



## Staffordshire Leaders Board

### Future priorities

11 July 2024

#### Recommendations to

the Leaders Board

That the Board:

- (a) Consider and agree the proposed refreshed Board priorities, and next steps.
- (b) Note the progress of the Leaders Board priorities over the last 12 months.
- (c) Offer views on any further collaboration opportunities in terms of unlocking some of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's most important current and future challenges.

#### Summary

1. As the Leaders Board continues to deliver successes through our focus on close collaboration, there is a good opportunity take stock, reflect on our approach, and look to the future of our shared priorities and challenges. This also acknowledges the strengthened membership of the Board discussed today.
2. This paper highlights key successes to date and outlines the proposed priorities for the next 12 months (2024/25).

#### Background

3. Collaboration is at the heart of how we do things in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. 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 and Stoke-on-Trent 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 City 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 - and through Stoke-on-Trent's focus on helping city businesses survive and recover, such as the Recovery and Growth Grant.
  - 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.
4. 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 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. Looking forwards, with Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s role on the Board, both our shared ambitions for the County and City, and our opportunities are further enhanced.
  5. 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 Leaders Board and our focus continues to represent a clear opportunity to really grip the key challenges facing our residents and every one of us, and to work with the government to tackle this locally and nationally.
  6. 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.
  7. 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 and Stoke-on-Trent. 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.
  8. The below outlines some key achievements to date, followed by the proposed refreshed priorities for the Board’s focus in the next 12 months.

### **Summary highlights and achievements**

9. Some key highlights and achievements of the Leaders Board priorities 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 £220m investment into Staffordshire secured from national funding programmes including the Future High Streets Fund, Town Deals and Levelling Up Fund. Through our collective lobbying this included helping to secure a further £17.1m for Leek town centre, £20m for transport infrastructure include to enable improved and greener access to our town centres and a further £20m for the Stafford Gateway scheme allocated towards the end of 2023.
- 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.
- 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.

#### **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 the Home Office and Serco will further engage with the Board on this issue moving forwards.

#### **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 Health Inequalities 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.
10. Building on this significant progress to date along with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's role, 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.

### **Future priorities and looking ahead**

11. Reflecting on the above and the Board's clear ambition to collaborate on opportunities to help unlock some of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's most important challenges, the refreshed priorities for consideration and agreement are:
- Economic Development (incorporating Green Growth)
  - Transport infrastructure
  - Climate Change and a joint approach to Waste and Sustainability
  - Health inequalities
  - Social inequalities
  - Devolution and a County Deal
  - Strategic Migration Partnership / Asylum Dispersal

### **Conclusion**

12. Our refreshed priorities create further and significant opportunity to build on the positive progress outlined to date and our clear ambition to collaborate on opportunities to help unlock some of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's most important challenges. The refreshed priorities will ensure an even stronger joint focus to tackle the big issues which matter most to the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

### **Next steps**

13. Pending conversations and agreement by the Board today the refreshed priorities will be taken forward, with progress shared with the Board against each, and ultimately with a view to continuing to make a positive difference for residents across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
14. As the detail and delivery for each priority is developed further, a key focus will be on maximising join-up and linked opportunities across this all, including close working with key stakeholders and central government.

