

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Date: 8 October 2020

Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday 8th October 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 8th October 2020 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

8. **Questions (Pages 1 - 14)**

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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QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

**Question to David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Ron Clarke

Question

Seven years ago, Amey started to identify and to monitor 186,000 drains and gullies across Staffordshire, the purpose was to bring about a schedule which would allow drains to be cleaned, either once every year, two or three years. It would also identify drains which are in need of repair or need to be replaced, again this would enable the County Council to plan a maintenance schedule over a long-term period.

All this information should now be in place. Would the Cabinet Member get Amey to distribute this information to all Councillors, so that we get a clear picture of the issues in our divisions, and allow us to work with Amey to meet the above objectives?

Reply

The routine gully cleansing programme is now available on the Members portal. This allows Members to see how often the gullies in their division are emptied and when the next planned visit is due.

The data collected as part of setting up this system shows that around 5%, or 10,000, of our highway gullies have been identified as needing repair – for example to loosen jammed lids or replace collapsed brickwork.

As part of the recently announced £2.0m in-year investment into Community Highway and Rights of Way priorities around £1m has been allocated towards these kinds of local gully hotspot repairs.

Local Members have been asked to work with their local Highway Officers to help identify and prioritise those requiring the most urgent attention. A full schedule is currently being compiled. This will be shared with Members to help track progress of their own priorities.

It is likely that some of these repairs and other investigatory work will also identify issues requiring more substantial work and many of these are also likely to be complicated by the involvement of third-parties like Severn Trent Water (STW), the Environment Agency (EA) or private land-owners. This new schedule of issues will be of further help to local Members in engaging with those third-parties.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

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

By Susan Woodward

Question

In June, Government announced a fund to support those in need of food and basic essentials during the Covid19 crisis. In response, the County Council set up its “Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies” in August with a grant from Government of approx. £800,000. Of this, £600,000 was allocated to Family Hubs for distribution to families in need via Edenred food vouchers, each voucher being worth £15. Can the Cabinet Member tell me please how many vouchers have currently been allocated to Staffordshire families in each of our Districts?

Reply

Defra announced the Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Emergency Supplies. This grant was made available from 05 August 2020 to support all residents of Staffordshire who may require support. This includes families, individuals and those asked to self-isolate due to COVID-19 with limited alternatives to access food and emergency supplies.

The grant made it clear that the Local Authorities (LA) had discretion on how we identify those most in need. As a result, we have used a broad definition to include those entitled to benefits or those who people identified in immediate need of help and those who are struggling to afford food and essentials due to COVID-19.

The grant suggested that LA’s should consider using cash or vouchers where practical as this may reduce pressure on local partners. It also allows people the flexibility to get the food items that they most need.

In addition, the grant seeks to ensure that we provide information to people to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits and community support.

The government did anticipate that most of the funding will be spent within 12 weeks. However, in Staffordshire we were keen to ensure that funds were available to allow for flexibility to use as slightly longer-term support.

The amount allocated for the Family Hubs was £600,000 for food and emergency supplies. In total 1287 Vouchers in total have been issued (as of 05.10.20), more detail is provided below:

District	Total Vouchers Issued
Cannock	122
East Staffordshire	134
Lichfield	205
Newcastle	210
South Staffordshire	75
Stafford	207
Staffordshire Moorlands	208
Tamworth	126
Total	1287

There has been an increase in the number of referrals in the last 2 weeks which has seen the distribution of these vouchers double within this time and we continue to seek members' support to promote this scheme to local residents who may need assistance.

The information on how to access this support is available here <https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/service.page?id=X8GSyOF0ADQ>

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

Question to Johnny McMahon
Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

I am grateful to the Cabinet Member for the interest he has shown in the Kniveden Partnership, The Mount, Leek. I recognise that the site owned by the County Council is to be developed for housing but could he clarify whether:

- The site has been sold;
 - The North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust has been asked to vacate the site;
 - NSCHNT has yet indicated what their intentions are for the future of this vital mental health service at the present site or elsewhere in the area;
 - A formal agreement is to be put in place between the County Council and NSCHNT to allow the service to be reopened on the site before it is redeveloped for housing?
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Reply

In response to your points above:

- **The site has been sold.** No, the site is earmarked for sale as part of the Council's estates' strategy, but we do not expect to sell it imminently. If and when the Kniveden site is sold we have offered to assist NSCHT with finding alternative local options for their service users; we would also provide support should they wish to continue to operate their service at a different location in the area.
- **The North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust has been asked to vacate the site.** No, we have not asked NSCHT to vacate the site.
- **NSCHNT has yet indicated what their intentions are for the future of this vital mental health service at the present site or elsewhere in the area.** No, NSCHT have yet to indicate whether they intend to continue to provide the service.
- **A formal agreement is to be put in place between the County Council and NSCHNT to allow the service to be reopened on the site before it is redeveloped for housing?** Yes, the Council has asked that that if NSCHT wish to continue to use the Kniveden site then we enter into a formal arrangement in order to give us appropriate cover for insurance purposes. The

Council has not indicated that we would charge rent and have no intention of doing so.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

**Question to David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Charlotte Atkins

Question

The Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on the provision of school crossing patrols.

So:

- How many vacancies are there now for school crossing patrols and at which schools;
 - How many school crossing patrols have left the service in the year since September 2019;
 - How many have been recruited since September 2019;
 - When was the last review of the school crossing patrol service;
 - During that review, which schools were added to the list of schools requiring a school crossing patrol and which were removed?
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Reply

Vacancies

There are currently 29 vacancies out of 240 positions countywide, that's a vacancy factor of around 12%. This changes frequently and some of the vacancies are long standing and hard to recruit to.

[Details available in Appendix 1]

Recruitment

Since September 2019 approximately 34 patrols have left or retired and 40 have been recruited.

Review

The last full service review was carried out towards the end of 2018. No new schools were added or removed from the service.

Appendix 1 – School Crossing Patrol (SCP) vacancies – 5/10/2020

Newcastle and Moorlands

Pepper Street, Silverdale
Priory Road / Abbot's Way Newcastle
High St. Wolstanton, by the Post Office
Galleys Bank, Kidsgrove
High St Maybank jct Upper Marsh (Zebra)
Old Rd/New Rd, Audley
Knutton Lane / Ashfields New Road, Newcastle
Dimsdale Parade/Hassam Parade/Clare Ave
Newcastle Rd/Crewe Rd - by Madeley Heath War Memorial
Leek Road, Endon
Clayton Lane, Clayton High School, Newcastle
Chapel Lane, Harriseahead
Alexandra Road, Wolstanton
The Avenue Kidsgrove (By zebra/Library)
Gloucester Avenue, Kidsgrove
Station Rd, Barlaston

Cannock, Rugeley and South Staffordshire

Wolgarston Way/Cannock Rd, Penkridge
The Parkway/Gainsborough Dr, Perton
School Rd, Wombourne
Hazelslade Primary
Chillington Drive, Codsall

Stafford, Burntwood & Lichfield

Great Haywood, Stafford
Cheadle

Burton-upon-Trent, Uttoxeter & Tamworth

Branston Road/All Saints Road, Burton-upon-Trent
Clarence St/Queen St, Burton-upon-Trent
Church Hill St/Eldon St, Winshill
Wetmore Road, Burton on Trent
Station Road, Barton Under Needwood
Main St, Yoxall

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

**Question to Philip White
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills**

By David Brookes

Question

I noted the announcement regarding the Leader of Solihull welcoming the massive funding from the Staffordshire apprentice scheme of £250k. Why wasn't this money raised in Staffordshire spent to help our residents from this fund?

Reply

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced by government in April 2017 and focuses on large employers with a wage bill of over £3m per annum. The levy takes 0.5% of the wage bill and places it into a digital account that can only be used to fund apprenticeship training.

It is right that we are focussed on growing apprenticeships nationally, however the rules that apply to the scheme mean there are challenges for organisations in spending all their levy. Despite the challenges Staffordshire as a place is currently performing above the national averages, especially in supporting apprenticeships for young people.

Part of the management of the levy allows organisations to spend (also known as "gift") up to 25% on funding apprenticeships in their supply chain or local economy. Staffordshire County Council has been successfully funding external apprenticeships in partner organisations that deliver our priorities and through local businesses. We also joined up with councils from across the West Midlands to jointly promote the initiative to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) across the region. The benefit of this approach being efficiencies of scale in terms of marketing and administration.

Another benefit is that there are other private businesses in the partnership and if any council uses its full allocation the private businesses are asked if they will fund additional applications which means we get more funding to use in the area if we need it.

Within the partnership it is a rule that each local authority uses its own allocation for its own businesses and residents. All of Staffordshire's £250,000 that has been allocated through the partnership has gone to Staffordshire businesses and residents to help them in recruiting apprentices or in developing existing staff.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

**Question to David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

By Susan Woodward

Question

I have a question from Steve in Burntwood. He wants me to ask - "When white paint is put around a pothole on a footpath trip hazard of broken slabs, does it mean that it will be repaired within the next two or three years?". What can I tell Steve?"

Reply

The condition of roads and pavements, together with the speed and quality of repairs remains a top issue locally and nationally. This has been partially dealt with through the £5m/year investment made by the Council since 2017 to reduce the backlog of defects and the recent additional in-year investment of £14.284m made by Central Government. In the coming months Cabinet will also be considering the medium and long-term funding needs of our highway assets.

All highway defects, including broken paving slabs, are identified from a combination of our own routine safety inspections or customer defect reports. And repairs are prioritised in accordance with the level of risk they present to public safety or property damage.

The latest performance monitoring shows that despite the recent difficult weather conditions:

- over 90% of the most urgent emergency and category 1 defects have been repaired within 24-hours; and
- 92% of other high-risk category 2 defects have been repaired within 7-days.

Lower risk defects do of course take longer, but local Members also have the discretion of using their local Member funding or other funding contributions to accelerate the speed of repairs where necessary.

The use of spray markings does not have any bearing on the level of urgency or timescale of the repair. They are just used in some occasions to help identify the location or show the extent and quantify the amount of work for planning purposes.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 8 OCTOBER 2020

**Question to Jonathan Price
Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)**

By Kyle Robinson

Question

What direct representations has the County Council leadership made to the Government to request urgent commitment to ensuring free school meals are provided for eligible pupils throughout this year's autumn half term and Christmas school holidays?

Reply

Senior officers within the County Council have requested ongoing national support for those eligible for free school meals whilst the country remains in the current status of alert. This includes holiday periods including the October half term and Christmas. We are currently awaiting a response from the DfE. We are making arrangements for the 'family hubs' to provide support for families in an emergency should there be no additional support from government.

