

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Dear Sir/Madam,

## County Council - Thursday 9th December 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 9th December 2021 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

#### 8. **Questions** (Pages 1 - 16)

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 - 9 DECEMBER 2021

## Question to Cllr Alan White Leader of the Council

### By Cllr Pritchard

#### Question

Thanks to the Future High Street Fund, Staffordshire County Council, South Staffordshire College and Tamworth Borough Council, Tamworth town centre is about to undergo a huge re-development. This near £100M re-development will offer residents of my division an improved shopping, retail and visitor experience.

Can I take this opportunity to ask the Leader of the Council to recommit publicly, on the record, the council's support for this exciting project and its desire to help create a vibrant town centre in Tamworth for future generations to come.

### Reply

Can I thank Cllr Pritchard for talking the time to ask such an important question and one that is so relevant to the vibrancy of all our towns and city centre going forward?

Tamworth town centre is one of a number of places that is receiving unprecedented levels of support from central government. This includes Town Deals in Newcastle, Kidsgrove and Burton that represents over £60M of government investment. We are also seeing investment through the Future High Streets fund in Stafford and again Newcastle totalling nearly £50M.

I am delighted to put on record our support for not only Tamworth, but all our Boroughs and Districts who are working so hard to regenerate their town centres. This is reflected in the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills having as one of his key priorities over the period of this administration, to support the regeneration of our town centres.

These centres are an important part of our Staffordshire community and working with our partners it is vital we find solutions to their regeneration. Whilst the investment from government is welcomed, we cannot underestimate the task that we all face, and each must play a part. We are already investing significant sums in our urban areas and

## Reply

considering how we use our existing assets in the most positive way to help our partners, but to also allow us to continue to deliver our mainstream activity. In addition, I would suggest that we consider the involvement, support and assistance of our respective members and officers on local delivery boards to add further capacity and to aid the sharing of local knowledge. I look forward to further detailed proposals coming forward for this Cabinet to consider.

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

## **By Cllr Oates**

#### Question

During the pandemic Tamworth community stepped up and showed its heart and spirit.

One group that delivered fantastic support for the community was Community Together CIC. This work has continued with the group currently on working to bring a visit by Santa Clause to local children who are in economic hardship.

Would the Leader/Cabinet Member join me in congratulating the organisation on this fantastic work?

### Reply

We are immensely proud of the work that the voluntary sector has delivered during the pandemic.

We would like to congratulate Community Together CIC for some fantastic initiatives, which included a visit to Father Christmas. Watching the way this community group has helped children in the area, who have experienced real hardship during this time, has been humbling.

On behalf of Staffordshire County Council, I offer my sincere thanks for the work of the volunteers and look forward to seeing more great initiatives in the future.

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

### By Cllr Jones

#### Question

Every week-day morning my residents are stuck in excessively long traffic jams that form on the A5 when residents are traveling from the A5 eastbound on to the M42 Junction 10 island. Sometimes these queues have been a mile in length.

Would the relevant Cabinet Member meet with me and my other colleagues onsite to discuss how the council can lobby the Highways Agency to improve the traffic flow at peak times?

#### Reply

I would be happy to meet with you, by way of an update of what we are already doing.

The A5, M42 and Junction 10 is part of England's Trunk Road Network and is managed by National Highways.

Recent communications between Council officers and National Highways officials have confirmed that the signal-controlled junction at this location is managed by software to maximise traffic flows whilst managing queuing traffic on all approaches.

National Highways have indicated that they are aware of peak time queue lengths on the eastbound A5 but have stated that any queue length reduction will depend on increasing junction capacity which is currently restricted due to the geometry of the southern bridge deck.

Council officers are represented on the A5 Tamworth to Hinckley working group which is lead by National Highways who are looking at potential highway improvements along this route. The capacity issues of junction 10 have been raised and will continue to be raised at this forum, although it should be noted that sustainable travel is also discussed as a potential solution to unrestricted growth in vehicular traffic.

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

## By Cllr Clements

#### Question

After a recent taxi drivers forum meeting it became apparent that the very people trying to transport our residents from a-b are not informed when we put in road closures or diversions. Please can you advise how this can be rectified so that they can be forewarned about these highways issues as time is money to these drivers?

## Reply

Road maintenance, utility operations, sporting and community events are just some of the reasons why road closures, diversions or other traffic restrictions appear on local roads.

Details of all such formally arranged events are publicly available online at One.Network.

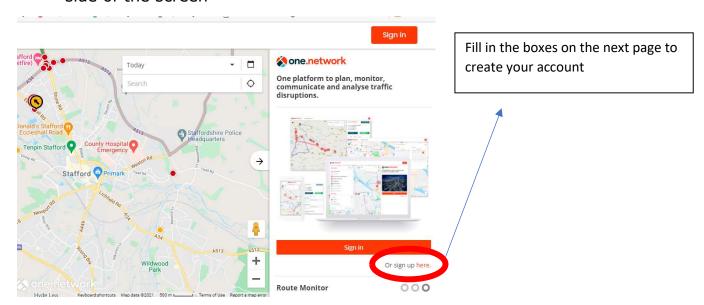
As well as being able to view details of all events across the whole of the UK's local road network, <u>One.Network</u>, also allows local Transport Operators and individual members of the public to sign-up to receive direct alerts about events on particular roads or areas of interest.

It's a simple 4-step process. But our Highway Network Management team have also very helpfull produced an illustrated guide, which I'll arrange to be circulated to all Members.

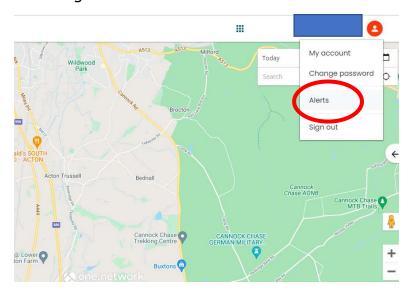


One.Network is the portal used by Staffordshire County Council as a coordination tool to log and display road works, including road closures. The data from this website also links to Sat Navs and proactively directs motorists away from the works. One.network also has the facility for individual users to set up alerts which provides the user with an email notifying them of any road works within the area or route they have selected. Multiple alerts can be set up for each user. The below step by step guide will show how to set up these alerts.

1. The individual will first need to set up an account. Its free and easy to do! Just click on the sign-up button on the panel the right-hand side of the screen

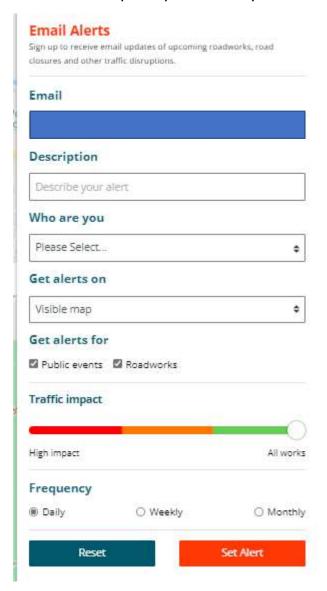


2. Once your account has been set up, click your name in the top right-hand corner and select "Alerts"





3. The panel on the right-hand side of the screen will display fields for you to fill in to create your alert. You can set up alerts for a specific route, a specific location searched for on the map or for the area visible on the main map shown on the screen. You can also choose the frequency in which you receive the alert.



4. Once completed, select "Set Alert" and you will receive an email to the address provided where you will need to confirm that you want the alert to be set up. Your alert has now been set up!



## Question to Cllr Jessel Cabinet Member for Health and Care

### By Cllr Charlotte Atkins

## Question

Will the plan set out in the Government's White Paper resolve the County Council's social care challenges? If not, what more needs to be done?

### Reply

On 01 December the Government published the White Paper **People At The Heart Of Care: adult social care reform.** The White Paper builds on the Care Act 2014 and sets out a vision that many elderly and disabled people will welcome, with its three objectives to ensure that:

- 1. People have choice, control, and support to live independent lives.
- 2. People can access outstanding quality and tailored care and support.
- 3. People find adult social care fair and accessible.

There remain significant questions about how the ambitions in the White Paper will be funded. It includes a promise of £3.6bn over the three years 2022/23 to 2025/26 to fund the Care Cap, more generous capital thresholds and equalise the prices paid by local authorities and private individuals. However, it is not clear that this will lead to a net increase of funding for the adult social care sector. A further £1bn is earmarked for various national schemes to support the workforce, housing and technology, which might amount to around £5m annually for Staffordshire.

The big challenges in adult social care are rising demand and the ability of the providers to pay competitive wages. The Council has a range of initiatives underway to try and address these. We will need support from HM Government, with significant additional funding, if the aspirations of the White Paper are to be realised.

# Question to Cllr Price Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)

## By Cllr Phillip Atkins

#### Question

Can the Cabinet Member tell me the percentage of children attending school? How does this compare with previous years?

#### Reply

The latest Staffordshire attendance data as of 26 November 2021 (from September 2021) is 94.6%. The latest unvalidated national attendance information we have is for week 42 (19 – 23 October) which was 86%. The attendance data for Staffordshire for the autumn term 2020 was 95.8% compared with a West Midlands rate of 95.1% and a national rate of 95.3%.

The Staffordshire attendance figure for the whole academic year 2019/2020 was 92.5% and in 2020/2021 was 93.8%. We are waiting for the national data to be published for these periods.

## Question to Cllr Jessel Cabinet Member for Health and Care

## By Cllr Pardesi

## Question

In light of the announcement of the Government's Drug Strategy, what is the evidence that confiscation of passports and driving licences will prove to be a deterrent? Who is this particular strategy aimed at when most of the vulnerable and in need of support do not even possess passports and driving licences?

## Reply

The Government on 06 December 2021 published <u>From harm to hope:</u> <u>A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives</u>. This sets out plan to combat illegal drugs by breaking drug supply chains, delivering a world class treatment and recovery system, and achieving a shift in the demand for recreational drugs.

The Government's intention is to publish a White Paper in 2022 which will consider increased sanctions for recreational drug users such as curfews, removal of a passport or driving licence, and fines. The evidence base and likely impact of these measures is not available at this time.