

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 17 January 2024

Attendance	
Mark Deaville	Alan White (Chair)
Ian Parry	Philip White
Jonathan Price	David Williams
Mark Sutton	Victoria Wilson
Simon Tagg	

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

Also in attendance: Samantha Thompson

Apologies: Julia Jessel

Part One

71. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

72. Decision notice of the meeting held on 13 December 2023

Decision – That the notes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 be approved.

73. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including the recent death of Noreen Oliver who founded the Burton Addiction Centre, known to us all now as the BAC O'Connor Centre; the inspection by Ofsted which showed that while the care of children in our care is "good" we need to do more to raise the bar across the service; the 15 people from Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent who received awards in His Majesty the King's New Years Honours list; the dedicated, on-going, work of our highways crews who are responsible for maintaining the county's 6,000km, including the proposals to carry out at least an extra £50 million worth of repairs and essential maintenance over the next three years, on top of any grant given by the government; the County Council receiving a top award for crisis communications for the roll out of the giant carbon bubble to towns across the county to help visualise how their daily activities can impact carbon emissions; and encouraging people, when they make their New Year's Resolutions, to think about giving something back to local communities, perhaps through volunteering or opening up their home to a foster child; be noted.

74. Staffordshire Means Back to Business

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 405 claimants in Staffordshire, at the same time we have seen increases both regionally and nationally. This is reflective of the challenging economic conditions businesses continue to operate in across the country. The total number of claimants in the county now stands at 15,165 and the claimant rate remains the same this month at 2.8% of the working age population. It is important to note that 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%. We will continue to support those residents that unfortunately find themselves out of work to access employment through our dedicated Jobs Brokerage service.
- The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw a decrease of 25 claimants this month to a total of 2,860 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit remains the same at 4.6%. This is lower than the national rate of 5.1% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.8%. Whilst this decrease in the youth claimant count is positive our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or continue in education and training.
- One of our key economic priorities is supporting residents in being able to take advantage of high-paid job opportunities, and I’m therefore pleased to be able to update Cabinet on the recently released earnings data which gives a good indication as to why, at least partly, disposable income has increased within Staffordshire. The average weekly earnings of our residents are now the same as the national average, the first-time that this has been case. Over the last year, the average earnings of our residents have increased by over 12% compared to just 5% across the West Midlands Region and England as whole. Continuing to support the creation of highly paid, high-skilled jobs across Staffordshire and supporting our residents in gaining higher level skills will of course remain a key focus for us in 2024, ensuring we are doing all we can to put more money into people’s pockets.

- Adapting to climate change is evidently already a key consideration for businesses and developers across Staffordshire, with the developer of the first units on the West Midlands Interchange scheme aiming for the highest possible rating for energy performance of the buildings, including through the use of solar panels on the roof, something we have increasingly seen throughout the county in recent years.
- Supporting energy efficiency of our businesses is nothing new to us as the Staffordshire Business & Environment Network (sben) has been operating for over 30 years and has provided advice and delivered countless support programmes since its inception. Last year saw the conclusion of our Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme (LCBEP) which ran for 7 years in partnership with sben and supported businesses to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The programme is estimated to have reduced carbon emissions by over 2,250 tonnes annually, supported over 350 businesses, provided £1.1 million in grants and unlocked £1.3 million in private sector investment.
- Whilst LCBEP has now concluded, we remain committed to supporting businesses to improve their energy efficiency and adapt to climate change requirements. Our businesses can therefore now access our new Green Solutions programme which provides training, an energy efficiency review and a potential grant to implement energy saving measures. Currently this programme is being funded utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding provided by a number of our district and borough partners, although I'll be updating Cabinet on the further development of this programme next month.
- Last month I updated Cabinet on our success in securing a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent which has the potential to bring significant benefits including through access to support and future funding programmes. Establishing the LVEP will be a key goal for the coming year and on Friday we have our Tourism and Hospitality Conference at one of our most important attractions, Alton Towers. The event will give our businesses and partners an opportunity to learn all about how we are working directly with VisitEngland through the LVEP and feature guest speakers, workshops and opportunity to network with relevant people and organisations. I look forward to updating Cabinet on this and all of our economic growth programme through 2024.

75. Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation



"Although this authority has taken steps towards its target of reaching net zero by 2050 by cutting carbon emissions by 50 per cent since 2019, there is still more to be done.

This working party report suggests possible ways that the Council can meet its commitment to the environment and support Staffordshire's economy, while also enhancing the county's quality of life.

We will consider the report and respond in due course."

Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the report of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Climate Change Working Group on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation

Decision – (a) That the report of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Climate Change Working Group on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation be received.

(b) That an executive response to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recommendation(s) of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report be provided within two months of receipt of the report.

76. Natural Environment Strategy



"Staffordshire is a stunning rural county but, like much of the UK, nature is under pressure here too. We must act now to help nature Recover.

That is why we have developed this Natural Environment Strategy, which sets out the actions we will take in the coming years to care for nature on our land and through our activities. This will form part of wider efforts across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, which will be identified through the local nature recovery strategy we are leading with our partners and stakeholders.

By helping nature, we are also helping ourselves.

	<p>Nature provides important goods and services that support our wellbeing and quality of life. From the insects that pollinate our food crops, to trees storing carbon, nature is essential to us.”</p> <p>Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the Natural Environment Strategy which has been developed to set out how the Council will deliver its biodiversity requirements and enhance the natural environment.

Decision – That the natural environment strategy be approved.

77. Here to Help - Progress Update

	<p>“As a county council, we want to do everything we can to support people to lead happy and independent lives but recognise too that some residents also may need a little extra hand to help with increasing costs over the colder months.</p> <p>Our Holiday Activity & Food programme has, for example, already supported 199,000 free sessions for eligible children and our Here to Help campaign has signposted people to the wider financial and community support they may benefit from.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with our partners across all the district and borough councils to ensure we can work together to make sure we target people who may need the help and will continue to do so over the winter and spring months.”</p> <p>Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider a progress update on the range of support, initiatives and signposting activities which have been undertaken by the County Council to enable our residents to manage cost of living pressures over the last 12 months.


Decision – (a) That how the County Council has supported Staffordshire residents to manage cost-of-living pressures be noted.

(b) That the proposed next steps, as set out in paragraph 19 of the report,

be agreed.

(c) That the continued delivery of the County Council's Strategic Plan through investment in early years provision, education, skills, training and by attracting first class businesses to the county, while supporting existing businesses to thrive and prosper, which will support the long-term prosperity of Staffordshire residents, be noted and supported.

78. Service Provision of Temporary and Interim Staff Resources


	<p>"We have over 3,000 valued full-time equivalent employees at the county council; however, we do need temporary employees for a variety of reasons and most notably in front line service areas. This supports us in ensuring we are highly flexible and respond to the needs of our teams as soon as possible. We have in place a sourcing organisation to streamline this process which is well regarded by agency suppliers due to its fair payment processes."</p>
<p>Alan White, Leader of the Council</p>	

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the arrangements for the provision to supply temporary and interim human resources (agency workers) to the County Council to provide cover for vital frontline services.

Decision – (a) That the Council continues to operate a neutral vendor model for the provision of temporary and interim human resources.

(b) That the Council awards and enters into a 3 + 1 year call-off contract from Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework agreement 653F_23 – Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR4) with Comensura.

79. Ofsted Report

	<p>“Children Services in Staffordshire have been rated ‘good’ for a decade, so the result of this inspection requires careful reflection.</p> <p>However, we accept the findings, and I can assure everyone that protecting vulnerable young people is a priority.</p> <p>We are committed to improve our services and have already begun taking steps to do so.”</p> <p>Mark Sutton, Cabinet member for Children and Young People</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the report arising from the Ofsted inspection of the Council’s Children’s Services.

Decision - That the information contained in the Ofsted report be noted.

80. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 21 February to 19 June 2024, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

Subject Matter	Contact
Civil Contingencies Policy & Business Continuity Management Policy	Name: Tracy Thorley Tel: (01785) 276337
Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24	Name: Rachel Spain/ Wendy Tompson Tel: (01785) 854455/ (01785) 854267
Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion - progress update	Name: Sarah Getley Tel: (01785) 854265
Lighting and ITS energy contract procurement proposal	Name: James Bailey Tel: (01785) 276591
Procurement of Gas Supplies	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Green Solutions – SCC Delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204
Homes for Children in Our Care	Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976 191079
Household Waste Recycling Centres – Equipment Replacement Programme	Name: David Atkinson Tel: (01785) 277910
Joint Enterprise Legacy Committee	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204

Recommissioning of Residential and Nursing Care Homes	Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557
Staffordshire's Joint All Age Carers Strategy 2024 - 2029	Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557
Section 75 Agreement for the provision of Adult Social Care Assessment and Case Management	Name: Amanda Stringer Tel: (01785) 895170
Burton Regeneration	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Capital Programme for Schools 2024/ 25	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Highways and Transport Capital Programme	Name: James Bailey Tel: 01785) 276591
Corporate Delivery Plan 2024/25	Name: Lynsey Bissell Tel: 07855 026263
Climate Change Strategic Development Framework - Update	Name: David Atkinson Tel: (01785) 277910
Provision of Apprenticeship Services 2024	Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984
Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service	Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976 191079
Review of Local Authority Social Care Case Management Systems	Name: Jo Crowcher/ Nisha Gupta Tel: 07772 011078/ 07890 402088
Unregulated Placement Update	Name: Nisha Gupta Tel: 07890 402088
Community Learning Accountability Agreement 2024-2025	Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984

81. Exclusion of the Public

"That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below".

PART TWO

82. Residential Overnight Education (Exemption paragraph 3)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the commissioning arrangements for the delivery of Residential Overnight Education, funded through the High Needs Block.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

83. Drug and Alcohol Partnership Proposal

(Exemption paragraph 3)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the arrangement for the provision of drug and alcohol treatment services from 01 April 2024.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

84. Unregulated Placements

(Exemption paragraph 2)

Reasons for the Decision – To provide Cabinet with an update in relation to the use of unregulated placements.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

85. Overview of a Child's Complex Care Planning

(Exemption paragraphs 1 and 2)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider an overview of a child's complex care planning.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

Leader of the Council