

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Staffordshire's Communities

1.1 Infrastructure+

The current contract for highway maintenance functions comes to an end in April 2014. In light of this, Cabinet has agreed to enter into a strategic partnership with Amey for the delivery of improvements and maintenance of the County Council's infrastructure assets. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure, has been authorised to agree the final details of the scope of services to be included in the contract with Amey and also contract conditions.

(Cabinet – 19 February 2014)

1.2 Kingswood Lakeside Business Park

The Kingswood Lakeside Business Park is partially completed and has started to deliver results and more jobs for local people. Two developments are completed, two plots are the subject of negotiations and there is interest in further plots. However, the delivery of these further developments is being hampered by various issues. The scheme needs an increased budget for completion of outstanding works, including remaining on-site infrastructure. The Cabinet have therefore agreed an increase in investment in the Kingswood Lakeside Phase 2 scheme from the previously approved £7.03M up to a maximum of £7.68.

(Cabinet – 19 February 2014)

1.3 Centralisation of County Archive Service and William Salt Library Collections

Bringing together the county's collections from the existing three sites onto one modern accessible site will improve visitors' experience and the quality of service offered. Cabinet has therefore agreed a proposal to extend Staffordshire Record Office to enable the two record offices at Stafford and Lichfield as well as the William Salt Library collection to be brought together onto one site. Cabinet has also agreed to the submission of a grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the cost of the project.

(Cabinet – 19 February 2014)

1.4 Approval of Revised Statement of Community Involvement when dealing with Planning Applications and Producing our Minerals and Waste Local Plans

The Cabinet has approved the adoption of a revised Statement of Community Involvement which contains guidance on consultation processes that are to be used during the preparation of local plans and in handling planning applications. The production of a Statement of Community Involvement is a legal requirement under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

(Cabinet – 19 February 2014)

2. Staffordshire's People

2.1 Supporting People Review

Changes to government funding have given the County Council the opportunity to review its current approach to the Supporting People programme, with the aim of sustainably supporting vulnerable members of the community with the resources at the Council's disposal. With this in mind, Cabinet has decided:

(a) That the principle of focusing resources around early help and targeted support, which will prevent many people from needing higher levels of intervention in the future, be agreed.

(b) That a move away from the current arrangements for providing housing related support in favour of a needs based, integrated approach to commissioning future services to be developed with partners and agreed through the Health and Wellbeing Board, be agreed.

(c) That current commissioning arrangements be reviewed in line with the Council's agreed outcomes and principles, with a focus on the quality of life of local people.

(d) That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Care to make any and all decisions relating to the renewal, variation, cancellation or re-provision of existing contractual arrangements (subject to a full Equalities Impact Assessment/Community Impact Assessment being undertaken for each such decision to include consideration of the length of transition, and the impact on providers, partners and localities).

(Cabinet – 19 February 2014)

3. Our Staffordshire

3.1 Third Quarter Budget Monitoring Report 2013/14

The Cabinet has received details of the financial position of the county council (including the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy) at the end of the third quarter 2013/14. They noted that, with regard to the Revenue Budget, at quarter 2, a forecast overspend of £9.8m (1.9%) was reported. Now at quarter 3, the forecast showed an anticipated overspend of £8.538m (1.6%). Work was continuing to bring down the projected overspend. However, the anticipated overspend had been provided for in the MTFs approved by Cabinet on 5 February 2014.

The latest capital outturn projection was £149.7m, compared to the quarter 2 projection of £158.2m, a decrease of 5.3%. The re-profiling of capital spend and additional capital grants were the main reasons for this change.

(Cabinet – 19 February 2014)

3.2 Portfolio Holder Delegated Decisions

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

- The selection of the preferred delivery partner to become Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Partner on the Infrastructure+ Project.

3.3 Forward Plan

Cabinet has approved the Forward Plan for the period 19 March to 16 July 2014, which contains details of the decisions which the Cabinet are expected to take during that period.

3.4 A50 Growth Corridor

In my last statement to Full Council I referred to the upcoming A50 Growth Corridor. The two projects involved in this programme are yet another example of how the county council is driving forward growth in Staffordshire working with our colleagues and partners to deliver new opportunities for local employers and attract investment.

The pre-planning consultation is now complete and saw strong attendance at the various stakeholder events in the area. Even though the project is government funded and on a road managed by the Highways Agency and – the fact the county council is carrying out the works, it reflects our excellent reputation for delivery of essential highways infrastructure. That reputation is built on i54 South Staffordshire in particular and the success we have had in drawing investment from big businesses like Jaguar Land Rover. This clearly demonstrates the advantages of being proactive, rolling up our sleeves as a county council and getting on with the job in hand.

I am sure members will be hearing more and more about this essential project over the coming months.

3.5 Mid-Staffordshire NHS Trust

Members will be aware that the Secretary of State for Health has agreed with the TSA's recommendation to dissolve Mid-Staffordshire Trust.

Whilst I am aware that campaigners may be disappointed, it is my intention to ensure that the county council is heavily involved in any transition, working with our NHS colleagues to ensure the continued improvement in services in Stafford and Cannock and to work through the NHS to build a fully integrated health service across the whole of Staffordshire.

The crisis at Mid-Staffordshire shocked the nation and led to a long period of doubt and concern. We need a new kind of district hospital in Stafford that serves local needs and provides the best possible service. I am less concerned about different structures or the names of the trusts involved – the primary issue is to get Stafford and Cannock back on to a sustainable footing that doesn't require continued bailing out from the government, and can attract the best staff and clinicians to serve local people. I have written to the Secretary of State to make this case and to see how we can play a role in the future of Stafford and Cannock Hospital and their future working with the wider health economy.

3.6. Other Items

I have represented the county council at a number of external stakeholder events.