



Committee: **FULL COUNCIL**

Date: **20 JULY 2022**

Title: **LEADER'S UPDATE**

Report of: **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

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Since my last Leaders report in May of this year, the rising cost of living has become even more apparent and across the Island we are experiencing the impact of this. As a council we can take some action to help, but as with during the COVID pandemic I am asking all of our partner agencies and voluntary groups across the Island to work together to help our community at this very challenging time. By working smartly together we can do more for the Island.

In March the Government announced the energy rebate scheme and funding of £8.8 million, to provide financial support of £150 to households living in properties within council tax bands A-D. The council has until the end of September to make all payments to those residents living in properties banded A-D. The first payments were received on 4<sup>th</sup> May with over 40,000 payments totalling £6,034,800 having been made in 9 weeks (using existing staff and resources).

In addition there is a discretionary scheme, which was launched in the first week of July and which will remain open until November. The discretionary scheme is available to households living in properties banded E-H who are in receipt of local council tax support or universal credit.

We have a holiday activity and food programme supporting families over the summer, with eight providers delivering across 13 venues. This will provide 7,756 places for benefits eligible free school meal children to participate in fun and engaging activities as well as receiving a meal, free of charge.

We continue to support vulnerable households on the Isle of Wight with food and utility costs through the Household Support Fund. The food voucher scheme for recipients of some forms of Local Council Tax Support, and funding to community groups who are working with Island residents were launched in June.

For the Mental Health Awareness week in May a 'pull out' was developed with our partners and was published in the local paper. This was backed up by a social media campaign sign posting people to local support and self-help.

We will continue to promote the help and support that is available to our communities.

Adult Social Care and Housing Needs continue to be pressured as care and support provision as well as accommodation continue to be scarce resources locally and this impacts on the ability of the council to support local people the way that it wishes it to do so. The teams continue to work hard to exhaust all options available within budget.

The past couple of months has also seen an increase in the impact of covid on both health and social care services. Working closely with colleagues in our Public Health team the Adult Social Care team are supporting in the management of outbreaks in care settings.

In June, just under 500 pupils, from 33 Island Primary Schools, took part in the PEACH Games. PEACH (Partnership Education Attainment and Children's Health) supports schools to improve the health and wellbeing of their pupils through physical activity, healthy eating, emotional wellbeing and mental health. Held at West Wight Sports Centre, the pupils took part in a variety of sporting activities including boccia, archery and handball. The games are organised by our Public Health Team in collaboration with Premier School Sport Coaching, programme. There was great feedback from participating Primary schools for our Sports Leaders who were from Carisbrooke, Medina and Isle of Wight Colleges and who ensured the event ran smoothly providing inspiration and leadership to the children taking part.

Work has started on a local transport plan, with stakeholder engagement sessions being held in June.

Road safety education, training and publicity campaigns were undertaken during the Festival in partnership with colleagues from emergency services. In addition, earlier this month, our secondary schools took part in a road safety initiative run by a theatre company called "Riot Act".

Work is ongoing with the Ryde Interchange project. The pedestrian pier works are due to start in September and the station works are in design phase.

Our regulatory services teams have been hosting training webinars for new businesses and have also provided allergen training to local food businesses.

Funding for the COVID support offices has come to an end. During their time with the council the four strong team dealt with over 1800 requests for assistance; 2000 visits to businesses, schools and public areas; 92 pop up locations to distribute test kits; delivered webinars and supported the regulatory teams with surveillance and intelligence visits.

Good progress with the regeneration projects at East Cowes, Branstone Farm and Innovation Wight will see new jobs and homes being created following their completion in the coming weeks and months.

Our primary focus remains provision of housing for those islanders in need of affordable accommodation. While it was good to see over 200 affordable homes

completed and commenced in the last financial year demand continues to massively outstrip supply so we will continue to do all we can to create the environment for partners to deliver new housing for islanders as well as looking to our own sites.

The recent census results remind of us of the challenges we face in keeping a balanced population so creating better paid jobs and attractive places to live must be a priority in encouraging people to stay on the island and bringing more investment and attractive jobs.

The partnerships at work across our communities stepped up again during the Platinum Jubilee celebrations – every community right across the island did a fantastic job in recognising Her majesty's incredible achievement – never to be seen again I doubt.

We welcomed the government's announcement regarding establishing Islands forum and we hope this still goes ahead in September regardless of the turmoil in Westminster at the moment

As we look towards what will be a very difficult winter the council will work with all agencies to ensure people have access to the advice and support they need to cope with the impact of the increasing cost of living by ensuring the best possible signposting to the help they might need.

Of course, we do have the Tour of Britain to look forward to and preparations are continuing to be made for the Island to host the final stage of the Tour on Sunday 11 September. This is a real opportunity to continue to showcase the Island both for spectators coming to the Island for the race and for the millions who will be watching the race on TV around the world, who can see for themselves the beauty and diversity of our Island.