

Date: 13 December 2017

Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday, 14th December, 2017

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, 14th December, 2017 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

10. **Questions**

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

- a) Question 1 from Maureen Compton (Pages 1 - 2)
- b) Question 2 from Jill Hood (Pages 3 - 4)
- c) Question 3 from Charlotte Atkins (Pages 5 - 6)
- d) Question 4 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 7 - 8)
- e) Question 5 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 9 - 10)
- f) Question 6 from Alastair Little (Pages 11 - 12)

John Henderson
Chief Executive

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QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2017

**Question to Mark Winnington
Cabinet Member for Economic Growth**

By Maureen Compton

Question

Given General Electric's statement on Thursday, 7th December that they are restructuring their business and that many jobs at Stafford could be lost, what is Staffordshire County Council going to do to assist those who face redundancy at Christmas?

Reply

The County Council, along with partners, will be doing all we can in the coming weeks to support those affected by the GE announcement. We are already working with Stafford Borough Council, DWP Jobcentre Plus and a number of other key agencies to form a 'Task Force' to ensure appropriate timely support is put in place. The Borough Council has agreed to lead the 'Task Force' and the first meeting is scheduled for the 16 January 2018.

DWP Jobcentre Plus has a rapid response service and this will be engaged once GE has submitted the HR1 redundancy notification to DWP. GE has entered a 90 day consultation on the proposed redundancies.

There is a specialist response to redundancy programme commissioned by the LEP and funded via ESF and this service plus others such as the National Careers Service will be used alongside the DWP's rapid response service. These services will help to redeploy, retrain, upskill and signpost people to new employment opportunities ensuring support is available to the individuals affected and their families.

These services will address the effects of job losses on individuals and on the local community by helping people move rapidly into alternative employment without the need to claim welfare benefits.

The support is managed by Jobcentre Plus and delivered with the aforementioned partners. Decisions are made locally about the appropriate support drawing together local partners to deliver support tailored to the needs of the situation.

Rapid Response Service support is available through the notice period and for 13 weeks after, irrespective of whether a claim for benefit is made.

The support offered by Jobcentre Plus and partners can include:

- connecting people to jobs in the labour market;
- matching people facing redundancy to known job vacancies;
- helping people to construct a CV;
- helping people to enhance their job search skills;
- providing general information about benefits;
- helping people to identify their transferable skills and training needs;
- providing job-focused training to help people develop additional vocational skills;
- helping to meet discretionary costs e.g. travel to work expenses; and for large redundancies potential for on-site services to promote jobs or to take benefit claims.

Getting the right information in a timely manner is essential and the above services will provide the appropriate support to individuals by signposting them to sources of help, support and advice. This might be how to find a new job, improve skills, find out about benefits that individuals may be entitled to, to ease money worries, or coping with the emotional pressure of being made redundant.

QUESTION 2

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2017

**Question to Mark Winnington
Cabinet Member for Economic Growth**

By Jill Hood

Question

Why is it that the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth seeks to achieve mitigation for the economically detrimental Stone site, rather than seeking to gain either Alternative Provision or Petitioning for the far superior Aldersey's Rough option, especially as the Stone site will ultimately lead to Stafford station losing its HS2 services and status as an HS2 hub? Page 31 lists six bullet points as key petitioning points, why isn't there a seventh which would state that "Proper assessment of the potential of the Railhead for HS2 ph2a being at Aldersey's Rough, instead of Stone, thereby avoiding the need to bypass Stafford with HS2 Services, avoiding the log-jam of traffic on the A34 and the M6 at J15 associated with a Railhead at Stone, and having the potential to develop effectively the rail services for North Staffordshire safeguarding the interests of Staffordshire's residents?"

Reply

The Authority is aware of the suggestion by some residents to relocate the proposed HS2 maintenance depot at Stone to Aldersey's Rough. The Authority is also aware that there are opposing views to this proposal from residents living near to Aldersey's Rough.

The Authority does not agree that HS2 Ltd proposals for the location of the maintenance depot will mean that the HS2 passenger services for Stafford Station will be lost once it is constructed. Indeed we are working closely with the Government to ensure that the benefits of HS2 trains stopping in Stafford are maximised both in the short and long term.

The authority will take residents views into account when preparing its petitioning document which will be submitted in early 2018. It should also be noted that the Authority has recently held a community meeting where the petitioning process was explained in detail allowing interested stakeholders to effectively petition the current HS2 Ltd proposals for Phase 2a.

QUESTION 3

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2017

Question to Mark Sutton
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

What is the procedure the County Council follows in allocating Section 106 monies? How is the local member involved?

Reply

Section 106 (or S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows for private **agreements to be made between local authorities and developers** to make acceptable development that would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. The legislation allows only local authorities to be the recipients of any financial contributions and other government departments (e.g. Highways England) cannot be party to a S106 agreement.

Legislation sets out the **three strict tests that all contributions** (as set out in a planning obligation) **must comply** with, i.e., they must be:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

All S106s must be agreed by the developer and confirmed by the planning authority that they meet the relevant tests for them to be legitimate. As a result where SCC is party to an agreement **we are bound by the terms to spend the contributions** on what is set out in said agreement **to mitigate the impact of the development**. If the monies are not spent on that scheme then they legally have to be returned to the developer. Often the amount and timing of the contributions are agreed only at the end of protracted negotiations with developers and landowners.

The second test means that a mitigation project, e.g. a new or expanded school, new bus service, pre-identified highway projects, toucan crossings, etc. must have a direct and identifiable link to the development under consideration. Historically, **contributions could be secured towards additional infrastructure within the vicinity** of the development. More recently however, the Community Infrastructure Levy (or CIL) Regulations have tightened considerably the use of S106, which means that **obligations must now be more precise and set out specific infrastructure projects**.

Where the district or borough council has **an up to date local plan, the planning of infrastructure can be less complex**. For example, a [list of potential new schools](#) on large local plan housing sites is published on-line. Nevertheless, even where there is an agreed plan, **unexpected and speculative applications from developers can have a major impact on infrastructure planning**. Such applications provide officers with a matter of days to identify an appropriate project to have any possibility of securing a contribution from developers: in such instances there is little scope for wider discussion.

S106 agreements also set out the **trigger points for when contributions must be paid**. Phased payments assist with viability but mean that the county council often has to wait for the total amount to be paid. It may be perceived that projects are not being delivered even after contributions have been agreed with developers. In some respects this is down to the delay between developers gaining planning consent, the actual commencement of development and when the triggers points are met. Often a project would not start until sufficient funding has been received from developers (contributions from up to five developments can be pooled towards a specific project). Occasionally, a specific project has not been identified for an older style S106 agreement, e.g. where more than one school is capable of expansion in the *vicinity* of the development).

With respect to local members, Development Control officers regularly meet with the Divisional Highway Managers to discuss the highway impacts of planned and speculative development. This opportunity allows any potential projects held on the Members Divisional Highway Programme to be picked up and funded by a contribution from the development but only if it meets the three tests as defined in current legislation. Over recent years, officers from the School Organisation Team have attended meetings with members in most districts and boroughs to discuss school place planning, as well as responding to individual member inquiries. Over the coming year, working with the Community Partnership Officers and Strategic Delivery Managers, officers will use the schedule of Local Priority Meetings to provide members with more regular, scheduled briefings.

QUESTION 4

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2017

**Question to Philip Atkins OBE
Leader of the Council**

By Kyle Robinson

Question

The town of Kidsgrove deserves a modern Sports Centre fit for the 21st Century. Can the Leader please tell me whether Staffordshire County Council's position has changed on funding a new Sports Centre in Kidsgrove or whether the position is likely to change in the future?

Reply

Our position on this issue has not changed since my response to a similar question at Full Council in May. We are still committed to working alongside Newcastle Borough Council as they develop their plans for leisure in the town. However, responsibility for and funding of the provision of leisure facilities rests with the Borough Council. To date there have been 2 expressions of interest in taking on the former Kidsgrove Leisure Centre as a Community Asset, and those interested community groups have until March 2018 to provide a business case before any decision can be made.

QUESTION 5

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2017

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Can the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport please tell me why grit bins across my Division have not been replenished before the recent severe weather set in?

Reply

Staffordshire has in the region of 4,000 salt bins and piles distributed across its 6,000kms of highway network. These are grouped in to 168 refill schedules for the purposes of efficiency.

Generally speaking the restocking exercise begins at the start of the winter season in late October, as highway crews switch from the main road repair season to winter activities. Restocking then carries on throughout late October to early December in advance of the more severe winter weather generally experienced between December and February.

It's an onerous process and the time taken to complete this exercise can vary based on the availability of resource and the demand placed on the teams to deal with other highway related activities.

The Countywide restocking exercise was 95% complete prior to the recent snow event. Unfortunately the schedules covering Kidsgrove, Talke, Mow Cop and Newcastle had not been completed and are scheduled for completion during the week commencing 11 December. This work remains on track for completion by the end of the week.

More generally further refills are then carried out throughout the season as required, dependent on local usage. The salt should only be on adopted highway, but during periods of severe weather the stocks in these bins and piles can diminish very rapidly. The first refills of this winter season are taking place currently following the recent period of high demand.

QUESTION 6

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2017

**Question to Mark Winnington
Cabinet Member for Economic Growth**

By Alastair Little

Question

With the recent figures for claimants for job seekers allowance and Universal credit in the county again being welcome news, could the portfolio holder comment on some initiatives which encourage business to locate or retain high paid, high skill jobs to the county?

Reply

Creating the right conditions for Staffordshire's economy to grow and create more better paid jobs remains a key priority for the County Council. Members will be aware of the County Council's support to the "Make It" Investment Service which has a target of creating and safeguarding 2,000 jobs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in 2017/18. The service specifically targets key sectors where there are higher value jobs, such as Automotive, Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Digital and Energy.

We're working on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership to help meet their ambitions of creating 50,000 jobs and growing the economy by 50% over the 10 years. Through the success of our "Growth Deal" projects we have recently secured 800 jobs at the Bericote Four Ashes site in South Staffordshire with automotive supplier, Gestamp relocating their production to a purpose built 450,000 square foot facility, following our intervention.

By investing in sites such as Innovation Centre 5 at Keele University Science and Innovation Park, Redhill Business Park in Stafford, and the highly successful i54 South Staffordshire we are creating the right conditions for further high value and skilled employment in Staffordshire.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Growth Hub was established in 2014 with the purpose of helping to unlock private sector growth in terms of job creation, sustainable new businesses and new product/market development. It does this by extending the reach and impact of national initiatives and funds, and by a referral system which enhances the effectiveness of the business support infrastructure across Staffordshire. The Growth Hub has assisted more than 4,300 businesses since 2014, and develops co-operation among national and local providers and encourages the cross-referral of clients.

Through activity funded by the European Social Fund we are also delivering a high level skills programme with a value of almost £10 million which will reach benefit 7,600 people.

