

Council Agenda

Thursday 14 December 2023

10:00

Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford

To: The Members of the Staffordshire County Council

Notice is given that the meeting of the Staffordshire County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford at 10:00 on Thursday 14 December 2023 to deal with the matters set out on the agenda.

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

Pat Flaherty
Chief Executive
6 December 2023



Agenda

(Note: The meeting will begin with prayers)

Part One

1. **General Housekeeping and Declaring an Interest** (Pages 5 - 8)
Apologies for absence (if any)

2. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

3. **Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 October 2023** (Pages 9 - 28)

4. **Chairman's Correspondence**

The Chairman will mention a range of recent items of news which may be of interest to Members

5. **Statement of the Leader of the Council** (Pages 29 - 34)

The Leader will inform the Council about his work and his plans for the Council, and will give an overview of decisions taken by the Cabinet (and Portfolio Holders) since the previous meeting of the Council

6. **Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel** (Pages 35 - 44)

7. **Questions**

Questions to be asked by Members of the County Council of the Leader of the Council, a Cabinet Member, or a Chairman of a Committee. The question will be answered by the relevant Member and the Member asking the question may then ask a follow up question which will also be answered

8. **Petitions**

An opportunity for Members to present and speak on petitions submitted by their constituents

9. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman of the Council will move the following motion so that the County Council can consider confidential business in private:

“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

(All reports in this section are on pink paper)

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

Filming of Meetings

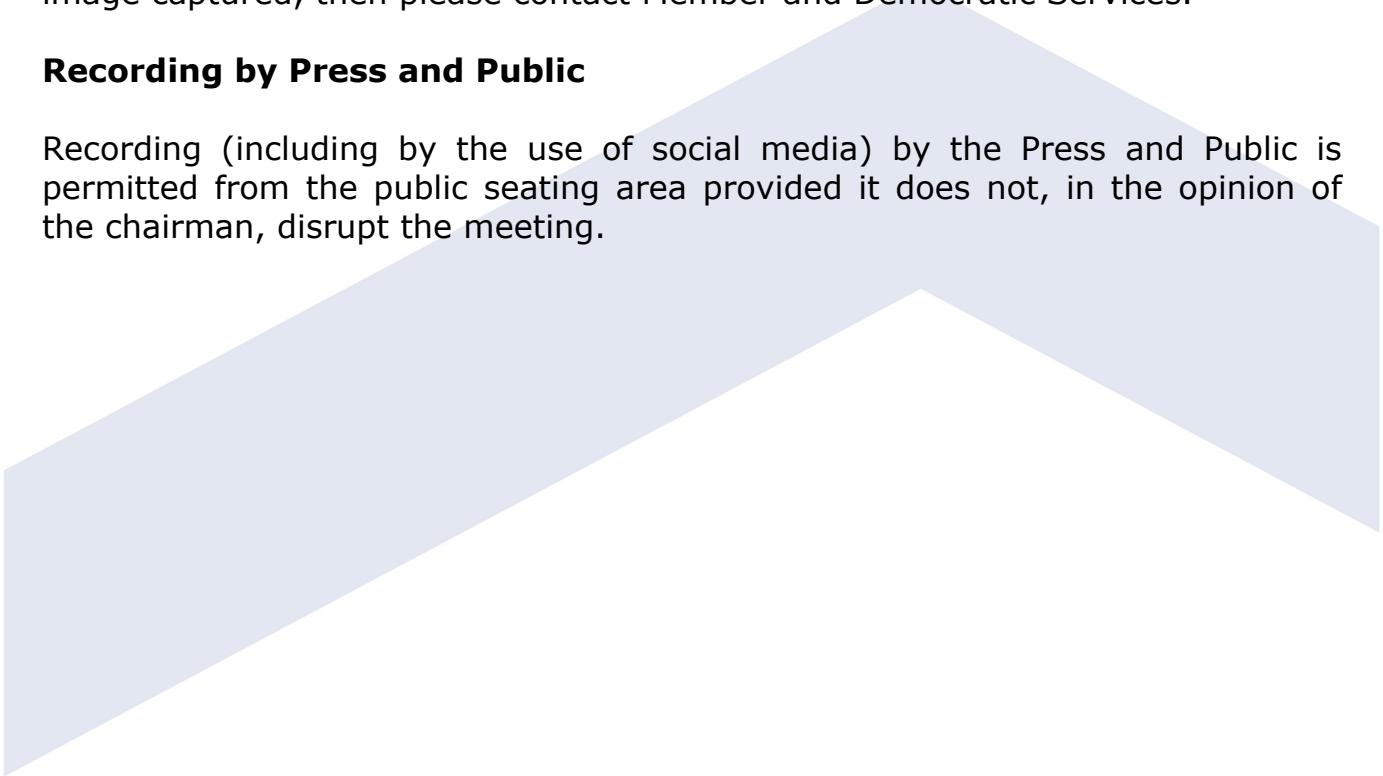
Staffordshire County Council is defined as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. The County Council has agreed that public meetings should be the subject of live web transmission ‘webcasting’. Fixed cameras are located within meeting room for this purpose.

The webcast will be live on the County Council’s website and recorded for subsequent play-back for 12 months. The recording will also be uploaded to YouTube. By entering the meeting room and using the seats around the meeting tables you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for the purpose of webcasting.

If you have privacy concerns about the webcast or do not wish to have your image captured, then please contact Member and Democratic Services.

Recording by Press and Public

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.



NOTICES FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Questions

- 1.1. Questions must be addressed to the Chairman, or to the Leader of the Council or to a Portfolio Holder or to the Chairman of a Committee. Notice in writing of any question must be emailed to the office of the Director of Corporate Services (michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk) by no later than 1:00 pm on the third working day preceding the Council Meeting i.e. **by not later than 1:00 pm on Monday, 11 December 2023**. All questions and answers will be circulated around the Chamber before the commencement of the meeting.
- 1.2. Questions may be addressed to the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council, any Cabinet Member or a Committee Chairman. The Leader of the Council may refer questions asked of them to the relevant Cabinet Member if they consider it appropriate.
- 1.3. Each Member may submit a maximum of one question each, however only the first 15 questions received by the Director of Corporate Services before the deadline will be dealt with at the meeting. All other questions will receive a written answer.
- 1.4. Questions and written responses will be circulated to all members at the start of each meeting and will be made available online to accompany the webcast but will not be read out at the meeting.
- 1.5. Each questioner will be entitled to ask one supplementary question on their question/answer and the time limit for supplementary questions and answers will be at the sole discretion of the Chairman.

2. Notices of Motion

- 2.1. A Notice of Motion must reach, by email, the Director for Corporate Services (michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk) nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 4 December 2023**. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Paragraph 11 of Section 12 of the Constitution.
NB. Notices of Motion for the County Council meeting on 8 February 2024 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 29 January 2024.

RULES OF DEBATE

3. Speaking at Council Meetings

- 3.1. Councillors shall conduct debate politely and with due respect for others.
- 3.2. Councillors shall not use foul or offensive language.

3.3. As far as is possible, Members should use notes for reference where necessary but should avoid reading directly from a script. This will assist with engagement in debate and the ability of the microphones to pick up the sound.

4. Content and Length of Speeches

- 4.1. Subject to Paragraph 4.2 below, no Member may speak for more than five minutes during debates by the Council unless the Chairman gives an extension.
- 4.2. When the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members nominated by the Leader or Committee Chairmen propose reports to the Council they may speak for up to ten minutes. Members who have been nominated by the Leaders of minority political groups as spokesmen on a report discussed by the Council may also speak for up to ten minutes.
- 4.3. Members will confine their speeches to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or a point of order. No Member may question another Members motives or use offensive expressions to any Member of the Council or Officer.
- 4.4. The Chairman may call the attention of the Council to continued irrelevancy and tedious repetition or any breach of order by a Member and may direct them to discontinue their speech. If the Member continues to disregard the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may ask them to retire for the remainder of the sitting. Should a Member refuse to retire the Chairman may order their removal from the meeting.
- 4.5. The Council operates a 'traffic light' system for speeches. During any speech, the amber light will come on notifying the speaker that they have 60 seconds left.
- 4.6. Where a Local Member is presenting a petition, they may speak for a maximum of two minutes. The amber light will come on for the final 30 seconds.
- 4.7. If there is serious disorder or persistent disregard of the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may, without prejudice to any other powers which they have, direct that the Meeting be suspended for such period as they consider desirable.

GUIDANCE ON DECLARING DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AT MEETINGS - WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY

DEFINITION OF WHAT IS A DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

A 'Disclosable Pecuniary Interest' is an interest of yourself or interest known to the Member of relatives and close associates within the following descriptions:

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from Staffordshire County Council) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you or your partner in connection with you carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between you or your partner (or a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest) and Staffordshire County Council- (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of Staffordshire County Council
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of Staffordshire County Council for a month or longer
Corporate Tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) (a) the landlord is Staffordshire County Council and (b) the tenant is a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where- (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of Staffordshire County Council; and (b) either- (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class

You are also required to declare a pecuniary interest if an issue being considered at a meeting where you're present affects your or your partner's personal well being or financial position to a greater extent than it affects that of a member of the general public.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

If you also have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you must notify the Chairman of that interest and withdraw from the room when the matter is being discussed.

An example of what you should say

"I have a disclosable pecuniary interest in item number..... on the agenda. The interest is I shall leave the room when that matter is being discussed"

DECLARING INTERESTS AT FULL COUNCIL

The Code of Conduct only requires that disclosable pecuniary interests are declared where the matter to which the interest relates is being considered. Some items will be mentioned in the papers for Full Council but are not actually being considered by Full Council. In particular, some items are mentioned in the Leader's Statement as having been dealt with in Cabinet but are not actually mentioned or discussed at full Council. In such circumstances the Monitoring Officer's advice to members is that there is no need to declare an interest unless the particular matter is mentioned or discussed. As a general rule, members only need to declare an interest at full Council in the following circumstances:

- Where a matter is before the Council for a decision and/or
- Where the matter in which the member has an interest is specifically mentioned or discussed at the Council meeting.

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 12 October 2023

Attendance		
Arshad Afsar	Syed Hussain	Paul Snape
Charlotte Atkins	Graham Hutton	Bob Spencer
Philip Atkins, OBE	Julia Jessel	Mike Sutherland
Gill Burnett-Faulkner	Peter Kruskonjic	Mark Sutton
Tina Clements	Tom Loughbrough-Rudd	Simon Tagg
Richard Cox	Johnny McMahon	Samantha Thompson
Mike Davies	Paul Northcott	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mark Deaville	Jeremy Oates	Ross Ward
Janet Eagland	Gillian Pardesi	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Ian Parry	Philip White
Keith Flunder	Kath Perry, MBE	Mike Wilcox
Colin Greatorex	Jeremy Pert	Ian Wilkes
Philippa Haden	Bernard Peters	Bernard Williams
Gill Heath	Jonathan Price	David Williams
Phil Hewitt (Chairman)	Robert Pritchard	Victoria Wilson
Jill Hood	James Salisbury	Mark Winnington
Derrick Huckfield	Janice Silvester-Hall	Mike Worthington
Philip Hudson	David Smith	Nigel Yates

Apologies: Jak Abrahams, Alex Farrell, John Francis, Thomas Jay, Jason Jones, Stephen Sweeney, Jill Waring and Conor Wileman

Part One

25. County Councillor Jill Waring

The Chairman informed the Council that Councillor Waring had been unwell for some time and was therefore currently unable to attend meetings of the Council and its Committees. He therefore sought the approval of the Council for her continuing absence to be authorised for a further period of six months.

Resolved – That, in light of Councillor Jill Waring’s continuing ill health, and for the purposes of section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, her continuing absence from Council meetings be authorised for a further period of six months.

26. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

27. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 July 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 20 July 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

28. Chairman's Correspondence

Honorary Alderman Edward Boden

The Chairman informed the Council of the recent death of Former County Councillor Eddie Boden.

Mr Boden represented both the former Cross Heath and Audley and Chesterton (Newcastle-under-Lyme) Electoral Divisions on the County Council from 1993 to 2009.

He served on a number of the Council's Committees including the Regulatory Committee, Planning Committee, Standards Committee, Corporate Policy and Audit Scrutiny Committee and the Partnerships Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Mr Boden served as Chairman of the County Council between May 2003 and May 2005 and was appointed as an Honorary Alderman upon his retirement from the Council in 2009.

Councillor Tagg paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr Boden during his service as a Member of the County Council and also whilst serving on Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

Former County Councillor John Russell

The Chairman also informed the Council of the death, on 5 August 2023, of former County Councillor John Alan Russell. Mr Russell represented the Stone Rural (Stafford) County Electoral Division from 1994 to 1997. He served on a number of the Council's Committees including the Education Committee, Youth and Community Sub-Committee, Enterprise and Economic Development Committee, Planning Committee, Development Services Group Committee and the Policy and Resources Group Committee.

Councillor Parry paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr Russell during his service as a Member of the County Council and also whilst serving on Stafford Borough Council and Barlaston Parish Council.

Members stood and observed a one-minute silence in memory of Mr Boden and Mr Russell.

Members' Long Service Awards – Mike Worthington

The Chairman informed Members that, since 1985, the County Council had recognised the service of its Members who had completed 12 years (i.e. three full terms of office) through the presentation of a Long Service Award.

Mr Worthington first became a Member of the County Council in 2011 and had served on the Council since that date.

The Chairman invited Councillor Mike Worthington to come forward and receive his Long Service Award.

My first six months as Chairman

The Chairman informed the Council about his first six months as Chairman. He indicated that, in addition to the plethora of events he had been invited to by external organisations, from a Speech Day at Lichfield Cathedral School to the Armed Forces Parade in Newcastle under Lyme, his focus had very much been on recognising the valuable work of the County's many volunteers. Over the past few months, he had taken the opportunity to visit a number of the County's Libraries and had met with many of the voluntary groups which used the libraries as their base.

He added that plans were also well advanced to introduce "Unsung Heroes" afternoon teas in County Buildings to recognise the work of volunteers across the County. For the first afternoon tea, the Chairman had asked Members representing communities in Cannock and Lichfield to come forward with their nominations.

(Further information on the diary of Civic Events was available on the Council's website – <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Your-council-and-democracy/Civic-and-Ceremonial/The-Chairman-of-the-county-council/Diary-of-events-2023.aspx>.)

29. Petition: Staffordshire County Council decision to take away valuable sports pitches and building

Members were informed that, under the Council's Petition Scheme, any petition that exceeded 5,000 valid signatures automatically triggered a debate at the next available Council meeting.

A petition had been received concerning development proposals for County Council owned land at Cherry Close, Chasetown, Burntwood. The petition consisted of an e-petition containing over 27,400 signatures.

Kieran Newey of the Midland Soccer Academy, on behalf of the petitioners, outlined the reasons for the petition which included:

- The Council's proposals for the land would result in the Midland Soccer Academy becoming homeless.
- Players from the Academy could not be absorbed into other local teams as those teams were already at capacity.
- The Council's proposals went against policies in the Local Plan in relation to access to open spaces and sport and recreation.
- The proposals would result in the loss of good quality football pitches.
- Other sites in Burntwood could be used to accommodate the Council's proposed development.
- A suitable alternative site to which the Academy could relocate had not been found.

In responding to the petition, Councillor Deaville expressed his thanks to Mr Newey for bringing the petition to the County Council. He added that, together with partners, the County Council proposed to provide a state-of-the-art Health, Care and Nursing Complex on the site which was much needed and had been long-awaited in Burntwood. The development would provide massive benefits, not only to residents of Burntwood, but also the surrounding area. The Complex would consist of a new, modern General Practice and Community Health Facility reducing the need for people to travel to hospital. The proposed development would also provide 70 individual homes for older people with associated care and support facilities. Councillor Deaville added that the County Council and Lichfield District Council had been working and would continue to work with the Midland Soccer Academy to find an alternative site for the Academy to enable them to continue the excellent work they did.

Councillor Hood indicated that, whilst sympathising with everything Councillor Deaville had said, there was still a need to provide green spaces for children and young people to be able to run about as this was crucial for their physical and mental health. She added that it was a real shame that the County Council was in a position that it needed to debate the competing demands for the site.

Councillor Jessel added that whilst she empathised with the Academy, its staff and the young people they served, it had been known for a long time that the site was due for redevelopment and was vacated from its original use in 2014. Since then, the site had been used by a number of different users on short-term leases/licences. She indicated that the Academy was on a 48 hour lease which meant that they, or the County Council, could terminate the lease at 48 hours' notice; and that the Academy had known for a long time that the site was due for redevelopment. Councillor Jessel also indicated that the County Council had made a commitment to the

people of Burntwood to provide the proposed Health, Care and Nursing Complex and would deliver on that commitment. She added that the County Council was working with Cannock Chase District Council and Lichfield District Council to identify a suitable site to which the Academy could relocate and asked that they worked collaboratively with the Councils to achieve that aim.

Councillor Loughborough-Rudd expressed his support for the development of the proposed Health, Care and Nursing Complex as this was a much-needed facility locally.

Councillor Wilcox added that, whilst he sympathised with the Academy in respect of the situation they found themselves in, there was a need for the proposed, much needed, health facilities. He reiterated that County Council was working, and would continue to work, with Cannock Chase District Council and Lichfield District Council to identify a suitable site to which the Academy could relocate. Councillor Wilcox added that the Academy would be permitted to continue to use the pitches at Cherry Close until the end of the year and would then play the remainder of the season's fixtures at Burntwood Leisure Centre or other pitches in Lichfield.

In concluding the debate, Councillor Deaville extended his thanks to the Midland Soccer Academy for the work they did and added that the Council would continue to work with them to find a suitable site to which they could relocate.

Resolved – That the petition be received.

30. Statement of the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council presented a Statement outlining his recent work since the previous meeting of the Council.

Staffordshire Means Back to Business - Oral Update

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Councillor Smith referred to the proposed developments in his Division including the provision of a facility with 30 electric vehicle charging points; the regional headquarters for a major company and a 10-acre site for hi-tech manufacturing.

Councillor Yates requested an update with regard to the Chatterley Valley site and, in particular, the delays in completing the ground works. In response, Councillor Philip White indicated that the sub-contractor undertaking the ground works had gone into administration and that the Council was working with the main contractor to secure a new sub-

contractor to complete those works.

Councillor Winnington spoke about the recent announcement by the Prime Minister that the second phase of HS2 between Birmingham and Manchester was to be cancelled. He also referred to the need for the Council to look to maximise the benefits which could be harvested in relation to the announcement of Government funding to support local transport schemes. Councillor Cox added that he supported Councillor Winnington's comments on the need to look to maximise the benefits from any additional Government funding to support local transport schemes. Councillor Hood also spoke about the devastating impact of HS2 on her Division including the work which had been commenced to construct a railhead. In response, Councillor Philip White indicated that the County council had consistently opposed the construction of HS2 but that if the project did proceed, the Council was committed to extracting every ounce of economic benefit for Staffordshire and this remained the case. He welcomed the announcement of additional Government funding for local transport schemes and stated that he was awaiting the full details of what this would mean for Staffordshire.

Councillor Hussain referred to the closure of Wilkinsons stores across the UK and asked the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills that every effort was made to ensure that workers at the stores received their rightful pension, redundancy payments and a reliable safety net to avoid them falling into poverty. In response, Councillor Philip White indicated that Staffordshire had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the region with 1.6 vacancies for each person looking for employment, a large proportion of which were in retail. He added that a multi-agency group had been put together to support those employees affected by the closure of Wilkinsons and also the Amazon site in Rugeley.

Councillor Jessel spoke about the investment which had taken place along the A38 including the development at Branston Locks and the proposed upgrading of the interchange at Branston. Councillor Hudson also referred to proposed work to improve two junctions along the A50 in Uttoxeter.

Councillor Philip White referred to the Enjoy Staffordshire tourism awards, with judging taking place over the next few months and the awards ceremony set for March 2024.

Councillor Alan White highlighted how Staffordshire had had to endure more than its fair share of disruption arising from national infrastructure projects such as the widening of the M6, the M6 Toll, improvements to the West Coast Main Line and more recently, HS2. He added that the County Council needed to make sure that it derived the maximum inward investment which could be capitalised from such projects.

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

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Councillor Clements welcomed the Strategy and, in particular, its focus on supporting people to live their best lives, regardless of the nature of their disability or neurodivergence or whether they had care and support needs.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins also welcomed the Strategy but added that it needed to do more to recognise the daily challenges disabled people faced. She also spoke about hate crime against disabled people which she indicated had increased by 23% in Staffordshire, with fewer than 3% of perpetrators being charged. Councillor Atkins added that the disability charity, Leonard Cheshire, had called on all Police Forces to have Disability Liaison Officers to help reduce such hate crime but that, unfortunately, none had been appointed in Staffordshire. In response, Councillor Jessel indicated that she would raise this matter with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Loughborough-Rudd expressed his support for the Strategy and also spoke about the excellent support available in the County for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Councillor Jessel and Councillor Northcott spoke about the development of the Strategy, how service users had helped inform the strategy, and its solid foundation which was aimed at providing the best possible service to disabled people.

Supported Living Future Commissioning Arrangements Update

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Councillor Charlotte Atkins indicated that she supported the decision to go for a flexible framework for the future commissioning of supported living and enquired as to the expected increase in demand for such services over the next five to eight years; and whether the Council would be able to meet that demand, especially in the high needs area.

Councillor Yates spoke about supported living arrangements and how they needed to be properly planned and integrated into local communities.

Councillor Hussain sought an assurance that equipment provided for disabled people, such as stairlifts, would be serviced and properly maintained.

Councillor Jessel explained how service users had helped inform the development of the Council's supported living service in order to provide a

consistency in approach and in service specifications.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards - Contract Award

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Councillor Hussain, Councillor Alan White indicated that the County Council was continuing to lobby the Staffordshire Members of Parliament to press the Government to bring in the proposed new Liberty Protection Safeguards legislation which would replace Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards.

Staffordshire Bus Strategy

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Councillor Yates referred to the perceived reluctance of car drivers to trust bus services as an alternative means of travel and also the need for funding for the provision of appropriate infrastructure such as bus shelters and live "arrivals" displays.

Councillor Cox and Councillor Huckfield spoke about bus patronage levels and the risk that if services were not used and became non-cost effective, they would be withdrawn by the operator.

Councillor Loughborough-Rudd referred to the need for a national strategy on bus services to make them more connected, for example, with rail services.

In responding to Members, Councillor David Williams referred to the on-going work with bus operators to encourage patronage and to bolster essential services. Councillor Alan White added that there needed to be a devolution of powers from Central Government to local authorities to enable the local delivery of public transport infrastructure.

Accelerated Progress Plan: Enhanced Assess-Plan-Do-Review Pathway, Strategy for Special Provision and the Staffordshire Children and Young People's Framework

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Councillor Charlotte Atkins spoke about the need to "win the confidence" of the parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) that the support those children need is available in mainstream schools. She also indicated that, unfortunately, there were some schools which discouraged SEND pupils from joining their school community and that this was not acceptable. In response, Councillor Price indicated that he agreed with Councillor Atkin's comments on the need to win the confidence of parents of SEND pupils.

Councillor Yates referred to the need for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP's) to be completed more quickly.

Staffordshire Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Councillor Smith referred to the need for an audit of all of the actions the Council was taking which contributed towards its climate change policy.

Councillor Yates spoke about the Council's responsibilities to mitigate the impact of climate change and also to prioritise actions which could reduce flooding such as clearing drains and gulleys. In response, Councillor Tagg suggested that Councillor Yates should contact the Council's Flood Risk Management Team if there were any particular issues which needed to be addressed.

Councillor Hussain asked that there be a coordinated approach with partners, such as other local authorities, to undertake a survey looking at opportunities to expand woodlands. In response, Councillor Tagg indicated that the Council was working with the district and borough councils with regard to tree planting initiatives.

Councillor Tagg thanked Members for their comments and indicated that the Strategy had been developed jointly with the district and borough councils across Staffordshire. He added that good progress was being made towards achieving the target of net zero by 2050.

Staffordshire Warmer Homes – Approval of the Spend plans for the Home Upgrade Grant Phase 2

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Councillor Yates called on his fellow Members to help to identify those households who may be eligible to receive funding under the Warmer Homes initiative. In response, Councillor Jessel stated that she agreed that Members could play a vital role in helping to identify those people who could benefit from the initiative and added that Parish Councils and community groups could also help in this respect.

Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Service

(Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Councillor Kruskonjic spoke about the success of the jobs fairs which had taken place in his division. Councillor Philip White thanked Councillor Kruskonjic for his comments and added that the jobs fairs were taking place across the County.

Fixing more roads

(Paragraph 13 of the Statement)

Councillor Hudson spoke about the recent improvements to roads in Uttoxeter and extended his thanks to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport. Councillor Silvester-Hall welcomed the recent works to install traffic lights at the junction of Grange Lane and Eastern Avenue in Lichfield.

Councillor Hood extended her thanks to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport for the speed with which the improvements to the Walton Island in Stone were completed.

Councillor Cox indicated that the Council was now seeing the fruits of its additional investment in the County's roads and Councillor Peters extended his thanks for the recent resurfacing of the Claymills junction in his division.

Councillor Philip Atkins referred to the highway improvement works which had taken place in his division but added that there was still more to be done including along the A50 – A500 corridor.

Councillor Trowbridge spoke about the need for improvement works which needed to be undertaken along the A449 Wolverhampton Road in Stafford.

Councillor Price referred to the housing development at Beaconside in Stafford and asked for reassurance that the Council was putting pressure on the developer to get the scheme delivered.

Councillor Worthington referred to the need for improvements to the condition of the A520. Councillor Heath also referred to the need for improvements to roads in North Staffordshire.

Councillor Smith spoke about the need to ensure the suitability of diversion routes where roads were closed to enable works to take place.

Councillor Snape referred to improvements which had taken place in Cannock and Councillor Winnington indicated that he welcomed the proposed reopening of Shay Lane in his division which had been closed for over a year.

Councillor Edgeller spoke about the impact on roads in Stafford as a result of the closure of the M6 motorway both from the point of view of traffic congestion and damage caused by heavy vehicles. She suggested that the Council should write to National Highways to seek more funding. In response, Councillor Alan White confirmed that conversations had been held National Highways on this issue and he would continue to press them

for additional funding for the County's roads.

Councillor Eagland welcomed the proposal for a bus service to serve the National Memorial Arboretum near Alrewas.

Councillor David Williams extended his thanks to Members for their comments. He also referred to how the Council's additional investment in its highways was now bearing fruit.

Celebrating 10 years of diverting waste from landfill

(Paragraph 14 of the Statement)

Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about the success of the Waste to Resources (W2R) Plant at Four Ashes in South Staffordshire and how it had saved the Council a considerable amount of money by diverting waste from landfill.

Councillor Tagg spoke about the ongoing issues at Whalleys Quarry and called for a public inquiry into the Environment Agency's failure to correctly monitor emissions from the site and the consequential health implications for local residents.

Call to get your Covid and flu jabs this autumn

(Paragraph 15 of the Statement)

Councillor McMahon stressed the need for those Staffordshire residents who are eligible, to get their Covid and flu jabs. He added that Covid was endemic and remained in our communities and also could be harmful to those who were vulnerable.

Councillor Oates referred to the vital role played by Pharmacies during the Covid pandemic and added that they were still delivering a massive amount of health care. He referred to the need for the Council to share information with pharmacies so that they were better able to target their services and also reduce the demands on GPs.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins expressed concern that the NHS system often directed people to vaccination centres which were some distance from their home when they could have attended walk in vaccination centres at Pharmacies closer to their homes. In response, Councillor Northcott indicated that he would take this matter up with the NHS.

Councillor Hutton also encouraged residents to get their Shingles vaccination if eligible.

Councillor Hussain referred to the large amount of misinformation about vaccines published on social media.

Give a child a childhood

(Paragraph 16 of the Statement)

Councillor Hussain and Councillor Edgeller praised the fantastic contribution made by the County's foster carers and asked their fellow Members to encourage more people to come forward. In response, Councillor Sutton indicated that the Council currently had over 400 foster families but that more were needed as too many children were still ending up in residential care.

Resolved – That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

31. Recommendations to the Council

(a) Proposed addition to the Scheme of delegation in relation to the Handling of S53 Applications under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Council's approval was sought to the granting of delegated authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services to prioritise the making of Definitive Map Modification Orders in either of the following two instances.

- i. an application has been the subject of court proceedings which has required the Council to obtain such a level of legal expertise and advice, that any potential delay in making an order might result, over time, in the loss of that knowledge, or
- ii. routes may be affected by major projects, such as HS2.

In moving consideration of the recommendations contained in the report, Councillor Worthington suggested that, in the light of comments which had been made about the use of delegated powers by officers, the following recommendation be added to those contained in the report:

"(b) That the exercising of delegated authority by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services be reported to the next available meeting of the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel."

Resolved – (a) That the following proposed addition to the Scheme of Delegation be approved, and that the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation be updated accordingly:

- e. To prioritise the making of Definitive Map Modification Orders in circumstances where:
 - a. an application has been the subject of court proceedings

which has required the Council to obtain such a level of legal expertise and advice, that any potential delay in making an order might result, over time, in the loss of that knowledge, or

b. routes may be affected by major projects, such as HS2.

(b) That the exercising of delegated authority by the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services be reported to the next available meeting of the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel.

(b) Potential Appointment of Independent Members to the Audit and Standards Committee / Review of the Audit and Standards Committee Terms of Reference

The Council's approval was sought to:

(i) The Proposed Appointment of a Non-Voting co-opted Independent Member to the Audit and Standards Committee.

(ii) Proposed revised Terms of Reference for the Committee.

Members were informed that the option of appointing co-opted Independent Members to serve on the Audit & Standards Committee was in line with guidance produced by CIPFA within its 2022 'Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police'.

Members also considered proposed revised terms of reference for the Audit and Standards Committee as contained in the CIPFA's Publication - "Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police 2022 Edition."

Resolved – (a) That section 11, Paragraph 25.1 of the Constitution be updated to show the membership of the Audit and Standards Committee to include one non-voting, co-opted independent member.

(b) That the 'Governance and decision making' section of the revised Terms of Reference include under the remit for a five-member Panel;

'to carry out the recruitment process and make recommendations to Council on the appointment of a non-voting, co-opted Independent member of the Audit and Standards Committee.'

(c) That the proposed revised terms of reference for the Audit and Standards Committee (as set out in the report), updated to provide for point (b) above, be approved.

(c) Electoral Review of Staffordshire County Council: Draft Recommendations

Members were informed that, in March 2023, the Council approved and submitted its response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) Electoral Review of Staffordshire.

The Commission has published proposals for changes to Staffordshire. The LGBCE have largely accepted what the County Council approved at its meeting in March and submitted during the last consultation. The key proposals from the Commission include:

- LGBCE have agreed to 62 Councillors (as is)
- All of the proposed divisions will be represented by one councillor
- Reduction of -1 member in Tamworth
- Increase of +1 member in East Staffordshire
- Major boundary changes to Stafford
- Moderate changes to Cannock
- Minor changes to East Staffordshire, Newcastle and Staffordshire Moorlands

A public consultation on the proposals was to run from 8 August 2023 to 16 October 2023. Once the LGBCE have considered all responses to the consultation, they aim to publish their final recommendations in January 2024.

The proposals had been taken through the Council's Governance process and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had provided scrutiny and oversight of the process. Broadly speaking, the Council was satisfied with the proposals set out by the LGBCE.

Members considered the proposed response to the LGBCE where the Council wished to comment on the proposals.

Resolved – (a) That the progress made to date on the County's Electoral Review be noted.

(b) That the response to the LGBCE for Staffordshire's boundary changes be supported.

(c) That the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services be authorised to finalise the proposals prior to submitting to the Boundary Commission.

32. Questions

Councillor Yates asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

As all Members are very much aware, roads around schools are plagued by excessive numbers of cars parked both illegally and inconsiderately around schools, creating an inconvenience to residents and a direct danger to the safety of our children. Given that current traffic management around schools is obviously not working, what new and innovative initiatives are being considered for introduction to resolve this issue?

Reply

Staffordshire County Council works with a range of partners to keep the roads around schools safe. Finding sustainable solutions to school parking challenges will require continued collaboration between School Travel Advisors, the School Crossing Patrol team, Road Safety Education Team and the Civil Enforcement Teams. Ongoing engagement with schools is also essential, promoting active travel, educating pupils and asking parents to park considerately and safely. Current behaviour change initiatives include parking buddies, anti-idling and Pupil Parking Toolkits for schools.

Where serious issues and complaints are received from schools, higher enforcement may be required, with police presence over a short period, supported by communications to parents. The County Council has trialled enforcement by use of a camera car in East Staffordshire, which had mixed success and still requires Civil Enforcement Officer support to issue the Penalty Charge Notices (PCN).

The County Council can implement zero-minute observations for parking restrictions, where considered appropriate, such as where people are driving off during the observation period, however there is currently no progression of the PCN as the enforcement code (01) is not supported under the Traffic Management Act, so there is no follow-up when the driver does not pay.

We are also exploring bids to national funding pots to trial different ways of working, as well as learning from best practice across the Country. Bids to Active Travel England that include School Streets are welcomed and have the potential to secure funding. They are being delivered by other local authorities, supported by Sustrans and Living Streets, and rely on the temporary removal of moving traffic outside school gates at drop-off and pick-up times, giving the street environment back to pedestrians for this short period within the day. As yet, we haven't delivered any School Streets in Staffordshire, but we are keen to discuss the idea with Councillors and identify schools where

it could work.

Finally, I would like to highlight that the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee is considering Civil Parking Enforcement at a future meeting which will provide a good opportunity to explore options for managing the areas around schools.

Supplementary Question

We currently have a situation where parents are following the school bus in their cars, adding to the congestion and pollution around our schools, as they live slightly outside the free bus catchment area and are unable to pay for vacant seats. What work is the Council undertaking to resolve this frustrating issue and, in the short term, will the Council permit schoolchildren to pay and use these busses where the service provider can provide a disability compliant bus?

Reply

This has already been processed and evaluated in the Council and is subject to Government legislation to what can and can't happen. If you want to write to me with your question, I will make sure you get a full response.

Councillor Pardesi asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Now that the HS2 line from Birmingham to Manchester has been cancelled, how soon can the residents of Staffordshire expect to see the promised significant road upgrades with the money that will have been saved?

Reply

The government have not yet released any details for any of the proposed schemes, including the proportion of funding that will be allocated to Staffordshire. Officers are seeking further information urgently and I will make this available as soon as possible.

Supplementary Question

Why did the seeking of further information not happen sooner? Debate and speculation as to whether the line of HS2 will, or will not, happen towards the north has been going on for some considerable time. So where was Plan B or the strategic thinking/forward planning as to what

we should be going just in case that line doesn't go ahead?

Reply

This is a matter for the Government, not the County Council.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

What assessment has the County Council made of the PM's local transport improvement plan Network North, its impact on Staffordshire and its timescale for delivery?

Reply

An initial assessment has been undertaken and the following schemes are included in the Network North plan for Staffordshire:

- Paras. 23 and 24: the construction of the Handsacre link.
- Para. 36: safeguarding will be lifted in weeks on Phase 2a. Land acquisition will be halted with immediate effect. Property no longer required for HS2 will be sold and a programme is being developed to do this.
- Para. 40 f: J15, M6 strategic road project is mentioned. No further details are provided.
- Para. 40 k: A50/500 corridor improvements Stoke to Derby.
- Para. 62: £2.2b investment in rail, improvements to Kidsgrove and Longport stations.
- Para. 63: a new station at Meir.
- Para. 66: £2.2b additional funds for pothole repairs in Midlands. No breakdown for Staffordshire has been provided.

A dialogue will be opened with Government to discuss provision of high speed services to Stafford and Stoke and the making good of existing damage. Further ways in which Network North could support local transport infrastructure and economic development in Staffordshire will also be discussed (the details of this are not yet finalised).

Supplementary Question

I am really surprised that this response does not include the exciting project about the Leek to Stoke Railway Line, unless of course it has been dropped which I hope it hasn't. The feasibility study for this particular line speaks about seven hundred thousand journeys being

carried out on this line by 2030. That is a remarkable figure, but my concern is can we be sure that it will be fully funded by the Government and that there is connectivity with buses? I hope that when the County Council does get more involved with the DfT, those issues around the Leek to Stoke Railway Line will be considered and fully addressed?

Reply

We work alongside the DfT on our Local Transport Plan which we are putting together now. We have constantly worked with HS2 to try to reduce issues and we work with Government and DfT as much as possible on transport matters.

Councillor Hussain asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

We are deeply saddened to report that in the past few weeks, we have witnessed two tragic fatalities resulting from road accidents. Unfortunately, both incidents occurred in the same area, which falls under my division. Can the cabinet member assure me that he will implement the necessary steps and strategies to prevent this from happening in Burton on Trent? Will he provide me with information about his initiatives?

Reply

Our condolences go out to the family, friends and communities affected by the tragic incidents that recently took place in Burton.

At this point in time, we have not received detailed information concerning the circumstances of the collisions; however, the County Council will work with the Police and the Coroner to understand the factors involved and take appropriate action to reduce the number of tragic incidents on our roads.

Staffordshire County Council takes road safety extremely seriously and, as the Local Highway Authority, the Council has a statutory responsibility to study road collisions in its area and promote measures and actions to improve safety.

All reported injury incidents are continually reviewed by a dedicated team to identify those sites and routes where actions can be taken to reduce the number of people hurt on our roads. We also work with wider agencies within the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership to ensure the Council's limited resources are being used in the most

effective way in response to the most pressing road safety needs. Our annual programmes of interventions include road safety engineering, education in schools, training activities, and the control of traffic where appropriate. Most importantly, we liaise with our local communities to understand their individual aspirations and work collaboratively to tackle any road safety issues.

Supplementary Question

May I urge the Cabinet Member to listen to the bereaved families, to hear their stories, to see if there is anything we can find out to improve the situation for the future?

Reply

Our sympathies go out to the families. The details of the accidents will be properly investigated by the Police and reported on. We will look at why these accidents happened and what, if anything, can be put in place to prevent any reoccurrence.

Councillor Afsar asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Care whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

General practitioners (GPs) are essential to the functioning of the National Health Service (NHS). They serve as expert risk managers and proficient communicators. If general practise is not successful, then the NHS as a whole will also fail. Recently, I have been contacted by numerous residents in Burton on Trent who are registered for various surgeries. They have expressed their frustration regarding the lack of available appointments when they need to see their doctors. As a partner of NHS, could the county council please investigate this matter as an urgent health concern for our residents and work towards finding a mutually agreeable and sustainable solution?

Reply

I am sorry to hear about the difficulties that residents in Burton on Trent are experiencing in getting a GP appointment. We know that access to GPs is a high priority for the NHS nationally with the 'Delivery Plan for Recovering Access to Primary Care' published last month. I will raise the issues in Burton on Trent with the Integrated Care Board who are responsible for GP services. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee may also wish to consider investigating these concerns further.

Supplementary Question

Will the Cabinet Member feedback any findings?

Reply

Yes, I will be happy to work with you on this matter.

33. Petitions

(i) Request for a weight Restriction on Shaws Lane, Great Wyrley

Councillor Perry presented a petition from local residents requesting a weight restriction order along Shaws Lane, Great Wyrley to stop its use by HGV's

(ii) Request for Safety Improvements Along Chester Road, Stonnall

Councillor Smith presented a petition from local residents requesting safety improvements along the junctions of Chester Road with Lazy Hill, Gravely Lane, Main Street and Downsgate, Stonnall.

(iii) Request for the Resurfacing of Chancery Drive, Hednesford

Councillor McMahon presented a petition from local residents requesting the resurfacing of Chancery Drive, Hednesford.

Chairman

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Staffordshire Means Back to Business - Oral Update

The Cabinet have received an 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:

- This month saw an increase of 335 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 14,955 or 2.8% of the working age population. It is important to state 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 4.8%, 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 Jobs Brokerage service.
- The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 40 claimants to a total of 2,900 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit now stands at 4.6%. This is lower than the national rate of 5.1% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.8%. This further increase in the youth claimant count highlights the importance of continuing to engage with our younger residents and supporting them to find employment or continue in education and training.
- The most recently released figures on disposable household income showed that Staffordshire is outperforming regional and national averages, with disposable income per head increasing by 4.4% in Staffordshire compared to 4% and 3.7% across the West Midlands Region and UK respectively. Whilst high levels of inflation continue to present challenges, this is now expected to fall substantially over the coming months whilst the County Council will continue to do all we can to support our residents in getting a higher paid job, thereby putting more money in their pockets.
- The highway works at the Chatterley Valley West employment site recommenced on 13th November following the appointment of our strategic infrastructure partner, Amey, to undertake these works. The site developer, Harworth Group has also appointed a replacement earthworks contractor to recommence plot preparation and servicing works. Although there may be a period of limited activity due to winter conditions, the development of the site will soon be fully back

underway, ensuring that the full benefits of the scheme, including the creation of 1,700 jobs, will be realised at the earliest opportunity.

- The Council has now supported 598 people through the Staffordshire Start Up Mentoring Programme, with 279 of those who have successfully completed the course deciding that self-employment is for them and having gone on to start their own business. For those people who have completed this programme, we recently ran a series of peer-to-peer networks to support them in ensuring that their new business is a success and to work through any difficulties they may be facing and help find solutions together. These sessions have proved very successful, and we are therefore looking to commission more to be launched in the next couple of months.
- Our Get Started and Grow programme has now supported more than 194 business owners who have been trading up to five years with professional services support in marketing, accountancy, digital marketing, legal or human resources consultancy. These are just a few examples of our current activity to support businesses to start and thrive within Staffordshire and this will of course remain a key focus as part of the delivery of our Economic Strategy.

(Cabinet 15 November 2023)

2. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2023/24

The Cabinet have received an update on Quarter 1 activities for each service area: Health and Care; Families and Communities; Economy, Infrastructure and Skills; and Corporate Services. They noted the key challenges facing the Authority including:

- 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. The New Discharge Planning Team went live in August and would help progress exit activity.
- SEND: Increased demand for Education, Health and Care Plans. Capacity continued to be a challenge; however, all additional Senior Key Workers were now in post.
- Adult Social Care Demand: Safeguarding and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLs) requests remained 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 was back on track following a dip in Quarter 1, and the council was continuing to deliver its Highways Maintenance and Transformation Programmes.

The latest revenue forecast outturn showed a forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1%), compared to the quarter 1 forecast overspend of £9.5m (1.39%). There continued to be areas of financial risk in Children and Families as outlined above.

(Cabinet 18 October 2023)

3. Strategic Vision for Early Years

The Government's move to extend the provision of funded childcare is an opportunity for young children to enjoy high-quality play and learning to pave the way for later life.

The Cabinet have received an update on National and local changes that are planned or have changed the way we work in Staffordshire and have approved proposals to review the structure of the Early Years Service within Staffordshire County.

The proposals will improve outcomes for children and families through a more efficient, joined up and holistic services for our youngest children and their families so that they can:

- maximise their take up of provision
- have timely access to high quality early education and childcare provision

This will be achieved by ensuring that the team design and delivery is integrated into the Family Hub model so that we continue to build on this as the integrated access to Early Help services and support.

(Cabinet 15 November 2023)

4. Climate Change Annual Report (2023) and Draft Climate Change Action Plan, revision 3 (November 2023)

The Cabinet have considered the Council's Climate Change 2022/2023 Annual Report. The Report records the significant 50% reduction in the Council's carbon emissions that had been made since declaring a Climate Change Emergency in July 2019, demonstrating the pragmatic, action focussed approach by the Council.

The Cabinet have also approved the Climate Change Action Plan revision 3, November 2023 (CCAP), which contains specific actions to be undertaken by the Council prior to 2025 which will assist in our journey to become net carbon zero by 2050.

(Cabinet 15 November 2023)

5. Staffordshire Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030

The Cabinet noted that the work to improve local skills over the last decade had seen significant improvement in skill levels and more local people working in higher value, better paid jobs. This had ensured that our economy continues to grow through a more productive and economically active working population.

To further build on this success, the Council has developed the Employment and Skills Strategy. Although the Strategy is a County Council strategy, we have worked closely with key stakeholders to put in place the vision and priorities to deliver our united economic vision for Staffordshire.

The Cabinet have approved the new Employment and Skills Strategy which outlines the County Council's vision and priorities for developing the skills of our residents to create the workforce needed to deliver our Economic Strategy and Strategic Plan.

(Cabinet 15 November 2023)

6. Treasury Management Report for the half-year ended 30 September 2023

The Cabinet have received a summary of the County Council's borrowing and investment activities during the first six months of the year. They noted that the County Council maintained a cautious approach to investments. The policy of using cash instead of borrowing continued to generate savings, helping reduce the average interest the County Council pays on its debt despite the increase in interest rates.

Overall, the County Council's borrowing and investment activities were being undertaken prudently and in line with agreed strategies in a very challenging environment.

The Cabinet noted that the County Council made an early repayment of £50 million of PWLB loans on 3 July 2023, as allowed by the Treasury Management Strategy Statement. This decision will save the County Council £199,000 p.a. based on current interest rates taking into account discount, interest savings and loss of investment income.

(Cabinet 15 November 2023)

7. Local and National Government Budgets

We welcomed the measures outlined in the Autumn Statement, which will help to put more money in people's pockets for example through reductions in National Insurance contributions – but recognise the importance too of still doing everything we can at a local level to promote greater opportunities and economic growth.

Like all local councils we are facing huge and increasing demand on both adult and children's services – a national funding issue to be addressed.

But despite these pressures, we are on track to deliver a balanced budget next year, as well as deliver on pledges to invest in growth, money for roads, support for new and existing businesses, rural broadband, public health and care and investing in our communities.

Our draft proposals were published last week and will be finalised and brought back to this chamber in the New Year after we receive the final local government settlement.

8. Good news for Stafford

With the cancellation of Phase 2 of HS2, our focus is greater than ever on working with partners to deliver economic growth and better transport links via developments such as high-speed rail to Stafford via the Handsacre Link and securing funding for the green A50/A500 corridor.

Michael Gove, came to Stafford recently to find out first-hand about the multi-million-pound Stafford Gateway project, of which the county council is a partner.

The secretary of state delivered the news the borough council had been successful with its bid for £20m to help deliver proposals which will include a hotel, up to 900 new homes, 30,000 square feet of commercial space, a 350-space multi-storey car park, along with retail and leisure facilities on 'underutilised brownfield land' around the railway station.

9. Investment in Highways

The Government has also announced that a total of £2.2 billion will be invested in improving road networks in the West and East Midlands alone, with more than £186 million coming to Staffordshire over an 11-year period.

The funding is part of the Government's Network North plan to spend the money saved by cancelling HS2 to the north and we are determined to

maximise the benefits through innovation, such as the recent investment in JCB's Pothole Pro.

Now winter is with us, and indeed we have already seen snow, I would also like to thank the highways crews who work day in and day out on our highways whether that is fixing potholes or gritting our major network.

10. Longest Night

Winter also brings with it the Longest Night, which we will be marking with Staffordshire Samaritans on December 22.

We want to use the date to remind anyone in need that the Samaritans are there for them during their darkest hours, including over Christmas and New Year.

Several county council buildings including the Shire Hall Gallery in Stafford will be lit up green and we're inviting individuals, organisations and businesses to join us by safely displaying a light in their window.

Last year, Samaritans volunteers responded to 244,254 calls in the UK and Ireland over the festive period and this year volunteers in Staffordshire will be there round-the-clock to make sure people who are struggling always have someone to turn to.

11. Christmas Message

Finally, I would like to end this update by thanking our staff, our partners, our fantastic volunteers and of course each and everyone of you, for your tireless efforts on behalf of the communities we all serve, a responsibility which is at the heart of what we do.

Despite the pressures, we are in good shape and remain hugely optimistic about what this county council can do on behalf of residents and businesses as we head into 2024.

So, please do enjoy a peaceful Christmas with your family and friends and I look forward to delivering more of our goals together in the year to come.

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice, I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 10 October 2023.

The main items of business were:

Details were submitted of **decisions published by the Commissioner** since the last Panel meeting. A link to the decisions can be found in the agenda pack [Agenda for Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel on Tuesday 10th October 2023, 2:30pm - Staffordshire County Council](#).

The Panel considered **the questions ask by members of the public** and the Commissioners written response which were included in the agenda pack.

With the consent of the Chairman, Mr Riley was allowed to comment on the Commissioners response and ask a supplementary question. Mr Riley commented that a Freedom of Information (FOI), as directed in the Commissioners response, would provide him with information but not the public and this was not transparent.

Mr Riley's supplementary question was:

If the Police force is only required to record offender ethnicity, would the Commissioners office direct the Chief Constable to collect data on foreign nationals, so that the general public could see the impact on the local communities?"

The Commissioner responded that he did hold performance meetings with the Chief Constable in public and this type of data was available on his web site. If there were areas of data which it was felt were missing, he would consider adding them to the data pack which accompanied the meeting. The Commissioner confirmed that the Chief Constable had operational independence and the data on foreign nationals was not required to be collected. The Commissioner suggested that this may be a better question to MP's or the Home Secretary who had influence over legislation and what is required to be recorded.

The Commissioner commented that the areas where Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent housed migrants were not currently areas of concern or challenge for the force.

Police and Crime Plan – Update. The Commissioner introduced his report which provided the Panel with an update on the Police and Crime Plans progress. The report set out the Commissioners priorities designed to ‘Keep Staffordshire Safe.’

Following the Commissioners introduction, the Panel asked questions and the following information was gathered. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- Misconduct of officers was taken very seriously by all concerned. The Chief Constable had confirmed his commitment to ensure high standards of behaviour in the force at the recent Commissioners performance meeting.
- The pilots for the ‘Right Care, Right Person’ national initiative, which was due to be implemented in 2024, were being monitored and discussions taking place locally with all relevant partners. It was acknowledged that the Police were not leading on this initiative, and that communication between all services was key if the changes were to be implemented effectively. which regards to the public perception survey, it was acknowledged that more detailed data was needed to demonstrate the context of some of the increases. The Commissioner informed the panel that his performance meetings with the Chief Constable and the accompanying information pack did contain more information. This could be found on the Commissioners website. Comparison information with other forces and local geographical area differences would be useful.
- Both Male and Female victims of domestic violence were treated by the Victim and Witness Support Service. Safe accommodation was now a responsibility of local authorities.
- Newcastle’s safer streets initiative was welcomed as a success in the town.
- There was a feeling in some localities that anti-social behaviour was not reducing and the neighbourhood policing strategy was not as effective as it could be. The Commissioner agreed that perception was an issue. The ‘hot spot’ visible patrolling pilots, particularly in town centres would be monitored and if successful would continue.
- Reducing delays in the court system was seen as a priority.
- When asked which areas needed to be improved, the Commissioner confirmed that; out of court disposals could be better; 101 call averages were not yet satisfactory; and there were concerns that vehicle crime, particularly in the south of the county, could be reduced.
- Speed cameras were being rotated and new digital cameras being installed. These were part of a much wider list of road safety enforcement methods used to keep roads safe.

- The Commissioner was not aware of disability hate crime being an area for concern, but he agreed to look into it.
- Catch 22 was acknowledged as a positive support group but more 'safe' places for interviews were needed.
- The Officer uplift programme was ahead of schedule. Officer experience was highlighted as an area of concern due to the age of new recruits. This was being addressed by ensuring that senior officers had both the time to support and guide new recruits.
- Knife bins and bleed packs were viewed as a welcomed success initiative.

Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan – Update - The Commissioner introduced his report which provided the Panel with an update on the Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan which included the Integrated Risk Management Plan. The report set out the Commissioners priorities and progress to date.

Following the Commissioners introduction, the Panel asked questions and the following information was gathered. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- The Commissioner confirmed that the three person crewing trail would continue to be monitored. He confirmed that he was interested in what was right for Staffordshire not the views from elsewhere in the country.
- The roving appliance project had been viewed positively.
- Diversity of the work force would take a little time to change as recruitment took place when people retired or left the service. It was important that opportunities were well promoted and that the environment encouraged diversity. Detailed figures would be brought to the next meeting.
- Staff attending falls in the community were trained and supported by appropriate expert advice when necessary.
- The Commissioner would scrutinise that home fire safety visits were taking place to ensure all geographical areas were coverage and compare the data to pre covid figures.
- Community Fire stations could be used for community use wherever possible. If Police services did co-locate with Fire services, the community may be relocated but support and assistance would be given to help them find an alternative venue.
- Building regulation and other performance data was discussed in public with the Chief Fire Officer at the performance meetings with the Commissioner. The next was due in December. The Commissioner agreed that more context was needed around the figures to ensure that the number of

inspections/enforcement notices etc was comparable to other areas or what was expected for a county of this size.

- A review of the use of Volunteers was taking place currently.

There was a **question from a member of the Panel** on a Tamworth By-election candidates post on social media, claiming that there would be a public facing desk at the local Police station. The Commissioner confirmed that MP's and election candidates could not make these decisions/claims, as they would be made by the Chief Constable in conjunction with the Commissioner.

Webcast can be found at [Browse meetings - Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - Staffordshire County Council](#)

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson
e mail mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Councillor Bernard Peters (Chair)
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice, I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 13 November 2023.

The Panel was informed that Cllr Zrupski had replaced Cllr Fitzpatrick, representing East Staffordshire Borough Council.

The main items of business were:

Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public

The Panel considered the questions ask by members of the public and the Commissioners responses. There were no supplementary questions asked at the meeting. It was reported that a further 2 questions had been received since the publication of the agenda, but a response had not been possible within the timeframe. The questioner would be provided with a response as soon as it was available and given an opportunity to have the questions and responses added to the next public agenda if they wished.

Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC). No decisions had been posted on the Commissioners website since the last meeting.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update report for the Police Service was presented by the Commissioner and his Director of Finance. The report set out:

- The current position of the 2023/24 budget
- An update on future years MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- An update on the capital programme.

Movement in the MTFS position since the it was set in February 2023 was listed in paragraph 4.2 of the report. The current position for 2023/24 showed a forecast (at the end of Quarter 2) of £242.472m. This was a positive variance of £0.476m against the annual net revenue budget of £242.947m.

As a result of the Commissioners presentation and questions from the Panel, the following information was shared. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- The 'targeted removals' as mentioned in paragraph 7.7 of the report were reported as having no business impact and being for small amounts, such as an estates project in the sum of £100k.
- Following a question on why loans were being repaid rather than using the funds to invest in services, it was reported that these were scheduled repayments so there was little option to do otherwise.
- The reserves remained in line with recommended levels. The Commissioner felt that budget reserves were in a good position.
- It was confirmed that the budget covered the growth in wages of new recruits progressing through their training and had also managed to accommodate changes in levels of staff moving into the county during the year.
- The Panel felt that knowing the criteria used to assess savings and priorities would have been useful.
- It was requested that in future budget/MTFS reports, the Commissioner include appendices covering the Capital programme and detailed lines in the budget.

The Panel noted the report and recommended that in future, the budget/MTFS update reports include an appendix covering the Capital programme and detailed lines in the budget.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) update report for the Fire and Rescue Services was presented by the Commissioner and his Director of Finance. The report set out:

- The current position of the 2023/24 budget
- An update on future years MTFS assumptions
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Transformation update
- Key investment areas
- An update on the capital programme.

Similar financial assumptions had been made to that in the earlier Police MTFS report. There was a positive position at the 6 month stage, with the total revenue spend as at 30 September being £23m, showing a slightly favourable position against the budget of £23.3m.

Paragraph 4.4 of the report outlined the risks as:

- Pay
- Pensions
- Utility costs and insurance
- Council tax and referendum limit assumptions
- Revenue support grant

During the discussion and question and answer session, the following information was gained:

- The Panel raised the public's concerns over fire personnel safety and questioned investment in the service. It was clarified that investment in equipment was on track, however, technology and systems were reported as being 'outdated' (paragraph 7.3 (9b)). This referred to the back-office admin ICT systems for performance data and reporting. There was also an investment required for 'fire control' software which was a shared service with West Midlands Fire and Rescue which had recently had an upgrade but was due another. The Commissioner reported that this was part of a conversation he would be having with the public over investment in these areas.
- When asked what a 'flexible responses with a 3% increased productivity target' would look like, it was reported that one of the ways this could be achieved was through the team of 3 crews. The result of this trial would be reported to the panel when it was available. The budget implication would be evaluated but the Commissioner felt that the real benefit was to the service and productivity.
- There was concern that dealing with flooding was not a statutory function but was dealt with in a rescue capacity. The Commissioner stated that he would welcome this being a statutory duty as this would provide opportunity for increased investment and funding.
- Batteries and the risks involved in recharging was a concern. Christmas provided an opportunity to communicate safety with the public.

The Panel noted the report and recommended that in future, the budget/MTFS update reports include an appendix covering the Capital programme and detailed lines in the budget. The results of the crew of three trial, would also be reported to the Panel when available.

The Panel considered the draft **Fire and Rescue Statement of Assurance** for 2022/23. It was reported that the statement was also considered at the Commissioners Ethics Transparency and Audit Panel (ETAP) (Fire) Group.

It was reported that the plan had been extended by a year so that it covered the same time period as the Commissioners term of office.

The document was a Statement of Assurance from the service, the Community Risk Management Plan had wider public input and the Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan had public input.

The Falls service was commissioned by the Integrated Care Board. Control centres assess the patient's needs and are trained to identify situations where ambulance staff are needed. Fire fighters were not normally involved in medical care. Various initiatives were being

discussed where Fire and Rescue could help support the Ambulance service. The detail of any initiatives and training needs would be brought back to the Panel at a later date.

The Commissioners ETAP meetings produced various reports for both Fire and Rescue and the Police service and made recommendations on service efficiency and finance. The Commissioner reported that he was satisfied that the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Constable took on board the recommendations and these were reported through the Performance meetings with the Commissioner.

The detail on small outdoor fire which had shown an increase on previous years, would be raised at the performance meeting on the 14 November.

The Panel noted the report and recommended that the detail of any initiatives where Fire and Rescue could help support the Ambulance service and any training needs would be brought back to the Panel at a later date.

The Panel asked questions and received the following responses:

1) How were the Police dealing with the changes in legislation on Big Dogs?

In response, the Panel was informed that the Police were taking appropriate action when required which, ranged from providing advice to removing animals if absolutely necessary.

2) Was there evidence that the Police Constable and Fire Chief were taking action to address both the local and national concerns of officers misbehaviour?

In response, the Panel was reminded that they did consider Police complaints on an annual basis and the Commissioners performance meetings with both services also considered this concern in a public arena. The Commissioner gave his total commitment to addressing this issue.

3) How did the Commissioner feel about the high turnover of Police Commanders in some local areas?

The Commissioner welcomed officers having the opportunity to move to other services and gain experience and knowledge, but did acknowledge that this could result in frequent moves. However, this was an operational issue and there was always a team of highly competent officers available to step up and cover roles.

4) How were the Police responding to tensions and crime against the Jewish and Muslim communities?

The Commissioner was aware of increased Police awareness and the service were supporting the London demonstrations and any local remembrance services, if needed. He was not aware of any incidents in Staffordshire.

Webcast can be found at [Browse meetings - Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - Staffordshire County Council](#)

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson
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Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Councillor Bernard Peters (Chair)
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

