with Stoke-on-Trent City Council to deliver local and countywide priorities.
- To develop targeted business support activities and signposting to help the visitor economy renew and transform following on from the Covid 19 pandemic.

(Cabinet – 17 March 2021)

(ii) Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Loan Fund

The Cabinet have approved proposals to build on the success and strengths of previous phases of the Staffordshire Business Loan Fund managed through Black Country Reinvestment Society (BCRS). The proposed fund will also provide a focus for rural businesses across Staffordshire as part of the Council's priorities for rural businesses outlined by the All Party Working Group on the economy and in the forthcoming rural economic strategy. This covers a range of small sized business sectors and forms part of Staffordshire County Councils response to COVID-19 economic recovery and the county's future economic prosperity. It is intended for the fund to be launched in April 2021 and act as a viable alternative lending option as a revolving loan fund.

(Cabinet – 17 March 2021)

2. Capital Programme for Schools 2021/2022

The Cabinet have approved the Schools Capital Programme for 2021/22. The Programme is made up of:

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

The funding available to deliver the 2021/22 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. Special Provision Capital Fund

The DfE are yet to confirm the 2021/22 SCA allocations so the School's Capital Programme 2021/22 is based on an estimated SCA of £3.9m. The programme will need to be reviewed once the funding allocation is announced to ensure affordability and that investment is targeted in SCC maintained schools (excluding Basic Need).

The Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets will monitor progress of the programme and, subject to the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND), will make any necessary in-year alterations.

(Cabinet – 17 March 2021)

3. Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2021/22

The Cabinet have approved the Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2021/22. The Programme is made up of two parts, Highway Maintenance (including Bridges) and Integrated Transport improvements. They are not ring-fenced, and precise allocation can be determined locally. In recent years this has also been enhanced through government funding via the Pothole Fund.

Most of the capital funding for replacing life expired highway assets is generally provided through government grant which in 2021/22 will be £25.067m (including the pothole fund) which is £8.735m less than the amount received in 2020/21. The grant for Integrated Transport improvements is £3.449m a slight increase (£26k) on the previous year.

The County Council's additional investment of £5m per year provided in recent years was due to end on 31 March 2021. However, Cabinet have agreed that this additional investment be extended initially for one more year and be reviewed as part of the

review of the Strategic Plan and MTFs in the summer of 2021. (The majority of this is used to support Minor Capital Maintenance £4.6m, with any balance being used on structural maintenance schemes).

Delivery against the Programme will be monitored and authority has been delegated to the Assistant Director for Highways and the Built County in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation to approve any significant in-year alterations.

(Cabinet – 17 March 2021)

4. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme (Department of Education)

In November 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) announced that the National Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is to be expanded across the whole of England in 2021. Since 2018, this Programme has provided enriching activities and healthy food to disadvantaged children and young people (and in some circumstances their families).

The Department for Education is making up to £220 million available to Local Authorities across England to coordinate Holiday Activities and Food Programmes which are administered to promote and develop community resources, spaces and activities locally. It is anticipated that Staffordshire will receive £2,231,290 under the Programme.

The Cabinet have agreed that delivery decisions relating to the Holiday Activities and Food Programme be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities.

(Cabinet – 17 March 2021)

5. Update from COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board

The Cabinet have received an update from the COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board. They were informed that the number of cases of Covid in Staffordshire and across England was continuing fall, leading to the pressure on the NHS being largely abated; the first two steps on HM Government's Roadmap from lockdown had been completed, enabling schools to re-open, people allowed to meet outdoors in groups of up to six, shops opening, and outdoor hospitality resuming; the roll-out of the Covid vaccination programme had seen over 500,000 people in Staffordshire receiving a first dose, and 100,000 with a second dose; there were concerns about very rare side effects associated with the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and, as a result, people under 30 were now being given the choice of one of the other vaccines available.

(Cabinet – 21 April 2021)

6. Integration and Innovation: Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care for All

The Cabinet have considered the key aspects of the proposals contained in the HM Government White Paper published on 11 February 2021 together with the opportunities and risks they present to the Council. The proposals seek to build on the collaboration between health and social care during the Covid pandemic and aim to:

- (i) Increase integration within the NHS and between the NHS and local authorities.
- (ii) Remove much of the transactional bureaucracy within the NHS that has arisen from the 'commissioner-provider' approach over the last eight years.
- (iii) Ensure that the NHS is accountable to Ministers and develop enhanced assurance for adult social care.

As and when the proposals set out in the White Paper become law, they would have the following legal implications relevant to the Council:

- (i) A duty to collaborate with the NHS.
- (ii) Involvement on the Board of the statutory Integrated Care System (ICS) NHS body.
- (iii) Involvement in an ICS Health and Care Partnership.
- (iv) That the Council would have to give regard to the plan to address the health, social care and public health needs of the population produced by the ICS Health and Care Partnership.
- (v) That the Council would be subject to the new enhanced assurance framework for adults social care.

(Cabinet – 21 April 2021)

7. Framework Agreement for the Repair and Treatment of Flat Roofs and Associated Works

The Cabinet have approved proposals for the award and subsequent award of any call-off contracts under the Agreement for the Repair and Treatment of Flat Roofs and Associated Works.

Based on building condition information held by the Council's Property team, there is approximately £7,200,000 worth of roofs with a life expectancy of 4 years or less (so may need replacing during the term of the new framework) split across both schools and corporate property.

Following the procurement process, the successful suppliers will be appointed to the framework agreement for the period 1st December 2021 to 30th November 2024 and that dependent on the quality of their delivery, a 12-month service extension can be implemented to a final contract end date of 30th November 2025.

(Cabinet – 21 April 2021)

8. Integrated Performance Report 2020-21 - Quarter 4

The Cabinet have received an overview of the County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They noted that, at the end of Quarter 4, the overall assessment on the council's performance and financial position was amber. There continued to be areas of risk in Adult Social Care and Families and Communities.

The latest revenue forecast outturn showed a saving of £1.8m (0.3%), compared to the overspend of £0.6m (0.1%) at quarter 3.

The latest capital outturn projection was £144m, compared to the quarter 3 position of £146m, a decrease of 1.7%. This projection was a fully funded position. This decrease was due to property purchasing moving to 2021/22, reprofiling of Highways schemes Major projects and delays in starting works on Household Waste Recycling Centres.

(Cabinet – 21 April 2021)

9. Elections

Following the local government elections, I am delighted to see both some "old" and some new faces back at this annual meeting of the Full Council. It is fantastic too to actually see each other face to face and I would like to thank Rising Brook Church for help making this happen.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank too all those who took part in the elections; from the staff at the polling station on the day and at the counts on Saturday, to all who stood as a candidate and to residents themselves who took the time to vote. I would also add my personal appreciation for hard work of previous county councillors over the last four years.

I am of course delighted to return as Leader and look forward with working with you all.

10. Covid-19

It is great to see rates continue to remain low in the county and so much of the county now reopen. It has been a challenging 12 months and we know that the challenge to keep making the easing of lockdown steps work remains.

Throughout this pandemic I have been hugely impressed how together with our partners in the NHS and across the district and borough councils in particular, we have not only rapidly responded to each challenge, but also moved swiftly to adapt our approach where necessary.

The successful vaccination roll out in Staffordshire, together with regular testing in our communities and the efforts by our fantastic in-house test and trace team will hopefully prove to be a long-term game changer.

But in the short-term, the identification of more cases of Covid-19 variants is likely to be a key focus for us over the coming weeks and months and we are well prepared to deal with this.

11. Looking Forward

As we emerge from the pandemic, it is important that we focus even more on making this great county the best it can be and helping people live the best lives they can.

As a county council, we will continue to create the conditions for economic growth in Staffordshire, attracting new employers and supporting existing ones as well as investing in schools, business parks, roads and broadband.

At the same time, we will strengthen the bonds we have made during this pandemic to work with our communities to support them to live happier, healthier, independent lives.

As a newly elected county councillor it is our job to work with our communities, our businesses, with partners and with Government to deliver on these aspirations.

I am confident that each and everyone of you will do everything you can to do just that.