

To: All Members and Officers of the County Council.

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Date: 19 May 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

County Council - Thursday 19th May 2022

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 19th May 2022 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

15. **Questions (Pages 1 - 12)**

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 – 19 MAY 2022

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

By Cllr Pritchard

Question

Tamworth Borough Council is seeking to install the LitterCam system on lampposts in Tamworth that overlook roads that see significant litter deposited by motorists.

What can Staffordshire County Council do to ensure that the permission, installation and operation of the LitterCams system on Staffordshire County Council lampposts is as simple and efficient as possible for Staffordshire's district councils?

Reply

The County Council will of course support the Borough Council to safely roll-out the use of Litter-Cam systems in the right locations.

Please could you put your lead individual in contact with me and I will make sure they work with the relevant leads from the County Council and our Street Lighting PFI contractor E.on.

It will be important to understand the locations where the use of the Litter-Cam is planned so we can quickly assess whether the local streetlighting system is even capable of hosting such equipment, this should help speed up the process. Where it isn't possible, we will of course support you to find alternatives for the equipment installation both on and off the public highway.

Finally, it is worth noting that there are strict requirements for the temporary or permanent attachment of ancillary equipment and connection of electrical power supplies from lighting equipment on the public highway which will need to be met.

QUESTION 2

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 19 MAY 2022

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

By Cllr Pardesi

Question

How often is the condition of school buildings assessed and monitored and what has been the result of that assessment over the last 5 years? What remedial work is being carried out by SCC?

Reply

We only have a role in maintained schools which is now approximately a quarter of the school's estate by building number.

We inspect schools every three years and produce a programme of maintenance works based on priority for "safe, warm and dry" issues. Typically, the works are – windows, roofs, heating systems, electric's, lighting, external play areas and security.

The funding is specific grant from central government and over the last five years has been:

School Condition Allocation (SCA)

2022/23	£	8,529,329
2021/22	£	9,586,242
2020/21	£	4,187,906
2019/20	£	5,072,313
2018/19	£	5,994,906
Total	£	33,370,696

As can be seen from the funding, the government changed its allocation methodology from 2021 which increased the amount of funding we receive.

Whilst the figures above are only for maintained schools the same increase will apply for independently funded academies, correcting previous years allocation methodologies under which we got a smaller share.

We have also been successful in bidding for de-carbonisation funding and have delivered £3m of improvements to heating and lighting in schools which saves them money on bills and reduces carbon emissions.

The full details of our schools maintenance spending is in the Statement of Priorities and within the School Capital Programme.

QUESTION 3

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 19 MAY 2022

Question to Cllr Sutton Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

By Cllr Afsar

Question

Youth Clubs help street youngsters and young adults to become more responsible members of Society. Do you think the County Council should revisit the idea of youth clubs in order to provide children in our divisions with a better future?

Reply

In March 2014 the County Council moved away from the traditional direct delivery of youth clubs, in favour of working more collaborative with the thousands of groups that run across the county every week. We deliver this through our close collaboration between the County Council and the Voluntary, Charity & Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to fulfil the potential and expectation of our Young People through an organisation called Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS).

While there is no 'one size fits all' model for providing positive activity, the VCSE sector across Staffordshire harnesses a range of grassroots organisations to support our Young People across:

- Universal services such as uniformed, sports/outdoors and creative groups.
- Targeted services - tailored for specific groups or characteristics – offering a range of more specialist activities.

Young People and families can access a directory of services in their local area via the Staffordshire Connects site.

It is important to acknowledge here that we regularly engage young people in their thoughts and views and the introduction of youth clubs is not what they ask for, instead they favour places to go and things to do and therefore that rich picture of activities is something we are keen to promote.

Promoting a diverse VCSE sector, the County Council is able to commission support for Young People requiring a more targeted approach via Youth Offending prevention and Early Help services. This was best demonstrated in the recent pilot of the Vulnerable Adolescence Support Programme, which provided a one-to-one mentor to support engagement of Young People where universal activities were not always appropriate. Our ambition for our communities and VCSE sector has been realised as we explore transforming this service from a pilot scheme to a future commissioned service.

In addition, we commission Holiday Activities & Food Programme which offers targeted positive activity and a hot meal in the Easter, Summer & Winter school holidays to approximately 22,500 school-aged children across the County. To date, the VCSE sector has created the following capacity in the support of this programme:

Holiday Period	Available Places
Summer 21	40,705
Winter 21/22	10,846
Easter 22	19,187

As part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda, local VCSE sector partners have been supported to apply for grants of between £5k-£50k via the Youth Investment Fund in support of the expansion and improvement of local youth facilities in the 24 wards of Staffordshire categorised as 'Left Behind' areas.

In support of this more targeted approach to positive activity and ensuring the sustainability of the wider Support for Young People portfolio, the County Council has committed to producing a statement outlining the sufficiency of local services for Young People which will be a thorough mapping of services which identifies any gaps in provision. This statement will form a key part of how we facilitate meaningful conversations with people about how we meet the needs in the local community working with SCVYS and others to ensure that local Young People have access to the right help and support.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 19 MAY 2022

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

By Cllr Charlotte Atkins

Question

What does the County Council do (a) to respond to residents who report the destruction of hedgerows on private land during the nesting season, and (b) to monitor the state of hedgerows and encourage their protection?

Reply

(a) There are two issues within this – firstly the destruction of the hedgerow and secondly the potential destruction of active bird nests. Some, but not all, hedgerows fall within the remit of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, and these would fall under the remit of the local planning authority i.e., the relevant district or borough council. As such, we would generally refer people to the relevant council to check whether any permission had been granted or whether an offence may have occurred and to follow this up via enforcement.

In relation to nesting birds, destruction of nests could constitute a wildlife crime and would be the remit of the police. However, it should be noted that any action would depend on good evidence that an offence had occurred, which is often difficult to provide.

Neither of these issues are the remit of the County Council and we generally sign post enquirers to the relevant body.

(b) The County Council supports protection of hedgerows in relation to its own planning function in line with policy / legislative requirements, and in the ecological and landscape advice it offers through arrangements with some district and borough councils to support their planning roles. We manage the hedgerows on our own countryside estate, for example our recent work with local school children to plant hedgerow trees at Apedale Country Park – teaching children about climate change and nature recovery.

More proactive work to support hedgerows is generally through our environmental partnership initiatives, such as through the Cannock Chase AONB's Farming in Protected Landscapes Programme, or through Lottery-funded initiatives such as Transforming the Trent Valley.

With regards to highways unless there are specific agreements to the contrary the maintenance of highway boundary hedges is usually the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. Where hedges are the responsibility of the Highway Authority trimming is carried out annually during late winter to avoid bird nesting and to support local ecology. If a hedge requires cutting between 1st April and 31st August, this will generally only be for safety reasons and following an ecological survey.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 19 MAY 2022

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

By Cllr Hussain

Question

Will the council consider assisting countywide community centres, food banks, and soup kitchens in their excellent efforts to combat poverty in our society?

Reply

The County Council are already supporting a number of initiatives including.

The Education Support Fund

This scheme provides approximately 26900 children with a £15.00 supermarket eVoucher per week out of term time. The eligibility criteria are as follows: -

1. Children in receipt of means tested benefit related free school meals.
2. Children in receipt of Think 2 funding
3. Children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium Funding
4. Children accessing alternative or independent education provision but identified in a household with financial exclusion
5. Staffordshire County Council Care Leavers

The eVoucher are sent direct to the education settings in Staffordshire for them to distribute to the families accordingly or we mail the families out direct asking for them to contact us to claim their eVoucher.

This scheme has been delivered every half term since October 2020 and will continue until Easter 2022, May 2022, Summer 2022.

Household Support Grant Food and Essential Supplies

This project is a short-term grant allocated to Staffordshire County Council through the Household Support Fund and will only be available whilst we have funds remaining or will terminate on the 31st September 2022.

Families facing substantial financial hardship are able to apply for an Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies. Grants will be made available to Families via an eVoucher. The eVoucher will be awarded by Text or Email, depending on preference. The eVoucher will be redeemable at Aldi, ASDA, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose or Marks & Spencer's.

Applicants will be required to be in receipt of means tested benefits to be considered for an Assistance Grant.

Home Heating – Fuel Vouchers

Individuals and families struggling to pay their fuel bills, could get up to £350 worth of financial help. Grants will be provided by pre-paid meter credit or paid directly to the resident's energy provider. The grants can be used to add credit to their account or to clear prior debt.

If they are in an emergency situation and you do not have heating, or their heating has broken, we can deliver electric oil filled heaters to their home. They will also receive a Winter Warmth Pack (which includes hats, gloves scarves and hot flasks) for each individual who resides within the house.

Residents' information is cross checked against the wider Staffordshire Warmer Homes offer, to see if help to get a long-term central heating solution fitted in the home, as well as insulation, or more energy efficient measures that can save them money.

We are also active partners in the network of community food banks and soup kitchens for example,

1. Children's Centre staff have access to the foodbank online systems, this enables them to make referrals for support direct when families contact us needed help.
2. Staffordshire Connects has details of any financial support or discounted food available for families to access.
3. Staffordshire Children's Centres receive food donations from local supermarkets, these are made available to the vulnerable families locally.
4. We continually promote the Staffordshire County Council benefits checkers throughout our online social media, face to face through our service provision and when accessing any food support.
5. Referrals are made into the Family Support Providers where required when families are identified to support them with their finances.
6. Staffordshire Children's Centres work in partnership with the VCSE sector enabling us to access food supplies for families in emergency situations. As such we have been able to provide tailored food

supplies that have been delivered direct to family homes taking into account dietary requirements.

7. The Early Years Coordination Service created the Family Hub Cooking project, please see here for more information [Family Hub Cooking | Staffordshire Connects](#). Staffordshire County Council has worked in partnership with Family Action to produce very simple recipes for families to try and that are low cost to make as well as weekly Free School Meal ideas and shopping lists. We then worked in partnership with our district partners to create YouTube Videos showing how to create the meals.
8. For the annual year 2021/22 **923** children attending Cannock schools were gifted free school uniforms saving families **£46,150**. We are looking to extend this initiative to other libraries and are beginning work in Stafford.

