

Agenda

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Notes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 3 - 6)
4. **Chairperson's Update**
5. **Progress Review** (Pages 7 - 12)
6. **Cost of Living - Update** (Pages 13 - 16)
7. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairperson to move:

“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 exempt)

Membership	
Michael Fitzpatrick	Roger Lees
Mike Gledhill	Doug Pullen
Aidan Godfrey	Simon Tagg
Thomas Jay	Alan White (Chair)
Tony Johnson	

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.



Minutes of the Staffordshire Leaders Board Meeting held on 9 March 2023

Present: Alan White (Chair)

Roger Lees
Doug Pullen

Paul Roberts
Simon Tagg

Apologies: George Allen, Patrick Farrington, Olivia Lyons, Andy O'Brien, Jeremy Oates and Andrew Stokes

Also in attendance: Andrew Barratt (Tamworth Borough Council), Tim Clegg (Stafford Borough Council / Cannock Chase District Council), Chris Ebberley (Staffordshire County Council), Darryl Evers (Staffordshire County Council), Simon Fletcher (Lichfield District Council), Martin Hamilton (Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council), John Henderson (Staffordshire County Council), Keith Luscombe (Staffordshire County Council), Cristian Marcucci (Staffordshire County Council), Annette Roberts (South Staffordshire District Council), Wendy Tompson (Staffordshire County Council) and John Tradewell (Staffordshire County Council)

PART ONE

16. Apologies

17. Declarations of Interest

None

18. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

19. Chairperson's Update

The Chairperson and Leader of Staffordshire County Council gave a verbal update to the Leaders' Board. The update informed the Board on Business Start Ups, Asylum Seekers, the Armed Forces Community Covenant, Staffordshire Day and the King's Coronation.

20. Economic Vision and Priorities

- 1 -



The Board received an update and considered the Economic Vision & Priorities document.

The Staffordshire Leaders' Board agreed:

- That the final version of the Economic Vision & Priorities be approved.
- That a supporting delivery plan to be developed by the Economic Growth Directors Group over the coming months, to be considered by the Leaders' Board in the summer.

21. Economic Growth Programme Update

The Board received an overview of the work undertaken by the Leaders' Board and supporting officer groups over the past year, projects and programmes that are currently ongoing, as well as providing a look to the year ahead.

The Board:

- Agreed to note the work already undertaken by the Leaders' Board and supporting officer groups, including successes in helping to secure investment in the county.
- Considered and commented upon the progress being made on the many shared projects and programmes outlined within the report that are being progressed jointly by the Staffordshire local authorities.

22. Staffordshire Employment and Skills Strategy

The Board received the draft Employment and Skills Strategy which has been developed to support the delivery of the economic vision and priorities. The Employment and Skills strategy can be used to guide future employment and skills work programmes, to support external funding bids, to enable effective communication of Staffordshire's shared employment and skills goals, and to inform the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The Board:

- Considered and commented upon the draft Employment and Skills Strategy vision and priorities set out within the report.
- Agreed that the Economic Growth Directors Group develop the vision and priorities into a succinct document to guide future work programmes and

enable effective communication of Staffordshire's shared employment and skills goals.

- Agreed that the final draft of the document be circulated electronically to Leaders for comment and agreement prior to the Summer 2023 Leaders' Board meeting.
- Agreed that they consider for sign-off the final version of the Employment and Skills Strategy at the Summer 2023 Leaders' Board meeting.
- Agreed that the appointed representatives of the Economic Growth Directors Group lead on the dialogue with Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Employer Representative Body in the development of its LSIP with the aim of ensuring that the LSIP contributes to the delivery of Staffordshire's Employment and Skills vision and priorities.

23. Code of Joint Scrutiny Working - Local Authorities

The Board considered the revised Code of Joint Working Arrangements (Joint Code) with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny.

The Code has been reviewed and refreshed to develop the health scrutiny function across Staffordshire and to foster good relationships with District and Borough Council scrutiny committees and Health Partners.

The Board:

- Considered and approved the revised Code of Joint Working Arrangements (Joint Code) with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny.
- Agreed that the Leaders of each District and Borough Council would take the Joint Code back to their respective Local Authorities for adoption.

24. Exclusion of the Public

Chairman



Staffordshire Leaders Board
Progress Update
7 March 2024

Recommendations
Staffordshire Leaders Board

to the

That the Leaders Board:

- (a) Consider and comment on the progress of the Leaders Board to date.
- (b) Note that work is underway to shape the Board's future priorities, building on the strong foundations and progress shared today.

Summary

1. As the Leaders Board continues to deliver successes through our focus on close collaboration, and as we will be looking to our future shared challenges and priorities further, there is a good opportunity take stock and reflect on our approach.
2. This paper highlights key successes to date, for the Boards consideration and comments.

Background

3. Collaboration is at the heart of how we do things in Staffordshire. We have a track record to prove it. A few highlights are below of how historic working together, across local government and with public and private partners, has made Staffordshire a great place to live, work and visit.
 - Covid-19 – our unified response protected the most vulnerable and supported those in need. Notable successes include supplying food to the most vulnerable in our communities, PPE support to care providers, targeted action in hotspot areas, from vaccinations in mosques, to testing migrant workers on fruit farms.
 - Creating jobs and opportunities – working together and across county and borders to deliver nationally important employment sites such as i54 South Staffordshire and, Keele University Science and Innovation Park. Supporting businesses and our economy to recover from Covid, through both a countywide package of support – Staffordshire Means Back to Business.
 - Town Centre regeneration – reimagining and reshaping our High Streets and Town Centres through the Future High Streets Fund, Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund.
 - Waste – our partnership has led local efforts to reduce waste, and maximise reuse, recovery and recycling. It has also, through joint procurement exercises, produced significant efficiencies and economies of scale across Staffordshire.



Our partnership of councils has delivered these successes through a focus on close collaboration for many years. In 2021 and 2022, when we considered the government's new opportunities around devolution, we recognised that a formal joint committee – this Leaders Board – would give one collaborative voice to speak to central Government, and our own communities. It also provided the foundation for exploring the potential of a County Deal, when the right time comes to do so, so that we can work with government on how powers are devolved into local hands.

4. Importantly this was never just about devolution. With or without a County Deal, we were clear from the outset that we would continue to innovate, collaborate and invest in to grow the economy and make a positive difference for residents. The focus of the Leaders Board continues to represent a clear opportunity to really grip the key challenges facing our residents and every one of us, including the examples below:
 - **Climate Change** – bringing together our skills and expertise to challenge our strategies and plans for reaching Net Zero, including a long-term vision and Board to lead the work.
 - **Waste** – Linked to our shared commitment on Climate Change, strengthening our waste partnership and seeking innovative ways to collaborate more and drive-up recycling.
 - **Economy** – A huge success story in Staffordshire already, we continued to create the right conditions for economic growth, and the creation of more, better-paid jobs and opportunities for the people of Staffordshire.
 - **Health Inequalities** –Health and wellbeing is determined by our environment, our living conditions, and our behaviours. The pandemic brought national and local health inequalities into sharp focus. In support of the establishment of the Integrated Care System, we saw an opportunity for local government partners in Staffordshire to work better together, to tackle many issues that have a significant impact on health, such as housing and employment.
5. To build on our successful track record of delivering, we therefore agreed to evolve and strengthen our governance establishing the Staffordshire Leaders Board in June 2022, to oversee the delivery of an agreed set of priorities, and the development of a County Deal for at the right time. Core to the vision of this Board was the further strengthening of the strong, local democratic leadership.
6. The Leaders Board continues to allow us to build on our strengths and successes by focusing on joint approaches to the big issues which matter most to the people of Staffordshire. This includes growing the economy, attracting investment, tackling public health issues such as obesity and mental health, but also global issues like climate change and how, by working together, we can reduce our carbon emissions and increase recycling targets.
7. The below outlines key achievements to date, for the Board's consideration and comment.



Key achievements since 2022

8. The key highlights and achievements of the Leaders Board since 2022 are summarised below. This includes significant progress delivering against the Board's initial priorities, in addition to providing critical leadership on a number of other issues which have emerged. Highlights include:

Economic Growth

- Working collaboratively to deliver over £200m investment into Staffordshire through the Future High Streets Fund, Town Deals and Levelling Up Fund. This including helping to secure a further £17.1m for Leek town centre and £20m for transport infrastructure including enabling improved and greener access to our town centres.
- Leading the development and adoption of a joint Economic Vision and Priorities for Staffordshire, using the Board's strategic oversight to shape the county's economic future.
- Representing Staffordshire on an international stage at UKREiiF and agreeing as a partnership to return with an even bigger representation.
- Considering how we can create a more efficient and joined-up approach to planning in Staffordshire.
- Strategic oversight in the development of an Economic Growth Pipeline for driving future growth and progressing priorities on innovation-and green skills.
- Leading the development of partnership Investment Prospectus to promote Staffordshire and its opportunities internationally, attracting new employers to the county. It has been used to huge success at development events including at UKREiiF, as a key part of marketing Staffordshire to new investors.

Staffordshire Strategic Migration Partnership

- A joint approach to immigration and asylum dispersal, with clear political oversight and consensus through the Leaders Board – a model recognised nationally as good practice.
- Discussions have led to direct engagement with the Home Secretary, resulting in a commitment that government and Serco will engage with the Board on this issue moving forwards.

We Are Staffordshire

- Recognised the hugely successful We Are Staffordshire Place Branding approach, which strengthens the place-branding of Staffordshire on a national and international scale.
- Agreed to jointly finance the model in support of collaborative place marketing activity over a longer term and supported the further development of the Visitor Economy Action Plan within this, building further on the style and success of the joint Investment Prospectus.

Sustainability and Climate Change

- Provided leadership and oversight in the development of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board and its work, after establishment in January 2022, to enable and facilitate change wherever possible throughout Staffordshire.
- This has seen agreement of a joint vision and ten base pledges across the partnership, workstreams to use the influence available at both tiers of local



authority, a jointly agreed communications plan, joint preparation of a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and agreement to join the emerging Staffordshire Climate Commission.

- The Leaders Board continues to oversee progress of the Sustainability Board as it develops further.

Health inequalities

- Agreed practical next steps for how both tiers of local authority can work together on public health issues, such as obesity and mental health.
- Engaged the local NHS leadership more effectively with local government, particularly with Districts and Boroughs, where the majority of non-medical health indicators are influenced.
- Agreed how the Board can work in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care System as part of the Prevention workstream.
- Established a Director's group to take this forward with a key oversight role for the Leaders Board.

Single Front Door

- Jointly agreed to take forward work scoping the benefits of greater alignment and integration of the member organisations' front doors and customer service operations.
- Leaders Board taking key role in strategic oversight of three pilots progressing currently, with a jointly agreed flexible approach on taking forward the work in different areas.

Empowering Our Communities

- The Board's place leadership role is helping to influence the development of next steps for how we work with communities in Staffordshire, and ways we could take this even further.

Cost of Living

- Building on existing successful two-tier partnership working, the Board agreed to establish an Officer Group to ensure partners continue to collaborate locally where appropriate, as well as ensuring residents are signposted to all relevant support and guidance.

9. Building on this significant progress to date and with refreshed membership, it's clear that the Leaders Board is now in a stronger position to work even more closely together for the benefit of our residents and our businesses.

Conclusion

10. Reflecting on the above and the Board's clear and continuing ambition to collaborate and help unlock some of Staffordshire's most important challenges, it is clear there are further opportunities to build on together.
11. As we begin to look to our future priorities together, and with our partners, the Board is in a positive place to ensure an even stronger joint focus to tackle the big issues which matter most to the people of Staffordshire.



Next steps

12. Pending conversations and agreement by the Board today, further work will be taken forward to refresh the priorities for the next year, ultimately with a view to continuing to make a positive difference for our residents.
13. As this is progressed, building on the progress noted today and alongside refreshing the Board's constitution, a key focus will be on maximising join-up and linked opportunities across this all, and with partners.

**Staffordshire Leaders Board****Cost of Living - Partnership Group**

March 2024

1. Recommendations: *That the Leaders Board:*

- 1.1. Agree that the Cost-of-Living workstream is merged with and led by the Health Inequalities Directors Group (HIDG), ensuring continued and joined-up work avoiding duplication.
- 1.2. Agree that an information sharing platform for Cost of Living initiatives is maintained for all authorities utilising a dedicated Microsoft Teams Channel

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Local government across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent continues to provide significant support and assistance to residents and businesses to help with the ongoing cost-of-living pressures.
- 2.2. Following a report in December 2022, the Leaders Board agreed to establish a 'Staffordshire cost of living partnership group' to ensure partners continue to collaborate locally where appropriate, including sharing best practice, as well as ensuring residents are signposted to all relevant support and guidance.
- 2.3. Acknowledging the refreshed Leaders Board Membership since the partnership group was initially formed, it will be important to ensure that opportunities to further join-up across partners continues to be explored and maximised.
- 2.4. It is also important to note that there continues to be significant support provided to residents by our voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE), and by our residents supporting each other.

3. Overview of work undertaken and current position

- 3.1. Since the group was established, it has met quarterly over the last year and has brought together representatives from the County Council, Borough, and District partners.
- 3.2. The group's purpose has been to share information, raise awareness and encourage joined up working where possible across all partners to assist Staffordshire residents with the rising cost of living.



- 3.3. Over the last 12 months the group has successfully promoted multiple initiatives which have been led by individual areas as well as initiatives which have been delivered in combination between one or more areas and the County Council.
- 3.4. It would be an impossible task to map out all of the activity and support that is available, so this paper highlights a selection of key initiatives and support which have been delivered and promoted through the Cost of Living Partnership Group:
 - 3.4.1. Partners have provided **warm and welcoming spaces** for residents over the winter periods in 2023 and now in 2024. These have helped people to save money in terms of heating their own homes while at the same time accessing safe, warm venues in each borough and district. In almost all cases residents have also been able to seek advice on other cost saving initiatives and available funding, as well having the added benefit of meeting new people which has also helped to tackle social isolation.
 - 3.4.2. Borough and District partners have been working alongside organisations such as Citizens Advice to deliver additional support and advice to residents to **maximise incomes and address ongoing debt** concerns on top of the usual provisions.
 - 3.4.3. There have also been examples where partners have been working with **food bank providers** in each area, in different ways and to address local needs. For example, this has been through providing grant funding to those providers, and other situations bringing together multiple providers to share resources.
 - 3.4.4. The group has also heard from and promoted the ongoing work of the **Staffordshire Centre for Data Analytics** (SCDA) and the extensive **Cost of Living Data Project**. This uses a data model to enable partners to access detailed information on their areas to ascertain which residents are most likely to be vulnerable or at risk of becoming vulnerable due to the cost of living pressures.
- 3.5. In all cases where initiatives have been shared with the partnership group they have been met with support and have prompted further discussions and information sharing amongst representatives which has ultimately enabled areas to consider different ways of working, based on shared good practice.
- 3.6. During recent partnership group meetings, it was noted that the updates being provided linked to those being shared as part of the Health Inequalities Directors Group (HIDG) meetings.
- 3.7. As a result, representatives who attend COLPG and the HIDG proposed disbanding the COLPG and merging the Cost of Living workstream with the HIDG to avoid duplication and enable future collaboration. This was raised informally at the HIDG meeting on 11 January 2024 where it was agreed that a formal request would be made at the Leaders Board.

4. Conclusion



- 4.1. There is a substantial amount of positive work that has and continues to take place to support residents with the cost of living pressures from across the public sector and within our communities. This report provides a summary of key activities and support led by local authorities. This paper suggests the below next steps in support of the Recommendations, as outlined in section 1.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Cost of Living work should be merged and led by the Health Inequalities Directors Group (HIDG) ensuring continued joined up work which avoids duplication.
- 5.2. The established information sharing platform for Cost-of-Living initiatives will be maintained utilising a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel and representatives from Stoke-on-Trent City Council will be invited to join ensuring join-up across the City and County.

Contact details:

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