

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 19 July 2023

| Attendance | |
|--------------|--------------------|
| Julia Jessel | Alan White (Chair) |
| Ian Parry | Philip White |
| Mark Sutton | David Williams |
| Simon Tagg | Victoria Wilson |

Cabinet Support Members in attendance: Paul Northcott and Robert Pritchard.

Apologies: Mark Deaville and Jonathan Price.

Part One

14. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

15. Decision notice of the meeting held on 21 June 2023

Decision – That the notes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023 be approved.

16. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including the Council's on-going work to keep Staffordshire children safe and protected from harm, with more children and families coming forward in need of support; the vital role foster carers play in looking after some of the most vulnerable young people in our county and the recent long-service awards ceremony which paid tribute to more than 40 foster carers; the support available to parents struggling with the cost of living through the Holiday Activities and Food Programme; the work to find new, better, and lower cost ways to work and deliver results including, for example, through our community managed libraries; the continuing work with local councils and businesses to create the right conditions for our economy to grow, and create more, better paid jobs for Staffordshire people; the Council working with Cannock Chase District Council and others to support employees and showcase opportunities through our jobs and careers service following Amazon's announcement that they will be relocating operations from Rugeley; the additional £30m investment in our roads which will include repairs on the A522 near Uttoxeter, a £200,000 resurfacing scheme on the A34 Liverpool Road in Newcastle and an £800,000 improvement of the junction of Eastern

Avenue and Grange Lane in Lichfield; and the Council's efforts to reduce carbon emissions and achieve net zero by 2050 including through its Climate Change Action Fund, now in its fourth year, offering more than £90,000 of grants to not-for profit organisations including charities, voluntary and community groups, parish councils and schools; be noted.

17. Staffordshire Means Back to Business - Oral Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills giving an update on “Staffordshire Means Back to Business” activity including the following matters be noted:

- This month saw an increase of 180 claimants, which was a lower proportional increase than seen nationally and in-line with the change seen regionally. The total number of claimants in the county now stands at 15,300 or 2.9%. The claimant count rate in Staffordshire continues to be one of the lowest in the West Midlands and is far lower than the average for the region of 4.9%, and lower than the average for England of 3.8% of the working age population.
- The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 55 claimants to a total of 2,890 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit is 4.6%. This is lower than the national rate of 4.8% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.6%.
- In terms of job vacancies there was a 4% increase across Staffordshire and a 3% increase nationally between May and June. Demand for labour and skills remains high, with there currently being 1.7 jobs available for every claimant within the county, and therefore our focus continues to be to support those that unfortunately find themselves unemployed, to transition into work.
- The news that Amazon have decided to leave its site in Rugeley to relocate to a much larger new facility in Sutton Coldfield. It is anticipated that the closure of the site at Rugeley will take place on a phased basis with the new site operational by October 2023. There is the opportunity for workers to remain in employment with Amazon elsewhere, and our primary concern will of course be ensuring that we are supporting our residents who will be impacted by this decision. We have therefore convened a taskforce comprised of senior representatives of the County Council, Borough Council, Department for Work & Pensions, South Staffordshire College and the National Careers Service to exchange information and consider our support offer, including the deployment of our Jobs & Careers Services if and when appropriate.

- Alongside our district and borough partners and local authorities from the wider West Midlands Region, we are progressing work to consider the need for large employment sites for the logistics industry across the region. This and our continued dialogue with the private sector emphasise the potential for this industry and its opportunities to create substantial numbers of new jobs, and we will of course continue to work proactively to ensure that these jobs are the right jobs in the right locations.
- Our Staffordshire Jobs and Careers service continues to grow and receive referrals from residents across the county either via the website, word of mouth or via one of the many events the Employment Brokers have been attending. This ongoing promotion of our employment and skills services continues to deliver with 11 Open Door placements secured (5 external, 4 SCC), two individuals gaining employment, 77 Staffordshire Jobs & Careers service client referrals and 37 business contacts established in June.
- The ongoing work to develop an investment prospectus for the corridor the A50 / A500 corridor. The details of the investment prospectus are now becoming clear and highlighting some unique strengths aligned to the decarbonisation of the corridor, including through the development and implementation of hydrogen technologies. As connectivity improvements will also be a key part of our success in realising the opportunities along the corridor, I recently took the opportunity to mention this work to the transport secretary, Mark Harper. Over the coming months we will be working to finalise the investment prospectus with our partners and start discussions with the relevant Government departments as to how together we can accelerate private sector investment across the corridor.
- With the summer holidays and I want to take the opportunity to encourage everyone to take advantage of all of our many attractions and activities that Staffordshire has to offer. We will again be promoting our 30 Family Days Out in Staffordshire for Under £30 campaign, with many of the activities being completely free.

18. 'Living My Best Life' - A Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent People in Staffordshire 2023-2028



“People of any age with a disability or neurodivergence should be supported to live the best life they can, for as long as they are able. This new strategy ensures these people are put at the centre of everything we do in Staffordshire.

Throughout the development of this strategy, we have been speaking directly to those with experience of disability and neurodivergence. This means we have been able to put something together that is meaningful, will make a difference, and has been directly influenced by disabled and neurodivergent people, their carers and their families.”

Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care



“Young people who have a disability or neurodivergence need to be supported so they can live their best lives. Throughout the creation of this strategy, we have learned that this is especially important when it comes to their education, social lives, and families. By putting them at the centre of this strategy, we can ensure their needs are met, their voices are heard, and they have choice and control over the support they have.”

Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People



“Taking into account the unique experiences and thoughts of young people with disabilities and neurodivergences are crucial in shaping a strategy that truly works. By listening to them in putting together this strategy, we can empower them to live their best lives, where they are encouraged to dream big and are supported in achieving their goals.”

Jonathan Price, Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the final draft of a new 'Living my Best Life': Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028 which has been jointly developed by the Staffordshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB).

Decision – That the proposed 'Living my Best Life': Report on the Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028, be approved.

19. Supported Living Future Commissioning Arrangements Update



"Supported Living care services provide individuals with disabilities and mental health conditions the support they need to be as independent as they wish.

After talking with individuals who benefit from Supported Living care services, care providers and other stakeholders, we have developed a commissioning plan to ensure that we get the best possible quality of care, the outcomes that individuals want and value for money."

Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the commissioning plan for Supported Living care services in Staffordshire and to delegate authority for the award of contracts.

Decision – (a) That the commissioning plan for procurement of a Flexible Framework for Supported Living care services in Staffordshire be approved.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Director of Health and Care to appoint successful care providers to the Flexible Framework for Supported Living care services and to award call-off contracts under the Flexible Framework for Supported Living care services as detailed in the report.

(c) That authority be delegated to the Director of Health and Care to extend the current Dynamic Purchasing System for contracting Supported Living care services up to 01 July 2025 to cover the period of transition to the new contracts.

20. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards - Contract Award



“Staffordshire has a large number of both care homes and elderly people and consequently we have more Deprivation of Liberty safeguarding applications to consider than most local authorities.

New legislation had been promised to improve the processes but unfortunately has been delayed. We have raised this directly with the Secretary of State and in the meantime have agreed to provide extra funding for the additional capacity we will require.”

Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care

Reasons for the Decision – To seek approval to procure additional capacity to support the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards process.

Decision – (a) That the procurement of additional capacity to support the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards process be approved.

(b) That authority be delegated to the Director of Health and Care to award contracts for this additional capacity.

21. Staffordshire Bus Strategy



“Through the Government’s National Bus Strategy, we have an opportunity to fulfil our role as the Local Transport Authority in shaping and supporting public transport provision in Staffordshire.

By working with operators to bid for money to update old vehicles, improve passenger facilities and encourage bus companies to innovate for the future, we can encourage the development of a sustainable bus network for the benefit of Staffordshire residents.

An ambitious Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan should help provide equality of access to employment and key services whilst contributing towards achieving carbon net zero.”

David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the requirement to complete the process for the creation of an Enhanced Partnership; and a proposed full review of the previously agreed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in line with Department for Transport (DfT) feedback.

Decision – (a) That it be agreed that the process for the creation of an Enhanced Partnership (EP), that is to commence on the 1st August 2023 in line with the previously agreed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), be completed.

(b) That the undertaking of a full review of the previously agreed BSIP in line with Department for Transport (DfT) feedback, to enable Staffordshire County Council a greater chance of success for future bids, be agreed.

22. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 1, 2023/24



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

Our work to promote Staffordshire as a top location to live, work, invest in and visit continues. Our ‘We are Staffordshire’ team attended the UK Real Estate Infrastructure and Investment Conference in Leeds in May where they got the chance to promote the many investment opportunities available in the county. This, alongside supporting local businesses, helping attract new businesses with better quality jobs for people remains a priority.

Our Household Support Fund continues to help thousands of local families with the ongoing cost of living pressures and during the May half term holiday provided supermarket vouchers to 27,000 families. Over Easter, the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme also saw its highest take up rate meaning more children and young people benefited from the scheme.

Work to tackle climate change is ongoing, and since December 2022, the Staffordshire Warmer Homes scheme has installed 459 measures in 328 properties to make them more energy efficient.

We continue to face challenges within Children's services including the rising cost, number and complexity of Children in Care, and ongoing placement pressures, however additional recruitment is helping ease this. We are also seeing Increased demand for Children's Services and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) for Education, Health and Care Plans, but again, the recruitment of additional staffing capacity is underway.

Despite the many pressures facing councils like ours, we will invest to keep growing the county in a sustainable way to make a positive difference in the lives of our residents".

Alan White, Leader of the Council



"All council departments continue to deliver against their priorities, whilst progressing with activities in the organisation's Delivery Plan.

Like most local authorities, we do face rising costs across the organisation and high inflation which puts extra pressures on our finances. We also continue to face challenges around demand and capacity within Children's services and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities teams.

We continue to do what is necessary and to manage our finances effectively. The latest revenue forecast outturn shows an overspend of £9.5m (1.39%), compared to the balanced budget.

We continue to keep our 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".

Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Reasons for the Decision – To consider an overview of the Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan, Corporate Delivery Plan and Medium-Term Financial

Strategy.

Decision – That the report be received.

23. Treasury Management Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2023



“We are a well-run council and we continue to manage our finances prudently while doing and spending what is required. By using cash reserves rather than borrowing more, we have been able to achieve substantial savings in what remain challenging times.

In addition to being prudent, our low-risk investment approach, which focuses on lending to low-risk institutions, means we have been well placed to deal with challenges arising from difficulties the current global economy presents.

We remain committed to supporting local businesses along with providing access to funding, as we work to grow our economy. Like most Councils we face financial pressures, rising costs and uncertainty over the long-term funding of some services but we will continue to spend and invest where necessary, focusing our efforts and resources on where they are most needed.”

Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Reasons for the Decision – To consider a summary of the County Council’s treasury management activities for 2022/23, including the borrowing and investment decisions taken throughout the year in the light of the interest rates and economic conditions prevailing at the time.

Decision – (a) That the treasury management activities for the year ended 31 March 2023, including the Prudential Indicators outturn detailed in Appendix 4 to the report, be noted.

(b) That the use of the Minimum Revenue Provision at 31 March 2023 for £20.441m as set out in paragraphs 31 and 32 of the report be noted and approved.

24. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 16 August to 13

December 2023, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

| Subject Matter | Contact |
|---|--|
| Strategy for Special Provision | Name: Tim Moss Tel: (01785) 277963 |
| Burton Regeneration | Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228 |
| Staffordshire Climate Change Adaptation Strategy | Name: Tim Cooper Tel: (01785) 276204 |
| The Recommission of Shared Lives | Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557 |
| Children & Young People's Programme Framework | Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976 191079 |
| Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2023/24 | Name: Rachel Spain/ Wendy Tompson Tel: (01785) 854455/ (01785) 854267 |
| Nexus Care (Nexus Trading Services Limited) Annual Report 2022/23 | Name: Richard Harling MBE, / John Tradewell Tel: (01785) 278700 / 276102 |
| Staffordshire Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030 | Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984 |

Alan White
Leader of the Council