

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

### **1. Staffordshire's People**

#### **1.1 Post 16 home to school and college transport policy**

In 2010/11, the County Council secured transport for 2,900 students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Following the highly successful introduction of the Your Staffordshire Card, the number of students using the post 16 transport scheme significantly reduced by about 55% to around 1,300 for 2011/12. The County Council has therefore reviewed its transport policy for post 16 students and the Cabinet has approved changes to the policy which are to be implemented from September 2012 for students moving into year 12. The current arrangements will continue for students in year 13 and above.

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2012)*

#### **1.2 Education Support Services Project**

The Cabinet has approved proposals to seek an investor willing to partner with the County Council to create a new company to deliver education and support services to schools and the wider learning community. It envisages providing a comprehensive end to end offer in this field, something that does not currently exist in the private sector. The project seeks to combine the best of the public sector (the Council's acknowledged expertise in education services, and its considerable experience of providing support services to schools) with the best of the private sector (the skills to commercialise and grow a business).

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2012)*

#### **1.3 Burton upon Trent Primary School Places Strategy: proposals to create additional school places**

The rising birth rate in Burton means that the town needs around 1,000 new primary schools places over the next ten years. In collaboration with local schools, additional places have been created over the last three years but the limited size of school sites means that two schools need to be built on new sites to provide more places from September 2013 onwards. The Cabinet have therefore approved proposals for a new 420-place academy to open in September 2013 on the Belvedere Sports and Social Club site and to enlarge St Modwen's Catholic Primary and relocate onto the Tutbury Road site in the 2013/14 academic year. The Cabinet have also approved proposals to expand Christchurch Infants School and River View Primary and Nursery School on their current sites.

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

#### **1.4 Partnership for Care: Rural Premium to Reflect Additional Costs of Social Care in Rural Areas**

There is evidence to suggest that services are more expensive to provide in rural areas and the more remote the area, the more likely it is to suffer relative disadvantage. Providers of services in rural and remote areas have identified a range of challenges that drive up costs, including distance, lack of transport, shortages of skilled staff, economies of scale, and insufficient funding. Provision has been specifically incorporated in the new contract arrangements for Domiciliary Care where a "rural premium" is paid to providers for delivering care to those areas of Staffordshire which are hard to support. However, those receiving a direct payment or personal budget get no such recognition. The Cabinet have therefore agreed that, in order to address the financial challenges of those receiving or providing care services in remote areas, a "Rural Premium" be introduced through an enhanced rate for Direct Payments.

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

#### **1.5 Improving Equipment and Adaptations Services**

The County Council's vision for the future of health and social care aims to increase the ability of individuals to look after themselves, safely and independently in their own homes for as long as they are able. There are many people whose lives can be improved immeasurably through the provision of practical adaptations in their own homes. These range from simple items of equipment to major adaptations and increasingly include technological aids to providing care and support. Current commissioning of these services is fragmented, leading to duplication, inefficiency and a confusing array of providers for people to deal with. The Cabinet have agreed that the County Council should enter into appropriate pooled budget arrangements for the joint commissioning of integrated community equipment and other services and that the Council act as lead authority on behalf of the Health sector and Stoke-on-Trent City Council to procure and oversee the delivery and management of contracts for these services. . That the Cabinet Member for Adults' Wellbeing, is also to launch a Staffordshire Green Paper, inviting responses to the proposed creation of a seamless equipment and adaptations service which will improve the support to people in their own home

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

## **2. Staffordshire's Economy**

### **2.1 Staffordshire County Council Tourism Strategy 2012 - 2014**

Visitors to Staffordshire have access to and can visit a varied range of quality attractions and Staffordshire is now the home of four major national centres / attractions - The National Memorial Arboretum, the National FA centre, The National Brewery Centre and the National Forest. The Cabinet have approved the Tourism Strategy 2012 – 2014 which identifies the means whereby the visitor economy may be developed, with resultant increases in employment and cultural opportunities. The Strategy also formalises the relationship between

the County Council and the Destination Management Partnership which operates under the 'Enjoy Staffordshire' brand and for which County Council is the accountable and legal body.

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

## **2.2 Staffordshire Business Support Fund – Continuation of the scheme**

The Staffordshire Business Support Fund was launched in November 2009 to support well run small businesses in Staffordshire unable to access finance from banks. Since 2009 the County Council has invested £1million, matched by ERDF monies. This has, to date, provided loans worth £1,452,000 to 55 businesses, including three start-up businesses, helping to create some 110 new jobs and safeguard 121. The contract with the Black Country Re-investment Society (BCRS), the company who runs the scheme for the County Council, is due to expire at the end of March 2012. The Cabinet has approved that a further £1 million be invested with BCRS, over a two year period, in order to continue with the scheme. The Fund is to be re-launched in spring 2012 to kick-start a targeted and focussed promotional campaign to ensure that Staffordshire businesses seeking access to finance are made fully aware of the opportunities provided by this initiative.

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2012)*

## **2.3 Superfast Broadband for Staffordshire**

The Cabinet has agreed a capital contribution of £7.44m towards the costs of improving local broadband infrastructure in Staffordshire. This contribution will be matched by the Government, and will lever investment totalling £93m. Investment in broadband infrastructure will enable a wide range of opportunities to be taken and innovations to be introduced for the transformation of public service delivery. It will also improve inward investment opportunities by making development sites more attractive to business and could, indirectly, lead to the creation of 500 to 1,200 jobs.

*(Cabinet – 21 March 2012)*

## **2.4 Corporate Property Strategy – Public Services Strategic Property Review**

After staff costs, the management of the property estate constitutes the second highest cost to the Council. It is essential, therefore, that the estate is managed efficiently and effectively. Through property rationalisation, the County Council and its public sector partners in the districts, health, fire, police and others have much to gain both in terms of reduced property costs but also higher productivity and improved services that result from integrating service provision and property use. The Cabinet have agreed to take forward the key opportunities for estate rationalisation and greater collaboration across the public sector partners that have been identified in the Staffordshire Public Services Strategic Property Review.

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

### **3. Staffordshire's Communities**

#### **3.1 Leader's Update -**

The Cabinet have received an update by the Leader of the County Council on a range of recent initiatives (including support to local communities to fight the impact of HS2, the joint venture to deliver education support services and the commitment to invest over £7.5 million in getting broadband across Staffordshire); together with progress on the creation of more jobs and prosperity for the County.

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

### **4. Our Staffordshire**

#### **4.1 2011/12 Quarter 4 Outcome, Performance and Finance Report**

The Cabinet has considered progress against the delivery of the nine cross-cutting outcomes in the Council's Strategic Plan together with the financial position at the end of quarter 4. The report highlighted a range of successes and initiatives including:

- The launch of the Business Support Helpline.
- Investment to support the roll-out of Super Fast Broadband
- The integration of social care and health services.
- The creation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
- The receipt of a "Hear by Right" Gold Award for the Children's Voice Project.
- Reductions in the levels of violent crime with injury and domestic violent crime.

The Cabinet also noted that the latest revenue outturn revealed a forecast saving of £3.761m on service budgets.

*(Cabinet – 18 April 2012)*

**4.2 Portfolio Holder Delegated Decisions** - Portfolio holders have recently taken decisions in respect of the following matters:

- That the County Council offer Jaguar LandRover (JLR) an uninsured indemnity single-claim warranty (with 50% reclaimable from Wolverhampton City Council) together with an externally sourced design warranty in respect of the site levelling works that are required for their proposed engine plant at i54.
- The grant of £65,000, over a two year period beginning in April 2012, to Landau Forte Charitable Trust for the specific purpose of using the allocation to aid maintenance works on the Victorian Building on the Queen Elizabeth Mercian School site in Tamworth.

- The carry forward of £155,200 from the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund from 2011/12 into 2012/13.
- The Section 75 Partnership Agreement between the County Council and the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Partnership Trust whereby the Council agrees to transfer functions as agreed to the Partnership Trust.
- The 2013/14 admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools (for which the Local Authority is the admission authority), and the coordinated admission scheme for primary and secondary schools for 2013/14.
- That the Staffordshire Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) include a Humanist representative as a member of Committee A.
- The letting of Holding No 14 Aston Hall on a fixed term tenancy of 10 years from 25 March 2012.
- The letting of Holding No 47 Plardiwick Estate on a fixed term tenancy of 18 years from 25 March 2012.
- That Capita Plc be appointed as the County Council's Procurement Partner.
- The allocation of grants for 2012/13 under the County Council's Capital Grants Scheme for Village Halls and Community Centres

**4.3 Forward Plan** - The Cabinet have approved the Forward Plan for the period 1 May to 31 August 2012, which contains details of the decisions which the Cabinet are expected to take during that period. .

#### **4.4 Staffordshire 100 Debate**

The second Staffordshire 100 debate took place in the Council Chamber on 20 March. The panel comprised Gareth Morris, Head Teacher of Flash Ley school in Stafford, Donald MacPhail, Regional Director of Veolia Environmental Services (UK) PLC, Amir Kabal, member of East Staffordshire Racial Equality Council and Dr David Hughes, Chair of North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. The debate was well attended with wide ranging, lively and sometimes controversial discussions concerning youth unemployment, elderly care and many other issues. The discussion will influence the strategic direction of the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership. Since the debate took place, I have received many favourable comments from partners that attended and I look forward to the third event.

#### **4.5 Sir James Hawley KCVO**

It was with great pleasure that I attended the dinner on 22 March to celebrate the contribution of Sir James to Staffordshire during his nearly nineteen years as Lord Lieutenant. During his time in office, Sir James has been an outstanding servant of the Queen and the county, and my best wishes go to him and his family for a relaxing and well deserved "retirement".

#### **4.6 National duties**

I have been attending a number of meetings of the Local Government Association and was pleased to accept an invitation to present examples of the outstanding and innovative work taking place across Staffordshire and elsewhere in the West Midlands in my role as Chairman of West Midlands Councils. The County Council Network continues to thrive and I attended an interesting meeting with Lord Taylor from DEFRA regarding rural proofing, a subject which is especially relevant to a county like Staffordshire. The annual CCN conference will be held in Staffordshire in the autumn and will prove a welcome opportunity to showcase the county and its successes to a national audience.

#### **4.7 Volunteer Staffordshire and All About You Awards**

On 30 March I attended the second Volunteer Staffordshire Awards dinner and ceremony. This year it was held at Alton Towers and was full to the rafters. Over 700 nominations were received; which is twice as many as the previous year. Everyone enjoyed a wonderful evening which saw the new Lord Lieutenant perform his first official duty and entertainment provided by the superb Staffordshire Youth Jazz Orchestra. During the awards ceremony, many of those attending were moved to tears by the volunteers' stories. Earlier in the day I had presented the annual All About You Awards to county council officers. The dedication and commitment of the nominees was outstanding and reflective of our workforce as a whole. The cross county council and partnership team that deliver the Volunteer Staffordshire campaign won the annual large team award, so the whole day's activities had a certain symmetry to them.

#### **4.8 St George's Park**

It was with a great deal of interest that I met David Sheepshanks, Chairman of St George's Park, the new national FA Centre located in East Staffordshire. We met on site and the development is coming along at a cracking pace. The national facility will be a true asset to the whole county. We discussed how the county council can work with the centre to maximise mutual benefit and I can't wait to see the first football kicked on site.

#### **4.9 Olympics Fine Tuning in Staffordshire**

I was really pleased to see that the Pakistan Hockey Federation has built on its existing relationship with Cannock Hockey Club by selecting the club as its venue to prepare for the Olympic Games. The presence of the Pakistan team will, I hope, prove inspiring to local youngsters and foster an interest in hockey, the Olympics and other team sports. Pakistan and Great Britain are drawn in the same group during the Olympic tournament, so best wishes to both teams.

#### **4.10 The "President" and the Queen**

What a delight it was to see the President narrow boat off on its 300 mile journey to London, proudly flying the flag for Staffordshire as it prepares to take

part in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee River Thames Pageant on 3 June. The Royal Barge has already been spotted "practising" for the Pageant on the Thames – a truly magnificent sight. The President, on its way to London made three canal side stops at Etruria Industrial Museum, Stone and Fradley Junction; being enthusiastically welcomed by numbers of on-lookers and the media on each occasion.

#### **4.11 West Midlands Councils (WMC)**

In my role as Chairman of WMC, I have chaired a number of learning events and seminars. These include "colleges in their communities" where members examined the new remit given to colleges by central government and discussed what a good relationship between a college and its community looks like. At the "mutualisation" event, we explored options for public service delivery via mutual models. We considered the barriers to be overcome and if the mutual approach provided opportunities to drive cost reduction, increase productivity, retain jobs and enhance user satisfaction.

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