



Purpose: For Information

Name of Meeting: **FULL COUNCIL**

Date: **27 FEBRUARY 2019**

Title: **LEADER'S UPDATE**

Report of **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

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## **Introduction**

1. Since my last report in January of this year the focus has been very much on delivering a lawful and balanced budget. The month has also seen time given to attending meetings with leaders from across Hampshire, working together to address concerns surrounding Brexit. I will now highlight some of the key areas of activity across portfolio areas.

## **Budget**

2. As difficult and challenging as the process has been, I hope that all members will agree that public opportunity to input into the budget process was greatly increased by the decision of this Administration to publish our savings proposals at the end of October 2018, far earlier than ever before. Many more residents now recognise the challenges faced and why being a financially balanced and sustainable council remains our number one objective.
3. In finalising the budget we have managed to:
  - a. Reduced our savings target for the next two years from £11m to £9m
  - b. Secured a further £1m for £2019 / 20 through a further successful bid to the business rate retention pilot scheme.
  - c. Improved our financial resilience by increasing reserves to £12.2m, giving us financial headroom of just over £5m.
  - d. Supported a capital programme of £43m which will include investments in schools, adult social care facilities as well as in schemes that will improve the economic prosperity of the Island.
4. Our approach to the budget also enabled us to take account of representations from Newport and Ryde in respect of initial proposals around daytime parking charges, which led to a postponement pending a review of all parking charges and related matters across the Island.

5. How the council chooses to deploy its assets is a matter of choice. In our budget proposals I believe this Administration has found the right balance between financial responsibility and doing the best we can with what we have for everyone on the Isle of Wight.

### **Leader & Strategic Partnerships**

6. This month I have spent a considerable time discussing Brexit arrangements with Leaders and Chief Executives of councils across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The immediate concern remains potential pressure that could happen in the port of Portsmouth and the impact that might have on access to the City and the Island should worst-case scenarios play out.
7. I am continuing to support work to engage with the Department of Transport by all our local authorities, in planning for a response to any identified scenario at the port. This work is being led by the Local Resilience Forum, established under the Civil Contingencies Act, for just this sort of event. I welcome the additional £220,000 provided by Government to help us adjust to the changes after Brexit; our focus will be in making the necessary changes to policies and procedures that previously relied on EU legislation of guidelines.
8. In my role as a Board member of the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (SLEP) I have been engaging with its executive to help it better understand the needs and potential of the Island's economy as a key part of the SLEP geography. I am looking forward to welcoming the Chief Executive to the Island in early March to develop these discussions.

### **Adult Social Care, Public Health and Housing Needs**

9. I am aware that many parts of the council are working hard to support the healthcare sector through its challenges which are increased by 'winter pressures' at this time of year. I am pleased to advise members that the council is providing a significant level of support to St Mary's Hospital to ensure people only stay there for as long as is absolutely necessary.
10. This work includes:
  - a. Continuing to fund independent home care agencies for 48 hours after their clients are admitted to hospital – we are one of the few councils to still do this.
  - b. Not charging "self-funders" who are in hospital for using the council's Single Point of Commissioning team as we identify and arrange the care they need on discharge from hospital.
  - c. Funding the voluntary and community sector to deliver the "Carers Lounge" at the hospital as another option for people needing to organise care and support in hospital.
  - d. Employing a social worker who is based in the emergency department and Medical Assessment Unit at the hospital in order to help avoid any unnecessary admission into hospital.
  - e. The reablement service "in-reaching" into the hospital seven days a week to directly take people out of hospital who have been identified as benefitting from reablement.

- f. Establishing a new in-house home care service – that works only with people being discharged from hospital and will support them for up to three weeks whilst they recuperate at home and during which time we can procure longer term care and support from the independent sector.
  - g. The innovative use of Personal Assistants (PAs) to support people leaving hospital. There are now over 200 PAs registered all DBS cleared, self-employed and with their own liability insurance. These PAs access free training and support people to leave hospital them for up to three weeks to aid their recuperation.
11. I am also pleased to report that after a rapid period of mobilisation, the Island’s drug and alcohol treatment service is now being led by ‘Inclusion’, which is part of the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. It is a national provider of drug and alcohol, mental health and sexual health services across England and has been working on the Island for many years providing drug and alcohol services with HMP Isle of Wight. The new service is called “Inclusion Isle of Wight”.
12. The service is currently fully staffed with no uncovered vacancies and increased resilience across service elements. The alcohol services are running normally, and staff are increasing in confidence/competence under the aegis of an experienced alcohol detox nurse brought across from the mainland.
13. A new volunteer programme has also commenced with six service volunteers who are undergoing training/DBS checks and induction. In partnership with Inclusion, the council will also be introducing Breaking Free Online; an on-line cognitive behavioural therapy platform that enables access to psychological treatment for alcohol and drugs and which will increase access to treatment across the Island.

### **Children’s Services**

14. I was pleased to attend an Education Seminar held on 1 March 2019, organised by Cllr Brading. The purpose of the seminar was to consider the educational provision we would want all children on the Isle of Wight to experience. The seminar was led by Professor Mick Waters who was previously Director of Curriculum at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and is currently working in several areas of the country with schools to improve the quality of education.
15. The seminar was attended by headteachers, governors and community leaders. The feedback from the seminar was extremely positive and further work is planned to improve the links between business and schools with a view to making the curriculum more relevant and exciting.
16. I am also pleased to report that the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Education has been visiting a large number of schools across the Island with recent visits to Brading, Gatten & Lake, Summerfield’s and Cowes Primary. I am pleased to have a Cabinet member that takes the job very seriously and listens first hand to headteachers, their staff and, most importantly, so many of the Island’s children and young people.

17. Members will be aware Cllr Brading will also be taking forward a consultation on school places on the West Wight. The council will not pre-judge the outcome of that consultation, but will listen carefully to the views of parents, children and teachers before making a decision on how to address the issue of falling enrolment in our schools in the West Wight.

## **Regeneration and Business Development**

18. Our “Digital Island” aspirations have taken a major step forward following the council’s successful bid to Government for funding of £718,000 towards a £1m project to upgrade public buildings across the South and West Wight; giving them access to Full Fibre, Gigabit speed broadband.
19. This funding is from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport’s Local Full Fibre Challenge programme. The project will complement current commercial investment in full fibre in the East of the Island by Wightfibre.
20. The consequence of this project is that by 2021 the whole of the Isle of Wight will have the opportunity to access the fastest possible internet speeds and will be one of the first areas in the UK to have this full fibre coverage available to the whole of its community. Having this infrastructure provides our Island with unlimited potential to grow digital businesses, improve public services and further reinforces our overall regeneration strategy.
21. This success will be complemented by the publication of our Digital Island strategy. The strategy builds on widespread engagement with businesses and communities across the Island with ambitious but deliverable proposals to improve digital skills, grow new digital businesses, digitise public services. This will help to overcome inherent physical disconnection by integrating personal travel planning data enabling individuals to move around the Island, and travel to the mainland, in the most efficient and sustainable ways possible.
22. The council has signed up to the Local Government Association Local Digital Declaration which affirms our ambition for local public services in the internet age. It commits us to working to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of our citizens; challenge the technology market to offer the flexible tools and services we need; to protect citizens privacy and security and to deliver better value for money. As a result of this commitment, we have been fortunate enough to receive £13,000 of funding to support our on-going work on cyber security.
23. Our efforts to secure regeneration in our High Streets across the Island are making good progress; the Newport Place plan is progressing real improvements across the county town in partnership with the Parish Council and Business Association. Stakeholders in Ryde are also coming together to address agreed priorities. The Isle of Wight Council will be supporting a bid to the Government’s Future High Street fund and developing and agreeing these plans will successfully secure funding from another key national programme.

## **Infrastructure and Transport**

24. The Highways PFI contract will shortly enter the final year of a seven-year Core Investment Period (CIP). The 25-year contract, worth £730m, will see continued investment in the council's highway network, including carriageways, footways, streetlighting, bridges, retaining walls and traffic signals. This year will see Fishbourne Lane resurfaced at night to minimise disruption to Wightlink and its customers. As much of the Island's strategic network has already been resurfaced, year seven will be focused more on the more urban roads.

## **Planning and Housing**

25. Consultation on the Island Plan continues and I would remind members the closing date is noon on 25 February 2019. It is an important document; an up-to-date adopted Local Plan and five year housing supply is key to the council's ability to control where development should take place on the Island and how we will meet our housing delivery targets determined by Government.
26. Following publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) failure to meet delivery of housing targets could result in the council having to identify even more land for housing and, in the worst case, create an absolute presumption that planning permission will be granted unless the land is protected under the NPPF or the adverse impacts of development outweigh the benefits.

## **Environment and Heritage**

27. I am delighted to report that a scheme to relocate the Cyclone studio and extend the Tone Zone gym at 1Leisure Heights, Sandown was completed on time and on budget opening just before Christmas and the traditional New Year fitness rush. The Tone Zone has been extended into the area previously occupied by Studio 3 (formerly the old bar area) meaning it now accommodates more than 100 different gym stations over a floor space of nearly 600 square metres.
28. The capital cost of the scheme, funded through the council's capital programme was c£700k, but its delivery in accordance with planned timescales will allow it to generate additional income for the council of £104,000 per annum as a contribution to the £5.5m savings target for 2019/20
29. The facility sits within the council's Commercial Services section so whilst it looks to maximise income it balances this with the provision of increased opportunities for individuals to meet and exceed their fitness expectations. The provision of leisure facilities assists in reducing levels of obesity as well as improving health, emotional well-being and life expectancy across the Island.

## **Community Safety and Public Protection**

30. Following the decision of the last Full Council meeting, and subsequent extraordinary Cabinet meeting, the Cabinet member for Community Safety and Public Protection and chairman of the Hampshire Fire Authority have jointly written to the Home Secretary to advise of the decisions taken in respect of the creation a new Combined Fire Authority for Isle of Wight Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton. Officers from the council and the Hampshire Fire Authority are now

working on the detail of the joint submission the Home Secretary requires to inform their final decision.

### **Corporate Resources**

31. I hope Members will join me in welcoming the council's success in overachieving its target for the number of apprenticeships to date. The crucial next phase in this to sustain this success has been to review the rates of pay of the apprentices as recognition of their value to the council.
32. The council is about to embark on a review of the UK parliamentary polling places and districts which is required to be undertaken once every four years. The next compulsory review must be completed by 31 January 2020. This review requires a review of existing polling stations to decide how many are required for each polling place. A report will be brought to Full Council in September 2019 for this purpose.

### **Procurement, Waste Management, Special Projects and Forward Planning**

33. Members will be aware that the waste and recycling resource project has achieved a significant increase in recycling and composting rates, moving the Isle of Wight Council up to the top quartile in England. This achievement is a great success and will be further enhanced over the next 12 months as the new facilities at Forest Park Resource Recovery Centre move through the stages of completion. Working with our waste partners the council is building two state of the art facilities at the site.
  - a. The new mechanical recovery facility is expected to open in the spring and will be the first of its kind in the country. It uses the latest recycling technology to sort recycling into different grades of plastic (HDPE, PET, LDPE etc), paper and card, ferrous and non-ferrous metals and glass. These recycling resources will then be sold on to the reprocessing market to be formed into new products, with the income reducing the service charge for waste management to the council.
  - b. The energy from waste plant will incinerate the non-recyclable waste, generating an estimated 2.7MW of electricity, which is enough to power around 5000 homes and will power the mechanical recovery facility.
34. The success of both facilities relies on the continued cooperation to sort and recycle their waste of the Island's community. The evidence is that the community has embraced recycling which will help support our ambitions to send zero-non-essential waste to landfill and achieve a 90 per cent diversion rate by 2020; 15 years ahead of the new national targets.
35. Subscription renewals for the popular garden waste collection service are now open for 2019/20, residents are encouraged to renew their subscription online to continue their fortnightly collection service, which will cost £60 for the year (a little over a pound per week!). The subscription year runs from the 1 April to the 31 March and includes a free real Christmas tree collection in Jan 2020

## Concluding Remarks

36. Through my report to full council I continue to highlight the range of activities of this administration which support our drive towards our vision of ensuring our Island is an inspirational place to grow up, live, work and visit. I also recognise the hard work by our council staff to deliver our corporate plan and thank all those involved for their commitment and hard work.

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