



**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.

