

Date: 21 July 2022

County Council - Thursday 21st July 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

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 21st July 2022 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed:

- Questions

John Henderson
Chief Executive

Enc



QUESTION 1

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

**Question to Cllr Alan White
Leader of the Council**

By Cllr Pritchard

Question

Yesterday Tamworth hosted the Queens Baton Relay, with the baton ending its journey through Tamworth at a huge festival of sport and music in the town centre. Tamworth has also secured another honour, being the only Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Festival Site in Staffordshire. Over the next three weeks Tamworth will be showing Live footage of the games in the Castle Grounds, as well as putting on be a three-week summer festival of sports, entertainment, concerts and community events.

Will the Leader of the Council join me in congratulating Tamworth, and all those officers and volunteers, who have worked so hard in securing this amazing event?

Reply

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) congratulates all eight districts and boroughs for their involvement and co-ordination of events for The Queen's Baton Relay. SCC recognises the commitment made by Tamworth District Council to offer the Commonwealth Games Festival Site providing live footage of the games over the coming weeks of sport.

SCC has been committed to supporting all the districts with their plans for The Queen's Baton Relay. Co-ordinating a county-wide group to discuss and co-ordinate the events, offering support from relevant teams to ensure the events could be delivered efficiently, safely and were well promoted to Staffordshire residents. Comms have been actively involved in sharing the social media posts (on all platforms available) from all district councils. All the activities, routes and events were and will continue to be (where applicable) communicated via a dedicated webpage on SCC's website to ensure Staffordshire residents would know how and when to get involved with The Queen's Baton Relay and Commonwealth Games in the County.

SCC look forward to the start of the Commonwealth Games on 28 July and in particular the two events that will take place within our county: the

Mountain Bike event which will be held on Cannock Chase on 3 August and the Cycling Time Trial on 4 August in South Staffordshire.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

Question to Cllr David Williams Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

By Cllr Oates

Question

Tamworth is in a unique situation being almost completely urban and without many rural roads, this means almost all roads have kerb stones.

Each year we see weeds growing up to 2ft high in these kerbs, not only are they unsightly but their roots will be creating gaps in between kerb stones and slabs which will fill with water then freeze and then become an expensive pothole or broken kerb stone/slab. These are our assets to maintain, so could the portfolio holder look to support more weed suppression in urban areas particularly Tamworth, in order to reduce future highways repair costs?

Reply

As part of the new vision and investment in highways we will be reviewing services that both improve the condition of our road network and have environmental benefits for our communities throughout Staffordshire.

Current weed control operations are undertaken to mitigate any structural damage to the highway infrastructure and improve visibility at key locations. However, there are number of factors that limit the effectiveness of this routine maintenance service.

To meet previous MTFS savings, the frequency of weed treatment was reduced to just once each growing season. Added to this, the chemicals used are environmentally regulated and the treatment is only effective on growing plants. This effectiveness can also be reduced if it rains after treatment.

Several alternative treatment methods do exist, some being more expensive and less effective at killing the weed at source. However, we are currently investigating new technologies, their cost to benefit ratios and what schemes can be employed to support our climate emergency ambitions.

However, a particularly useful method of weed prevention is through regular road sweeping activity. Therefore, part of any future weed treatment solution will include looking for support from local councils to maintain, and in some cases possibly increase, the amount of local road sweeping activity.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Clements

Question

Please can the Cabinet Member please tell me the costs to repair pavements specifically in Tamworth where people use them to park inconsiderately and make them unsafe for pedestrians and those with disabilities?

Reply

Parking on the footway can obstruct and seriously inconvenience pedestrians, people in wheelchairs or with visual impairments and people with prams or pushchairs.

Rule 244 of the Highway Code clearly states that drivers must not park partially or wholly on the pavement in London and should not elsewhere unless signs permit it.

In 2020, the Department for Transport carried out a consultation on managing pavement parking which outlined options to tackle pavement parking at a local authority or national level which included three options; improving the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) process, under which local authorities can already prohibit pavement parking; a legislative change to allow local authorities with civil parking enforcement powers to enforce against 'unnecessary obstruction of the pavement'; or a legislative change to introduce a London-style pavement parking prohibition throughout England.

The consultation closed in November 2020 and as of July 2022, the Department for Transport advice on the consultation page is that the feedback is being analysed.

Currently, if there are no parking restrictions and vehicles are parked in contravention of the rules of the Highway Code the matter can be reported to the police who have access to powers enabling them to identify vehicle owners and issue on the spot fines if necessary.

We repaired around 2,300 footway defects across the county in the past year at a cost of around quarter of a million pounds. However, but we don't collect the cause of defects so it's not possible to say how many of these were as a result of footway parking as opposed to other general ageing and deterioration.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Jay

Question

Tamworth has recently seen some large and disruptive traveller encampments. Residents are concerned about the mess caused to open spaces and parks, as well as the anti-social behaviour that can take place while camps are there. There is also the not insignificant cost associated with cleaning the County Council owned space after the travellers have left. What is the County Council doing to ensure its open spaces in Tamworth are secured against encroachment by unauthorised travellers?

Reply

There has been very little impact on property under the control of the County Council in Tamworth. Since the beginning of 2021 there has only been one report of travellers, but they had moved on by the following day.

The vast majority of council owned open space in Tamworth is school land where access is controlled, whilst there is some highway land this is operational highway in all but one location. There is no county council-controlled park land.

Countywide, the majority of traveller encampments affecting council-controlled properties are on either country parks or highway. We are not generally allowed to restrict access to these areas; where we are able to do so, we balance legitimate access needs to the risk of encampments.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Ford

Question

Sitting in the south-east of the county, Tamworth shares a significant length of border with Warwickshire. Given that political boundaries mean very little to most residents, what guidance can be given to ensure that cross-border issues are resolved in a satisfactory and timely manner?

Reply

The county council has a strong track record of working with partners regionally and nationally to deliver against our ambitions. We proactively engage in a range of regional strategic partnerships such as Midlands Connect and the Midlands Engine to support the delivery of our priorities. We also engage in a range of local government networks, such as the County Council Network and Local Government Association, that provide opportunities to continue to build strong strategic relationships with our neighbouring authorities and beyond.

At a service level, we have a range of different mechanisms and arrangements in place to address cross-border issues. A few examples include:

- The School Organisation Team works closely with all neighbouring authorities on school place planning matters. Recently the Team have worked to secure additional school places to mitigate the impact of proposed residential developments on the border.
- The Highways Team maintains good working relationships with all neighbouring councils. Staffordshire County Council is a founder member of the Midlands Highway Alliance Plus, 35 local highway authorities working together to share learning, best practice, and closer collaboration.
- Within Adult Social Care there are a range of operational arrangements in place to support cross-border arrangements, for example Staffordshire residents accessing social care services, such as a care home in another local authority area.
- In my own portfolio, we have some significant examples of cross border working. Warwickshire and Staffordshire Library colleagues

regularly share best practice and initiatives such as the Community Managed Library Model, with volunteers from both areas sharing their experiences and learning.

We fully appreciate that residents do not recognise boundaries in terms of accessing public services, and we work well with our neighbouring authorities. Staffordshire County Council is committed to working with all relevant partners to deliver the best possible outcomes for Staffordshire.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Edgeller

Question

The A34 in the South East Division is not mentioned in the extra funding that has been allocated to the County Council, I refer to the £3 plus million.

My concern is the state of the A34 leading into Stafford which is a major commuter Gateway into the town from the south. It is also a major principal road when an accident occurs between junctions 12 and 13 on the M6. This means this road is then subject to very heavy motorway diverted traffic on top of the existing traffic.

The Radford Bank Islands are currently in a dreadful state and a danger especially to cyclist and motorbikes. From the Radford Public House to the Queensville Island also needs immediate attention. I have raised this issue many many times previously and is still waiting for attention.

I might add also along the A34 Cannock Rd needs to be a 30 miles an hour area to the bottom of Holdcroft Rd.

When are we going to see some action on the above questions please?

Reply

A top priority for the county council is to fix more roads, which is why during 22/23 the council is investing an extra £15M in capital maintenance schemes and operations.

However, with many locations needing attention and government grant funding for highway maintenance reducing it is vital that we leave no stone unturned when it comes to identifying every other potential sources of funding opportunity.

Earlier this year the government announced a second round of its Levelling Up Fund (LUF2), inviting bids of up to £20M to achieve the Levelling up

White Paper Missions, including Transport Infrastructure, Living Standards, Skills, Health, Well-being, and Pride in Place.

Many sections of the A34 through Stafford, which is part of the national Major Road Network (MRN), are key to the LUF2 aims locally and so are included in Staffordshire's bid. If successful, major structural maintenance works and sustainable transport improvements along this route will be carried out during 2023/24 and 2024/25.

To compliment the council's LUF2 bid and maximise the benefit of all the potential funding available the council's own investment during 22/23 is being targeted to other major key gateway locations across the county.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Pardesi

Question

Residents are continually telling me they no longer even bother trying to get a GP appointment. They just go straight to A and E. With people also dying waiting for ambulances, what is the County Council doing to hold the local NHS to account for its failures during what has become a dangerous health service crisis?

Reply

It has been clear for a long time that the NHS, including access to GPs, is under considerable pressure. Demand is rising and the NHS is finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain staff. This was evident before Covid and has been exacerbated by the pandemic. We have seen 'Major Incidents' called several times by the County's acute trusts over the past twelve months such as has been the pressures on the system. It is important that we all work together to try and support the NHS to manage these pressures in an effective way.

Our Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for holding the NHS to account and includes colleagues from County as well as District and Borough councils. The Committee regularly calls on the NHS to provide assurance that their services are operating to the standards we expect.

The Committee scrutinised management of NHS pressures in December 2021 and access to GPs in July and December 2021 – and the webcast is available on the Council's website. The Committee's work programme for 2022/23 outlines planned scrutiny of the NHS – and the September meeting includes a further agenda item to scrutinise how system pressures will be managed. I would also draw attention to the Scrutiny Annual Report 2021/22 (which forms part of today's Council agenda), whereby reference is given to the ongoing scrutiny of GP access.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Charlotte Atkins

Question

In the light of Ofsted's judgement that Leek High School is inadequate and requires special measures, what support will the County Council be offering the school? What are the wider implications for education within Leek of this Ofsted verdict?

Reply

Leek High School is part of The Talentum Learning Trust which is a Leek based academy trust. The local authority wants all children to receive the best education possible and wants all Staffordshire schools to be judged at least good. Where an academy school is judged as inadequate, it is the Regional Director (previously known as the Regional Schools Commissioner) who will make the decision about the future of the school. The WM Regional Director has issued a Termination Warning Notice to the academy trust. The trust are required to provide written evidence to demonstrate their capacity to deliver rapid and sustainable improvement at the academy. If the Regional Director is not satisfied that this can be achieved, he will consider whether to terminate the funding agreement in order to transfer the academy to an alternative academy trust.

The LA continues to meet regularly with officers from the DfE regions group' office of the Regional Director to discuss schools and academies that are causing concern. Leek High School and The Talentum Learning Trust are part of these discussions. As a decision about Leek High School are made, the LA will want to ensure this does not impact negatively on education offer across Leek.

The local authority still has a statutory responsibility for safeguarding children and young people. As soon as the LA was aware of the safeguarding concerns raised within the report, contact was made with the Academy Trust and support offered. The LA education safeguarding lead has since visited the school to undertake a robust safeguarding audit and supported in the drafting of an action plan to address safeguarding issues.

The safeguarding lead has arranged to revisit the school to review the impact of actions taken.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Afsar

Question

As a councillor, I often get disparaging remarks about Burton's road conditions, such as "potholes are so awful in Burton it's like driving over "craters on the moon." What can the cabinet member do to enhance Burton's roads?

Reply

Staffordshire's huge road network is vital for keeping our county connected and its residents and businesses on the move.

This year we are investing over £50 million in a range of major projects, vital local improvements, and general road maintenance, including an additional £15.5M funded directly by the County Council to fix more roads.

In Burton specifically over the last two years we've invested over £2M in mix of structural maintenance, surface treatments and reactive repairs to potholes.

And subject to confirmation of future funding we plan to invest a further £1M on preventative treatments between this year and 2024 and have identified a £4.1M of other high priority structural maintenance needs.

We recognise that there is always more to be done and we continue to lobby central Government for the money necessary to keep Staffordshire's roads in the condition we expect and is needed to ensure local communities and businesses are able to see the benefits of an improved highway network.

One example is within our LUF2 we are bidding for £6m to invest in improvements at Burton's southern intersection with the A38(T) and the connecting links on the A5121. The scheme includes carriageway maintenance, carriageway widening through the junction and on the approaches, new traffic signal controllers and improvements at the adjacent B5018/A5121 junction.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 21 JULY 2022

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

By Cllr Hussain

Question

What remedies will the council consider in response to the anticipated decrease in quality and quantity of school meals owing to inflation?

Reply

Individual schools and academy trusts are responsible for procuring their school meals. The government has set school food standards which are designed to help children develop healthy eating habits and ensure that they have the energy and nutrition they need to get the most from their whole school day.

When agreeing a contract, school leaders should ensure the contract specification includes the School Food Standards, Professional Standards, food quality and lunchtime experience.

Through the joint venture company Entrust, many schools have a schools meal contract with 'Chartwells'. This contract does include an expectation that the school food standards will be delivered.

Across the country school meal providers will be facing the same challenges. It is for schools to ensure that standards are maintained.

