

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Date: 20 May 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday 20th May 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 20th May 2021 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

17. **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

Enc

QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

**Question to Cllr McMahon
Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing**

By Cllr Clements

Question

With the growing number of military veterans struggling for support and some taking their own lives what is the county council doing to identify these people within the county and the community and what support is offered/signposted to them?

Reply

Further to Cllr Clements' question, the Portfolio Holder has made enquiries with Senior Primary Care colleagues with respect to whether veterans are now being acknowledged as such and coded on their systems. He was advised that they are now being accounted for. This will not be universal, however we can work with our NHS Primary Care colleagues to ensure that veterans get the support they wholeheartedly deserve.

For adults who require assistance there is also a wealth of help available from our communities. People can use Staffordshire Connects to find help locally or can call Staffordshire Cares or use one of our Community Help Points to have a conversation about the sort of support they need and what might be available in their area. Anyone who requires a Care Act assessment will be offered one, by telephone initially and in person if necessary.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

**Question to Cllr Jessel
Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change**

By Cllr Charlotte Atkins

Question

The introduction this year of Climate Change Action Funds for local projects was very welcome. Will such funds be allocated to Councillors in the future? Which Councillors were successful in applying for Climate Change Action Funds, how much were they allocated and how were these funds used within their Divisions? Which Councillors applied for funds but were unsuccessful in securing support for their bids? Which Councillors did not apply for funds for their Division? What was the total sum allocated to Climate Change Action projects?

Reply

The intention is that the Climate Change Action Fund will be launched again this year.

The fund was not allocated directly to Members, the financial allocation to each electoral division was a guide as to how much support was available. The fund was set up to raise awareness in the community to the climate change challenge and the need for everyone to make changes to their lifestyle and environment. Each project applicant had to seek their local councillor support before submitting their application, this gave councillors the opportunity to champion the climate change message

In financial year 2020/21 there were:

- 155 applications in total,
- 107 successful applications,
- 33 unsuccessful,
- 15 pending (had to be put on hold due to elections),

The original fund was launched in October 2020 with a budget of £62K. It rapidly became apparent that the fund was extremely popular with a great amount of interest. A further £62K was then allocated out of the total climate change budget. Therefore, of the total fund that was available over the course of last financial year was £124,000, of this £70,337 has been awarded to projects, with a further £14,110 pending.

The successful applicants' projects ranged in focus, in line with the fund criteria. The majority of the projects were for items such as, LED lights, building insulation, bike shelters (in schools), tree planting and double-glazed windows.

The table below is a summary of the allocation by the eight district/borough council areas (to date excluding pending submissions):

District or Borough	Amount Awarded
Cannock Chase	£7,709.00
East Staffordshire	£10,259.60
Lichfield	£9,971.00
Newcastle	£6,400.00
south Staffordshire	£12,246.00
Stafford	£10,867.00
Staffordshire Moorlands	£11,750.00
Tamworth	£1,135
Total	£70,337.60

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

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

By Cllr Charlotte Atkins

Question

What assessment has the Council made of the proportion of electors within Staffordshire who do not possess a form of photographic identity document, such as a passport or driver's licence that might be acceptable for use as a requirement before voting? Are those electors without photo ID likely to be from any specific community or disadvantaged group? How many instances of voter impersonation have there been in Staffordshire over the last ten years?

Reply

No analysis has been done specifically in Staffordshire, but based on national research by the Electoral Commission (published 2015) it is estimated that 7.5% of the electorate may not have a suitable photo ID.

The Commission also noted that 2011 Census data shows that White groups and mixed White and Black Caribbeans are less likely than other groups to hold a passport.

DVLA data showed that women, people under 20 and over 65, are less likely to hold a driving licence.

In terms of electoral fraud, we do not have the information for Staffordshire to hand, but the figures nationally show that for the years between 2010 and 2018 inclusive the number of cases of electoral offences reported to the Police varied between a low of 148 in 2013 and a high of 518 in 2015. In the majority of these cases, no further action was taken because there was insufficient evidence.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

**Question to Cllr McMahon
Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing**

By Cllr Pardesi

Question

Integrated Care Systems are shortly to be introduced with a more permissive NHS procurement regime. These new arrangements will hasten the increased fragmentation and privatisation of the NHS. What is the Council doing to alert the public of the implications of these changes?

Reply

The White Paper 'Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' published in February 2021 sets out HM Government's proposals for legislation to reform the NHS. They include the establishment of Integrated Care System NHS bodies to replace Clinical Commissioning Groups. They also include removal of the procurement rules which apply to the NHS when arranging healthcare services by creating powers to remove the commissioning of these services from the scope of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, as well as repealing Section 75 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition Regulations 2013. This would enable the new Integrated Care System NHS bodies to determine providers for healthcare services in the best interests of patients, taxpayers, and the local population and use competitive tendering only where it adds value.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

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

By Cllr Edgeller

Question

The people in South East Stafford Division have suffered greatly from the loss of Bus Services and I would imagine many other rural areas are also in that category. In one area alone, I have approximately 1000 homes with no service. These homes are approximately 3 miles from the town centre and their lack of access to public transport will have a negative impact on the town centre's businesses. Additionally, a lot of these houses will have a high elderly population who cannot walk the ½ mile to the nearest bus route, to which we can add the mental anguish, loneliness and isolation to compound Mental Health issues this problem creates. This Friday I, along with our MP Theo Clarke, have arranged a meeting with Chaserider to discuss the bus issues. Will the Leader and Cabinet give their support to help our citizens to regain their bus service lifeline?

Reply

We support your conversation with one of the main local bus operators, D&G, to discuss potential opportunities for new commercial services in your area. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 95% of the local bus network in Staffordshire was operated on a commercial basis by bus operators. Public transport locally and nationally has been drastically impacted by the pandemic, and in line with government advice service levels were reduced due to lack of demand during national lockdowns.

The government and the authority have financially supported our local bus companies throughout this challenging time to ensure that they remain sustainable and in the medium to long term. Since April 2021 service levels have returned to pre pandemic levels in most areas of the county although patronage levels are still only 60% of pre-pandemic figures.

We continue to work closely with bus operators through the Staffordshire Bus Operators Forum and are currently considering what impact and benefits there will be for our residents following the recent publication of governments National Bus Strategy.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

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

By Cllr Hussain

Question

Has the County Council allocated £1m for Burton Library's relocation to Market Hall, if so, can I be assisted with the breakdown of the spending of the one million pounds? How is that £1m arrived and to whom? Has the council received any developer's interest in the site?

Reply

The initial submission to Government of The Burton Town Investment Plan has been successful in securing £22.8m across a collection of seven complementary projects, subject to individual Full Business Cases being approved. The seven projects will contribute significantly towards the regeneration of the town. These include the concept of relocating the existing Library to the Market Hall and around £7m of potential funding has been allocated. The redevelopment of the existing library site is considered essential to the success of an associated project to regenerate the frontage to the River Trent's "Washlands".

The Cabinet considered the principle of the relocation in a confidential report on 19th August 2020 (item 11) and as part of the decision-making process agreed the recommendations in respect of the proposed move to the Market Hall subject to the relevant consultation and design processes.

I can confirm that up to £1m has been earmarked for this project should it proceed.

The project is still at an early stage of design and as such the actual cost breakdown of the works is not available, hence the wide range of £0.5m - £1.0m used in the August 2020 Cabinet paper.

The decision to proceed will rest with both the Burton Stronger Town Board, in terms of making the requested £7m available to fund the structural alterations to the building and Property Sub Committee in order to confirm the Council's acceptance of the terms following submission of a Full Business Case and the Council's contribution. Neither the Town Deal Board nor the Council's Property Sub Committee will make any decisions until after they have considered the results of an extensive public consultation exercise that will take place during summer 2021.

There are no current plans to move the library if the Market Hall proposal is not progressed.

The principle of a land exchange between the two councils has been discussed which would see the county council becoming the freeholder of the Market Hall if the project proceeds. In return, East Staffordshire Borough Council would become the freeholder of the existing library site. The existing library site has not been marketed by the County Council and neither has it had any discussions with any developer about the site.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 20 MAY 2021

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

By Cllr Hussain

Question

Because of personal circumstances, many residents in the county slipped away from the COVID economic safety net, very often we hear their financial hardship experiences, what will the council do to assist them?

Reply

At the time of any significant global economic shock which results in a recession there will unfortunately be parts of the labour force which will be disproportionately impacted through the loss of work or pay. Beyond the extensive Government business and job support that has been put in place such as the furlough scheme, self-employment income support and the Government relaxing the criteria for Universal Credit, so that those that have lost earnings as well as people out of work can now claim locally, the County Council have put in place an extensive COVID-recovery, renewal and transformation strategy, Staffordshire Means Back to Business.

To aid local businesses with their recovery and transformation as we move beyond the crisis there are an extensive range of business loans e.g. The three-year Staffordshire Business Loan Fund will provide loans from £10,000 to £150,000 to companies across a range of sectors.

The £5.4m Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme provides further support and incentives to help businesses and the workforce and includes:

- Small Business to Thrive Financial Support Grants of between £2,000 and £5,000, and support schemes.
- Incentives of £5,000 to businesses to recruit, retrain and train apprentices
- Free Training Top Up for Employers with grants of up to £5,000 for businesses to help quickly adapt business models to become more viable and sustainable

Residents that are looking for work can access a wide range of new COVID-19 response and recovery interventions such as the Countywide Redundancy and Recruitment Triage Service to support residents back into work, the local delivery of the Government's Kickstart scheme to support young people into work and the Government's Restart scheme to help local unemployed residents that have lost work in hardest hit sectors to reskill and upskill into growth sectors such as digital

and the green economy. The Redundancy Triage Service has supported over 1,600 people with a positive progression to jobs and further training of 29% so far.

Be assured the Council will not stop working to find ways to support our communities. The County Council recently made its own submission to central governments Community Renewal Fund to deliver new and more ways to support citizens. But it does not end there, it is also looking at further ways that it can continue to support as many people and businesses as possible now and into the future.