

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 Kruskonvic 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