MINUTES OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
16 FEBRUARY 2006 AT COUNTY BUILDINGS, STAFFORD

Present: P. Haynes (Chairman)

Astle, Mrs. M. Deakin, Mrs. G. Heath, Mrs. C.G. Poulter, M.J.D.
Atkins, P.E.B. Dean, Mrs. C.A. Jebb, Mrs. C.R. Roberts G.E.
Barber, M.J. Dix, T.A. Lawrence, M.J. Roberts, R., OBE
Bayliss, Mrs. E.J. Dixon, D.I. Leech, D.A. Simpson, R.J.
Beresford, P.J. Downes, Mrs. V.M. Lewis, F.W., MBE Taylor, J.W.
Bloomer, L.W. Drinkwater, E.N. Lovatt, Mrs. M.M. Timms, P.H.
Boden, E.M. Eagland, Mrs. J.M. Marshall, R.J. Wakefield, V.T.J.
Butter, H. Edwards, B.R. McDermid, R.R. White, P. J.
Clarke, M.R. Edwards, R.W. Morrison, G. Wilkins, A.J.
Compton, Mrs. M.R. Ellis, M.C. Mycock, R.B. Winnington, M.J.
Corbett, T.J. Finn, T.V. Norman, S.G. Woodward, Mrs. S.E.
Davies, D.N. Fraser, R.A. O'Leary, J.
Davies, P.R. Garforth, J.A. Parry, I.M.
Davis, D.J. Gorton, R.L. Perry, Mrs. K.M.
Day, W.D. Hambleton, Mrs. S. Podmore, N.R.

Apologies: Mrs. S. M. Oatley and Messrs. J. Muir, E. C. Perry and J. Toth

Minutes

166. RESOLVED – That, subject to the addition of Mrs. K. M. Perry in the list of persons who had submitted apologies for non-attendance, and the substitution of the word “member” for the word “recipient” in Paragraph 128, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2005 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Declarations of Interest

167. The following members declared interests in accordance with Standing Order 16.5:-

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<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Minute Nos.</th>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs. E.J. Bayliss</td>
<td>196 and 197</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Members of the Local Government Pension Scheme</td>
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<td>P.R. Beresford</td>
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<td>M.R. Clarke</td>
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<td>P.R. Davies</td>
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<td>D.J. Davis</td>
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<td>M.J.D. Poulter</td>
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<td>R.J. Simpson</td>
<td>196 and 197</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Member of the Local Government Pension Scheme; employee of the Stafford Borough Council; and as a Governor of two schools in Stafford</td>
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<tr>
<td>V.J.T. Wakefield</td>
<td>202 and 203</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Chairman of the Wedgwood Memorial College</td>
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<td>Member</td>
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<td>R.J. Simpson</td>
<td>202 and 203</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Representative of the County Council on the Wedgwood Memorial College</td>
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**Correspondence**

**Mr. J. Muir**

168. The Chairman reported that Mr. J. Muir had been unable to attend the meeting of the Council owing to the death that morning of his father. The Council asked the Chief Executive to extend their deepest condolences to Mr. Muir.

**Letter of thanks**

169. The Chairman informed members that Miss Iris Moseley, M.B.E. had recently written to him asking him to pass on her thanks to all members for their good wishes, cards, gifts and flowers sent to her during her recent illness. The Chairman indicated that Miss Moseley was now well on the way to recovering from her operation and that she felt that the kindness she had received from her past colleagues at the County Council, which kept up her spirits, did much to aid her recuperation.

**New Year’s Honours List**

170. The Chairman informed members that Mr. F. W. Lewis had been awarded an M.B.E. for his services to Local Government. Mr. Lewis had represented the Lichfield Rural North County Electoral Division on the County Council from 1977 until 2005 when the boundaries changed. He now represented the Lichfield Rural West Division.

The Chairman also reported that Alan Doig, Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service had been awarded a C.B.E. for services to the Fire and Rescue Service.

**West Midlands Regional Pensions Officer Group**

171. The Chairman reported that Janet Caiazzo, the County Council’s Pensions Manager, had been elected as Chair of the West Midlands Regional Pensions Officer Group. As such, she represented the region on the National Local Government Pensions Committee Technical Officer Group.

**National Quantity Surveying Award**

172. The Chairman informed members that the quantity surveying section of the County Property Services Division, in conjunction with strategic partner, Thomas Vale Construction Plc, were recently shortlisted for a National Quantity Surveying Award in Innovation promoted by QS News. Although unsuccessful, Staffordshire was the only County Council shortlisted for an award in any category.

**Institute of IT Training**

173. The Chairman informed members that the Social Care and Health Directorate’s IT project team had won the Institute of IT Training’s Staff Development Programme of the Year Award for 2006. The ICT Skills Project gave just under 2,000 Social Care and
Health staff a chance to update their computer skills. Each worker had their IT skills assessed and a programme of study developed to meet their needs.

**Sustainable Communities Awards 2006**

174. The Chairman reported that Staffordshire’s Young Watchdog Scheme, which worked in partnership with the Council’s Community Watchdog Scheme, comprised an 80 strong team of young people who helped to protect the consumer interests of their peers. The scheme, which was one of only six schemes nationwide shortlisted, received the award in the Community Youth Initiative Category of the Sustainable Community Awards 2006.

**Petitions**

**Cheadle Road, Blythe Bridge – Traffic Calming Measures**

175. Mr. W.D. Day presented a petition from residents of Blythe Bridge, Forsbrook and the surrounding area seeking the introduction of a permanent pedestrian crossing point adjacent to Blythe Bridge High School and the installation of traffic calming measures along Cheadle Road from Forsbrook to Blythe Bridge.

**Proposed Brownhills Eastern Bypass**

176. Mrs. E.J. Bayliss presented a petition from residents of Stonnall and the surrounding area opposing the proposal by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council to construct a new bypass to the east of Brownhills.

**City Rider Bus Service to Hill Top, Brown Edge**

177. Mrs. C.R. Jebb presented a petition from residents of Brown Edge seeking the continuance of the City Rider Bus Service to Hill Top, Brown Edge.

**Mobile Library Services in Madeley**

178. Mr. R.W. Edwards presented a petition from residents of Madeley opposing the proposal to withdraw the mobile library service from Morningside, Laverock Grove, the Church and Knightley.

**Bemersley Recycling Centre – Opening Hours**

179. Mrs. C.R. Jebb presented a petition from residents of Bemersley Road seeking a reduction to the opening hours of the Bemersley Recycling Centre.

**Standing Order No 6 – Questions**

180. Mrs. V.M. Downes asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Children and Lifelong Learning) whose reply is set out below the question:-

**Question**

At present the County Council are paying £3,000 per week per child to care homes in the private sector in order to meet our statutory responsibilities in caring for vulnerable children. How many children are placed out of County Care and how much have we spent to date from the 2005/06 budget?
Reply

There are currently 28 children placed in non-local authority care homes in the independent sector within Staffordshire and 23 children placed in non-local authority care homes in the independent sector outside of Staffordshire. The average cost of these placements is £3,375 per week.

Included in the above are two placements in the voluntary sector with National Children’s Homes at an average cost of £2,084 per week.

The estimated expenditure for the current year 2005/06 for the above placements is £6,972,652.

The present introduction of preventative strategies and a more flexible approach might lead to a reduction in numbers going into care in future.

Supplementary Question

Is the County Council still committed to increasing the number of foster parents and are there any proposals to increase the level of fees payable to them?

Reply

The County Council is committed to increasing the number of foster carers in the County and has introduced various advertising campaigns. I understand that the Government are proposing to issue a Consultation Paper on payments to foster carers and we eagerly await the outcome of this consultation.

Supplementary Question

A recent article in the press highlighted a 20% increase in the number of persons interested in becoming foster carers. Can the Cabinet Member tell me what percentage of these people have been accepted as foster carers and also how many are still under consideration?

Reply

As I do not have the precise details to hand I will reply in writing.

Supplementary Question

Will you be able to supply me with the details before the meeting of the Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 21 February 2006?

Reply

I will endeavour to provide you with the information you have requested prior to the meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.
181. Mrs. C. R. Jebb asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Children and Lifelong Learning) whose reply is set out below the question:-

**Question**

(1) What progress has been made with recruiting a crossing warden for Endon Hall Primary School, since local residents took the initiative to run a recruitment campaign, as the post had lain vacant from September 2005?

(2) How many authorities pay school crossing wardens more than the national rate, currently paid by Staffordshire?

(3) What opportunities are there to enhance the rate currently paid in Staffordshire, in order to attract more applicants to these posts?

**Reply**

The senior officers with the specialist knowledge to answer your questions have taken leave during half-term. I will ensure that you are provided with a full and informed response on the return of the relevant officer.

**Supplementary Question**

Can the Cabinet Member tell me when he proposes to visit Endon to see the problems first hand?

**Reply**

As you are aware, I have arranged for two officers from the Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate to visit the site to look into the issues you have raised. I am aware of the difficulties to which you refer and also of your views on the matter. I will provide you with the information you have requested at the earliest opportunity.

**Supplementary Question**

There seems to be some confusion between the Development Services Directorate and the Children and Lifelong Learning Directorate regarding the possible provision of a pedestrian crossing in the area. Could I ask the Cabinet Member to clarify the position?

**Reply**

I will liaise with the Directorates concerned and will ensure that the situation is clarified.

182. Mr. R. J. Marshall asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Children and Lifelong Learning) whose reply is set out below the question:-

**Question**

Following the recent Ofsted inspection of St Nicholas' First School, Codsall, the pupils, staff, governors and parents must be congratulated on being described as both "excellent" and "outstanding" in all categories - a fantastic achievement.
The Ofsted report recognises "the outstanding teamwork amongst the staff is closely and very effectively focused on ensuring the best possible progress for the pupils, even in the nursery where the cramped accommodation prevents the children's free movement around the planned learning activities".

The head teacher and chairman of governors would appreciate any support this council can give in ensuring that the SEED Challenge money applied for will be forthcoming.

Would the Council please:

(a) congratulate the school on achieving an outstanding inspection report

(b) guarantee the funding required for a fully functioning (and suitable) nursery.

Reply

I entirely agree that St Nicholas’ First School is an excellent school led by an excellent headteacher.

With reference to the Staffordshire SEED Challenge funding for 2006/07, we have received 180 bids to the value of £5.6 million set against a budget of £2 million.

To ensure that each application is assessed openly on an equal and consistent basis, each bid is assessed against published criteria that have been developed over several years.

Following this year’s assessment, 57 out of the 180 applications received have been successful.

The proposed programme will be submitted for approval to the Directorate Management Team during the week commencing 19 February 2006; each school will then be informed of their results.

Unfortunately, owing to budgetary constraints, both bids submitted by St Nicholas First School have been unsuccessful.

Supplementary Question

Can the Cabinet Member confirm whether all of the budget of £2m relating to the SEED Challenge Fund has been utilised by the 57 successful applications?

Reply

I do not have the information to hand and will therefore reply to the member in writing.
Supplementary Question

May I and Councillor Oatley have a copy of the published criteria relating to bidding for SEED Challenge Funding?

Reply

I will ensure that copies of the criteria are circulated to all members of the County Council.

Supplementary Question

When can the unsuccessful applicants re-apply for SEED Challenge Funding?

Reply

I confirm that all unsuccessful applicants will be informed in writing at the appropriate time in order that they can re-apply for SEED Challenge Funding.

183. Mr. N.R. Podmore asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Children and Lifelong Learning) whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

How many immigrant children do we have under our care in Staffordshire, where are they from and what is their average stay in Staffordshire?

Reply

Whilst it is not clear whether Councillor Podmore is referring to immigrants or asylum seekers, as Corporate Parents the County Council has a duty of care to all children irrespective of their origins and we respect their individuality and backgrounds.

Supplementary Question

I concur with the sentiments expressed by the Cabinet Member but if we do not know who these people are or where they are situated how can we meet their needs?

Reply

Your question is unclear as there is not a definition in law as to what constitutes an immigrant.

184. Mr N.R. Podmore asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Children and Lifelong Learning) whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Over the last 12 months how many school children in Staffordshire are 'excluded' and how many specialist support staff does the LEA employ to support these excluded children?
Reply

Number of excluded children – see attached Appendix

Number of staff employed to support excluded children - The Education Inclusion Division employs four Exclusion Officers and four Education Otherwise Co-ordinators (one in each district). The Education Otherwise Co-ordinators each have a team of home tutors, some of these tutors are employed on a permanent basis and some are employed on a sessional basis. There are a total of three permanent full time equivalent tutors employed in each district (12 in total). The number of sessional tutors employed varies (this could be anything from 10 to 15 tutors employed in each district at any one time). Excluded pupils can also access education at a local college or other alternative education scheme. Excluded children can also be placed in a Pupil Referral Unit within their own district.

Supplementary Question

Given the number of excluded children in Staffordshire do we have an appropriate level of staffing to support their needs?

Reply

I believe that the current staffing levels are adequate to support the needs of excluded pupils and I can confirm that such levels are kept under constant review.

Supplementary Question

What is the cost to the County Council of providing specialist support for excluded pupils?

Reply

As I do not have the details to hand I will reply to the member in writing.

185. Mr. W.D. Day asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Development) whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Would the Cabinet Member (Development) please give me an assurance that the Safer Routes to School scheme for Blythe Bridge will be implemented in 2006 taking into consideration the decision of the Council to amalgamate Draycott Manor Primary School with The Marsh Primary School in Blythe Bridge?

Reply

In the light of budget pressures it has been necessary to review and make some difficult decisions with regard to our forward programmes. Inevitably some schemes are either slipping or disappearing from programmes. In the case of Safer Routes Projects, we will not, for the foreseeable future, be able to progress as many as we have done in recent years. However, whilst there has
been some slippage, I am pleased to reassure Councillor Day that the Blythe Bridge Safer Routes Scheme will be included in the next tranche with initial parent/pupil surveys commencing in January 2007. This timescale will fit well with the merger of the two schools which is due to take place on 1 September 2006, as the surveys and investigations will then take place in the context of the new arrangements.

186. Mr. M.C. Ellis asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Development) whose reply is set out below the question:-

**Question**

(a) With community safety a priority for the County Council, will the Cabinet Member for Development review the ‘one size fits all’ policy with regard to the use of speed reduction measures, such as Vehicle Activated Signs, so that it takes account of local public concerns, local and fully researched parish plans and confirmed speeding data rather than heavily rely on the historically and often inaccurate use of past accidents?

(b) Does he not think it wrong, in an officially confirmed high speeding location in a rural village with narrow and even non existent pavements and with a significant elderly population, the use of Vehicle Activated Signs is not considered necessary because ‘there is little evidence of accidents and no deaths’? Is this really proactive prevention of accidents and does it address the fear that particularly the elderly have towards speeding vehicles?

**Reply**

Road Safety is a very high priority for Development Services and much of what our highway teams do is related in one way or another to our aim of improving safety and reducing casualties. It would not be true to say that we have a “one size fits all” policy with regard to safety or speed reduction measures. The measures which we implement across the County are very much tailored to the specific location to take account of the nature of the problem, local views and concerns and the local environment.

We do, however, have County-wide policies to identify and prioritise sites for action and the most significant factor in determining priorities are the accident records. Whilst I recognise that the perception of danger or speed is important, with only limited resources it is vital that we are able to target those locations where accidents are occurring. The success of these policies is demonstrated by the very significant reduction in casualty figures that has been achieved in recent years and by the fact that Staffordshire consistently leads the national performance tables in respect of reducing serious road accidents.

With regard to the use of Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS), these have become extremely popular since we started to introduce them in 2004. We now face a huge demand from Parishes throughout the County who see such signs as a relatively simple solution to perceived speeding problems. However, The Department of Transport guidance on the use of VAS states that they should only be considered “when there is an accident problem associated with inappropriate speed that has not been satisfactorily remedied by standard signing”, they “should only be used sparingly” and detailed accident investigations should be used to determine if VAS are an appropriate remedial
measure. To comply with this guidance and, again, to ensure that limited resources are targeted at the most serious problems, potential VAS sites do have to be prioritised on accident records and the actual speeds of vehicles at the particular site.

Finally, I do recognise the importance of local views and concerns. Following the recent Staffordshire Highways reorganisation, our front line staff are now organised much more than before on a geographic basis. Our aim is for all officers not only to develop a very high level of local knowledge but to build up close working relationships with District and Parish Councils and with local representatives so that we become increasingly proactive in addressing community concerns. It remains the case, however, that increasing public demand and expectation greatly exceed the available resources.

**Supplementary Question**

Thank you for your answer which sets out clearly the Department of Transport’s Guidance in relation to the use of vehicle activated signs. Can you confirm that, as this is only guidance, the County Council does not have to comply with it?

**Reply**

When considering the installation of vehicle activated signs, the County Council takes into account the relevant guidance and, where appropriate relevant local issues.

**Supplementary Question**

The Parish Plan for Clifton Campville Parish clearly identifies the high level of concern regarding traffic speeds through the village. If, as you say, you take into account local issues and the views of local residents, will you reconsider the decision not to install vehicle activated signs in the Parish?

**Reply**

The decision whether to install such signs must be robust. The measures we have in place to prioritise schemes ensure that all parishes are treated in a fair and consistent manner.

**Supplementary Question**

In view of the fact that the Parish Council are willing to fund in full the provision of vehicle activated signs and that there will, therefore, be no costs falling on the County Council, can I ask you to support the scheme?

**Reply**

Although I am impressed by the evidence the Parish Council has put forward to support their case, as I have indicated previously, the County Council has to ensure that such schemes are robust and that the prioritisation process treats all parishes in an equitable manner. I am, therefore, unable to give any firm assurances about the provision of vehicle activated signs in Clifton Campville.
187. Mrs. C.R. Jebb asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Development) whose reply is set out below the question:-

**Question**

(1) The County Council has advised parents, whose children attend Endon Hall Primary School and have no warden to cross them safely, to take a 10 minute detour to the nearest pelican crossing. Then they are expected to walk them in single file along a narrow footway, next to a busy and dangerous road. If they have a younger child too, they must push one child in front of them and expect the other to follow behind. What progress has the Development Services Department made in negotiations with landowners who agreed last summer to give up some of their land to widen this narrow footway?

(2) A budget was allocated to this project at that time. When will the new footway be installed?

(3) What is the implementation date for the Endon High School Safer Routes to School Project?

**Reply**

Negotiations have taken place with the landowners concerned and, whilst agreement can be reached with two of them, negotiations with the third landowner have so far proved unsuccessful, as that landowner is asking for accommodation works which are incompatible with the locality and which would involve the County Council in paying more than the compensation to which the landowner would otherwise be entitled for the dedication of his land. Negotiations are continuing.

Prior to any scheme taking place, an assessment is carried out as part of a prioritisation exercise and this determines future scheme proposals, the relative priority within the programme and the likely delivery date. The progress of this footway scheme depends largely on the dedication of the necessary land. The processes involved in land dedication and agreement to accommodation works can be lengthy and once dedication has been secured, the project will be considered for inclusion in the future programme of work.

All accidents and casualties recorded on the journey to and from High Schools are re-assessed on an annual basis and the relative priority of each catchment considered on a County-wide basis. Following the latest evaluation, the Endon High School Safer Routes to School Project has not achieved sufficient priority to be included in the forward programme although this position could change at future reviews as described.

**Supplementary Question**

Has funding for the proposed footway widening scheme been withdrawn?

**Reply**

I confirm that funding for the scheme is still available, the difficulty lies in securing the agreement of all of the landowners concerned.
Supplementary Question

In view of the fact that there does not appear to be any money available to Safer Routes to School or for the provision of a pedestrian crossing in Endon, how does the County Council propose to achieve its priorities in relation to safer communities?

Reply

Each proposed scheme is considered against the relevant priority criteria.

Supplementary Question

A give-way sign has recently been erected in the central refuge of one of the main routes in the village. I have concerns that this may have road safety implications as it could impair the view of persons crossing the road at this locality. May I ask the Cabinet Member to look into the issue?

Reply

Thank you for bringing the matter to my attention. I will look into the issue and will respond to you in writing.

188. Mr. R.J. Marshall asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Health) whose response is set out below the question:-

Question

Does the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health feel that the extra £4m proposed for vulnerable adults will be enough to avoid an overspend of the budget in 2006/07?

Reply

The proposed additional sum of £4m is a significant investment and will help the authority achieve its goals in delivering improved services to vulnerable adults. The sum of £4m is in addition to inflation increases and the loss of specific grants.

There are, nevertheless, very high demands for services provided to vulnerable adults and even with this investment, as in previous years, demands will exceed the resources available. The challenge for the service will be to match the available resources with the greatest need.

The Corporate Director of Social Care and Health in consultation with myself, as Cabinet Member, will allocate the financial resources to budget holders and, through the budget delegation scheme, will manage within the available budget for 2006/07.

Supplementary Question

Does the Cabinet Member share my concern that there is a significant danger that the £4m added to the budget for vulnerable adults will not be enough to prevent further overspends in 2006/07?
Reply

I do share your concerns and, as indicated above, our challenge will be to match the available resources with the greatest need. You will be aware that the Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel are supportive of the measures that have been taken but obviously we cannot afford to be in an overspend situation year on year.

Supplementary Question

If our concerns do come to fruition and we are found to be heading towards an overspend situation in 2006/07, what level of overspend would be “acceptable” before we put in additional funding as we have had to do this year?

Reply

I trust that the action we have taken with regard to the budget for vulnerable adults will be sufficient. However, we must endeavour to live within our means and, as indicated previously, we need to match the available resources with the greatest need.

189. Mr. R.J. Marshall asked the following question of the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Health) whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Can the Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health assure the Council that the measures taken in the second half of 2005/06 have not impacted on frontline services?

Reply

The measures taken in 2005/06 have sought to protect frontline services. We have targeted savings on ‘back-office’ functions, and ensured our services go firstly to those clients with the greatest level of need. Measures include:-

- A vacancy freeze in the recruitment of administrative staff
- Savings on recruitment advertising budgets
- A cessation of purchasing non-essential equipment and consumables
- Restrictions to training and development expenditure
- A cessation of the use of agency staff in all but the most exceptional circumstances
- A reduction in the rate at which people are placed permanently into residential care
- Domiciliary (home care) services reduced and directed to those in greatest need.

Inevitably, some clients may have failed to have their expectations met or experienced a delay before receiving a service, but staff at all levels of the Directorate have done a remarkable job in containing expenditure with minimal negative impact on the experience of service users.
Supplementary Question

What level of discomfort and complaints has there been from service users as a result of the measures taken by the Directorate to reduce the level of overspend?

Reply

I do not have the details to hand so I will reply to the Member in writing. The measures taken during 2005/06 predominately relate to non-front line services but, obviously, there are likely to be some implications for service users.

Supplementary Question

At the next meeting of the Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel could members be provided with information on the level of complaints received since the overspend mitigation measures were put in place?

Reply

Subject to the agreement of the Chairman of the Panel, I will arrange for members to be provided with the information you have requested.

Corporate Strategy 2006-2009 and Directorate Improvement Plans


The Strategy had been informed by wide ranging consultation which included a public consultation event with 34 members of the public; a household survey; a web survey; an event for members; and consultation with staff. These all broadly indicated that the Council’s priorities were aligned with the views of its communities and the concerns of members and staff.

The Strategy had also been informed by feedback received from the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee, the principal change being the inclusion of a “what will success be like” section for the Corporate Change Enablers.

The Cabinet would receive performance reports twice yearly on the delivery of the Strategy using the improvement plans as the basis for monitoring progress. Quarterly performance monitoring reports would also be submitted to Scrutiny and Performance Panels and to the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee.

It would be necessary to review the Corporate Strategy next year to ensure that it could still provide the strategic direction needed as the shape of change continued to emerge. This would also provide the County Council with an opportunity to enhance business planning and develop effective performance arrangements.

191. Mr. T.A. Dix moved, and Mr. J.W. Taylor seconded, and it was RESOLVED –

(a) That the Corporate Strategy 2006-2009 be adopted.
(b) That the Directorate Improvement Plans be adopted.

(c) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make any minor amendments to the Corporate Strategy 2006-2009.

(d) That the relevant Corporate Director, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member, be authorised to amend their respective improvement plans during the year as targets are developed to support the change agenda and to respond to the outcomes of the service review programme.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and 2006/07 Budget and the Council Tax

192. The Council received a report and statement by the Leader of the Council on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the 2006/07 Revenue Budget, the Capital Budget and the Council Tax.

193. Mr. T.A. Dix moved and Mr. J.W. Taylor seconded, and it was RESOLVED –

That the County Council approve:-

(i) a net revenue budget for 2006/07 of £379.655m;

(ii) revenue budget allocations to individual services for 2006/07 as set out in Appendix 5 of the joint report of the Corporate Director (Resources), the Interim Deputy Corporate Director (Finance) and the Chief Finance Officer appended to the report of the Leader of the Council.

(iii) a contingency provision of £2.093m;

(iv) a contribution from reserves and balances of £7.5m;

(v) a budget requirement for £372.155m;

(vi) a Council Tax at Band D of £902.85pm an increase of 4.9%, leading to a Council Tax for each property band as set out below:-

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<td>Band G (£160,001 - £320,000)</td>
<td>1,433.78</td>
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<td>Band H (more than £320,001)</td>
<td>1,720.54</td>
<td>1,805.70</td>
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(vii) that the amount to be raised through Council Tax be £252,942,112 and that the Corporate Director (Resources) be authorised to sign precept notices on the billing authorities respectively liable for the total precept payable and that each such notice state the total precept payable, as set out below, and the Council Tax in relation to each category of dwelling as calculated in accordance with statutory requirements;
<table>
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<th>Billing Authority</th>
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<td>Cannock Chase</td>
<td>26,728,429</td>
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<td>31,853,580</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34,526,950</td>
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<td>34,641,775</td>
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<td>Stafford</td>
<td>40,671,857</td>
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<td>Staffordshire Moorlands</td>
<td>30,687,111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamworth</td>
<td>20,426,173</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>252,942,112</strong></td>
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(viii) a capital budget for 2006/07 of £104m and allocated to individual services as set out in **Appendix 11** of the joint report of the Corporate Director (Resources), the Interim Deputy Corporate Director (Finance) and the Chief Finance Officer appended to the report of the Leader of the Council;

(ix) the prudential indicators as set out in **Appendix 12** of the joint report of the Corporate Director (Resources), the Interim Deputy Corporate Director (Finance) and the Chief Finance Officer appended to the report of the Leader of the Council and note that the authorised limit for external debt determined for 2006/07 as detailed in **Appendix 12** will be the statutory limit determined under Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003;

(x) the arrangements for monitoring the financial health indicators as set out in the **Appendix 16** of the joint report of the Corporate Director (Resources), the Interim Deputy Corporate Director (Finance) and the Chief Finance Officer appended to the report of the Leader of the Council;

(xi) the continued development of the Corporate Strategy and the Medium Term Financial Strategy on the basis of a Council Tax increase of 5% in each of the next two years and that services continue to develop their medium term plans on the basis of the budget targets set out in **Appendix 17** of the joint report of the Corporate Director (Resources), the Interim Deputy Corporate Director (Finance) and the Chief Finance Officer appended to the report of the Leader of the Council.

**Standing Order No. 7 – Notice of Motion**

194. Mr. S.G. Norman moved and Mr. T.J. Corbett seconded, the following motion under Standing Order No. 7:-

“This Council congratulates Staffordshire’s Chasetown FC, Tamworth FC and Burton Albion FC in their recent bids for the Football Association Cup and that we wish “the Scholars”, “the Lambs” and “the Brewers” every success for the rest of the season”.

195. Following a vote, the Chairman declared the motion carried.
Statement of the Leader of the Council

196. The Leader of the Council presented a statement giving brief details of decisions taken by the Cabinet and Portfolio Holders since the previous Council meeting. In response to a question from Mr. I.M. Parry in relation to proposals for the reorganisation of local government, the Leader confirmed that, over the last six months, representatives from the County Council had not had any meetings with government ministers or senior officials in relation to the possible reorganisation of local government.

The Cabinet Member (Social Care and Health) congratulated staff for their hard work which had led to the Commission for Social Care and Inspection judging the Council’s services for adults as “serving most people well, with promising capacity for improvement”. She added that two other recent pieces of good news included the “Staffordshire’s Young Watchdog Scheme” receiving the award in the Community Youth Initiative category of the Sustainable Community Awards 2006 and the Social Care and Health Directorate’s IT Project Team winning the Institute of IT Training’s Staff Development Programme of the Year award for 2006. She added that she would pass on the Council’s congratulations to those involved.

Mr. M.J. Winnington referred to the review of office accommodation in central Stafford and stated that it was necessary to consider car parking issues as part of the review. In response, the Cabinet Member (Development) confirmed that car parking in Stafford was an integral part of the Stafford Master Plan which had been prepared by the Borough Council in consultation with the County Council.

In response to a question from Mr. P.E.B. Atkins concerning the County Council’s Corporate Performance Assessment, the Deputy Leader confirmed that he considered the assessment to have been fair, especially in view of the fact that “the bar had been raised”.

In response to questions by several members regarding the government’s consultation on “commissioning a patient led NHS”, the Cabinet Member (Social Care and Health) confirmed that the views that had been expressed by members and by the Staffordshire Health Scrutiny Committee and the Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel would be submitted to the Cabinet when they considered the proposed response to the consultation.

197. RESOLVED – That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

Overview Report on Scrutiny Activity

198. The Chairman of the Corporate Policy Scrutiny Committee, Mr. M.J.D. Poulter, presented to the Council an overview report detailing recent Scrutiny Committee and Scrutiny and Performance Panel activity. Mrs. E.J. Bayliss referred to the “climate change big debate” that took place on 27 January 2006 at Thomas Alleyne’s High School in Uttoxeter and asked that her thanks be extended to Mr. Peter Mitchell, the Headteacher at the school, to the students involved and to Michael Collie of the BBC who acted as anchorman.

199. RESOLVED – That the report on recent scrutiny activity be received.
Report of the Audit Committee

200. **RESOLVED** – That the report of the Audit Committee be considered.

201. After the report had been put from the Chair, the Chairman declared the report of the Audit Committee to have been adopted.

Recommendations to the Council

202. **RESOLVED** – That the recommendations to the Council be considered.

In response to questions from members concerning the implementation date of the Regulations giving the County Council the power to gate certain highways and the number of routes that are likely to be the subject of Orders, the Deputy Corporate Director (Law and Administration) indicated that he did not have the relevant information to hand and would, therefore, respond to members in writing.

203. After the paragraphs of the report had been put from the Chair, the Chairman declared the Recommendations to the Council to have been adopted.

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

204. **RESOLVED** – That the periodic report of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority be considered.

In response to a question from Mr M J Barber, the Chairman of the Authority confirmed that there were proposals to construct a new fire station in the Rising Brook area of Stafford.

205. After the report had been put from the Chair, the Chairman declared the periodic report of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority to have been adopted.

CHAIRMAN

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Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.
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<th>Technology</th>
<th>Maths and Computing</th>
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**APPENDIX 1**

**East Staffs District**
- Abbot Beyne
- de Ferrers High
- John Taylor High
- Paget High
- Paulet High
- Blessed Robert Sutton Catholic Sports College
- Thomas Alleynes High

**Tamworth District**
- Belgrave High
- Queen Elizabeth’s Mercian
- Rawlett Community Sports College
- Torc High
- Wilnecote High
- Woodhouse High

**Cannock District**
- Blake Valley Technology College
- Kingsmead Technology College
- Cannock Chase Specialist Science School
- Cardinal Griffin High
- Fair Oak Business & Enterprise College
- Hagley Park Sports College
- Norton Canes High

**Lichfield District**
- Chase Terrace Technology College
- Chasetown Specialist Sports College
- The Friary High
- King Edward VI
- Nether Stowe High
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