

Date: 14th February 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday, 15th February, 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, 15th February, 2018 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

12. **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 David Brookes (Pages 3 - 4)
- c) Question 3 from Syed Hussain (Pages 5 - 6)
- d) Question 4 from Susan Woodward (Pages 7 - 8)
- e) Question 5 from Charlotte Atkins (Pages 9 - 10)
- f) Question 6 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 11 - 12)
- g) Question 7 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 13 - 14)
- h) Question 8 from Ron Clarke (Pages 15 - 16)
- i) Question 9 from Charlotte Atkins (Pages 17 - 18)

John Henderson
Chief Executive

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QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY

**Question to Philip White
Cabinet Support Member for Learning and Employability**

By Maureen Compton

Question

Given the claim that more than half of the biggest multi-academy trusts (MATs) have issued warnings about funding deficits, is the County Council aware of any academy trusts which are in financial difficulties in Staffordshire?

Reply

MATs are accountable to the Secretary of State for Education through the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The RSC, Christine Quinn and her office, work closely with ESFA who would highlight any major concerns to her.

The RSC would make the county council aware of any such concern so we could work together on local issues.

The county council and RSC hold regular strategic meetings and I can confirm that, to date, we have not been made aware of any such concern for an academy trust in the county.

QUESTION 2

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

**Question to Mark Deaville
Cabinet Member for Commercial**

By David Brookes

Question

Would the Cabinet Member give the County Council an update on Entrust and our share partner Capita?

Reply

Capita has recently appointed a new chief executive who has reviewed the business and said that the company is currently spread too thin and needs to consolidate and take a longer term view of the business.

There was a recent announcement to the City that no dividend payments will be made this year, there is a pension fund deficit payment required and there will be a share issue later in the year to raise more capital.

This had an immediate effect with investors and hence a reduction in share price by around 40%.

Entrust's view was that this is a reaction from the market based on these short term issues and tied up with nervousness in the outsourcing market following the Carillion collapse.

In the longer term Capita's current position on Entrust is that this should be a "beacon" company/service for Capita and something to promote and replicate.

So my summary at the moment is that Entrust will be part of Capita's long term business plan and there isn't any immediate risk to Entrust.

I will continue to monitor the situation closely and continue to have close dialogue with the company.

QUESTION 3

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

**Question to Mark Deaville
Cabinet Member for Commercial**

By Syed Hussain

Question

Which County Council's properties are ear marked for sale in Burton upon Trent in the next three financial years?

Reply

At the present time the following properties are identified for sale. However our holdings are periodically reviewed as services and demand changes and as we look to make our use of properties and ways of working more efficient.

Tutbury Rd – Housing Development Site
Former Burton Day Services Shobnall Street – Sale agreed
Burton Area Offices St Pauls Square
Short Street Accommodation – Sale agreed.

QUESTION 4

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

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

By Susan Woodward

Question

In the light of last week's report by the cross-Party working group on sexism in Parliament, can the Leader tell me please what steps he is taking to address sexism at Staffordshire County Council?

Reply

The big issue in Parliament was that people who were subjected to inappropriate behaviour didn't have good way to bring this to light.

Staffordshire County Council is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to operating with integrity. All colleagues are expected to operate on this basis and adhere to our policies, procedures and code of conduct.

In respect of changes to policies and services, Equality Impact Assessments are prepared as a guide to help us make sure that we are having the intended effect and are not inadvertently having a negative impact on any particular groups.

I believe that it is important that our staff have the facility to raise any grievances relating to their employment and that these are dealt with promptly, fairly, consistently and without delay. Our grievance policy and procedure gives colleagues the opportunity to raise a grievance either informally or formally.

For elected members the same expectations of acting with integrity apply. In addition to informal mechanisms for resolution of issues any member of staff, member or member of the public may raise concerns with the monitoring officer under our standards regime. The issues are then investigated and considered not just by the monitoring officer but also by independent persons appointed to ensure impartiality. There are also avenues available within the Conservative Party to investigate issues and take action on and I hope there are with other Political Parties.

QUESTION 5

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

**Question to Mark Sutton
Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability**

By

Question

When will the S106 monies allocated to Westwood First School Leek be transferred to the school?

Reply

The Section 106 monies negotiated by the county council have been allocated for an agreed project at Westwood First School. A legal agreement is now being drawn up to enable the monies to be transferred to the school. It is anticipated that this would be concluded week beginning 26 February 2018.

QUESTION 6

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Does the Cabinet Support Member agree with me that utility companies should always ensure our pavements and highways are left in a high quality condition after they've carried out work? Therefore will the Cabinet Support Member ensure highways officers urgently inspect the diabolical state Virgin Media has left pavements in on Lynn Avenue, Milton Crescent, Barrie Gardens and Browning Grove in my division? Will the Cabinet Support Member also assure local residents and me that the County Council will immediately pursue this matter with Virgin Media and ensure they rectify the mess they've left?

Reply

Highway officers are working closely with Virgin Media at Talke. Virgin Media have issues nationally with their delivery of Project Lighting, the delivering of superfast fibre direct to the premise. All Utility Companies have to comply with the specification attached to New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991. Due to the level of non-compliance with the specification for the reinstatement of the highway within Staffordshire, Virgin Media have entered into a self-imposed improvement plan and meet monthly with the County Council to manage progress. The pavements identified in Talke will be discussed further at the next meeting with Virgin Media on Friday 16th February 2018. Specific localised issues can be raised directly to the Cabinet Member and do not need to wait for County Council Meetings.

QUESTION 7

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Does the Cabinet Support Member agree with me that with ever dwindling resources it is counterintuitive for this authority to neglect to repair minor road defects, leaving them to deteriorate into major structural defects on the carriageway, even after they've been reported by the local County Councillor and residents? Will the Cabinet Support Member take urgent action to ensure the sinking and cracked road surface on High Street in Talke Pits receives the urgent repair work it desperately needs before a passing vehicle is completely bottomed out?

Reply

We recognise that good roads are important not just for getting people from A to B, but for attracting investment and growing a strong economy and that's why we invested an extra £5m last year – and will be doing the same once again this year.

This has helped us tackle almost 35,000 potholes, compared to 20,000 in a typical year as well as increase the amount of high-value long-term preventative maintenance treatments that help to reduce the number of potholes from appearing in the first place.

However, the number of potholes always increases over the winter period. We ask residents to report defects through the MyStaffs App or County Council website and to drive carefully during this period. There will never be enough money to do everything, but our highways team are currently pulling together next year's maintenance programme using Cabinet approved criteria for prioritisation to bring about the biggest benefit for road users.

Once again I would encourage any local members to utilise the MyStaffs App or County Council website to report and chase up any repairs. I would also encourage you to approach me directly if you have any urgent concerns rather than waiting for the council meetings.

QUESTION 8

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

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

By Ron Clarke

Question

Four years ago Councillors were informed that a two year survey would be undertaken in the whole of Staffordshire to examine all drains. The purpose of the exercise was to identify those drains which needed to be cleared more often than others and to record those drains which were be in need of repair.

Has the County Council drawn up a chart and a schedule of all the drains in Staffordshire, this would save unnecessary cleaning of some drains and give more time for others to be cleaned on a regular basis?

Reply

You will be pleased to hear that we have now captured nearly all the information on the 185,000 gullies and drains in Staffordshire. As you can imagine this has been no small feat. We actually took an update to this to the Prosperous Select Committee on 14th November 2017.

We now have a database that holds the relevant information for each gully and is allowing us to begin a new risk based approach based on: the category of road, silt levels, flood risk, current condition (e.g. what capacity is it running at) etc. and will lead to a mixed approach to emptying frequencies.

Depending on what we find/have found on the condition of the gullies some may require further investigation before prioritising work. The cleansing of gullies will now happen once a year, once every 2 years and once every 3 years depending on the data we have collected and the factors detailed above.

These schedules are currently being loaded on the member's portal and will be available by the end of March 2018 at the latest.

QUESTION 9

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

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

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

What lessons has Staffordshire County Council drawn from the so called Preston model which aims to ensure that a greater share of the money the Council spends stays in the local economy?

Reply

The Deputy Opposition Leader of the Labour and Co-operative Party raises an interesting question in terms of the role of the UK and Staffordshire economy in a post-Brexit future. It is becoming increasingly clear from the referendum that we need inclusive growth with an economy that works for all.

The Staffordshire economy benefits from local, regional, national and global trade, and is part of the defining nature of our great shire market towns across the County.

I understand that in Lancashire, Preston's brand new Market Hall opened for the first time last week (February 12), underneath the recently renovated Victorian canopy, and the community have a lot to be proud of.

In Staffordshire however, we are forging our own way to support our communities; with a tailored economic strategy to build on our place-based industrial strengths. This is led by the business community with globally competitive advanced manufacturing and agri-tech sectors such as JCB in the North of the County, and the automotive sector illustrated by the JLR Engine Plant based at i54 South Staffordshire.

Nationally, Central Government are playing their part through the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, with the Secretary of State Greg Clark, supporting the Industrial Strategy, with the Automotive Sector Deal announced early this year (10 January 2018). The Ceramics Sector is also looking to take forward an ambitious Deal with the support of local partners.

Regionally, Staffordshire County Council are supporting agglomeration economics through Midlands Engine and forging new transport and connectivity links east to west through the Midlands Connects. Likewise, HS2 services at Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe are set to reinforce Staffordshire as the Connected County with improved North to South links to Manchester, Birmingham, and London.

Locally, we are seeking to reinvigorate our changing High Streets through our bespoke District Deals and Town Deals, using a collaborative approach to working through complex regeneration proposals. In particular we are supporting anchor institutions to help support the 'Staffordshire Pound' such as the approach we have taken to the Keele Deal. Neighbourhood Planning is another way that we are supporting our more rural and parished areas so they are better prepared to secure infrastructure and shape development.

The Growth Hub services provided through collaboration between the Local Enterprise Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce and Local Authorities are continuing to provide our preferred delivery model in which entrepreneurs can receive tailored support to establish or grow their own business. The Growth Hub will often refer to local guilds or subscription based services, such as the Staffordshire Business & Environment Network and Chamber of Commerce 'Finest' network for professional services.

We as Staffordshire County Council Administration takes a commissioning approach to service design and delivery to secure the outcomes set out in our Strategic Plan. We will continue to take such a well-considered approach as we decommission and recommission services in the future as appropriate.

Without doubt the policy of this County Council of promoting prosperity for all residents which allows those who are able, to look after themselves, gives Staffordshire County Council the ability to focus its resources on the most vulnerable of our society.

To engender a policy which precludes skills, investment and intellectual input is one we could not support and is intrinsically centralist in its nature.

This administration welcomes input from responsible local, national and international sources and is proud of its position as a growth generator within the UK.