

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Dear Sir/Madam,

**County Council - Thursday, 23rd July, 2020**

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, 23rd July, 2020 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

13. **Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels (Including the appointment of Community Cabinet Support Members) (Pages 1 - 4)**

15. **Questions (Pages 5 - 18)**

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

John Henderson  
Chief Executive

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**Annual County Council Meeting – 23 July 2020**

**Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of  
Committees and Panels**

In accordance with Standing Orders, the Council to appoint the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees:

**Committee**

**Chairman**

**Corporate Review Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman  
Opposition Vice-Chairman

Colin Greatorex  
Conor Wileman  
Susan Woodward

**Healthy Staffordshire Select  
Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman  
Opposition Vice-Chairman

Jeremy Pert  
Paul Northcott  
Charlotte Atkins

**Prosperous Staffordshire Select  
Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman  
Opposition Vice-Chairman

Ian Parry  
Tina Clements  
Kyle Robinson

**Safe and Strong Communities Select  
Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman  
Opposition Vice-Chairman

John Francis  
Bob Spencer  
Ron Clarke

**Committee**  
**Planning Committee**

**Chairman**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman

Mark Winnington  
David Smith

**Pensions Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman

Alastair Little  
Mike Davies

**Audit and Standards Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman

Martyn Tittley  
Carolyn Trowbridge

**Corporate Parenting Panel**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman

Mark Sutton  
Bryan Jones

**Charities and Trusts Committee**

Chairman  
Vice-Chairman

Kath Perry  
David Smith

## **Annual County Council Meeting – 23 July 2020**

### **Appointment of Community Cabinet Support Members**

**South Staffordshire**

Mike Davies

**Newcastle**

Trevor Johnson

**Cannock Chase**

Phil Hewitt

**Lichfield District**

Janet Eagland

**Tamworth**

Jeremy Oates

**Staffordshire Moorlands**

Ross Ward

**East Staffordshire**

Bernard Peters

**Stafford**

Carolyn Trowbridge



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**Question to the Leader of the Council**

**By Charlotte Atkins**

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**Question**

What actions has the County Council taken to tackle climate change since it declared a Climate Emergency a year ago?

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**Reply**

Since the County Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2020 the authority held an all member workshop to consider potential suitable actions which could form part of a future climate change action plan. All suggestions were considered by the newly formed All Party Climate Change Working Group with the aim of creating a prioritised list. Whilst this work has been temporarily paused due to Covid-19 activities I can confirm that we are looking to approve and publish the plan in the autumn. This will provide a framework to spend the £2.43m of resources that were approved in the current MTFs last February.

Whilst some elements of the climate change work have had to be temporarily paused as the Council responds to the Covid-19 pandemic, I am pleased to report that since declaring a Climate Change emergency a number of activities have still progressed:

- the local authority has switched to green electricity for buildings, street lighting and traffic signals;
- undertaken a full review of the authority's carbon baseline so we can track progress made since our carbon reduction strategy, Green Shoots, was published;
- supporting Engie to ensure the Rugeley site is as sustainable as possible and unlocking innovation;
- jointly commissioned a climate change study to support the refresh of local plans;
- started a review of possible locations for solar farms on county land;
- launched the Waste Savvy Staffordshire campaign;
- worked with SCVYS to capture the views of younger people for our Action Plan;
- ensured climate change is a golden thread of our Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy; and
- Restarted the Climate Change Working Group with its next meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> July to consider a comprehensive action plan of deliverable items which will be taken through Cabinet.

Work, of course, has continued on many fronts on the numerous activities that support a sustainable Staffordshire such as sustainable transport planning, active travel, building energy management and smart working to name a few.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**Question to Leader of the Council**

**By Charlotte Atkins**

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**Question**

Given the expected surge in mental health distress following the challenges of Covid-19, will the County Council ensure that the Occupational Therapy Department working at the Kniveden Partnership operating from a County Council owned site at The Mount, Leek has a sustainable future caring for over sixty clients?

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**Reply**

The Kniveden Partnership relates to Growthpoint, an horticulturally based mental health service that was established and is run by North Staffordshire Combined Mental Health Services Trust, (NSCHMST). This service is currently provided by NSCHMST from SCC's Kniveden/Springhill site, at The Mount Leek. This is not a service delivered or commissioned by SCC.

The three individual council owned sites at the Mount are allocated in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Local Plan for much needed housing development. Sale of these sites will also release money locked into surplus or underused and inefficient properties to invest in our key services.

We will respond to the many challenges that Covid-19 presents and will try to support NSCMHST in their valuable work. When a decision is taken to release the Mount Road sites, SCC will offer advice and guidance to support, if required by NSCMST, in seeking alternative community options for its 47 service users.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**Question to Leader of the Council**

**By Susan Woodward**

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**Question**

I am sure that the Leader will have been pleased to hear the comments made in Parliament by Wes Streeting MP, Shadow Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, citing the County Council's Covid19 Support Fund as an example of "the creativity and ingenuity" of local authorities during this crisis.

Can he tell me please whether all Members have fully spent their first tranche of this fund and publish a list of Members' allocations - by Member and by organisation - as has always been the case with previous Community Fund allocations?

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**Reply**

I am very pleased by the efforts of Members to spend their allocations of the Covid-19 Support Fund, to support the most vulnerable in our communities and help our key community groups to survive throughout the crisis period.

Members who had not fully spent their first tranche of the Covid-19 Support Fund by the end of June are now able to use any underspend in the current tranche as addition to their extra £2000. This closes for applications on 30 October 2020.

As has been the case previously, it is important to show transparency on how Members have used this public money, and the county council's website has an area devoted to this. From the area where groups can make their applications, there is a link to a page called "Covid-19 Support Fund Projects supported in 2020". This provides information, by Member, showing allocation amounts, organisation name and a brief summary of the project, using information provided in the original applications. The page is constantly being updated – as soon as a project is paid and is closed in the processing system, the information will appear on this page.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**Question to the Leader of the Council**

**By Kyle Robinson**

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**Question**

Can the Leader of the Council please set out what Strategy the County Council has in place to help tackle the plague of misuse of Nitrous Oxide in communities across Staffordshire? Specifically, what strategy and action has been taken by the County Council's Trading Standards department in relation to this issue and will he commit to writing to all Staffordshire MPs to press the Government for tougher action on dealing with this problem?

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**Reply**

Firstly I thought it would be useful to provide Council members with some background information on Nitrous Oxide.

Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) is a colourless sweet-tasting gas often referred to as 'laughing gas' and it has several legitimate uses in medicine and dentistry. It is also used as a fuel additive and as a component of rocket fuel, and is sold as an aerosol spray propellant within whipped cream canisters.

Products include small canisters in large packs, each enough for a recreational dose, and paraphernalia such as 'creamers' or 'crackers'. These dispense the gas from canisters into balloons, which are used to inhale the gas. Nitrous Oxide is covered under Psychoactive Substances Act 2016,

The act bans psychoactive substances, known as 'legal highs', in the UK and prevents the supply of previously unregulated and frequently harmful substances for human consumption.

This Act also includes controls on a number of other products including solvent-based glues, any kind of aerosols and nail varnish/nail varnish remover. Retailers need to pay particular attention to the potential for abuse of nitrous oxide, especially where customers seek to buy in bulk or large volumes involving nitrous oxide..

Trading Standards work closely with the Police and following the implementation of the new act in 2016 did a lot of work removing "Legal Highs" and providing advice and guidance to retailers to ensure they took the necessary precautions. Initially when the act was introduced trading standards committed a large amount of resource to education and advice to retailers over a period of several months. However more recently we have received no intelligence regarding matters relating to Nitrous oxide and, as with any enforcement, trading standards act on intelligence received to base any response accordingly.

Our Police partners also inform us that they also have no intelligence of any specific problems currently regarding nitrous oxide, advising that empty canisters have been

seen discarded on the side of the road, but that there is no impact on crime reports. Should intelligence or complaints be received into trading standards this will be investigated, in conjunction with the police, as each partner has specific powers within the Act and enforcement is most effective with joint working.

The Staffordshire Safer & Stronger Communities Strategy Group acts as the countywide strategy group for community safety and is responsible for producing a Community Safety Agreement based on the priority areas highlighted in the County Community Safety Strategic Assessment. The latest strategic assessment was produced earlier this year and the SSSCSG is currently updating its Community Safety Agreement with the current priority areas highlighted in the strategic assessment. This recent strategic assessment has not highlighted Nitrous Oxide as an area of concern and therefore no specific actions are currently identified for the partnership. Districts and Boroughs may have this area highlighted as an issue within the Strategic assessment for their own Local Authority area and may have developed plans to address at local level.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**Question to Leader of the Council**

**By Kyle Robinson**

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**Question**

4.2 million children were living in poverty in the UK in 2018/19 and the Government's Social Mobility Commission recently highlighted the shocking fact that there has been an increase of 600,000 more children living in relative poverty since 2012. In light of this appalling situation will the Leader of the Council now commit to reversing his administration's decision to cut and close Staffordshire County Council's Local Welfare Assistance Fund?

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**Reply**

Within Staffordshire we have been working for some time with the MHCLG on the Building Resilient Families and Communities programme. This programme is focussed on a range of outcomes one of which is financial exclusion. As such we have a range of support that is available to families in Staffordshire including;

- Access to employment advisors who can support families to maximise their income and support them to access volunteering, training or alternative employment. These employment advisors have mapped out a range of support to assist families which includes the community support groups, access to funding, emergency equipment all of which is accessible and available for families in need.
- The borough and district councils offer support to families facing financial hardship with rent and council tax.
- We fund a range of organisations to support families to manage their finances including Money Smart in Newcastle-under-Lyme which run through aspire for all Newcastle's families. This service supports with budgeting, reducing bills, maximising income, accessing emergency funds and savings. We hope that this service helps families develop the skills needed to support their ongoing financial security.

During COVID-19 we have been working hard to ensure that families in need are supported and the potential risks are identified. This has included the delivery of a targeted access to a virtual family hub and survival kit which have been delivered to over 3000 children. These survival kits have shared details of the family hubs and connected people to community support. In addition the government have announced additional funding for food and emergency supplies and this will be available to support families over the next 12 months.

The Early Help partnership have agreed that Financial Exclusion is a common theme which may require a countywide focus and funding from the 20 / 21 Earned Autonomy budget. A multi-agency partnership Task Group has been established to map existing provision, identify gaps and demand and scope the potential to commission a service across the county using Earned Autonomy funding.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

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

**By Syed Hussain**

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**Question**

How many BAME enterprises have been awarded monies from the £500K business grant scheme and have received additional support within the Staffordshire county area?

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**Reply**

The County Council does treat all business equally that request our support. However, we can't provide any data on ethnicity of businesses for the County Council's Emergency Business Grant nor the wider support provided through the Growth Hub, as this is data we do not collect from a business when they request support. It is also data that is not required by government when using their funding to support businesses.

We do know the locations of businesses and can make an assumption that some them will be from BAME groups given the diversity of Staffordshire's communities, but this is not formal confirmation of them being BAME enterprises.

We are completely supportive of all our communities, including BAME, and I am grateful Mr Hussain posed this question. Considering this, we will review our processes to reaffirm equal access to opportunity and indeed if improvements can be made.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**Question to the Leader of the Council**

**By Syed Hussain**

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**Question**

What has been the county's response to the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the BAME community?

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**Reply**

The Council recognises that people from BAME communities are at higher risk of complications from Covid-19. Information about Covid-19 has been made available on the Council's website in a range of the most common languages spoken by BAME communities. The Council's Covid-19 Local Outbreak Control Plan includes targeted communication for people from BAME communities.

In recent weeks the Council has been working with the BAME communities in parts of Burton-on-Trent in response to an excess of cases in the local area. The Council has been engaging with these communities to promote awareness of Covid-19 prevention and control as well as how to access testing. The Council has deployed a mobile testing unit to the town and established a dedicated service to offer testing to symptomatic people from this area in their own homes. The Council is also exploring innovative ways to extend testing to asymptomatic people from these communities.

