

Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday, 24th May, 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, 24th May, 2018 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

15. **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 Carolyn Trowbridge (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 Susan Woodward (Pages 7 - 8)
- e) Question 5 from Syed Hussain (Pages 9 - 10)
- f) Question 6 from Paul Northcott (Pages 11 - 12)
- g) Question 7 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 13 - 14)
- h) Question 8 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 15 - 16)

John Henderson
Chief Executive

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QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24 MAY 2018

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

By Carolyn Trowbridge

Question

Would the Cabinet Support Member for Learning and Employability give me some reassurance that, now that Stafford Borough Council's planning department are considering the proposal for 1500 houses, the new primary school for Burleyfields, scheduled for phase 2 of the development, will be open in time for the extra children this development will bring?

Reply

The County Council continues to work closely with Stafford Borough Council to support delivery of the [adopted Plan for Stafford Borough](#).

One of three Strategic Development Location (SDL) in the town, the "West of Stafford" site is identified in Policy Stafford 3 (see pages 49 and 50 of the Plan).

Staffordshire's School Organisation Team are responsible for delivering the county council's statutory duty to secure sufficient school places and have identified the key requirements from the location, which includes:

- a. "xviii. A new primary school will be provided, and financial contributions to support additional capacity with new provision at existing secondary schools" (see page 50 of the adopted Plan).

The master plan for the SDL has been developed jointly with developers and land owners and Burleyfields is part of the SDL, promoted by [Taylor Wimpey](#).

A new "2-FE" primary free school would eventually provide for up to 420 pupils, most likely opening in the mid-2020's.

Already there is a sealed Section 106 agreement in place that will contribute to the cost of the new school and, in time, further S106 agreements will be made for provision of the school site and additional education contributions.

The new primary school is shown on the list of potentially [25 new free schools across the county](#) to accommodate additional children as a result of new housing development.

QUESTION 2

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

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

By Jill Hood

Question

Which elements of the proposed agreement between the County Council and HS2 Ltd, and how much of the £10 million that has been accepted by the council, are specifically directed towards mitigating the significantly detrimental environmental and economic effects of constructing and operating the Stone Railhead?

Reply

The Council has not been offered or accepted £10 million from HS2 Ltd.

The County Council petitioned and raised a number of objections to the HS2 Phase 2a Hybrid Bill. The Staffordshire community impacted by the scheme help shape the petition points and 7 specific requests concerning the Stone Railhead were included.

The County Council has received a number of assurances and undertakings from HS2 Ltd in response to the petition but is waiting on a decision from the Select Committee regarding the extension of the tunnel between Whitmore and Madeley.

The assurances and undertakings are available to view on the HS2 Ltd website and include mitigation measures directly associated with the Stone Railhead which were in response to our petitioning points. These include:

- Ensuring that HS2 Ltd maximises the use of the facility thereby reducing road traffic across the Staffordshire road network.
- Ensuring that the slip roads to the M6 are constructed at an early stage to reduce construction traffic on Yarnfield Lane and surrounding roads.
- Minimising local disruption from operational noise by the use of appropriate noise mitigation features.
- Minimising visual impact by limiting the height of buildings on the site.
- Ensuring appropriate dust monitoring and control systems are in place.
- Minimising the footprint of the facility.

QUESTION 3

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

**Question to Alan White
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing**

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

How many hours of free face to face advice a week do social workers based in Leek obtain for their clients from Leek Citizens Advice Bureau? Should Leek CAB close, to whom would they go for such advice?

Reply

We do not collect information about referrals to Citizens Advice in a way that makes it possible to aggregate data about the number of referrals or the number of hours of support provided. Information from the social care teams indicates that countywide they refer a couple of people a week to Citizens Advice, typically if they need support with benefits/housing or to manage debt. Citizen's Advice is funded through a combination of charitable and public sector contributions, including from the District and Borough Councils. I have not been informed that the Leek branch is due to close. Advice is available from their national website.

QUESTION 4

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

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

By Susan Woodward

Question

A year ago, this Council agreed unanimously to join the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge and Staffordshire County Council is now one of the 199 local authorities which have committed to promoting mental health in our communities and in our Council. Can the Leader please outline to Members what aspects of the Challenge have been met during this past year?

Reply

The County Council signed up to the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge in November 2017. We have appointed Councillor Ann Edgeller to be our Mental Health Champion. Ann has been as a strong advocate, striving to promote the importance of mental health amongst her peers and others in the community, and supporting commissioners to deliver better outcomes for our population. During the last six months we have been developing and implementing a range of strategies and plans to improve mental health:

- We continue to work to deliver the Suicide Prevention Strategy. This includes suicide prevention awareness training for GPs and primary care staff; a pilot project in a local school to introduce mental health training for staff; and working with Network Rail and others to develop an artwork project at Tamworth Train station which has seen a high number of incidents.
- A new Children and Adolescent Mental Wellbeing strategy is under development along with an application for the County Council to be a 'trailblazer site' in response to the recently published Green Paper (*Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision, 2017*). Being a Trailblazer site will provide us with the opportunity to have designated Senior Leads for mental health in schools, create Mental Health Support Teams and reduce waiting times for support. Successful trailblazer sites will commence in 2019 and will be supported by robust evaluation.
- A new Public Mental Health Plan is in development. This will include actions to influence the environments we live in and the communities that we share, to promote positive mental and emotional wellbeing. For example working with District and Borough Councils on their Health in all Policies approach to housing, delivering models of social prescribing via our local libraries and engaging with employers across the county to raise

awareness about the importance of good mental health amongst their workforce.

- We have also developed a Mental Health Strategy for our own workforce, which includes Mental Health First Aid training across the organisation.

QUESTION 5

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

**Question to Mark Sutton
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

By Syed Hussain

Question

Does the County Council have any contingency plan to tackle holiday hunger?

Reply

I assume that you are referring to whether there are any plans to provide meals during the school holidays to those children who would normally be in receipt of free school meals. I am not aware of any plans to do so.

QUESTION 6

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

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

By Paul Northcott

Question

As an element of the mitigating arguments arising out of the petitioning process on Phase 2a can the portfolio holder give my constituents of Newcastle Rural information and assurances that, in light of the HS2 petition negotiations, the highways improvements such as the junctions of the A53 and A51 at the location of Blackbrook and the Swan with 2 Necks will be taking place in the near future before major work in the area commences?

Reply

The assurances and undertakings obtained by the Council in connection with the HS2 Phase 2a Hybrid Bill will become obligations on HS2 Ltd once the Bill receives Royal Assent.

With respect to the highway improvement at the junction of the A53 and A51 at Blackbrook mentioned above, HS2 Ltd are required to promote an 'additional provision' to ensure that they have the appropriate powers to provide the permanent highway improvement.

HS2 Ltd have indicated that, in line with works elsewhere along the route of the project, highway improvement work to facilitate construction traffic will be programmed at the commencement of main civil engineering works. It is not possible to provide a date for these works at this time.

QUESTION 7

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

The University of Chester Academy Trust is facing significant financial troubles - directly affecting pupils, parents and staff at University Academy Kidsgrove and University Primary Academy Kidsgrove. Does the Leader of the Council agree that the Regional Schools Commissioner's failure to give timely notification and information to this authority regarding this issue is a further disappointing example of the degradation of the role of this County Council and its councillors in education?

Reply

National education policy has been established for many years placing the management of schools in their own hands and moving towards more schools becoming academies.

With the increased autonomy for schools and a greater number of academies then, appropriately, the role of the local authority has changed. Recent LGA-commissioned research shows how local authorities have evolved as a champion for learners and families, a convenor of partnerships and a commissioner of services for schools.

The local authority retains key responsibilities for ensuring that every child has a school place and that the needs of vulnerable pupils are met, and for acting as champions for children and families.

Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC) are responsible for the oversight of academies and free schools and will intervene where there is underperformance or cause for concern. We had been made aware of the RSC's concerns regarding the schools' performance.

The county council has a positive but robust working relationship with the RSC and we meet regularly to discuss academies, trusts and also maintained schools. In between meetings, we are in regular contact and it is disappointing that the notification was late however fortunately, this is not indicative of the quality of our relationship with the RSC. The RSC has acknowledged this breakdown in communication, which occurred in the aftermath of the announcement, and agreed that we will discuss how procedures can be improved at our next joint meeting in June.

QUESTION 8

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 24TH MAY 2018

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

There are a number of blocked drains in my division – some of the worst on the A34 Congleton Road and Hardingswood Road. These blocked drains were reported to the council well over two years ago and they have still not received any treatment. Please can I ask the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport to intervene and urge prioritisation for these areas which have been prone to flooding in the past?

Reply

Our records show that routine gully emptying was carried out on the A34 Congleton Rd, Butt Lane in both 2016 and 2017. It is possible that some may have been missed, perhaps due to park cars, but those that were cleansed were all left running with no known problems. There are currently no customer reported problems with gullies along this section of the A34 and therefore no reactive tasks planned either. However, further routine cleansing will be carried out later this year as part of the annual cleansing programme.

With regard to Hardingswood Rd our records show one report of blocked gullies, made by Cllr. Robinson in February of this year. This location has a 3-year cleansing frequency and these blocked gullies will be attended to during 2018 as part of this programme.

Following a number of productivity improvements in the gully emptying operation the Countywide gully emptying schedules are currently being reviewed and will be updated and available on the Members Highways Portal later in the summer.

