

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday, 13th December, 2018

I have recently forwarded to you a copy of the agenda for the next meeting of the County Council.

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Thursday, 13th December, 2018 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

9. **Questions (Pages 1 - 4)**

Questions to be asked by Members of the County Council of the Leader of the Council, a Cabinet Member, or a Chairman of a Committee. The question will be answered by the relevant Member and the Member asking the question may then ask a follow up question which will also be answered

John Henderson
Chief Executive

Enc

QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 13TH DECEMBER 2018

**Question to
The Leader of the Council**

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Will the Leader of the Council set out the total cost to date for the 'Options for Reform in Staffordshire' documentation that Grant Thornton LLP have been commissioned to produce? Will he also share the 'Options for Reform in Staffordshire' documentation so that County Councillors can share information with residents about discussions regarding future models for delivery of the public services they fund?

Reply

Council will be aware that in September 2018, Staffordshire County Council was the subject of Corporate Peer Review by the Local Government Association. This examined a range of issues, including the county council's unprecedented financial challenges next year and in the medium term – a matter on which you have been notified during previous meetings of Full Council. Over the past few months both members and officers have worked tirelessly to set a balanced budget for 2019/20, and beyond. It is our responsibility as members of Staffordshire County Council to do so, and it is also incumbent upon us to manage the expected £35 million budget shortfall in the best way possible, whilst considering the longer-term sustainability and role of the authority.

We take this role very seriously and the LGA Peer Review team would expect us a well-managed and well-run council to explore all options; leaving no stone unturned to meet these challenges. As part of this we commissioned Grant Thornton to undertake a desk top analysis of all the possible options for the delivery of local governance in Staffordshire – both in terms of the needs of our growing population and about the potential cost savings that may be achieved if local government reorganisation was to be implemented. As one would expect, this required exploration of the status-quo, of unitarisation, and of the regionalisation of local government services. Grant Thornton carried out this work discretely to ensure that their work remained an exploratory exercise that could be delivered without prejudice and without becoming an unwelcome distraction at a time when there is already much deliberation about devolution and re-organisation nationally.

The final report which will be published in January 2019 will recommend the development of enhanced two-tier governance for Staffordshire and that this remains the most effective form of governance for the county. This is pleasing, and I personally have long been an advocate of this form of local governance. This report reaffirms and endorses this view, and I look forward, and remain

firmly committed, to, the 8 district and borough councils that alongside the county council deliver essential frontline service for the people of Staffordshire.

The overall cost of the work undertaken on behalf of the county council was approximately £48,000. I am sure Mr Robinson will agree that this work has helped reassure the LGA Peer Review team that Staffordshire County Council is financially viable despite the experience of other county councils, and that we are clearly committed to the protection of services for those that need them most.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 13TH DECEMBER 2018

**Question to Helen Fisher
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Three and a half months ago I reported a collapsed drain on Lower Ash Road in my division (4134612). Can the Cabinet Member for Highways please inform me when this collapsed drain will be repaired?

The problem with this particular drain, next to a well-used bus stop, was also reported in the local newspaper in August 2018 and in a statement the County Council said:

“We will be returning as soon as possible for further investigation before deciding on the best course of action.”

The ‘best course of action’ has done nothing to resolve the problem and my own report to the County Council has been closed by the investigating officer. Flooding at this location has become much worse in recent months, creating a severe hazard for vehicle users and pedestrians.

Reply

A report of a faulty drain and standing water on Lower Ash Road, Kidsgrove was reported by Cllr. Robinson, using the on-line ‘Report it’ tool on 27th August 2018.

This report was linked to an existing job and was attended to by the highways team two weeks later, on 13th September.

The highway gully and drainage system was cleansed and found to be in good condition. No further works are planned by the Highways team.

However, it was also identified that the carrier storm system, which is the responsibility of United Utilities, appears to be damaged or blocked and during heavy rain is surcharging back up the highway gully on to Lower Ash Road.

The highways team have notified United Utilities of the problem and are waiting a further update on their investigations and planned actions.

I’d kindly ask Cllr. Robinson to support these actions by following up directly with United Utilities.

