

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday 11th February 2021

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 February 2021 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

7. **Questions (Pages 1 - 10)**

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 – 11 FEBRUARY 2021

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

By Cllr Brookes

Question

Will the Staffordshire County Council or its highways contractors be purchasing the excellent new JCB pot hole repairing machines and how soon will I be seeing these machines repairing the many potholes within my division of Uttoxeter Town and throughout the County of Staffordshire where I understand that they are manufactured, supporting local jobs and efficiently repairing our broken highways in a more cost effective and efficient way, especially now we have no need to follow the EU procurement rules, or perhaps can you tell us how many of these brilliant machines already been ordered or purchased?

Reply

The county council's highways team have been working with and advising JCB on the development of their pothole-repair and other highway maintenance priority solutions for a number of years.

JCB's new Pothole-Pro machine was launched on 11 January. As a flagship Staffordshire based company the county council was delighted to support the launch, including sharing publicity materials across highway sector professional networks.

Arrangements to test the equipment on Staffordshire's road network are in development and we hope to carry out trials in the coming weeks. This involves testing its practical use against a range of different parameters, including different road construction types and where sites are physically constrained.

The trial will inform both the county council and JCB on how the Pothole-Pro machine compares with the range of different pothole repair techniques already used across Staffordshire's diverse road network. It will show whether the product can add value to Staffordshire's road repair operations now and will also provide JCB with useful feedback on further development potential. I'll be pleased to share the findings with Members in the coming weeks.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 FEBRUARY 2021

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

By Cllr Brookes

Question

Over the years, very sadly Staffordshire, like other roads and highway networks throughout our Country, has seen many unfortunate fatalities. What policies do we have for permanent memorials on, or adjacent to our public highway network to enable the families of those victims or for others for whatever reason to erect permanent memorials either on or adjacent to our Highways and what policies do we have for pedestrianised highways or Town Centre Market places regarding memorial benches and monuments etc, and have we or do we have a policy to close highways and what would happen to this land?

Reply

The County Council's programme of road safety engineering, education and training activities has contributed to Staffordshire having one of the safest highway networks in the country. By working closely with organisations through the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership, a considered and evidence led approach is adopted that ensures best use of resources as we continue to put measures in place to further reduce the number of tragic incidents on our roads.

The County Council recognises that the placing of a tribute at the roadside can be an important part of the grieving process for some individuals following the loss of a loved one; however, we have a responsibility to ensure that no items placed within the highway serve as a distraction to passing motorists and consideration must be given to how the tribute would affect drivers using the road.

Paying tribute at a memorial placed within the highway setting can also present a road safety risk and, therefore, the Council will work with local communities and their representatives to ensure any locally agreed memorial bench or monument is appropriately sited. The County Council's statutory responsibility is to ensure the highway is not obstructed and that any items placed within the highway are covered by an appropriate legal agreement. Within a town centre / pedestrianised setting, full consideration must also be given to maintaining accessibility for all.

The legal process to close a section of public highway is known as "stopping up" which permanently removes highway rights from the road and results in the area of land reverting to the adjacent landowners.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 FEBRUARY 2021

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

By Cllr Clarke

Question

Will the Cabinet Member for Highways help to improve the back log of New Residential Parking Zone applications, all new applications which meet the criteria will bring in an annual income, this will help to offset some of the financial losses from the car parking revenue due to Covid 19?

Reply

The County receive a significant number of requests for Permit Parking Schemes (PPS) from local residents every year. Each one is reviewed and prioritised against the criteria outlined in the On-Street Parking Strategy. Schemes anticipated to be delivered this year are:

- Forebridge area of Stafford; and
- Hattrell Street, Newcastle Under Lyme.

Permit Parking Schemes are often difficult to implement quickly. It is not uncommon for us to receive mixed responses to the scheme from residents once the operational restrictions and costs of joining and annual membership have been worked through.

The council does not generate a net income from its on-street parking activities. Permit Parking Scheme charges contribute to the operating costs performed by the council's parking team, which is also responsible for responding to day to day activities, regulatory functions and potential Pay & Display schemes. However, the current impact of Covid has seen a reduction in demand for some of these other activities, meaning that more resources are currently able to be directed towards progression of potentially viable Permit Parking Schemes.

The upfront costs of design, Legal Adverts and the onsite signing and lining measures can also be a barrier to the viability of Permit Parking Scheme. Recently, this has been overcome by securing developer contributions, such as at:

- Cherry Blossom in Hednesford; and
- A future scheme earmarked for Castle Brickworks in Stafford.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 FEBRUARY 2021

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

By Cllr Charlotte Atkins

Question

On average, how long does it take for the County Council Highways design team to design a traffic calming scheme involving speed humps to be paid for out of a County Councillor's Divisional Highway Programme?

Reply

The timescales for the design and delivery of traffic calming schemes vary greatly depending on the complexity of the proposed measures; the impact on the local community and key stakeholders; and the detailed design and construction issues that need to be addressed as part of the scheme delivery.

In general, it is traffic calming feasibility reports that are delivered through a councillor's DHP allocation. Traffic calming scheme costs will invariably exceed a councillor's DHP allocation and can cost many tens of thousands of pounds to design, consult and construct.

A feasibility report to consider traffic calming for an area would typically be completed within the financial year it is requested, normally within 6-12 months. The length of time to produce the feasibility report is determined partly by any site surveys that are required to complete the study, for example traffic surveys, pedestrian surveys, topographical surveys; and also by the level of design team resource available to produce the report. The engineers in the design team work on multiple projects concurrently to deliver the Integrated Transport programme across Staffordshire that is circa £8 million per annum. If the feasibility study recommends traffic calming, recommendations need to be agreed, and funding needs to be sought for the estimated scheme costs.

A typical traffic calming scheme timeframe would be as follows:

- Year 1 – complete a feasibility study and produce a report. Agree which recommended measures to take forward. Seek funding for the proposals.
- Year 2 – once funding is in place, carry out the detailed design of the scheme; consult statutory and key stakeholders, the local community and members of the public; construct the scheme on site. Many simpler, less contentious schemes would be completed in the second year.

- Year 3 – for more complex and contentious schemes - continue with detailed design, consultation and construction processes as required.

Turning specifically to Cllr Atkins's DHP request for a feasibility report into traffic calming on Morley Street, Leek, the request to carry out the study was received by the design team on 11th November 2020. The report and associated drawings have been completed and, if they haven't already, will be issued to Cllr Atkins shortly. In this instance, the study has taken approximately 3 months from the request to the design team to the issuing of the report.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 11 FEBRUARY 2021

**Question to Cllr Wilson
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture**

By Cllr Hood

Question

My Division has seen an unprecedented crime wave since the beginning of the pandemic culminating with two arson attacks on Friday, January 29th. This has led to many residents expressing their serious concerns to me of feeling unsafe in their own homes and business owners feeling extremely vulnerable. There is considerable pressure on Stone town police officers who are stretched to the limit in tackling crime. They are working all hours and shifts to combat what is happening in the town and their continued hard work is showing results with arrests made.

Can the Cabinet Member please give an update of how Staffordshire Police are dealing with the changing face of crime during this pandemic and could this involve an increase in police officer numbers to give out a clear message that we will not tolerate the activities of the criminal element who have been coming into Stone from other areas to profit during this pandemic?

Reply

Thank you for the question. Following a discussion with Chief Superintendent Jennifer Mattinson, Head of Neighbourhoods and Partnerships at Staffordshire Police, I can provide the following update on how Staffordshire Police are dealing with the changing face of crime during this pandemic and confirmation that police officer numbers in Staffordshire are increasing.

Firstly, it is pleasing to read that the policing of Stone has drawn positive comments. The neighbourhood policing team, alongside other force depts have moved quickly to effectively tackle the recent increases in offences and to ensure the community feels safe.

During the pandemic there have been significant crime reductions across the vast majority of crime types. All crime has reduced by 14.7% meaning there have been 12,155 fewer victims this year. There have been new challenges of course for policing with a significant amount of new legislation related to Covid 19 and the Police have been asked to 'police' activities which ordinarily would not have required any intervention such as gathering with others from your household. It has been a challenge to balance the police response between what has become known as 'the 4 Es' – Engage, Educate, Encourage and Enforce.

The number of officers in Staffordshire Police is increasing as part of the 3 year programme to increase the national number of officers by 20,000 as announced by central government. The policing of Stone or any other community is never the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Policing Team alone. Whilst that team will work with local residents and are our local face of policing, they are able to call upon central resources to assist them when greater resource is needed.

This may be in the form of support from the Police's Tactical Support Team, the Roads Policing Team or the Neighbourhood Tasking Team for example. Superintendent Mattinson has confirmed that the issues that Councillor Hood referred to in Stone did receive this extra support from police force resources beyond the neighbourhood team.