

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

### **1. Intensive Support for Staffordshire Children with Disabilities**

The Cabinet have approved proposals to bring together the commissioning of the previously separate arrangements for Children with Disabilities' Community Support and Aiming High 1-1 intensive support and short breaks into one contracting arrangement. The County Council currently commissions a range of providers from across Staffordshire to deliver Children's Community Support and Short Breaks on behalf of the local authority, though these are currently commissioned and contracted as two separate support programmes. The proposal approved by the Cabinet advocates the benefits of bringing these arrangements together under one commission, to provide more flexible, responsive support that draws on children and families' existing strengths, and focuses on development, independence, preparedness for adulthood, and cost effectiveness. The first two years of the new contract will be used to further investigate the merits and risks associated with In-house delivery of this support, and the efficacy of this model within the proposed new Children's System, as the Options Appraisal demonstrated a number of potential strengths to this approach.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

### **2. Future Delivery of Replacement Care Services in Staffordshire (Learning Disabilities)**

In November 2020 Cabinet endorsed an options analysis to be undertaken for future provision of residential replacement care in Staffordshire as well as the potential expansion of in-house services to offer a greater range of support for people in their homes and communities as part of a single integrated service, pending a business case and public consultation. These Cabinet decisions have been reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate and this has identified an opportunity to expand the scope of the options appraisal and consultation to include all replacement care services, not just those provided in-house or within a residential setting, in order to determine the optimum way to configure replacement care in the long term to maximise individual experience, quality and cost effectiveness. The Cabinet have approved the commencement of the options appraisal and the results will be presented to Cabinet in the third quarter of 2021.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

### **3. Child Exploitation and Missing Children & Young People Service**

Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Staffordshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioners Office are proposing to commission a Pan Staffordshire Child Exploitation & Missing Children and Young People Service. The proposed Service will see the Child Sexual Exploitation & Missing Children & Young People Service Model reconfigured to be inclusive of all forms of "Exploitation", as outlined in the Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Child Exploitation Strategy. It is proposed that the Service will consist of four core elements, each of which will interlink

with the other to ensure that the need and voice of a child is centric to any support that is provided within the Service and across wider partnerships. The Service will adopt a whole family approach to empower families in achieving their goals with the aim of sustaining long term change and stability. The Cabinet have approved proposals for the procurement of the proposed Service by Staffordshire County Council, on behalf of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the Staffordshire Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

#### **4. Public Health Commissioning Plans**

The Cabinet have received details of the forthcoming commissioning plans for adults' public health services (sexual health, drug and alcohol and lifestyle services) for the next two financial years. The aim is to improve the quality of and access to services and have been developed with partners. Authority to award and enter into relevant contracts for the services in the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23 has been delegated to the Cabinet Member for Health and Care in consultation with the Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Integrated Care and the Director for Health and Care. All the commissioning plans are funded through the Public Health Ring Fenced Grant or other dedicated Central Government funding. There is no impact on the Council's MTFS.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

#### **5. Recommission of Staffordshire Integrated Advocacy Service**

The County Council currently commissions a Staffordshire wide, single, Integrated Advocacy Service which provides a comprehensive approach to coordination and delivery of the following statutory advocacy services:

- Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) including Deprivation of Liberty
- Safeguards (DoLS) and paid Representatives
- Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)
- Care Act Advocacy, including for Prisoners
- Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)

The contract term of the current service expires on 31 March 2022 with no further extension option. The Cabinet have therefore approved the commencement of a competitive tender process to procure the commissioned service from 1 April 2022 for a maximum contract period of four years.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

#### **6. UK Community Renewal Fund - Priority Projects**

The Cabinet have approved proposals for the County Council to take on the role of Accountable Body for the UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) in addition to its current role as Lead Authority. The £220m UKCRF aims to support people and communities most in need across the UK to pilot programmes and new approaches and will invest in skills, community and place, local business, and supporting people

into employment. The level of interest seen locally in the UKCRF bidding process has been very positive and as a result a pipeline of projects has been created from a broad range of organisations reflecting the Council's ambitions for Staffordshire.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

## **7. Waste Management – Retender for the Disposal of Sweepings and Gully Waste**

Sweepings (street cleaning residues) collected by Staffordshire Waste Collection Authorities are currently treated under arrangements procured by Warwickshire County Council and involving, in addition to Warwickshire, Staffordshire County Council, Leicestershire County Council, Worcestershire County Council and Coventry City Council. These current arrangements will end on 2 January 2022 and there are no further extensions available. The Cabinet has therefore delegated authority to the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change, to let a contract (or contracts) to provide treatment facilities for sweepings (street cleaning residues) collected by Staffordshire Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) and gully waste collected by Amey LG (Amey) on behalf of the County Council.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

## **8. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 1 2021/22**

The Cabinet have received an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They noted that the latest revenue forecast outturn showed a saving of £8.1m (1.5%). Due to Covid 19 Central Government had issued additional grant payments to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services while protecting the workforce and local residents.

The latest capital outturn projection was £126.7m, compared to the budgeted position of £108.8m, an increase of 16.4%. This projection was a fully funded position. This increase was due to additional developer contributions for schools, new grants and additional costs and rephasing on the i54 project.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

## **9. Framework Agreement for the Provision of Asbestos Removal and Encapsulation Services**

The Cabinet have approved proposals to proceed with the procurement of a framework agreement for the provision of Asbestos Removal and Encapsulation Services (the "Framework Agreement") and to secure approval for the Director of Corporate Services to be given delegated authority to approve the award of the Framework Agreement and the subsequent award of any call-off contracts under the Framework Agreement. The Framework Agreement will be for a period of 2 years starting 1st March 2022 to 28th February 2024 and dependent on the quality of their delivery, a 24-month service extension to a final contract end date of 28th February 2026.

*(Cabinet – 21 July 2021)*

## **10. Update from COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board**

The Cabinet received an update from the COVID-19 Member led Local Outbreak Control Board. They noted that the number of new cases of Covid nationally and in Staffordshire rose during August 2021 and was continuing at high levels; vaccination was limiting the number of hospitalisations and deaths from Covid, however, the NHS and social care were experiencing considerable pressure from Covid and other conditions; people should exercise personal responsibility and continue to take sensible precautions to prevent the spread of infection (maintaining good hygiene, keeping a respectful distance, and wearing face coverings in crowded indoor places, as well as testing twice weekly); the Covid vaccination programme continued to make progress with more than 1.3 million doses having been administered, and more than 80% of adults in Staffordshire having now received two doses; the current focus was on vaccinating younger adults and 12-17 year olds; and the Government was expected to announce a booster campaign for older adults as well as vaccination of 12-15 year olds.

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **11. Staffordshire Means Back to Business – Oral Update**

The Cabinet received an update from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills giving an update on “Staffordshire Means Back to Business” activity including the following matters:

- Staffordshire’s recovery continues apace. Staffordshire saw a significant increase in Universal Credit Claimants early in the Covid crisis but recent signs of recovery with claimants reducing by nearly a fifth (17%) or 4,350 claimants between February and July and our rate of 3.9% is lower than the 6.5% regionally and 5.5% nationally.
- Although job vacancies in Staffordshire were heavily hit early in the crisis, overall levels have recovered and are now above pre-COVID levels.
- Our Ignite Programme, designed to support young people looking to start their own businesses, has enabled us to reach a significant number of students and raise awareness of both entrepreneurship and the Ignite programme through the delivery of the “Encouraging Enterprise” lesson plan. This would not have been possible without the support of the colleges who rolled it out effectively through their staff. As reported previously 7,000 students have received an Ignite lesson which must be unprecedented. We have now approved grants to support 171 companies with free training enabling them to work in a post Covid competitive environment. We are supporting 147 new apprentices which would not have been available without this initiative.

- We are seeing unprecedented levels of activity to revitalise our town centres following successful government awards through Town Deals and Future High Streets funds including proposals for the regeneration of Stafford Town Centre.

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **12. Call-Off Contract for the Supply of ICT Equipment and Services**

The Cabinet have given approval to proceed with the award of a Call-Off Contract for the Supply of ICT Hardware and Software Services from the ICT VAR Framework Agreement. They have also agreed that the Director of Corporate Services be given delegated authority to approve the award of the Contract for a period of 3 years starting 20 September 2021, with the option to extend by 2 x 12- month periods. The estimated value for the contract is c.£1.6m per annum for the Council.

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **13. Developing Family Hubs in Staffordshire**

The Cabinet have considered proposals for the development of Family Hubs in Staffordshire. They noted that the County already has a well-developed existing network of Children's Centres which currently focus provision on the Early Years. This network of Children's Centres, operated through the Early Years Coordination Service, seeks to deliver a seamless integrated service within communities in relation to the Early Years. The delivery of Staffordshire's Children's Centres is underpinned by the Children Centre Statutory Guidance which requires that Local Authorities consult with families if they plan to make changes to the delivery of the Children's Centre Services. The Cabinet have agreed proposals to engage in a period of consultation with families to develop the Children's Centres into Family Hubs with a broader age remit and offer of holistic placed based support working with partners. The Family Hubs will be a core component of the Council's Place Based Approach. This approach seeks to ensure that families can access the right support, at the right time, within their local communities, increasing families' resilience and preventing needs from escalating. The Cabinet have also agreed that, subject to the outcome of the consultation, the design and subsequent phased implementation of Family Hubs across Staffordshire be endorsed as an integrated model of working, whilst acknowledging the future commissioning intentions in relation to the Family Support and Outreach Service and the Early Years Coordination Service (Children's Centres).

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **14. High Needs Provision Capital Allocation Funding**

The Council has been allocated £2,441,299.98 High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) funding. The aim of the funding is to deliver new places and improve existing provision in education settings for children and young people with SEND, particularly those with more complex needs, and with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP), although the funding can also be used to support SEND pupils without an EHCP and pupils that require Alternative Provision (including children in

Alternative Provision settings without an EHCP). The Cabinet have approved proposals to use the funding for projects which involve:

- Developing Resource Bases at Mainstream Schools for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) or SEN Support with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs and/or Autistic Spectrum Condition
- A partnership approach through co-location of specialist provision on mainstream sites
- Increasing capacity in specialist provision to reduce the need to access placements at independent schools/out of county provision.

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **15. Strategic Review of the Care Home Market in Staffordshire 2021**

The Cabinet were informed that Covid-19 has had a profound impact on care homes, and despite the vaccination programme and the release of 'lockdown' restrictions, there remains considerable uncertainty about the long-term impact on the market. The fall in demand for older people's care home placements, both Council funded and self-funded, is likely to recover but this may take a considerable time. This may leave some care homes well below their planned bed occupancy rate for a prolonged period. This, along with increased operating costs and ongoing challenges with staff recruitment and retention, may compromise financial viability for some care homes. This risk is likely to be greater in older care homes where structural issues limit capacity and/or make social distancing difficult, as well as in care homes owned by smaller companies that do not have significant financial reserves. It is reasonable to expect that there may be some consolidation of the market in the next five years. The Cabinet have approved revised commissioning and contracting arrangements, as detailed below, to ensure access to good quality and affordable care home placements when they are needed:

- The implementation of guide prices for care home placements.
- The extension and variation of the current dynamic purchasing system contract for care homes for a further period from 1 April 2022 until no later than 31 March 2023.
- The re-procurement of a new dynamic purchasing system for care homes with a revised service specification.
- A phased increase in the number of block booked care home beds in accordance with demand.
- A review of the approach to contracting for complex residential and nursing home placements
- Opportunities to use technology and innovation to support care homes to meet the challenges they face.

The Cabinet have also agreed that, owing to the results of the structural and feasibility studies, the refurbishment of the Hillfield site, Burton-on-Trent to provide additional nursing home capacity be not progressed.

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **16. Treasury Management Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2021**

The Cabinet have considered the Council's investment and borrowing activity during 2020/21 including both borrowing and investment decisions taken throughout the year in the light of the interest rates and economic conditions prevailing at the time. These activities involve large sums of money and reflect the huge scale of the County Council's operations. As at the 31 March 2021, the County Council's overall debt level stood at £568 million, which reflects capital expenditure decisions made in the past. Investments totalled £279 million. The Council's treasury management activities were carried out prudently during the year and its policy of funding new borrowing from internal cash balances continues to generate significant savings. The Cabinet also noted that the Council's Annual Investment Strategy was considered prudent and sufficiently robust to meet any market challenges created by the UK's decision to leave the European Union and pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and that Officers would continue to monitor the position.

*(Cabinet – 15 September 2021)*

## **17. Covid Rates Update**

It was great to see pupils back at school for a new term and, hopefully a very different academic year. With students mingling it wasn't surprising to see Covid rates start to shoot up, particularly in the 11 to 18 year old age group. At one point the seven-day rate for this age group in Stafford Borough was more than 3,500 per 100,000 population.

Throughout this pandemic, both schools and parents have worked with us to help manage local outbreaks and bring case rates down and I thank them for their continued efforts.

Like everyone, we want to keep children safe, reduce the risk to the older or more vulnerable and keep our school doors open and minimise any further disruption to schooling.

## **18. Community Testing and Vaccinations**

As we head towards winter, the recent outbreaks across schools are a timely reminder that Covid is still with us.

We need to keep moving forward and the best way to do this is to get tested twice a week, have both vaccines as soon as you can, and have the flu jab and Covid booster as soon as you are eligible.

The vaccine has proved the game changer, but we all need to continue to play our part to reduce the risks and ease the pressure on our hospitals over the winter months.

## **19. Olympics and Paralympics**

While the summer seems a distant memory already, I am sure council members will want to join me in congratulating all the athletes who represented Staffordshire in the Olympic and Paralympic games and in particular our medal winners Adam Peaty, Frazer Clarke and Sir Lee Pearson.

Their performances were truly amazing and we are exploring how we can mark their achievements in a way in which will inspire young people in sport.

## **20. Afghan Evacuees**

Staffordshire has always been proud to play its part to support people affected by war or conflict.

Last month, we welcomed a large number of families fleeing Afghanistan and they are being temporarily accommodated in Newcastle as they start out on the difficult road to rebuilding a new life here in the UK.

Of course, the people of Staffordshire wanted to help and within days more than £3,000 was raised

## **21. Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

Finally, we know how the pandemic has disrupted so many lives, so it was great to see the Holiday Activities and Food Programme support low-income families over the summer holidays.

In total we teamed up with 22 local providers and more than 40,000 activity places and food items were delivered

Schools also noticed the benefits, reporting that the children were more focused, healthier, with bigger friendship groups and improved social skills.