

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 14 February 2019

Present:

Attendance		
Ben Adams	Michael Greatorex	*David Smith
*Charlotte Atkins	Gill Heath	Paul Snape
Philip Atkins, OBE	Phil Hewitt	Bob Spencer
*Ann Beech	Syed Hussain	Mike Sutherland
David Brookes	Keith James	Mark Sutton
*Gill Burnett	Julia Jessel	Stephen Sweeney
Ron Clarke	Bryan Jones	Martyn Tittley
Tina Clements	Dave Jones	Carolyn Trowbridge
Maureen Compton	*Ian Lawson	Ross Ward
*John Cooper	*Alastair Little	Alan White
Derek Davis, OBE	Johnny McMahon	Philip White
Mark Deaville	*Paul Northcott	Conor Wileman
Alan Dudson	Jeremy Oates	Bernard Williams
Ann Edgeller	Kath Perry	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Bernard Peters	Victoria Wilson
Keith Flunder	Jonathan Price	Mark Winnington
John Francis	Natasha Pullen	Susan Woodward
Colin Greatorex	Kyle Robinson	*Mike Worthington

Note: The Members marked “*” arrived late due to the closure of the M6 motorway.

Apologies for absence: Mike Davies, Janet Eagland, Jill Hood, Trevor Johnson, Jason Jones, Ian Parry, Jeremy Pert and Simon Tagg

PART ONE

46. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

47. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 December 2018

RESOLVED – That, subject to the amendments referred to below, the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 13 December 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman:

- (i) The correct spelling of the word “role” on the seventh line of the first paragraph on page three of the minutes;
- (ii) The insertion of the word “health” after the word “mental” in the third line of the sixth paragraph on page three of the minutes; and

- (iii) The correct spelling of the word “ageing” on the second line of the first paragraph on page four of the minutes.

48. Chairman's Correspondence

Former County Councillor Jesse Brough

The Chairman informed the Council of the death of former County Councillor Jesse Brough. Mr Brough had represented the former Cannock No. 4 County Electoral Division Member of the Council between 1977 and 1981. He served on a number of the Council’s Committees including the Education, Planning, Fire and Public Protection and Waste Disposal Committees.

Former County Councillor Bernard Michael Jones

Members were also informed of the death, on 19 December 2018, of former County Councillor Bernard Michael Jones. Mr Jones served on the County Council between 1967 and 1970 and represented the former Essington County Electoral Division. He served on a number of the Council’s Committees including the Education Committee, Finance Committee, Civil Defence Committee, Health Committee and Road Safety Committee. He was also Chairman of the Youth Service Sub Committee.

Mr Atkins, Mr Brookes, Mr Derek Davis and Mr Sutton paid tribute to the contributions Mr Brough and Mr Jones had made to the work of the Council during their periods in office following which Members stood and observed a one minute silence in their memory.

Honorary Alderman Henry Butters

The Chairman also informed the Council of the death of former County Councillor Henry Butter. Mr Butter represented the Eccleshall (Stafford) County Electoral Division on the County Council between 1988 and 2013. The Chairman indicated that Mr Butters had requested that upon his demise “there are no silences observed, no eulogies given and no civic service; just announce my death and move to next business.”

49. Petition: School Crossing Patrols

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 seeking the retention of County Council funding for School Crossing Patrols. The petition consisted of an e-petition: “Retain our County Council Funded Crossing Patrols” and two paper petitions: “I say no to Lollipop Cuts”; and “Petition to Protect School Crossing Patrols” with a combined total number of valid signatures of 5,409.

Mrs Sam Chappell, on behalf of the petitioners outlined the reasons for the petition which included:

- The service played a vital role in keeping children safe.
- There was a continued growth in the volume of traffic using Staffordshire's roads.
- Any savings from the withdrawal of County Council funding for the patrols would be eroded by the costs of providing training for the replacement patrols.
- There was a weight of public opinion opposing the cuts.

Mrs Fisher moved, and Mrs Woodward seconded: "That the County Council accepts the petition and conveys thanks to those who took the time to sign it and to present it to Council. The results of the consultation exercise and campaigners have been listened to and the original proposal has not been taken forward. The County Council hopes that this decision will be welcomed by members and campaigners alike."

She added that the County Council had listened to those persons who had responded to the consultation and had decided not to pursue with any reductions in the funding for School Crossing Patrols. She also expressed her thanks to the 900 residents who had taken part in the consultation and to the Parish Councils and local businesses which stepped forward with offers of funding. Mrs Fisher also extended her thanks to those persons who provided the school crossing patrols as she understood that this had been a very unsettling time for them.

Mr Robinson, Mr Clarke, Mr Flunder, Mr Francis, Mr Dudson and Mr Snape indicated that they welcomed the Council's decision not to reduce the funding for school crossing patrols as this was a highly valued service which saved lives.

Mrs Atkins paid tribute to those involved in organising the petitions opposing the reduction in funding for the school crossing patrols and expressed the hope that the patrols' future was now secured.

Mr Philip White commended Mrs Fisher for the way in which she had handled the consultation on the school crossing patrol proposals.

Mr Atkins referred to the role which planning authorities could play in relation to new housing developments and ensuring developers made adequate provision for Pelican crossings etc. He also referred to the importance of walking buses and other such schemes.

Mrs Fisher concluded the debate by thanking Mrs Chappell for attending the meeting and confirmed that there were currently no plans to review the funding of the school crossing patrol service again.

RESOLVED - That the County Council accepts the petition and conveys thanks to those who took the time to sign it and to present it to Council. The results of the consultation exercise and campaigners have been listened to and the original proposal has not been taken forward. The County Council hopes that this decision will be welcomed by members and campaigners alike.

50. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019/2024 and 2019/20 Budget and Council Tax

The Council received a joint report by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 20019/24 and 2019/20 Budget and Council Tax proposals.

Mr Sutherland expressed his thanks to the Deputy Director of Finance and those other members of staff who had assisted in the development of the MTFS, the Chairman and Members of the Corporate Review Committee's Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group for the robust manner in which they had challenged and questioned Cabinet Members during their scrutiny of the MTFS/budget proposals, and also to his Cabinet Colleagues and Members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Introducing the report Mr Sutherland explained that the early commencement of work to address the forecast £35million deficit for 2019/20 had proven beneficial in that it had provided for detailed consideration of all options available and consultation with interested parties as appropriate.

He explained that Cabinet proposed a net revenue budget of £508.634million for 2019/20 giving a Council Tax requirement of £351.132million. This necessitated a Precept increase of 2.95% at property Band D level.

As an example of the financial pressures facing the Council, Mr Sutherland reported that £315 million would be allocated in 2019/20 towards the cost of care for the young, old and most vulnerable members of the community, compared with the £200 million allocation some 10 years ago. He added that the Council would continue to Lobby Central Government for appropriate funding for the provision of social care.

Highlighting specific points in the proposed budget the Mr Sutherland indicated that the Council had consulted the public on the budget proposals and had listened to their concerns including the retention of School Crossing Patrols, the continuation of the concessionary fares scheme. He also referred to the Council's capital investment strategy which provided for a number of schemes including the Stafford Western Access Route, the Lichfield Southern By-Pass and the construction of new primary schools at Pye Green and Fradley.

Members noted that the MTFS had been prepared in conjunction with the Strategic Plan and contained the framework for the preparation of detailed revenue and capital budgets, decisions on council tax and savings and investment plans. Mr Sutherland expressed the view that this had been the most challenging budget to date but a balanced budget for 2019/20 had been achieved.

Mr Sutherland moved, and Mr Atkins seconded, the recommendations contained in the report before the Council.

Mr Adams referred to the Council's proposals for increased spending on health and care over the next five years to the tune of £28m; an additional £9m for families and communities; and £8m on economy, infrastructure and skills.

Mrs Woodward referred to the financial pressures most top tier councils were currently facing, particularly in relation to the funding of adult social care and also children's services. She also referred to the various campaigns and lobbying for additional funding for these services which was on-going at both local and national levels. She expressed concern about the reduction of 40% in funding for the community/voluntary sector and also the proposals to delete the four Community Partnership Officer posts. Mrs Woodward did however indicate that she welcomed the decision not to reduce funding for school crossing patrols and also in excluding disabled people from the proposed changes to the Concessionary Travel Scheme. She added that, although there were proposals for the Your Staffordshire Card to be terminated, she welcomed the announcement that discussions were ongoing with bus operators in relation to the possibility of them introducing similar youth concessions schemes. Mrs Woodward referred to a number of the proposals which the Labour Group had put forward including the savings which could be achieved in respect of joint services for waste management; procurement; the Council's Civic budget and also by introducing a "Business helping Business" enabler to run alongside the Council's "People helping People" enabler.

Mr Robinson spoke about the impact on low income families of year on year rises in Council Tax and the need to ensure that sound debt advice was made available to communities. In response, Mr Alan White stated that the Council took the minimum amount possible to fund services which people need. Mr Brookes added that Staffordshire was had the second lowest level of Council Tax of all the shire authorities across the Country.

Mr Alan White also stated that the Council's lobbying of Central Government had seen some success in the short-term but a long-term solution to the funding of social care still needed to be found.

Mrs Fisher referred to the budget reductions relating to transport and indicated that she, together with the Council's officers, would continue to work closely with bus operators and community transport providers to mitigate the impact of the proposals.

Mr Hussain welcomed the Council's decision not to reduce funding for school crossing patrols.

Mr Winnington informed Members that, since 2008, with the support of the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Council economic growth initiatives had led to 31,000 additional jobs. He also indicated that, with regard to procurement, the Council endeavoured to use local suppliers where possible. Mr Winnington also indicated that for every £1 invested by the Council it had levered £13.60 additional investment and that, post Brexit, the Council needed to be at the forefront on delivery and growth.

Mr Atkins indicated that Staffordshire was a well run Council and that, since 2009, it had reduced its running costs by £240m. He added that that unemployment in the County now stood at 1.3% and that the proposals in the MTFs provided for investment in a number of capital projects which would lead to the creation of a further 2700 new jobs. Mr Atkins also indicated that growing the economy remained an absolute priority for the Council. He also referred to the success of the Council in lobbying its MPs which had resulted in securing additional one-off funding for highways and social care.

The Chairman reminded Members that, under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, if they were two months or more in arrears with their Council Tax it was an offence for them to vote on the budget. Members were also required to disclose at the meeting the fact that this Section applied to them.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the Chairman called for a named vote to be taken in relation to the approval of the recommendations contained in the report, the result of which was as follows:

Those Members voting in support of the recommendations:

Ben Adams	Keith James	Mark Sutton
Philip Atkins, OBE	Julia Jessel	Stephen Sweeney
David Brookes	Bryan Jones	Martyn Tittley
Gill Burnett	Alastair Little	Carolyn Trowbridge
Tina Clements	Johnny McMahon	Ross Ward
Mark Deaville	Paul Northcott	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Jeremy Oates	Philip White
Helen Fisher	Kath Perry	Conor Wileman
Keith Flunder	Bernard Peters	Bernard Williams
John Francis	Jonathan Price	David Williams
Colin Greatorex	David Smith	Victoria Wilson
Michael Greatorex	Paul Snape	Mark Winnington
Gill Heath	Robert Spencer	Mike Worthington
Phil Hewitt	Mike Sutherland	

Those Members voting against the recommendations:

Charlotte Atkins	Derek Davis OBE	Dave Jones
Ron Clarke	Alan Dudson	Kyle Robinson
Maureen Compton	Syed Hussain	Susan Woodward

Note by Clerk: The following Members were not present for the vote owing to being delayed due to the closure of the M6 motorway – Ann Beech, John Cooper, Ian Lawson and Natasha Pullen.

RESOLVED – (a) That the following be approved:

- a net revenue budget of £508.634m for 2019/20 as set out in Appendix 11 to the report;
- planning forecasts for 2020/21 to 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 11 to the report;
- a contingency provision of £4.000m for 2019/20;
- a net contribution to reserves and general balances of £2.284m for 2019/20;
- a budget requirement of £510.918m for 2019/20;
- a council tax requirement of £351.132m for 2019/20;

- a council tax at Band D of £1,246.23 for 2019/20 which is an increase of 2.95% when compared with 2018/19. This results in council tax for each category of dwelling as set out in the table below:

Category of Dwelling	Council Tax Rate £
Band A	830.82
Band B	969.29
Band C	1,107.76
Band D	1,246.23
Band E	1,523.17
Band F	1,800.11
Band G	2,077.05
Band H	2,492.46

- that the Deputy Director of Finance be authorised to sign precept notices on the billing authorities respectively liable for the total precept payable and that each notice state the total precept payable and the council tax in relation to each category of dwelling as calculated in accordance with statutory requirements;
- the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2019/20, the Treasury Management Strategy 2019/20 and the (Non-Treasury) Commercial Investment Strategy 2019/20, including all the recommendations contained therein;
- the Prudential Indicators included in the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2019/20;
- the Financial Health Indicators set out in Appendix 14 to the report;

(c) That the Deputy Director of Finance's comments in respect of the adequacy of the reserves and the robustness of the budget, as set out in the report, be noted;

(vi) That the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Deputy Director of Finance be authorised to challenge Cabinet, the Senior Leadership Team and services to manage and deliver the current five year plans and to identify further cost reductions and income generation opportunities, as appropriate.

51. 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. In introducing his Statement, Mr Atkins indicated that after the council papers went to print, there was the news that the 1966 World Cup hero Gordon Banks had very sadly passed away. He added that Gordon Banks OBE was a legend, revered by football fans in Staffordshire, England and around the world, yet everyone who met him would say that he was the most humble person, someone who had time for everyone. A campaign had been gathering momentum here in the county for Gordon to be knight, an honour which would have been richly deserved, not only for his contribution to football but for his selfless charity work.

Enlargement of Manor Hill First School, Stone

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Mr Philip White indicated that the enlargement of the school was necessary owing to the growth in housing in the school's catchment area.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Growth Strategy

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Mr Robinson enquired as to how the Growth Strategy would assist efforts to provide a new Leisure Centre in Kidsgrove within the next five to ten years.

Mr Sweeney indicated that the Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council had a shared vision with the County Council on the growth of the Borough.

In response, Mr Atkins indicated that the provision of leisure services was the responsibility of the Borough Council and that the County Council would continue to work with them to promote growth and increase income to the Borough which, in turn, could be used for the provision of leisure services.

Adult Learning Disability Community Offer 2022

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward referred to the need to ensure that there was appropriate quality of provision as well as securing value for money. In response, Mr Alan White indicated that the provision of the Adult Learning Disability offer continued to evolve as time goes by that the consultation on the proposed offer going forward would be open until March. He urged service users and their families to take part in the consultation so as to inform the development of the proposals.

Enlargement of The Rawlett School – An AET Academy (Tamworth)

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Mr Adams welcomed the proposals for the enlargement of the school and he also paid tribute to the Council for the way in which it planned to ensure the provision of sufficient school, in the right places, across the county.

Executive Responses to All Party Member Groups

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward expressed concern that she had not seen and significant "outcomes and learning" from the work of the All Party Member Groups (APMG).

Mr Clarke referred to the work of the Innovation APMG in reviewing the provision for promoting children's emotional and mental wellbeing and enquired as to when the Group would continue its work and examine the prevention of such issues.

Mr Little and Mr Funder spoke in support of the APMGs and indicated that they were a forum which had enabled all Members to get involved in policy making.

Mr Winnington praised the work of the improvement APMG and stated that its outcomes were constructive.

Mr Atkins responded by indicating that the APMG provided an opportunity for Members to come forward and utilise their skills outside the traditional committee system.

Fatal House Fire

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Mrs Trowbridge expressed her deep sadness at the death of four children involved in the housefire in her electoral division. She also praised the community for the way in which it had come together in support. Mr Francis also paid tribute to the emergency services for the way in which they had responded to the tragedy. Mr Atkins added that the County Council was continuing to offer wide support to the teachers and fellow school pupils who had been affected by the tragedy.

MTFS

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward referred to the budget proposals which had been put forward by her political group and how they had assisted in promoting a full debate on the MTFS.

Mr Atkins added that he would continue to press Central Government on a long-term, sustainable solution for the funding of social care.

Communities

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Mrs Jessel, Mr Brookes, Mr Worthington and Mr Oates expressed their thanks to the Cabinet in respect of the proposals for funding to be made available to Members to support their local communities and how this funding could be utilised to lever further monies from other organisations.

Mr Davis indicated that some communities were in greater need of such funding than other, more affluent, communities and there perhaps needed to be a redistribution of such funding.

Mr Clarke referred to the proposal to introduce a scheme whereby each Member would have funding of £20,000 to spend on highway improvements in their Division and enquired as to the average cost of repairing a pothole or undertaking other minor improvement works. Mr Robinson also asked for an assurance that the County Council would be able to deliver those minor highway improvements that Members decided to fund out of their £20,000 allocation. In response, Mrs Fisher stated that Amey had confirmed that they had the capacity to undertake such works and it was important that those works were scheduled appropriately so as to achieve maximum value for money.

Mrs Heath and Mr Greatorex paid tribute to the success of Lichfield Library following its recent relocation from the Friary into the St Mary's Centre.

Growing Our Economy
(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Mr Spencer stated that he welcomed the recent announcement that planning approval had been obtained for the extension of the i54 site in South Staffordshire.

Mr Snape and Mrs Woodward referred to the proposed McArthurGlen designer outlet in Cannock which, it was estimated, would bring an additional 1,000 jobs to the area.

Mr Bryan Jones also welcomed the construction of the Poppyfield Primary Academy, a 210 place primary free school in Cannock which was due to open in September 2019 for Nursery and Reception.

Mr Lawson referred to the importance of the highway network and expressed concern at the time it had taken for the Police to deal with the incident on the M6 earlier that morning which had led to the total closure of the southbound carriageway between Junctions 14 and 13 for around seven hours resulting in Stafford being gridlocked. In response, Mr Sutton, Mrs Woodward and Mr Deaville indicated that it was important for the family of the gentleman who had died that the Police had sufficient time to investigate the scene and the circumstances leading to the death.

Note by Clerk – Mr Lawson subsequently apologised for his comments and added that he did not intend to cause any offence.

Mr Colin Greatorex referred to the timescale for the construction of the Lichfield Southern Bypass and also the need for appropriate signage to deter HGV's from using inappropriate routes within the City.

Mr Alan White explained the vital role the County Council played in promoting economic growth and creating employment opportunities within Staffordshire.

In response to a question from Mr Brookes in relation to the improvements to the A50 in Uttoxeter, Mr Winnington indicated that the County Council was in talks with JCB and Central Government regarding moving forward with Project B on the A50. He also referred to the proposed commencement of work on the Stafford Western Access Road (SWAR) in June 2019. Mrs Trowbridge mentioned the recent granting of planning consent for the Burleyfields development in Stafford and enquired as to whether the SWAR, which crossed the development, was on target for completion in 2021.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting until 1:50 pm

Present at 1:50 pm:

Charlotte Atkins
Philip Atkins OBE
Ann Beech
David Brookes
Gill Burnett
Ron Clarke

Keith Flunder
John Francis
Colin Greatorex
Michael Greatorex (Chair)
Gill Heath
Phil Hewitt

Kath Perry
Kyle Robinson
David Smith
Robert Spencer
Mike Sutherland
Mark Sutton

Tina Clements
Maureen Compton
John Cooper
Derek Davis OBE
Mark Deaville
Alan Dudson
Ann Edgeller
Helen Fisher

Syed Hussain
Julia Jessel
Bryan Jones
Ian Lawson
Alastair Little
Johnny McMahon
Paul Northcott
Jeremy Oates

Stephen Sweeney
Carolyn Trowbridge
Alan White
Philip White
Bernard Williams
Victoria Wilson
Mark Winnington
Susan Woodward

Transport Innovation (Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Mrs Fisher indicated that the Council was one of the seven transport innovation project bids nationally which had been approved for government funding. She expressed gratitude to partner agencies and organisations for their involvement in and commitment to the project.

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

52. Outcomes of Overview and Scrutiny Work July to December 2018

Mr Brookes and Mrs Jessel paid tribute to their fellow Members of the Council's Select Committees for the contributions they had made.

Mrs Woodward reminded Members of the ongoing review on gender inequality and sexism across the County Council. The review had stemmed from a national review, particularly the Fawcett Report. She reported that she was inviting views from women members on the Council on their experiences, the aim being to identify ways of supporting and encouraging women to take up the role of councillor.

Mr Alan White also paid tribute to the members of the Select Committees, and the officers who supported them, for the contributions they had made to the work of the Council. Mr Sutton also praised the members of the Corporate Parenting Panel for the contributions they had made.

In response to a question from Mr Smith as to why the recommendation of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee that Community Highways Infrastructure Managers share details of meetings arranged with Parish Councils with the local County Member did not appear to be happening consistently, Mrs Jessel indicated that she would take this matter up with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

53. Questions

Susan Woodward asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

I was very surprised to see you as a co-signatory for an open letter to Party Leaders (<https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1550/hs2-open-letter-final-210119.docx>) urging their support for HS2, in spite of unanimous and cross-party opposition to the project here at Staffordshire County Council and wide opposition across the communities we represent. You say, inter alia, "Our support must not flounder or stall. We must unite to deliver HS2, and we urge you to join us by offering your vocal and unwavering support." Can you explain to me, the Council and the wider public, when your position on HS2 changed, why you decided to act in a way that is contrary to the County Council's clearly expressed position and what discussions took place with fellow councillors before you co-signed this letter?

Reply

The position of the county council remains as per the motion set out below and as approved by Full Council in December 2015.

However, HS2 is a complex issue with partners, Members and people across the Midlands and in the North West having differing views, concerns and priorities. While of course it is easy to pick out any one line from a comprehensive letter, as a county council we are keen to seek clarity on the progression of the scheme.

Phase One has already been given Royal Assent, where we have gained substantial environmental mitigation, and which will allow Staffordshire residents to benefit from HS2 via the Handsacre Link, and the key part of this letter for Staffordshire is that if HS2 is to be delivered, we would like to see "support for *Phase 2a in reaching Royal Assent before the end of 2019, as planned.*" This will not only remove uncertainty for everyone, particularly those whose property is blighted, but will allow us to press on with our commitment to get the best deal for Staffordshire.

It is important to remember that the decisions on HS2 rest with Parliament and not this council.

That motion approved in December 2015 said this council:

(i) Continues to express concerns on the impact of HS2 on Staffordshire, especially given the acceleration of the phase to Crewe.

(ii) Welcomes the efforts the council has made to mitigate the impact of Phase One on the county and its communities and our commitment to build on the experience gained to reduce the impact of Phase 2a

(iii) Continues to ensure Staffordshire's voice is heard in terms of mitigation on the environment and meaningful compensation for affected residents.

(iv) Engages with Government, HS2 Ltd, district and borough councils and neighbouring authorities to gain maximum economic benefits from HS2, building on the partnership of Midlands Connect to deliver better connectivity for all Staffordshire.

As a county council, we remain focused on getting the best deal for Staffordshire in terms of mitigation, compensation for residents, economic benefits and improved connectivity if Parliament makes the decision to proceed with HS2.

We petitioned against Phase 1 and successfully achieved the lowering of 8km of the line in Lichfield. We also secured an assurance that the Handsacre link, connecting HS2 to the West Coast Main Line, would be constructed. This will provide the infrastructure needed for Staffordshire to receive HS2 services and gain economic benefit as a result.

We also petitioned against Phase 2a and gained several assurances which amongst other matters will see improvements to the local highway network which will have long term benefits for the communities along the line of the route.

As Parliament has decided to date that the HS2 project will go ahead, we have a duty to make sure that Staffordshire shares in any economic benefits and improved connectivity that we can derive from the scheme.

Supplementary Question

Mr Atkins has failed to answer the last part of my question which was “what discussions took place with fellow councillors before you co-signed this letter?”

Reply

As I have set out in my reply, this is a very complex issue. It is a complex situation with different positions throughout the County. I have appeared at the Select Committee to try to get the best deal for Staffordshire but, as I have previously said, we don't make the decisions on HS2, Parliament does and they need to get on with it as planned. I have always made it known, wherever I go, that the County Council does not support the scheme.

Alan Dudson asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

My Group was not in favour of setting up All Party Working Groups but we accept the majority decision by Council and, in the spirit of genuine cross-party working, my name was put forward to the Leader as a nomination for one of the four Chairs. Why have I and the Opposition Leader not received the courtesy of a response from Cllr Atkins?

Reply

As discussed at December's County Council, All Party Working Groups will continue to be tasked with providing a forum to drive the debate and overview around the medium to long term issues that affect the communities of Staffordshire and how public services, working with the private and voluntary and community sector, can plan for and address these issues.

As agreed with Council in December there are 2 All Party Working Groups, taking an even more rigorous focus on developing new ideas and solutions to key challenges. Also as agreed the investigations will be Jointly Chaired by the All Party Working Group Cabinet Support Members and driven by community and digital first thinking. These will draw further on community perspectives and the Elected Member's important role to help shape policy and reform of public services.

This is absolutely in the spirit of all party working and I'm sure that all County Councillors will be aware that an open invitation has been issued to each and every Elected Member to be part of this. It's important that we build on this together and to help develop and strengthen the 'thought leadership' we have right across the Council - and for Staffordshire as a place.

The All Party Working Groups are Jointly Chaired by Mr Alastair Little and Mr Mike Davies; and Mr Simon Tagg and Mr Keith Flunder.

It's clear for me that harnessing the vast skills, experience and insight across Elected Members is crucial to help the Council to think differently and tackle the key issues the Council and our communities face – and I welcome Mr Dudson and wider Members to be part of the All Party Working Groups.

The appointment of APWG Chairs is a matter for the County Council, not the Leader of the Council.

Supplementary Question

Can the Leader tell me at what meeting of the Council the four named people were appointed?

Reply

I would envisage that it would have been at the Annual Council meeting in May last year or the year before.

Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

How does the County Council monitor the performance of Amey and ensure it meets acceptable deadlines for repairs which impact on the safety of residents?

Reply

Amey's operational performance is monitored through the governance arrangements of the Infrastructure+ contract.

A suite of operational performance measures is used to regularly report performance to the Operating Commissioning Board (OCB) and the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB). These include: Defect response times; and Quality.

Performance levels are determined and agreed against historic performance and industry benchmarking. Amey's performance, and the Infrastructure+ contract in general, compares very favourably across the sector.

However, without enough money do everything we'd like as quickly as we'd like repairs are prioritised in accordance with the level of risk they present to the public.

Supplementary Question

What is planned to try to explain to residents how the contract with Amey works so that they feel that the contract is value for money?

Reply

Communications with our residents is very important and we have a customer outcome group which I chair and we are looking constantly at how we communicate on the day to day operational matters. Mr Deaville deals with the contract side with Amey and so I will take it up with him to see whether we have enough communications going out about the actual contract.

Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

How have the cuts in public health spending impacted on the ability of the County Council to deliver its health promotion agenda?

Reply

Despite cuts to the Public Health Ring Fenced Grant, the County Council continues to provide an active range of quality health improvement programmes. The change process has been challenging but we are confident that we are delivering good value to citizens and some examples of good practice.

Between 2016/17 and 2019/20, the grant fell by £3m (7.5%), from £40.m to £37.2m.

Drugs and alcohol

The £4.5m savings made from the drug/alcohol contracts has primarily been achieved by redesigning the pathway to focus on core addiction services, while drawing on support from other agencies working with the same client group.

0-19 children's services

We have saved £4.5 million from the Families Health and Wellbeing Service (Health Visiting and School Nursing). This has been achieved through close working with MPFT to develop a new model that seeks to balance public health promotion work and working with families with more complex needs.

Sexual health

The £2.5m saved from sexual health services has been achieved by consolidating a number of contracts with a range of service providers. The economies of scale this process provided has enabled us to continue to provide treatment to all residents presenting to services.

Healthy communities

Around £3.5m has been saved from previous healthy lifestyles contracts. By designing a more targeted approach that focuses on the people who need it most, we have been able to manage the reduction in funding without a similar impact on outcomes.

Wider support

In addition to the core health improvement programme, we also developing a range of new approaches to improving outcomes, including: Supportive communities programme; Partnership opportunities; digital/IAG/ communications.

Supplementary Question

Within my area I am very aware that although the NHS Health Check is universal for people over 40, those people who have issues around smoking cessation, weight management, fall prevention, that is restricted to a very small area because of the cutbacks in Public Health finance. The Government seems to be shooting itself in the foot by restricting the money available to local authorities to promote better health outcomes?

Reply

As far as NHS Health Checks are concerned, we have had a good look at this and have discovered that those people who would most benefit from the Health Checks do not tend to take them up and that those who would tend to benefit less do take them up. We have therefore decided to focus on those areas that have the highest deprivation index and to target people in those areas. You are correct in that the amount of money which is being allocated to public health has been reduced in the last few years but what we do plays into the prevention agenda. I would however like to see more security around the funding for Public Health.

Ron Clarke asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Will the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport review the continuous problem we have in Burton with our drainage system? I very much appreciate that 37 drains are in the process to be replaced. The Burton town centre was reported in the media

last week because of shoppers getting soaked due to the drains being unable to take the rainwater. This is not good for businesses and the people in the town centre.

Reply

There are more than 3,500 highway gullies in Burton Town Centre and nearly 10,000 across the wider area of Burton. Many are of an old Victorian design and known to be prone to blockage.

Over the last four or five years the highways team have been using GPS technology to capture the individual locations of all these gullies, together with silt levels and any other records of reported problems, to help inform a new 'intelligent' routine cleansing programme as well as future priorities for replacement or repair.

My thanks must also go to all those local Members who have engaged with this process and by engaging with their local communities have helped to minimise the number of parked cars and other obstructions so that planned gully cleansing can be carried out most effectively.

In the current financial year, with input from the local members, we've also embarked on an initial programme to replace 37 of the most problematic known gullies in the area.

A similar commitment is provisionally programmed for 2019/20. Added to which local Members will also have available to them a further £20k to spend on any local highway maintenance priorities of their individual or collective choosing.

Supplementary Question

With regard to the second paragraph of your response, would the Cabinet Member give me a list of these drains which have already been identified as this would enable me to make decisions on where to prioritise part of my £20,000 to spend on highway improvements in my Division?

Reply

Members already have access to the information. I will ask your local Highways Manager to assist you to access the information.

Syed Hussain asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Why has the Anglesey area in East Staffordshire got the highest number of children living in poverty in Staffordshire; what are the causes of this poverty; and will the Cabinet Member consider developing an action plan or pilot programme to alleviate children poverty in this deprived area that I represent?

Reply

The report developed by End Child Poverty <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/> suggests that levels of poverty are higher in some wards such as Anglesey. This report has been developed using overall household income using tax credit data as the main source. This is not the way we traditionally would have looked at child poverty. Previous estimates of child poverty have focused on out of work benefits only.

The changes in recording of child poverty presented in this report does affect the number of children identified in Anglesey who are living in poverty. This is because data relating to household income are included and not just those out of work, therefore people who are unemployed and in low paid jobs for example would appear in this new data.

There are multiple causes of poverty e.g. poor education attainment, low level of skills, levels of aspiration, actual cost of living in an area (e.g. housing, access to basic amenities, etc) versus income/benefits.

Across the county we are implementing a Place Based Approach (PBA). This is “A collaborative approach using the right resources (multi-skilled teams, universal services, voluntary sector, communities etc.) at the right time to improve outcomes for children, young people, families, vulnerable people and communities in an identified area”.

The approach focusses on addressing shared demand and need which is intelligence led and aims to tackle at the earliest stage the root causes of the issues which families and children were dealing with. It was recognised that this would improve outcomes and reduce the requirement for intervention by statutory services. There was a stated partnership ambition to extend the PBA to vulnerable adults once progress was being evidenced with children and families.

Research has shown that children failing to meet their Good Level of Development before they start school never catch up, leading to poor educational attainment and higher than average unemployment. Workless families struggle to provide the basic components to raise a child leading to children living in poverty.

The Place Based Approach work is being led locally by the East Staffordshire Local Strategic Partnership seeks to improve the uptake of funded childcare for 2-year olds and reduce the number of workless households. An innovative approach has been developed for a consortia of local organisations based in Burton to provide the community intelligence to drive these initiatives. The Anglesey ward will benefit from this work. The objective of this work will include a range of partnership and engagement but there will be a focus on improving aspirations of children and families for example:

- empowering families and raising aspiration
- support with developing skills
- encouraging healthy lifestyles and community safety
- link individuals into training, education and employment

- community involvement, responsibility and a sense of ownership
- reducing and managing the levels of debt that families are faced with

We are also continuing with our efforts to create the right conditions for economic growth across the whole of Staffordshire to produce more, better paid jobs for residents whilst improving education and skills provision in our schools, colleges and universities so that more people gain the training and qualifications they need to succeed. Since 2010, 43,000 additional jobs have been created in Staffordshire including 5,000 within East Staffordshire. Our resident's wages have also increased by around £57 per week, with the average £551 earned by a resident of Staffordshire working full-time exceeding the West Midlands Region average of £537. Skills levels also continue to improve with over 16,000 more Staffordshire residents now holding a degree or above level qualification compared with 2010. Our Economic Growth Programme continues to deliver homes and jobs across the county, including supporting the delivery of the Branston Locks development in Burton upon Trent which will see 400 acres of land immediately west of the A38 developed with 2,500 new homes, a range of community facilities and a 50-acre employment site.

Supplementary Question

Can I ask the Cabinet Member to support me to become part of the provision of community intelligence to ensure the end of child poverty in Anglesey?

Reply

In East Staffordshire, as there are in every other district/borough in Staffordshire, there is a Families Improvement Board made up of representatives from lots of partner organisations. That Board has a list of outcomes for children and families that they wish to improve. I will speak to you outside of this meeting as to how you can get involved in the working of the Board.

Kyle Robinson asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Whilst Staffordshire County Council is making millions of pounds of cuts to front line services, does the Leader of the Council think it is acceptable to use taxpayers' money to send councillors and staff to the MIPIM conference held in the South of France?

Reply

The total cost of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent delegation attending MIPIM in Cannes is estimated to be in the region of £130k in 2019. Staffordshire County Council's financial contribution to this is £12,500 (matched by Stoke-on-Trent City Council). The remaining £105k is raised through sponsorship and in 2019 we have secured support from companies including St Modwen, Keele University, Staffordshire University, Wardell Armstrong, Knights plc, Harworth Group and ENGIE. For the County Council's contribution of £12,500 we gain access to the Midlands

Engine pavilion, which is a £1 million plus project, with the majority of this investment also coming from the private sector. Every destination in the West and East Midlands will be represented at MIPIM.

It should also be noted that of the 6 local authority representatives attending MIPIM (4 from Staffordshire and 3 from Stoke-on-Trent) the team have secured 6 of these passes free of charge from organisers Reed Midem plus an additional free pass for David Frost, Chair of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP. The cost otherwise through the Midlands partnership is £595 per pass.

MIPIM is attended by over 24,000 delegates from over 100 countries and is one of the largest events for attracting investment and raising the profile of our area on an international stage. There will be a particular focus for Staffordshire on skills through our partnerships with both Keele and Staffordshire Universities as well as promotion of the County as a great place to visit. This will include serving food and drink produced in Staffordshire at our events.

Our attendance at MIPIM is particularly significant this year in light of the country's proposed exit from the European Union and it provides us with a timely opportunity to showcase our area as being open for business in terms of both trade and investment. Having a well-balanced and mixed economy will be important for Staffordshire in being able to address economic shocks and maintain the resilience of the local economy and MIPIM can provide an important platform to demonstrate how we will achieve this and engage with new potential partners. Staffordshire has already seen the percentage change in private sector employment (18.4%) increase more than the West Midlands and Great Britain (16.5%). We need to be highlighting this along with the increase in GVA in Staffordshire, which is up 17.0% between 2011 and 2016 from £14.3 billion to £16.7 billion. This stands the area in good stead in a competitive market and MIPIM is the ideal place to showcase this with significant opportunities available for a very modest financial contribution.

Please see our recent press release -<http://www.makeitstokestaffs.co.uk/promoting-stoke-on-trent-staffordshire-on-the-world-stage-at-mipim/>

Supplementary Question

Can I ask the Leader to make sure that, in the future, a report is brought to the Council to show what investments Staffordshire County Council has attracted as a direct consequence of sending a delegation of people to MIPIM?

Reply

These reports are available on the Local Enterprise Partnership website.

Kyle Robinson asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

The decision to scrap the 'Your Staffordshire Card' scheme will have an adverse effect on the ability of Staffordshire's young people to access education, training and work. It will also put more pressure on hardworking parents and carers to plan extra journeys, putting more cars on Staffordshire's busy roads. Can the Leader give details of conversations the council has had with private bus operators to provide schemes with similar benefits to the 'Your Staffordshire Card'?

Reply

The Your Staffordshire Card (YSC) is a non-statutory service that was introduced by the current administration some 7 years ago to encourage use of public transport and to demonstrate to bus operators the advantages of similar products.

The number of YSC holders and the number of bus journeys undertaken by pass holders has seen a significant decline in recent years, and this decline in usage is possibly due to the growth of commercial bus fare products from some operators that offer better value for money, and it is right that non-statutory services such as the YSC are kept under review to ensure that they offer value for money for the Staffordshire tax payer.

I am aware that on some routes, it is likely that the existence of the Your Staffordshire Card has influenced and impacted on available commercial products across Staffordshire. This has been raised with all the main bus operators in Staffordshire and they have agreed to review their available commercial products prior to the YSC scheme ending this summer.

Supplementary Question

I am concerned that the service across Staffordshire will not be universal as some operators will offer products and others will not. Can the Leader assure me that he will work extra hard to make sure that the bus operators in all areas, across Staffordshire, try and offer a service wherever the young people are?

Reply

Yes, we will keep talking to the bus companies.

54. Petitions

(a) Highway Safety in the Talke area

Mr Robinson presented a petition from residents of St Martins Road, Talke Pitts in relation to highway safety issues, including rat running and excessive vehicle speeds, and calling on the County Council to address their concerns.

(b) Request for a Pedestrian Crossing and/or Traffic Calming Measures on Bridge Street, Uttoxeter at the Junction with Chamberlin Close.

Mr Brookes presented a petition on behalf of residents of Chamberlin Close, Uttoxeter for a Pedestrian Crossing and/or Traffic Calming Measures on Bridge Street, Uttoxeter at the Junction with Chamberlin Close.

Chairman