



Purpose: For Information

FULL COUNCIL

Date **NOVEMBER 2019**

Title: **LEADER'S UPDATE**

Report of **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

Introduction

Pre - Election Period

1. The pre-election period for the forthcoming General Election commenced on Monday 11 November. This places, by law, restrictions on the council's activities. Members and staff have all been issued with guidance on these issues but, as a reminder, the basic premise is the council must remain impartial throughout the period and should not undertake any activity which could be perceived as affecting public support for a political party or influencing the outcome of the election.
2. A winter General Election will throw up a range of organisational challenges for council officers. However I have no doubt that they are up to the challenge and I know members will want to offer them every support with the tasks they need to complete in very tight timescales.

Leader & Strategic Partnerships

3. Prior to the dissolution of Parliament before the General Election I was in correspondence with various Government Ministers about issues of importance to the Island, including an island Deal, the future of the Camp Hill prison estate, our One Public Service agenda and Housing delivery for Island residents. These are all issues I will continue to pursue once the outcome of the election is known.
4. In the interim, good progress is being made on how the public sector estate can best be shared and used the most effectively, especially in relation to our 'blue

light' services. This was the subject of a very helpful workshop at October's meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

5. In addition, it is worth noting that the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), "Isle Help Hub", provision on the ground floor of county hall is approaching its first-year anniversary. The provision has seen the redevelopment and creation of a one stop IAG delivery hub made up of a range of voluntary sector organisations and the council - delivering a collaborative approach to providing support to the Island community.

Adult Social Care, Public Health and Housing Needs

6. I am delighted that the emergency shelter for homeless people opened on the 11th November. It will provide overnight accommodation for up to 25 people and will be staffed by the Salvation Army and fully supported by volunteers. The shelter is based in the former Barton school site and, in addition to a warm bed, hot shower and hot meal, the council is providing other services to support people who will use the shelter such as: a clothing store; a weekly free "barbers" shop; welfare benefit advice; housing advice; and access to a range of health services. I would like to pay particular tribute to Councillor Clare Mosdell, who has championed the opening of the facility and to the local ward Member Councillor Geoff Brodie for the support and assistance he has provided.
7. I am also pleased that the council sponsored Living Well Service, a highly innovative scheme whereby a number of different voluntary and community organisation have come together to work together as one, has just received a very positive independent evaluation by one of the country's most highly respected adult social care experts, Professor John Bolton.
8. His conclusion being (and I quote) that:

"...over 250 people per month are being assisted by the programme....of these 83% report that they got the help they needed. Only 4% are referred back to adult social care services to get the helpoverall the range of help being provided and the quality of that help in the Living Well Service came across as really impressive....there is no doubt that these services are taking pressure from: frontline assessment and care management staff in the local authority; nursing and multi-disciplinary staff in the hospital; longer term social work and care management staff; helping GPs and others address the needs of customers who might not be eligible for formal care."

Children's Services

9. During September and October, the Department for Education (DfE) has released provisional academic results for the Isle of Wight. All these results show

that the Isle of Wight's education system is improving faster than the rest of the country.

10. The key headlines are:

- a. The percentage of students attaining age related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of primary education has increased from 54% to 59%
- b. The percentage of students attaining a grade 4 or above (equivalent to an old grade C) in both English and mathematics has increased from 54% to 58%
- c. The percentage of students attaining two A levels has increased from 65% to 67% and within that 10% attained 3 A levels at AAB grades or equivalent compared to 8% the previous year.

11. On the 16 October another successful Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual conference took place at Cowes Yacht Haven. All agencies involved in safeguarding children and families across the island were represented, including children's services, schools, colleges, health, Police and voluntary sector organisations. The conference provided an opportunity for all partner agencies to be updated on the progress made in the last year and the challenges going forward. An important campaign to support families in coping with the challenges of early parenthood (ICON) was launched at the event. The day concluded with a fantastic contribution from members of the Isle of Wight Youth Council and pupils from a number of secondary schools talking about the anti-bullying initiatives being delivered across the Island's schools and the anti-bullying awards ceremony.

Regeneration and Business Development

12. In September I was delighted to be informed that the Isle of Wight had been successful in two bids to the UK Government's Heritage High Street Programme. Ryde Town Council and Newport and Carisbrooke Community Council have been allocated over £1m funding to help improve the main high streets in both towns from a heritage perspective. This follows a productive visit to the Island by the Historic England Places Panel in June this year where our ambitious regeneration programme was supported by the panel and the work local partners are doing on town centre regeneration was recognised.

13. The Isle of Wight is the only county in England to have been successful in securing two Heritage action zone projects and the quality of the Island bids (ranked 1st and 3rd in terms of 64 from the region) was particularly pleasing for all involved. This success is down to the regeneration partnership approach we have seen in areas like Newport and is a much welcome national endorsement of the "Shaping Newport" programme. Historic England share our intent to ensure the lessons learnt and progress delivered through these projects is shared with

other towns across the island. I would like to thank Councillor Wayne Whittle and Councillor Julie Jones Evans for their contribution to this successful outcome.

14. Members will have received a copy of the new Higher Education prospectus for the Isle of Wight which was produced last month. For the first time all the Higher Education courses available on the island have been collated in one easy to use reference manual. This supports our regeneration strategy and lifelong learning objectives connected with enabling increased access to higher education and encouraging more provision to be available to islanders. Further work on furthering these objectives will continue into 2020

Infrastructure and Transport

15. Members will be interested to know that the council is progressing, as planned, with consideration and review of resident parking schemes across the island. To date 85 requests have been received from members and residents and 32 streets have been surveyed to ascertain if they meet the parking stress criteria. As a result resident consultation will now take place in 24 assessed streets.
16. Also, on the theme of parking, I can advise Members that a new contract for removal of persistent evaders' vehicles commenced in early August. Since then 12 vehicles have been removed, 10 were claimed by their owners and 2 have been disposed of as they were not claimed within the statutory period of 35 days. The policy and removal contract is proving to be a good deterrent to persistent evaders and many have now contacted the council requesting payment plans for outstanding Penalty Charge Notices

Planning and Housing

17. I was delighted to see The Ryde Village Extra care project Topping Out ceremony that took place recently, a mixed scheme of 75 extra care apartments and 27 bungalows with supporting care facilities, which will be ready for occupation in March 2020. The provision of extra care facilities is one of the key long term outputs in the corporate plan and it is especially pleasing that this has been done in partnership with housing associations.

Environment and Heritage

18. I am pleased to confirm that the council has finally been able to issue documentation to the two shortlisted external parties as we look for an investment partner in Dinosaur Isle. Site visits are being arranged to view their current offering, facilities and operation in order to inform the evaluation process. The deadline for receipt of tenders is 10 January 2020 with an award scheduled to happen in February 2020.

Community Safety and Public Protection

19. It is with great disappointment that Councillor Outlaw has been unable to continue in his role as Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Protection due to his personal work commitments. He has been an extremely dedicated and diligent portfolio holder and I will also miss his articulate and insightful contributions to the wider work of the cabinet. I hope that his withdrawal will only be temporary and that I will have the opportunity to welcome him back to the Cabinet in the near future. In the meantime, I have taken temporary responsibility for this portfolio but I will look to appoint a further cabinet member shortly.
20. Members will wish to be aware of the 2018/19 strategic assessment of crime on the Island has recently been published by the Community Safety Partnership and includes a positive conclusion that, “ ... the overall crime rate for the Island has reduced (improved) since 2017/18 and is now statistically significantly lower than the England & Wales National average”.

Corporate Resources

21. Being a financially balanced and sustainable organisation remains the council's primary objective and greatest area of challenge. In the current year, at the end of quarter two, the overall budget position reflected a forecast pressure of £1m against the net budget of £150.3 million (0.7%). This is an improving position from the forecast at the end of quarter one of £1.2 million. However, the council continues to exercise rigorous financial restraint over all activities and will continue to aim to deliver a balanced budget by the end of the financial year.
22. The challenge in setting the budget for 2020/21 is further complicated by the General Election which will mean a delay in the publication of the Local Government Financial Settlement, although it is assumed that there will be little change to the proposals made by the Chancellor in September. The council is required to consult with the community on its budget priorities for the coming year and the details of the current consultation, which closes in January 2020, can be found on the council website.
23. The views of the council's staff are also important to shaping how the council organises itself to deliver the best possible services to the community. The annual staff survey is important in informing this work and has recently completed with a report due early in the New Year. Alongside this work plans are being finalised for the annual staff achievement and loyal service awards to take place in January 2020.

Procurement, Waste Management, Special Projects and Forward Planning

24. I am pleased to report that the mechanical treatment element of the council's new waste recovery park on Forest Road has now passed all of its commissioning and testing procedures and is now fully operational. This major element of the scheme is now sorting the mixed recycling into paper and card, different plastic types, steel, aluminium, and Tetra Pacs. Thanks to the good work of Island residents the recycling stream is very clean and will command a good price at market, reducing the overall contract price to the council. Work on the energy from waste plant is ongoing and is due for completion in 2020.
25. Following the climate emergency motion agreed by Full Council in July a Task and Finish group has been formed to lead the development of a climate action plan, including an environmental strategy, to inform future service delivery and sustainably. This is being supported by the environment and sustainability forum which has considered the effects of sea levels rise, sustainable transport, verge maintenance and moving to circular resource management from waste products as part of the emerging plan.
26. Members may also be aware that the council is the second highest achieving local authority in the UK for carbon and climate action from the Friends of the Earth statistical review, demonstrating the commitment this council has already made to reducing carbon and improving the environment for all the community.

DAVE STEWART

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