



Committee: **FULL COUNCIL**

Date: **23 FEBRUARY 2022**

Title: **LEADER'S UPDATE**

Report of: **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

1. The government's Levelling Up White Paper and the recent local government settlement have been widely discussed recently and I wish to repeat that we feel that the Island's unique position still fails to be recognised in any real meaningful way and we remain disappointed that our very real local pressures are not being recognised nationally.
2. As we have set out in our corporate plan we will continue to press government for recognition for the Island to tackle inequality with the mainland and we will be redoubling our efforts to ensure that the long awaited fair funding review does provide new funding for the Island.
3. Levelling up and settlement aside we cannot forget that as a council we do have a duty to set a balanced budget for the coming year and cabinet and staff have worked together to produce the budget paper that is before Full Council this evening. Our budget proposals will not only continue to keep the council solvent and improve the financial position of the council but they are a key step in pursuing our new direction for the council.
4. We continue to ensure that those hit hardest by the effects of the pandemic get access to the help and support that they need and the team administering the support for those self-isolating have to date received some 2600 applications of which just under 1600 have received financial support totalling £797,000.
5. I would also like to thank our Mental Health Champion, Cllr Michael Lilley, who, working with IOW Healthwatch, has developed a Mental Health Small Grants Fund to support voluntary, community and social enterprise organisation to deliver local projects to support mental wellbeing on the Island.
6. In addition to supporting individuals, over 50% of businesses eligible for the latest round of Omicron business support have received their grants. I would remind any business who are eligible to get their application in as the grant window will close at the end of this month.

7. 7 – 13 February was National Apprenticeship week and it would be remiss not to mention that the Isle of Wight Council can celebrate its achievement in meeting the public sector apprenticeship target for each of consecutive year from 2017 – 2021 and are well on track for this year’s target to also be achieved.
8. Our social work degree apprenticeship programme, now in its third year of operation, has some 16 apprentices currently, all of whom live in the Island’s community. This year will see the first four apprentices qualifying in July. This ‘grow our own strategy’ has excellent benefits for the council and provides a great step for social care professionals to develop their knowledge, skills and career with us.
9. Alongside apprenticeships this month we have been thrilled to launch a new social care training initiative in partnership with the IW College, aimed at supporting people who are new to the care sector to receive quality practical training and to secure employment within the sector. It has been well received and is directly linked in with local providers and we hope this will support to grow our social care workforce here on the Island.
10. Local investment and supporting our Island residents and businesses are at the heart of our new direction for the council and we aim to invest as much council money on the Island as possible. I am pleased that the recent investment in repairs to the harbour walls in Newport has not only seen the restoration of the walls but has been undertaken by a local company.
11. We hope that further local investment opportunities will arise from the recent announcement that stage 8 of the Tour of Britain 2022, the final stage in the tour will be coming to the Island on 11 September this year, with Ryde hosting this prestigious event. There will be many for the Island community and businesses to be involved in the event.
12. Finally, the highway safety scheme at Smallbrook Roundabout is proceeding well, being on target both in timescales and on budget. This is despite a major Southern Water leak that flooded the surrounding area.

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