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South Staffordshire Council Achieves £1 Million Budget Surplus in 2024/25

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South Staffordshire Council has closed the 2024/25 financial year with a notable budget surplus of £1.028 million, a significant achievement amidst a challenging economic landscape. This provisional outturn, presented at the cabinet meeting on 8 July 2025, reflects prudent financial management and strategic decisions that have bolstered the council's fiscal position. Factors such as robust leisure centre

performance, savings from digital services, and lower-than-expected inflation on waste contracts have driven this positive outcome.

The council's financial report highlights a reduction in the use of General Fund reserves from a budgeted £1.456 million to just £428,000, freeing up resources for future priorities. According to the report, "exceptional membership performance" at leisure centres, coupled with treasury gains from sustained high interest rates and a lower-than-anticipated local government pay award, were key contributors. The surplus marks a £406,000 improvement over the third-quarter forecast of £622,000, strengthening the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Projections now indicate General Fund reserves will rise to £1.946 million by the end of 2027/28, up from £1.540 million.

Despite this success, the council remains cautious about future funding uncertainties, particularly with looming reforms and a Business Rates reset planned for 2026/27. Further clarity is expected following the June 2025 Spending Review, which will shape local government finances under the current Labour administration's policies. The council's report avoids commenting on the government's approach, but the need for sustainable funding is evident as demand for services grows and costs escalate.

Commercial performance was another highlight, with the council generating £2.848 million in income against a target of £2.959 million. A minor shortfall of £110,996 was attributed to lost rent at Unit 4E due to fire-related construction. Nevertheless, the commercial estate maintained an impressive 98% occupancy rate in the final quarter, with efforts underway to secure leases on remaining vacant units, aiming for 99% occupancy in the first quarter of 2025/26.

Beyond financials, the council has prioritised community and economic initiatives. The Creating Brighter Futures programme, funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), has been extended for another year. Since April 2023, it has supported 425 residents, with 265 securing qualifications to enhance career prospects. Additionally, 51 properties benefited from retrofit grant funding, and 230 home adaptations were made via the Disabled Facilities Grant to help residents live independently. The launch of a new customer portal revealed that 77% of users were potentially missing out on welfare benefits, underscoring the council's commitment to empowering residents.

Environmental and infrastructure improvements also progressed, with 10 open space projects completed in the final quarter. Notable efforts included installing bollards in Bilbrook, adding litter bins, and enhancing car parks. Customer service metrics showed marked improvement, with calls waiting over 10 minutes dropping from 30 to two, and those over 15 minutes falling from 19 to one compared to the previous year.

The council's report concluded with confidence in its trajectory: "We have made good progress against all priorities in the Council Plan and are in a strong position to tackle the challenges and opportunities in 2025/26." This surplus provides a buffer against economic headwinds, but vigilance remains crucial as funding uncertainties loom.