



Committee Report

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Date	20 MARCH 2024
Title	LEADER'S UPDATE REPORT
Report of	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

I think it would be fair to say that the ongoing rainfall we are experiencing this winter and into spring is impacting on our communities more this year than we have experienced in recent times. Whilst we are having to respond to coastal erosion, landslide and flooding issues as they arise, we are also planning for the longer term as these are issues that we are likely to be an ongoing issue for the Island.

Under the leadership of the Director of Public Health the Island Strategic Drug and Alcohol Partnership have agreed the plan regarding focus for the government Supplementary Substance Misuse, Treatment and Recovery Grant 24/25. This sees an additional investment of £417,554 to support some of our most vulnerable adults for the next financial year including those with complex need (e.g. mental ill health, homelessness, criminal justice and domestic abuse).

In February the Public Health team brought together a number of stakeholders from across the health and care system to test our local preparedness to respond to possible cases or outbreaks of measles. This activity provided an opportunity for all relevant agencies/organisations to strengthen relationships, and coordinate activities. There will also be continued work to encourage staff and all Island residents to check they've received both doses of the MMR vaccine, through communications and work with colleagues and settings.

As the winter slowly comes to an end, the Public Health team is working with partners to review the successes and learning from the latest flu and COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. Locally we have performed well in relation to regional and national data, but we can do more to ensure we're protecting those clinically at risk. We will continue to work with NHS partners as we plan for the Spring COVID-19 vaccination campaign, due to start in April 2024.

The Revenues team successfully completed the annual billing exercise for council tax and business rates. The bills were despatched 11 March to some 72,686 households and 7530 businesses.

The business centre teams are working closely with the Isle of Wight College and have agreed to facilitate two 'T' level placements for students undertaking a Business Administration qualification. The students will spend one day a week for the next year

experiencing the work environment in both the Revenues and Benefits ICT and Payments teams.

A number of service areas will be attending the 'Open for Business Isle of Wight Event' at Medina Leisure Centre on Saturday 23 March to showcase the wide range of roles available throughout the Council and to encourage the take up of apprenticeship and trainee roles.

The new Childrens Services leadership team are now in place and have hit the ground running. In addition to ensuring that the quality of support provided to children, young people and their families remains high during this period of significant change, the team is focused on understanding the unique context of the Island and using this knowledge to inform strategic planning. This has involved meetings with a range of stakeholders including young people, parents, schools, school governors, and the voluntary sector. One key area of work is the development of a new education strategy for the Island, which will be informed by young people, families and schools and will include face to face drop in events for families across the Island in April and May. The aim is to publish a draft version of this strategy at the end of the summer term, and this will include new approaches to align the number of primary school places to the changing population, and to improve the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities on the Island.

The Island has secured £536,000 Rural England Prosperity Fund as part of the Islands UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The fund is aimed to support new and existing rural businesses across the Island to develop new products and facilities that will be of wider benefit to the local economy and tourism. The Fund will be launched in April.

Finally, I was pleased to see the governments provision in the recent budget for an extension to the Household Support Fund, something which all local authorities had been lobbying for, as the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis is very real for our residents. We await confirmation of the amount of funding and any conditions associated with it before being able to put in place a programme.

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