

MEETING:	Council
MEETING DATE:	17 July 2015
TITLE OF REPORT:	Leader's report
REPORT BY:	Leader of the council

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is not an executive decision.

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

To receive a report from the Leader on the activities of Cabinet since the meeting of Council in March.

Recommendations

THAT: the report be noted.

Alternative Options

1 There are no alternative options; it is a requirement of the council's constitution.

Reasons for Recommendations

2 To ensure members are aware of the activities of Cabinet.

Key Considerations

3 A list of the decisions taken by the executive between the last report to Council on 6 March and 3 July is provided at appendix 1; one was taken under the general exception provision (less than twenty-eight but more than five days' notice) and the

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Councillor AW Johnson, Leader of the council on Tel (01432) 260494

relevant overview and scrutiny committee chairman was notified. None were taken under the urgency provision (less than five days' notice). No decisions were subject to call-in.

- 4 Members will be aware from the reports to Cabinet in June that we successfully delivered planned savings of £15m last year and we continue to plan for further significant reductions in funding and increasing financial pressures particularly arising in relation to services to protect and support vulnerable people. The overall savings requirement over the next four years to March 2020 is estimated at £32m; this cannot be achieved without service cuts, and therefore requires the council to think very differently to ensure its future sustainability. The process and timetable for the development of a corporate plan and medium term financial strategy for that four year period is set out in the June Cabinet papers and I can't emphasise strongly enough how important it is for all members to get involved in the development of these key strategies.
- 5 The council's key planning document, the local plan, is currently with the planning inspector following completion of the examination in public. Following the publication of a ministerial statement on wind energy last month the inspector has advised of the need for a further modification to the draft plan. Consultation on this further modification will begin during July and it is expected that the inspector's final report will be received in the early autumn.
- 6 It is particularly pleasing to note that the work of the council has been recognised in a number of areas recently. The intervention notice issued by the department for education following the Ofsted inspection of children's safeguarding in 2014 has now been lifted, recognising the improvement progress made to date; the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation has commended the council and Balfour Beatty Living Places for its approach to highways asset management to improve highway performance; and the council's new archive and records centre for the county has won one of the Royal Institute of British Architects regional awards. I commend the work of members and officers who have contributed to these achievements in very challenging times.
- 7 The Funding Circle (a peer to peer crowd funding scheme) started in January this year and early indications are encouraging. This council invested £50k to encourage other investors, and to date some nine business have taken loans from the fund. Interest rates charged vary according to the risk but are mainly in line with commercial rates. The main advantages offered by the fund are speed to the borrower and around 6% return to the investor. A more comprehensive report will be available in the autumn; meanwhile we are happy to have been part of this valuable support to small businesses.
- 8 We await an announcement from government on the next bidding round for the Marches strategic enterprise plan, which is expected this autumn. Work has already begun on preparing potential bids and progress will be reported in due course.
- 9 As I indicated at the annual meeting of Council I have made only minor changes to the cabinet member portfolios, but do welcome Councillor Lester to the cabinet team; for information the revised portfolios are attached at appendix 2. There are a number of ways in which cabinet members try and ensure that all members are informed about decisions which affect their wards including the forward plan and briefings circulated to all members. If there are any issues of concern about a particular issue,

or if members would like to know more about a forthcoming decision, or have a view to put forward I would encourage them to raise this with the relevant cabinet member.

Community Impact

- 10 The community impact of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Equality and Human Rights

- 11 Cabinet and cabinet members have paid due regard to the public sector equality duty in their decision-making, as set out in the relevant decision reports.

Financial Implications

- 12 The financial implications of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Legal Implications

- 13 The legal implications of any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Risk Management

- 14 The risks associated with any decisions of the executive have been set out within the relevant decision report and taken into consideration at the time the decision was taken.

Consultees

- 15 None.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Executive decisions
- Appendix 2 – Cabinet member portfolios

Background Papers

- None identified.