

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 18 October 2023

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2023/24



Cllr Alan White, Leader of Staffordshire County Council said,

“We continue to deliver on our priorities and to do what is necessary to support our most vulnerable residents who need us most, while creating the right conditions for our economy to thrive.

“Our work by the ‘We Are Staffordshire’ team to promote the county as a top location to live, work, invest in and visit continues. During the quarter, the team got the chance to showcase the county at a national online conference with 600+ attendees and are now busy planning for next year’s UK Real

Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF). This, along with supporting local businesses, helping attract new businesses with better quality jobs to grow our economy remains a priority.

“We continue to support vulnerable families through the Household Support Fund and over the summer almost 28,000 families of children in receipt of Free School Meals were issued with supermarket e-vouchers. Alongside this, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme which also ran over the summer holidays offered more than 49,000 places and targeted some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

“Work to tackle climate change is ongoing. The Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme and an extra £10.5m funding will bring eco-friendly heating solutions to rural properties that are situated away from the gas network. A new permit scheme introduced at our Household Waste Recycling Centres is also helping promote sustainable waste disposal, while improving services for customers.

“The council continues to face challenges within Children’s services including the rising cost, higher than anticipated numbers and complexity of Children in Care, and ongoing placement pressures, however additional recruitment is helping ease this. We are also seeing increased demand for Education Health and Care Plans for children with special educational needs, however, additional Key Workers are now in post.

“Demand for adult social care also remains high with additional capacity being sourced and further options to streamline processes being explored. Despite the many pressures we face, we will invest to keep growing the county in a sustainable way to make a positive difference in the lives of our residents.”

Cllr Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said,



“All council departments continue to deliver against their priorities, and we continue to manage our finances effectively.

“We continue to keep finances in as strong a position as possible and to ensure that we provide good value for money for local taxpayers. Well managed finances also mean we can invest in our future and continue to grow our economy.

“Like many other councils, we do face rising costs across the organisation and high inflation which puts additional pressures on finances. We also continue to face challenges around demand and capacity within Children’s services, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities teams and in adult social care.

“The latest revenue forecast outturn for the council shows a forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1), compared to the quarter 1 forecast overspend of £9.5m (1.39%).”



Report Summary

This quarterly Integrated Performance Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan, Corporate Delivery Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Recommendation

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.



Local Members Interest
N/A

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Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2023/24

Recommendation of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Director for Corporate Services and the Director of Finance

Reasons for Recommendations

This is an opportunity for Cabinet to consider and discuss Staffordshire County Council's quarterly performance and finance position.



Quarter 2 Summary

This report provides an update on Quarter 2 progress in relation to delivering the council's priorities and pledge as set out within the council's [Strategic Plan 2022-26](#).

Key highlights

- **We are Staffordshire:** Staffordshire's place brand highlighted at national online conference with 600+ attendees. Planning started for UK Real Estate Infrastructure and Investment Conference (UKREiiF) in 2024.
- **Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme:** £10.5m funding secured to bring eco-friendly heating solutions to rural properties that are situated away from the gas network. Since December 2022, 473 measures have been installed in 334 properties.
- **Supportive Communities Programme:** New community resource called 'Bag of Trix' launched, which provides assistive technology and daily living aids to promote independent living.
- **Household Support Fund:** During the summer holidays almost 28,000 families of children in receipt of Free Schools Meals were issued with supermarket vouchers.
- **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme:** The Summer HAF offered more than 49,000 places; focus on encouraging take-up by the most vulnerable children and young people. Inclusion high on the agenda, with clubs to cater for all children.
- **Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs):** Permit scheme launched in September 2023 to improve services and reduce queues for residents while promoting sustainable waste disposal within the county.

Key challenges

- **Children in Care:** Continued pressures across Children's services, including the rising cost, higher than anticipated numbers and complexity of Children in Care, and ongoing placement pressures. New Discharge Planning Team, went live in August, will help progress exit activity.
- **SEND:** Increased demand for Education, Health and Care Plans. Capacity continues to be a challenge; however, all additional Senior Key Workers are now in post.
- **Adult Social Care Demand:** Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLs) requests remain high, with additional capacity being sourced and further options to streamline DoLs process being explored.
- **Highways Performance:** Levels of demand were high in Quarter 2, particularly in relation to high-risk defects, however timeliness of repairs is back on track following a dip in Quarter 1, and the council is continuing to deliver its Highways Maintenance and Transformation Programmes.

Further details of the above can be found in the main report and accompanying appendices.

1. Financial Overview

2. The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1%), compared to the quarter 1 forecast overspend of £9.5m (1.39%). There continues to be areas of financial risk in Children and Families, with further details included within this report and appendices 2-7.

3. Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

4. In Quarter 2, demand for Care Act Assessments for new clients was slightly higher than last year, with 2,301 assessments initiated in July and August 2023, compared to 2,238 in July and August 2022. However, positively the council continues to exceed its target for completed Care Act Assessments within 28 days (see Appendix 1). There has been a substantial rise in new assessments and a slow increase in unplanned re-assessments, e.g. someone's needs have escalated and they may require different support. Most of the demand usually relates to older people.

5. The number of monthly safeguarding contacts has increased since June 2023 to 1,372 in August 2023, but remains lower than the peak of 1,457 in August 2022. Initial analysis indicates that this is partly due to an increase in contacts which are lower in risk; it is not apparent that there has been an increase in risk of abuse or neglect to adults within Staffordshire. Recognising the priority of safeguarding, the council has allocated additional temporary resource to the service and is reviewing its pathways to identify any further improvements that can be made.

6. The number of reviews of people receiving services for 12 months or more has continued to remain high, with 89.7% reviewed in the previous 12 months in August 2023, exceeding the target of 80% (see Appendix 1), and recording the best performance over the last two years.

7. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLs) applications (where it is necessary to deprive a person of their liberty in a hospital or care home if they lack capacity to consent to their treatment and care) is an area of demand that continues to impact on resources. At the end of August 2023, the council had 356 people waiting for their DoLs assessment to commence and 542 who were in the process of being assessed. Additional capacity to help reduce the number of outstanding DoLs applications was approved by the council's Cabinet in Quarter 2. Options to further streamline the process will be explored.

8. Significant work has continued during Quarter 2 in preparation for the new Care Quality Commissioning (CQC) assurance framework which will assess how the council is performing against duties under the Care Act 2014. CQC have communicated that inspections will commence later in 2023.
9. The council continues to support its most vulnerable residents through the Warmer Homes Programme. Latest figures from the Sustainable Warmth Competition show that since December 2022, there have been 473 measures installed within 334 properties. This brings the total number of measures installed through Staffordshire Warmer Homes to 1,234 within 970 properties as of 14th September 2023. The council has also secured an additional £10.5m to bring eco-friendly heating solutions to rural residences (situated away from the gas network).
10. A new community resource called 'Bag of Trix' has been launched in Quarter 2 which provides assistive technology and daily living aids to promote independent living. This has been produced as part of the council's Supportive Communities programme and is available at every Community Help Point across the county. Community Help Points are trusted locations within communities, including libraries, voluntary organisations and community centres, which have become a reliable source of local information and guidance for many residents, particularly those at risk of social isolation.
11. During Quarter 2 a new variant of Covid was detected in the UK. As a precautionary measure this year's national autumn Covid vaccine programme has been brought forward by three weeks, with 25,000 vaccines already administered (up to 20th September) in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. This was the highest in the Midlands region. The council is providing dedicated Covid-19 information, advice and guidance on its webpages and in regular briefings to care providers. In addition, support is being given to care providers in vaccine promotion to ensure protection is given to Staffordshire's most vulnerable residents, as well as providing business continuity planning support to care providers in the event of staff absences.

12. Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
AMBER	RED

13. The Council continues to face challenges within Children's Services, including the rising cost, higher than anticipated numbers and complexity of Children in Care. To help address demand those past exit dates are

regularly reviewed to understand any barriers to exiting care and agree actions that might be required. In addition, a new Discharge Planning Team is now in place, who will work to further progress exit activity. A review of those in residential placements has been completed with 14 of 18 identified children now moved into semi-independent living.

14. Recruitment of additional capacity is also continuing following the additional cabinet investment of £5.7m, with all existing posts being filled and recruitment for new posts due to begin as planned in Quarter 3.
15. As at the 31st August 2023, there were 1,375 children and young people in the authority's care in Staffordshire, representing a slight decrease compared to the previous quarter (1,397). This is a rate of 81 per 10,000; higher than the most recent national benchmark (70 per 10,000 - March 2022) but lower than regional (88 per 10,000 - March 2022). The number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan at the 31st August 2023 was 694 down from a peak of 716 in April but an increase from a more recent low of 649 in June. This is a rate of 41 per 10,000 in Staffordshire compared to the most recent benchmarks from March 2022 of 42 nationally and 43 regionally.
16. The number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was 7,227 at 31st August 2023 compared to 6,792 a year earlier. This increasing demand means that the number of EHCP's issued in time (within 20 weeks) remains low in Staffordshire; 27% compared to the most recent national benchmark of 58% (2023). Recruitment is complete for the additional Senior Key Workers, and continues for the remaining Key Worker posts. Five Educational Psychologists have also been recruited and another recruitment drive with an active advert is out now and on the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP). These appointments will assist in improving timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans, and support early intervention.
17. Staffordshire has been chosen by the Department for Education (DfE) as one of 10 local areas to deliver a major government pilot scheme aimed at transforming children's social care. The Family Network pilot will be rolled out locally by our Children's Services in Spring 2024. It will look to find transformative ways to involve wider family members in supporting parents, so that children can stay at home with their families.
18. Work continues across the four main programmes of work within Children & Families; Children in Care, Children's Workforce, SEND Improvement and Embedding the Children & Families System. A key highlight was the consultation closing on the career progression scheme for social workers in District Teams, with feedback and amendments being considered by the project team to take this work forward. A session also took place with Senior Leaders and Cabinet Members on 27th

September to look in more detail at the elements that make up the current programme.

19. Final figures for Quarter 1 have confirmed that 438 families have achieved a successful and sustained outcome through the Building Resilient Families and Communities Programme since 1st April 2023. The Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have increased this year's target number of families by 62% to 1,290, but as the council strives to achieve more for families in Staffordshire, it is hoping to achieve outcomes for 1,677 families (30% above DLUHC target). At the end of Quarter 1, 34% of DLUHC's annual target has been achieved.

20. The Household Support Fund (HSF) supports families and others who need it most, to pay for food and energy bills. During the summer holidays almost 28,000 families of children in receipt of Free Schools Meals were issued with supermarket vouchers and over 5,600 households have benefited through the professionals' referral scheme since April. Care leavers also received the first of four £50 voucher payments at the end of August. Through the Winter Warmth Project, eligible residents have started to receive their first payment of £300 towards help with their energy bills.

21. Further support has also been made available to Staffordshire's most vulnerable families through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, which continues to offer children and young people free activities and a healthy meal, over school holidays. The Summer HAF offered over 49,000 places, with final take-up to be confirmed later in the quarter.

22. Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better paid jobs

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

23. A key driver for further investment in Staffordshire is the council's Place Marketing campaign, with progress made during Quarter 2 in promoting the 'We are Staffordshire' place brand, which was highlighted at a national online conference with 600+ attendees. There was also a successful Ambassador Event in collaboration with Lichfield District Council in July with over 80 attendees. Also, planning has started for the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) 2024 to market Staffordshire nationally following a successful event in Quarter 1.

24. The council has continued to support local businesses to start up and grow through its dynamic range of business support schemes. Between

June 2020 and August 2023, the council has supported 591 businesses through the Staffordshire Start Up Programme. Of these, almost half (277) have started trading following the programme. Get Started and Grow has supported 187 business owners who have been trading up to 5 years with professional services support. New consultants have been appointed for the scheme and they have started work on providing bespoke accountancy, marketing, web site creation, legal and human resources services with startup businesses.

25. Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
AMBER	GREEN

26. There were demand challenges in relation to the volume of high risk 'Emergency' and 'Category 1' highways defects identified in Quarter 2, with a 39% increase from 213 defects identified in July and August 2022 to 296 in July and August 2023. The timeliness of repairing these higher risk defects has improved following the post-Winter dip in Quarter 1, where performance has returned to levels above benchmarks (see Appendix 1).

27. To help tackle levels of highways demand, the council continues to successfully deliver its 2023/24 Highways Maintenance Programme, with thirteen sites completed, one currently on site and four due to start in Quarter 4. The preventative maintenance programme remains on track despite unseasonably wet weather during July and August 2023. By the end of August over 1.2 million square metres of the surface treatments programme had been completed, which equates to around 120 miles of carriageway and 81% of the total programme. Alongside this, progress also continues to be made on delivering the council's Highways Transformation Programme.

28. As part of Project Gigabit, which aims to provide gigabit-capable coverage to Staffordshire residents, there remains a high number of premises still under review for broadband intervention. These are being monitored by a Rolling Open Market review, which confirms where gigabit capable broadband infrastructure currently exists or is planned to be built and identifies eligible target areas for intervention. Plans to deliver to these premises are still on track to reach 85% coverage by 2025.

29. Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

30. Staffordshire's Climate Action Fund offers funding assistance to local communities to build resilience and reduce Staffordshire's contributions to climate change. The funding is open to constituted, not-for profit organisations, including charities, societies, voluntary and community groups, parish councils and schools. The application process was open during Quarter 2 with a Phase One deadline of 29th September and Phase Two deadline of 22nd December 2023.
31. Over 350 Staffordshire businesses are having a positive impact on climate change following funding worth £1.1 million, which has helped them reduce their carbon emissions. The council's Low Carbon Evolution Programme (LCBEP) in partnership with Staffordshire Business and Environment Network (SBEN) has supported the businesses with free energy efficiency reviews and provided grants to over 145 companies. The programme which is part funded by the European Regional Development Fund and Midlands Engine is estimated to reduce carbon emissions by over 2,250 tonnes annually.
32. Finding new and innovative ways to cut carbon emissions is essential if the council is to reach its goal of net zero by 2050 and one of the ways is using hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as a replacement for diesel in some of the council's mobile libraries, fuel site diggers and fleet vehicles. The Mobile Library Service is now using HVO fuel in four of the library transport vehicles. This will effectively reduce library transport emissions by up to 90%. HVO is also being trialled in one of Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs), and if successful could be used in other vehicles across all 14 sites.
33. The council undertook a Climate Change consultation between May and September 2023, with 3,407 responses received. The consultation was undertaken to understand attitudes towards climate change, what steps residents have taken to mitigate climate change and what barriers are preventing them from taking further steps. Analysis is currently being undertaken and findings will inform future climate change planning and strategy, as well as delivery of the current plan.
34. The new Household Waste Recycling Centre permit scheme was launched in September 2023, which aims to improve services and reduce queues for residents while promoting sustainable waste disposal within the county. The e-permits are free of charge for Staffordshire residents, are valid for 12 months and allow up to 12 visits each

year. Under the scheme, vehicles such as vans, pick-up trucks, tipper trucks, minibuses with seats removed and campervans with fixtures and fittings removed all require a permit.

35. Workers at all 14 household waste recycling centres across Staffordshire have been shortlisted for Best Team of the Year at the 2023 UK LARAC (Local Authority Recycling Advisory Committee) Conference and Celebration Awards that are due to take place in October 2023.

36. How we work

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

37. To achieve the council's ambitions, we continue to challenge and change how we work.

38. Good progress can be seen during the quarter as part of the council's commitment to working with its communities. The newly reconfigured Tamworth Library re-opened with refurbished equipment by the library designers. In July, the council handed over the running of Loggerheads Library to Loggerheads Parish Council. The council's Libraries and Arts service, in partnership with The Reading Agency, and funded by Arts Council England also delivered this year's Summer Reading Challenge which ran throughout the summer holidays. Early indications suggest the council has exceeded its target of starters, but the final figures will be reported in Quarter 3 when all evaluations are complete.

39. Work to deliver the Staffordshire History Centre project continues, with listed building consent approved for additional works in the Grade II* William Salt Library building. Volunteer support has been ongoing, throughout June and July 764 hours were provided by volunteers, valuing £15,300. There have been high levels of engagement over the summer holidays with events at libraries, outreach days and focus groups taking place.

40. Digital continues to be fundamental to the way the council works as an organisation, as well as how it will interact with partners, citizens, and communities. Progress has been made across multiple priorities, such as the trialling of automation software in Health & Care and Finance to free up capacity for added-value work. Work is continuing with Lichfield District Council (LDC) to progress a collaborative "Single Front Door" approach across Staffordshire. The Customer Service Waste and Recycling pilots are now live and two further pilots have also been agreed: Environmental Health and Disabled Facility Grant Information Advice and Guidance (IAG).

41. Work is ongoing to deliver the council's refreshed internal People Strategy and will continue throughout 2023/24. Benefits of the new applicant tracking system WeRecruit (a system that allows the council to attract, select and hire people more quickly and easily) continue to be realised, with time to hire rate remaining at 45 days or less.

42. There is a continued focus on absence across the council to help improve the number of days lost due to sickness absence; evidenced by a consistent downward trajectory for the last twelve months. The People Operations Team are working directly with those services with the highest days lost to understand the root causes for absence and proactively supporting them with short and medium-term actions. Additionally, absence related surgeries have continued to be provided to wider management teams to help them manage absence.

43. As a result of this work, long term absence now stands at 7.96 days lost per employee, compared to 9.00 days at the same point last year and an improvement from Q1 where performance was 8.15 days. Short-term absence now stands at 3.20 days lost per employee compared to 4.15 days at the same point last year. Over half of the workforce has had no sickness absences over the last year (51%, 2,254 people), with a further 24.1% (1,056 employees) having been absent for 5 days or fewer. Return to work in the last quarter is at 73%; an improvement from last year at 72%.

44. **Live within our means and deliver value for money**

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

45. Key priorities for 2023/24 continue to include carrying out the council's pledge of living within its means and delivering value for money, improving the customer experience, and inspiring a culture of innovation.

46. Work is ongoing to refresh the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and remains on track, with an update due to be presented to Cabinet in October. Development of a new online financial self-assessment portal to improve customer experience continues. Recent software testing has highlighted several elements that need to be resolved before the system can go-live and consequently the go-live has been revised to March 2024.

47. Inflation and rising demand for council services requires the council to find new, better, and lower cost ways of delivering services and achieving results. This requires creativity and innovation across the council, finding new ways of working, trialling technology, and applying best practice from other organisations. The council therefore launched the

Staffordshire Innovation Challenge in August, a cross-organisation approach to discuss and generate innovative ideas and solutions. The initial focus of this taskforce is to improve fostering uptake in the county.

48. During 2023/24, the council aims to raise c.£13 million net income through the sale of unused land and buildings to fund transformation of services and activity, in line with new Government regulation. By the end of August 2023, the council had delivered £2,191,658.

49. Work on the council's schools and corporate projects is ongoing. The Anna Seward Primary School (Lichfield) and the relocation/enlargement of St Leonards Primary School (Stafford) are now complete, with both opening in September. All three new primary schools set to open in September 2024 have full planning permission. Beaconfields (Stafford), Amington (Tamworth) and Dunstall Farm (Tamworth) Primary Schools have all started on site as scheduled. In addition, the Tamworth Library renovation works are now complete with services being delivered from the site.

50. The council's 2023 Community Fund was launched on 9th May 2023 and is progressing well. To date 106 applications have been processed with £44,723 spent and a further £9,234 allocated. Match funding of at least £283,494 has been generated. Turnaround time for the processing of applications has been significantly reduced with a typical application taking four weeks in total. The closing date for applications is 31st October 2023 and it is hoped all will be processed by Christmas 2023.

51. The council's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Capacity Building Framework continues to promote social action in local communities and build capacity in the voluntary and community sector. During the first year of the Framework (August 2022-July 2023) over 500 organisations were provided with development support, such as planning, developing policies and safeguarding. In addition, local VCSE representatives have accessed 500 training places, with a priority focus on groups that provide support on health and care and work with children, young people and families. Local VCSE organisations also continue to be supported to access additional funding, helping them to sustain and grow.

52. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications of note in relation to this report, which is for information and discussion.

53. Resource and Value for Money Implications

Please see Finance Appendices, where resource and value for money implications are set out.

54. Climate Change Implications

There are no direct climate change implications of note.

List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Performance Dashboard
- Appendix 2 - Finance Quarter 2 Summary
- Appendix 3 - Finance Quarter 2 Detailed Report
- Appendix 4 - Revenue Forecast Outturn 2023/24
- Appendix 5 - Capital Forecast Outturn 2023/24
- Appendix 6 - Financial Health Indicators 2023/24
- Appendix 7 - Prudential Indicators

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