

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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County Council - Thursday, 11th October, 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, 11th October, 2018 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

- a) Question 1 from Simon Tagg (Pages 1 - 2)
- b) Question 2 from Maureen Compton (Pages 3 - 4)
- c) Question 3 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 5 - 6)
- d) Question 4 from Kyle Robinson (Pages 7 - 8)
- e) Question 5 from Charlotte Atkins (Pages 9 - 10)

John Henderson
Chief Executive

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QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH OCTOBER 2018

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

By Simon Tagg

Question

Can the Portfolio Holder update the Council on her attempts to resolve the longstanding staffing issues that prevent the effective running of the 'Community' Highways team in Newcastle? This has led to delays in the implementation of Members' Divisional Highway Plan priorities and great frustration for the public at the lack of action on important highway issues that in this case do not result from any cuts to funding.

Reply

The Community Highways team perform a number of significant and strategic functions within the Infrastructure+ Partnership, which include: promoting the council's People Helping People initiative; enabling the transformation to digital Highways information; ensuring local insight informs the development of forward programmes of work, policies and procedures; and dealing with substantial volumes of correspondence day-to-day from a variety of stakeholders.

An extremely important element of the role is also to work with Members, inviting comment and challenge on strategic programmes of work and to facilitate the delivery of local community highway priorities through the Member's Divisional Highways Programme. There are just four local Community Infrastructure Liaison Managers across the county leading this work and every effort is made to ensure that the near 100 locally prioritised DHP initiatives are delivered, through a variety of delivery partners, within each financial year.

Our workforce is the most important asset we have for making a positive difference in the lives of Staffordshire people and they will continue to be supported with the skills, tools and confidence to do their jobs well. Plans have been developed to restructure the team, enable effective succession planning and to resolve a number of longstanding vacancies and staff absences within the team. However, progression is currently subject to resources being available within the council's support services functions.

QUESTION 2

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH OCTOBER 2018

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

By Maureen Compton

Question

Given the possibility that Jaguar/Land Rover might leave the UK and relocate to Europe after BREXIT, has the County Council had any discussions about this threat?

Reply

The Commissioner for Business & Enterprise Anthony Hodge sits on the i54 Executive Steering Group which periodically holds its meeting at the JLR Engine Manufacturing Centre (EMC) on i54, where JLR senior personnel attend a part of the meeting. The latest such meeting was held at the EMC in September 2018 with the Deputy Plant Director, and the UK Head of Property for JLR present. Although Brexit was mentioned and the impact on sales due to the issues around diesel, the feedback from the Deputy Plant Director was upbeat, and he was forecasting the output of the 1 millionth engine by the end of the year.

There were no statements about JLR pulling out of the UK. In the last month JLR, as a company, has taken on 500 new graduates and apprentices in the UK.

QUESTION 3

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH OCTOBER 2018

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

Residents and I have been shocked at the poor level of traffic enforcement in the Talke and Red Street Division. Despite the fact I have raised this as a serious issue with Highways officers and the contracted enforcement team, very little has been done to challenge vehicle users parking illegally, specifically in Church Street and Woodshutts Street, Butt Lane. Can the Cabinet Member for Highways please assist me in making sure the traffic enforcement team do more to enforce parking restrictions such as double yellow lines?

Reply

The County Council's Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers are limited to the enforcement of parking restrictions, such as Double Yellow Lines. They do not include powers of enforcement to prevent things like footway parking or driveway obstruction, both of which remain the responsibility of the Police.

There are only short lengths of parking restrictions in place on Church Street and Woodshutts street. In both locations the parking restrictions are designed to protect their junctions with the busy A34, whilst leaving the remaining areas free for what is mainly local resident's parking.

Since the 1 April this year the Council's Civil Parking Enforcement team has visited Church Street 28 times and Woodshutts Street 5 times. On each occasion there has been no parking on the double yellow lines and consequently no Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) have been issued.

If the local Member can advise of specific times when parking on the Double Yellow lines is occurring in either of these locations, then the enforcement team will attempt to undertake observations at these times.

QUESTION 4

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH OCTOBER 2018

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

By Kyle Robinson

Question

On 26 September 2018, the County Council's Property Sub-Committee met to consider whether to support a financial contribution to Kidsgrove Sports Centre re-opening. I've long argued for the County Council to make a financial contribution so that residents in Kidsgrove have a decent leisure facility that meets local needs. As a matter of public interest can the Leader of the Council inform me precisely why the decision to make a one-off financial contribution to Kidsgrove Sports Centre was deferred and could he also indicate exactly when this decision has been deferred to?

Reply

The County Council has no direct responsibility for the provision of leisure services. Kidsgrove Sports Centre is no longer required for use by the adjacent school since its rebuilding in 2016.

Given this and the fact that it is an old and expensive building presumably it was too expensive for Newcastle Borough Council to continue, therefore they closed the operation in 2017.

The County Council has recently been asked to transfer the centre. That request was presented to the Property Sub-Committee but more information was required in relation to the Council's obligations for the property, the current costs and potential value of the property in order to make a fully informed decision before making the significant contribution asked for.

The next Property Sub-Committee meeting is scheduled for the 7th November.

QUESTION 5

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11TH OCTOBER 2018

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

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

What is the obligation of the County Council to ensure street signs are not obscured by street trees and what discussions has the County Council had with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in respect of the trees in Leek town centre?

Reply

The County Council has a responsibility to ensure that street signs are not obscured by trees in order to protect the safety of highway users. This often includes ensuring that third-party owners, such as District Councils or adjacent land-owners, carry out their legal duty to maintain trees so as not to cause a hazard to highway users.

Obscured road signs are identified as part of routine highway safety inspections. They are risk-assessed and prioritised for action alongside all other highway defects. Determining the level of risk includes consideration of things like:

- The nature of the sign – for example is it mandatory or advisory; and
- Are there other signs, road markings or features that communicate the same message?

With regards to Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Cllr. Atkins will be aware that many discussions have taken place over the management of the District Council's trees since the Public Realm Improvement scheme was implemented in 2014. Cllr Atkins has herself very helpfully facilitated many of these in her role as local Member.

These discussions relate to one particular problem at the junction of Bath Street and Derby Street, where a small District Council owned tree is obscuring a 'one-way' direction sign. There are a number of easy solutions, including relocation of the tree to an alternative planter box and replacing it with low-height plants, but unfortunately this action has not yet taken place.

I would request that Cllr. Atkins helps to rekindle these discussions and help to implement a solution as soon as possible.

In the meantime, a number of other signs and road markings clearly communicate the message that Derby Street is 'one-way', meaning that the risk to road users is quite minimal.

