

## Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 17 February 2021

### Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2020/21



**Alan White, Leader of Staffordshire County Council said,**

“The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a considerable impact on our finances and operations – though we have met the challenge with the whole council working incredibly hard to support our communities through this difficult time.

“Our ongoing work with the NHS to combat the spread of coronavirus in Staffordshire has included identifying hotspots with targeted community testing programmes and latterly supporting the vaccine roll-out. We have now distributed six million items of PPE to care staff, social workers and other frontline roles in addition to the provision of PPE to over 2,000 small businesses. Through our #DoingOurBit initiative, 109 community groups have now received grants and we have continued to support our schools and early years settings in any way we can.

“Our five-year economic recovery programme has seen a new year launch of proposals to work with our district and borough councils on new support programmes for businesses and to increase employee and apprenticeship skills. It follows on from our comprehensive business start-up support package. Meanwhile our major regeneration projects continue at pace and we have seen more companies commit to invest in Staffordshire and create hundreds of jobs.

“COVID-19 will remain a huge challenge throughout this year and beyond. However we can assure people that our effective management of our finances and operations have put us in a strong position as we move forward; and we are confident that with the rapid roll-out of the vaccine and continued efforts of all partners, our residents and businesses, there is light at the end of the tunnel.”



**Mike Sutherland, Cabinet Member for Finance said,**

“The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic remains a huge challenge to our finances, but one which we continue to manage resolutely.

“At the end of Quarter 3, the latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £600,000 which equates to 0.1 per cent of our budget. This compares to £1.8m for Quarter 2.

“The pandemic will undoubtedly impact on the county council and its finances in the months and years to come. However, we can assure people that our effective management of them means we retain our focus on supporting those most in need, our communities and businesses as we move forward from this difficult period.”

## **Report Summary:**

This quarterly Integrated Performance Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan.

## **Recommendation(s)**

We recommend that:

- a. Cabinet notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

<b>Local Members Interest</b>
N/A

# Cabinet – Wednesday 17 February 2021

## Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2020/21

### Recommendations of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance

We recommend that:

- a. Cabinet notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

### Report of the Director of Corporate Services

#### 1. Background

2. All parts of Staffordshire County Council continue to deliver against their recovery priorities and wider service plans, whilst also progressing some planning and delivery activity for the future. This report provides an update on Quarter 3 key activities for each directorate area.

#### 3. Summary



4. At the end of Quarter 3, the overall assessment on the Council's performance and financial position is amber. There are some areas of risk in Adult Social Care and Families and Communities. Further details are included within this report and its appendices. The latest revenue forecast outturn shows an overspend of £0.587m (0.1%), compared to the overspend of £1.809m (0.3%) at Quarter 2. This is mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 5. Health and Care

6. Overall, significant work has continued across Health and Care, both leading the Council's response to COVID-19 and undertaking recovery of some key services. Prioritisation of this critical work has however resulted in some delays to delivery of pre-COVID activity, such as its Targeted Reviews Programme, however revised plans are in development to address this.



7. Ongoing COVID-19 Local Outbreak Control activity has included:

- Identification of weekly hotspot areas for community testing to help control the spread of the virus;
- Successful roll out of COVID asymptomatic testing model, including the use of lateral flow rapid testing;
- Support the NHS with the COVID vaccination programme, focussing on at risk groups;
- Extension of local contact tracing for all positive cases to reduce further transmission; and

- Ongoing support to care providers to manage incidents within services and staffing.
8. During this quarter COVID-19 cases in Staffordshire continued to rise, following the national trend. However, more recently cases are slowly falling and are now at 220.3 per 100,000 population (in the seven days to 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021). This is below regional rate of 256.8 but above the national rate of 200.5. Residents can keep up to date with the latest case figures in Staffordshire, including a district breakdown by clicking [here](#).
  9. More than 6 million items of personal protective equipment (PPE) have now been packed and delivered by the Council to front line care staff, social workers and other roles in direct contact. The Council continues to provide items of PPE when supplies have been difficult to obtain. This has helped ensure every care home and care provider in Staffordshire has what it needs to care for the most vulnerable.
  10. Ensuring care market resilience has continued to be a key part of recovery operations during Quarter 3. The Council has distributed £4.3m from the second round of Adult Social Care infection control funds to support their efforts to reduce the risk from COVID-19 for service users, staff and visitors. Furthermore, the Council has worked with Day Services providers to ensure they are COVID-19 compliant so services can remain operational during the national lockdown. Where this is not possible, they will provide outreach support to ensure people continue to be supported.
  11. Vital work with NHS colleagues has continued to ensure COVID-19 discharge pathways from hospitals are implemented and working effectively, in order to free up acute hospital beds in a timely way.
  12. In the adults' safeguarding service there is however an increase in its waiting list currently being experienced, largely due to an increase in contacts over the Christmas period. In response to the increased demand, additional capacity has been secured and appropriately trained, and plans remain in place for Adult Social Care teams to prioritise work on a risk basis for completion.
  13. Much work has been underway to progress the Council's Supportive Communities programme, aimed at helping residents to stay independent for longer. This quarter saw over £200k of #DoingOurBit grant funding allocated to 109 community groups, helping make a difference to vulnerable older people and children and families. In addition, with help from anchor organisations and Support Staffordshire, in October 18 Community Help Points were launched across the county. The help points are already providing befriending support, practical help and support in the home and low-level mental healthcare.
  14. Work continues to refresh the Council's Public Health & Prevention Strategy, with delivery of this focussed on mitigating the ongoing public health risks from COVID-19. Recent delivery includes the Stoptober stop smoking campaign ran throughout September and October generated 56 referrals to the stop smoking service. Efforts have also been made to widen the eligibility criteria for the physical activity element

of the Everyone Health Service, to help tackle physical activity and obesity across Staffordshire.

15. Furthermore, a report outlining plans for a new Staffordshire Joint Mental Health Strategy was presented to Staffordshire's Health & Wellbeing Board on 10th December 2020, with agreement to proceed. Initial work has been completed to identify key priority areas for the new strategy and a period of engagement is intended to commence in February 2021.
16. Work on the Staffordshire Warmer Homes scheme is delivering a range of positive outcomes. The scheme, which launched in June 2019, has already supported over 200 homes to be connected to gas and have free First Time Central Heating, with significant financial benefits. In addition, eligible families can also access other energy saving measures like home insulation and solar panels. So far £9.7m funding has been secured to support Fuel poverty in Staffordshire, with potential to secure over £17m in 2021.
17. From a Finance perspective, the Health and Care forecast outturn at Quarter 3 is a saving of £1.131m. There remains a range of high risk Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings within this area, with the directorate seeking alternative savings where necessary. In addition, the level of client debt is above target and work is ongoing to recover this. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £29.941mm. The longer-term financial impact of COVID-19 is not yet clear but will undoubtedly affect the MTFS in future years.

## 18. Families and Communities



19. Work to progress its recovery plans, transformation and wider service delivery continue to take place across the service.
20. During Quarter 3 considerable work has taken place to support schools and early years settings in the management of outbreaks. This includes provision of health protection advice and guidance, as well as visits to higher risk areas, to support schools in minimising any impact on learning.
21. Whilst schools subsequently closed on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021, they do remain open for critical workers, vulnerable children and children with no access to laptops. Compared to the first lockdown, there has been a considerable uptake of the school places, which has proved challenging for schools in managing demand and provision of online learning. The Council continues to support schools on the implication of the new lockdown, whilst also working with them on the roll out of Lateral Flow Testing in settings. In addition, the Council has reinstated its weekly vulnerable children's return from schools to ensure continued safeguarding and support for those in need.
22. The implementation of an Emotional Wellbeing in Schools programme is enabling schools to provide effective wellbeing support to children and young people who are dealing with the emotional impact of COVID-19. So far, seven local experts have been recruited and over 100 education colleagues have attended virtual training, with further sessions planned during January.

23. In December 2020, the number of Staffordshire Children in our Care increased slightly to 1,268, from 1,244 in September 2020, and is in line with the children's transformation reprofiled business case. The increase is partially due to court delays caused by COVID-19. The current rate is 74 per 10,000, higher than the national benchmark (67 per 10,000 in 2020) but lower than regional (85 per 10,000 at end of September 2020). The number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan is 662 and has remained relatively stable for the previous 12 months, with a current rate of 39 per 10,000. This is just below the most recent national benchmark (43 per 10,000 in 2020) and lower than the regional rate (49 per 10,000 at the end of September 2020).
24. Following the successful allocation of up to £469,000 of Department for Education (DfE) funding last quarter, social workers have now been recruited and begun specialist placements in seven Staffordshire schools, as part of a pilot scheme to reduce the number of referrals for specialist help. Staffordshire is one of 21 local authorities chosen for the extended national trial to identify need early and provide young people and their families with the necessary support.
25. Since 2015 the Council has helped 8,999 families through the Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC) programme. By the end of October, we had already exceeded our successful family targets, five months earlier than set by Government. By the end of 2020 1,100 families have achieved successful outcomes for this financial year, with this figure set to increase further.
26. Family Hubs continued to administer both the Defra Emergency food Scheme and the COVID winter grant. By December 2020 £500,000 has been allocated and a further 28,667 children have accessed food vouchers during the October and Christmas holiday period.
27. A proposed Staffordshire special educational needs and disability (SEND) strategy has been drafted after an initial period of engagement earlier this year. Public consultation has since commenced with parents, carers and education professionals invited to take part. The [consultation](#) was open to all those interested which recently closed on the 24th January.
28. Positively, significant work has taken place to clear the backlog of overdue Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP). Dedicating additional resource has resulted in the 540 children with overdue assessments been issued with their Plan since the project started in March 2020. This has reduced overall pressure within the service and led to an improvement in overall timeliness. In 2020, 33% of EHC Plans were issued within 20 weeks, compared to 13% reported in 2019. If the historic backlog is excluded, 60% of new EHC Plans issued in 2020 were in time, and now in line with the most recently published national average.
29. The Council has been successful in securing funds of £444,000 to deliver the Staffordshire Countryside Explorer project at Cannock Chase, Chasewater and Greenway Bank Country Parks. This year will see improvements to facilities including two new play areas, new heritage trails, as well as paths and visitor centre improvements. A further £23,000 has also been awarded to improve facilities at Chasewater Country Park.

30. To enable reading to be shared across the county at Christmas time, Staffordshire Libraries has gifted 500 gift parcels as part of The Reading Agency's partnership with Costa Coffee at the end of last year. The packs were distributed via Staffordshire Women's Aid and the Family Hubs, with an offer of advice or support from the library service.
31. In terms of the financial position at Quarter 3, for Families & Communities there is a forecast saving of £62,000, compared to the forecast overspend of £0.875m in Quarter 2. This is largely due to staffing vacancies and additional grant incomes. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £5.913m, as well as additional exceptional costs and lost income.

## 32. Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

33. The Council continues to support local businesses to survive, adapt and continue to operate as part of delivering its 5-year Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy. 
34. The Council has continued to work closely with local District and Borough Councils across Staffordshire to maximise the impact of available Government Funding support. This includes an investment of £862,000, to complement investment by District and Borough Councils, from the Additional Restrictions Grant which will support activities such as training grants to employers, wage support for apprentices and financial support for small businesses to thrive.
35. In addition, a Business Support Partnership Scheme, working with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and all local District and Borough Councils, will enable small local businesses to have access to extensive business support networks. The scheme is on track to start mid-January.
36. The regeneration of town centres in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stafford and Tamworth will be assisted through the allocation of funding from the Government's Future High Street Fund. This quarter the government announced that Tamworth will receive more than £21.65m as part of the £830 million Future High Streets Fund. In addition, both Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stafford have also secured provisional offers of £11m and just over £14m subject to further development of their plans.
37. Furthermore, businesses across Staffordshire have continued to be supported by the Council and its partners through a range of targeted initiatives, to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Some specific examples include:
- Countywide redundancy task group have begun preparations for a virtual jobs fair to be held on 14th January, in partnership with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP). The aim is to engage over 5,000 local people to help bridge the gap between industries at risk of redundancy and growth sectors;
  - Staffordshire Start-Up Loan scheme is assisting those made redundant or unemployed to start up new businesses with loans of between £3,000 and

£5,000, with no interest or fees. The first loan payment has been issued, with further funds to be allocated;

- Through the #StaffordshireMeansBusiness campaign a weekly newsletter is now being circulated to over 6,000 people informing them of key COVID business support and wider activities of interest;
- Launched #ThinkStaffordshireFirst campaign to promote the impact of small spend on local jobs and communities.

38. This support continues to be critical, with the latest out-of-work claimant figures remaining unchanged at 4.7% of the local population, with a total of 25,035 claimants. Whilst Staffordshire has been experiencing a rise in claimant numbers due to COVID-19, the County's strong position going into the pandemic has meant claimant rates remain lower than both regional (7.2%) and national (6.4%) averages. The proportion of young claimants, aged 18-24, has increased from 3.7% in March 2020 to 7.6% in December 2020, with 'A Plan for Jobs 2020' initiatives such as the Kickstart Scheme being put in place to support Staffordshire's young people's employment prospects, to help prevent them become long-term unemployed.

39. During Quarter 3 a range of business cases have been developed that enable the Council to secure investment from the Government's 'Getting Building Fund'. These include Council led projects such as i54 Western Extension, the Skills Equipment Fund, the Local Sustainable Transport Programme and Shire Hall in Stafford.

40. A total of £1.6m has been secured from this Fund for the development of Shire Hall, through the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, with the remaining cost met by the Council or other available funding sources. The investment will see the building transformed into an enterprise hub that will offer workspace for up to 20 small businesses, whilst helping to support the town centre economy. Additionally, in October Cabinet also agreed the next phase of works for the Eastgate regeneration scheme, which is a key part of Stafford town centre's transformation.

41. Much work has continued as part of delivering our community learning programme despite COVID-19 challenges. Learning providers and participants have transformed and adapted, with some courses more accessible to people across the county. Over 2,300 Staffordshire residents enrolled on the Council's Community Learning courses during 2019/20, and where lockdown meant the suspension of traditional classroom delivery, a good proportion of courses have continued to be delivered online.

42. Highways improvements are set to go ahead early this year, having successfully secured £1.8m Active Travel Government funding, to help deliver our local cycling and walking infrastructure plan in Stafford, Cannock, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Burton upon Trent. The investment will see a range of improvements delivered throughout the year, helping to improve people's health and wellbeing, combat climate change and reduces congestion on local roads.

43. Following feedback from residents and Councillors, delivery of the £5m extra investment works, and £2m in-year investment in Community Highway priorities is now well underway. In addition, the Council continues to respond to recent flooding and gritting operations throughout adverse weather conditions.
44. Finally, progress has been made in relation to the Council's Superfast Staffordshire programme team are currently working with approximately 60 communities and Openreach on Community Fibre Partnerships to utilise the DCMS Rural Gigabit Broadband Vouchers, along with the Council's "Top-up" voucher scheme (£1m). It is hoped that this could provide full fibre broadband services to 2,000 to 3,000 premises over the next 12 months. Over £753,000 vouchers have been allocated to date across the County.
45. The overall financial position at Quarter 3 for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills is a forecast saving of £0.109m with small forecast savings across the business. On top of this, the forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £5.353m, compared to the Quarter 2 forecast of £4.684m.

#### 46. Corporate Services



47. Corporate Services continues to provide vital support to the organisation in delivering on its priorities.
48. A significant amount of corporate support has been provided to Local Outbreak Control. During the quarter local contact tracing has been extended to cover all positive cases, with 78% of positive cases reached, helping to reduce further transmission of the virus. Dedicated data and analytical capacity are also helping to target action in relation to Test and Trace activity and management of outbreaks.
49. The Council's Registration Services has continued to register more deaths, nearly 500 more than Quarter 3 in 2019. Due to November's lockdown and the ongoing restrictions, the service now has approximately 1,000 more marriage ceremonies scheduled for 2021, compared with a normal year. These will either need administering or rescheduling should restrictions continue into Spring/Summer.
50. Much work has been underway to create a Staffordshire brand that will help to grow the economy and create more, better paid jobs. As a result of this work a new Staffordshire story and place brand was launched in late November, as part of an online event, with almost 200 key stakeholders involved from across the county and the Midlands. A new place brand manager will now lead the development and delivery of a place marketing plan.
51. In Corporate Services the financial position at Quarter 3 is a forecast saving of £0.146m, however there is a forecast overspend in HR offset by a saving in Assets and Business Support. This position includes a provision for M365 costs in the Digital area in 2021/22 of £0.250m as well as a contribution to forecast costs for the new recruitment system of £50,000. At Quarter 3 the impact of COVID-19 is £5.516m, representing an increase of £0.659m from Quarter 2. This increase is due to the forecast loss of income in the Registrars area and the additional costs

of continuing to use the County Showground for mortuary facilities and equipment storage.

## 52. Strategic Plan Principles

53. A significant amount of work has taken place this quarter to drive forward the Council's four principles, which continues to underpin our priority work. A summary of the key activities is set out below.

## 54. Communities

55. The Council recently launched its #DoingourBit Community Grant fund, which this quarter has seen the Council successfully award 109 local community groups a total of £203,199 funding to support vulnerable older adults and children and families. Furthermore, as part of the Council's response to COVID-19 the County Councillors' Members Fund continues to provide support to communities. As at 8 January 2021, a total of £207,666 COVID-19 support funding has been allocated to over 200 community groups to support vulnerable residents and community recovery.

56. A Staffordshire COVID-19 Resident Survey, which ran between August and September 2020, has been delivered achieving one of the largest responses to date of 3,921. Results have been published [online](#), alongside actions being taken in response to the feedback. Building on the Council's commitment to listen and respond to the needs of its citizens, a new Staffordshire Residents' survey was established which ran between November and January 2021. Results of this engagement are currently being analysed.

57. In December Cabinet approved the Council's Communities Delivery Plan, informed by the Council's progress working with communities, as well learning from COVID-19. The Plan promotes social action and to build capacity in the voluntary and community sector, as well as help the Council to work in a more community focused way. Following approval, the plan will now be taken forward and delivered. [Click here](#) to view the refreshed Communities Delivery Plan.

## 58. Digital

59. Work to reset the Council's digital strategy and programme has now been completed, with the development of an ambitious Digital First Strategy and Programme for approval by Cabinet on 17 February. The strategy focusses on four themes - Digital Citizen, Digital Council, Digital Care and Digital Economy. These themes are underpinned by programmes of work, including improvements to online access to services and information, as well as enabling digital innovations.

60. The digital team, with the Digital Leadership Group, are continuing to develop the programme to ensure that benefits are clear and that the programme support delivery of the Council's priorities.

61. During the next quarter the priorities for the digital programme will be to further support the Council's smart working approach, the development of a digital infrastructure strategic framework and actions to increase digital inclusion.

62. Digital inclusion remains a key priority throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, to help ensure residents can access digital information and feel connected to their community. A Digital Inclusion Action Plan has been created to support the Council's efforts, with a number of 'Priority Actions' identified for the period January to March. These actions will ensure that alternative provision is put in place where possible so that residents continue to be supported.

### 63. Climate Change

64. Key activities this quarter include Cabinet approval and publication of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. The plan includes changes that will put climate change at the centre of the Council's day-to-day thinking, in contracts and decision making, as well as practical projects such as increasing the use of LED lighting, the use of biomass or solar energy and tree planting. It is intended that the plan will be further developed as work progresses and technology changes, to facilitate the Council's ambition of net zero carbon by 2050.

65. Activity is now underway to commence the refresh the Staffordshire Climate Change Strategy. Initial engagement with partners is also planned and will be facilitated by Keele University.

66. To support Staffordshire communities to do their bit towards the reduction of carbon emissions, improve air quality or help people to deal with climate change events a new Member Climate Action Fund was launched in November 2020 to support projects in their communities. £124,000 is being made available and the fund is open until the end of February 2021. At the end of Quarter 3, 21 applications had been received, and by the end of January 2021 this had grown to over 70 applications.

### 67. Workforce

68. The Council continues to move forward with the delivery of the Learning and Development Commissioning Plan. Contracting for our new Learning Experience Platform, an online learning and development tool for all staff, is now complete with the system due to go live in April. The delivery of the Council's iManage development programme for managers has also begun, with more than 400 managers signed up to take part so far.

69. Significant work has taken to place to develop the Council's forthcoming 'Employer Brand' aimed at both existing employees and new applicants, with approval of this expected in the coming months. Alongside this a number of workshops, attended by officers, members, community leaders and trade unions were held to get feedback on our current approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I), and capture ideas on how we can improve it. Initial findings from these sessions have now been shared and will inform the corporate ED&I strategy that is currently in development.

70. Finally, one positive outcome of the COVID-19 response has been a significant and continued reduction in sickness absence levels, currently 10.24 days lost per employee (December 2020), representing a reduction of 16% from the same period last year. Improvements have been seen against the majority of absence reasons, but of particular note is the reduction in musculoskeletal absences, currently 1.51 days lost per employee, a reduction of 28% from last year.

### **List of Appendices:**

1. Finance Quarter 3 Summary
2. Finance Quarter 3 Detailed Report
3. Corporate Checklist
4. Revenue Forecast Outturn 2020/21
5. Capital Forecast Outturn 2020/21
6. Financial Health Indicators 2020/21

### **Contact Details**

**Report Commissioner:** Andrew Donaldson  
**Job Title:** Assistant Director - Strategy, Public Health & Prevention  
**Telephone No.:** 01785 278399  
**E-Mail Address:** [andrew.donaldson@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.donaldson@staffordshire.gov.uk)

**Report Commissioner:** Rob Salmon  
**Job Title:** County Treasurer  
**Telephone No.:** 01785 276350  
**E-Mail Address:** [rob.salmon@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:rob.salmon@staffordshire.gov.uk)