

Date: 12 October 2022

County Council - Thursday 13th October 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 13th October 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 – 13 October 2022

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

By Councillor Pritchard

Question

In August residents of my division, and the wider town, suffered as a result of the closure of the Ashby Road for utility works. Some residents were completely cut off from Tamworth by the closure, due to the 24 minute diversion.

Can the council look at how the rules on road closures could be updated to include residents in these decisions? This would both benefit residents effected by such roadworks and the Authority's reputation.

Reply

Ashby Road rail bridge is a specific pinch point in the County where any roadworks will most often require a closure due to the width.

New developments are progressing along the Ashby Road, No Mans Heath corridor and require various utility connections. The council's Traffic and Network management team coordinate these works and deliberately held-up the recent works so that they would be carried out in the quieter August summer holiday period.

For the residents to the East of the bridge this obviously caused some disruption. However, as with any road closure, advance notice was provided and a signed diversion route put in place, with alternative unsigned local routes also available and regularly used by local traffic.

Responsibility for the communication of a road closure rests with the individual utility provider, developer, or contractor. In addition to the legal notices all the remaining requirements, including letter drop, advance signage and discussion with affected bus companies, were all followed for this closure.

As part of the wider highways transformation programme, we will be reviewing best practice and considering what additional measures can be made to help raise awareness and reduce the impact of works that are

likely to cause significant disruption to local communities or adversely impact on the council's reputation.

County Council Meeting – 13 October 2022**Question to Councillor Wilson
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture****By Councillor Hussain**

Question

Small charities, community enterprises and local groups are doing heroic work in this cost-of-living crisis by supporting families through the food bank and soup kitchens and so on. How can the council help them to carry on their fantastic effort, especially in areas like Eaton, Shobnall, Anglesey, Stapenhill, and so on?

Reply

First of all, I would like to join Cllr Hussain in expressing my appreciation and thanks for the tireless efforts of community groups across Staffordshire in supporting residents with a range of issues, including the cost of living. The Council has recently launched a campaign, to highlight the help and support that is available throughout the county to tackle the current cost of living pressures. The 'Here to help' campaign is directing people to support on things like managing debt, paying bills, food and essentials, staying warm and helping others.

The voluntary sector plays a vital role in making Staffordshire a great place to live, where everyone can prosper, be healthy and happy. Across the Council we work in partnership with the voluntary sector and our communities on a wide range of different initiatives and priorities, including the Community Champions Programme in parts of Burton. The Council has recently recommissioned its VCSE Capacity Building Framework to provide vital support to community groups and the voluntary sector to access training and development support, secure additional funding and recruit volunteers. This three-year contract, invests £1.5m into supporting our local voluntary sector.

Through our Community Fund, local community groups have the opportunity to access small grants to help support a huge range of community activities. In 2021 we supported 156 different community groups, with a total of £114,000 awarded. The 2022 Fund is currently open to applications until the end of October.

County Council Meeting – 13 October 2022**Question to Councillor Price
Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)****By Councillor Afsar**

Question

According to the Sutton Trust, only 30% of year 13 students nationwide completed work experience. Is there a figure for the percentage of year 13 students in Staffordshire who are excluded from gaining valuable work experience, and what can be done to improve the situation? (Reference: Page 8 Local Government first, no 670 April 2022)

Reply

Staffordshire County Council does not collect this information on behalf of schools and colleges. Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors, employers and other agencies.

The Department for Education expects all schools and colleges to use the internationally recognised Gatsby Benchmarks to develop a careers programme that increases opportunities for students to access everything from experiences of the workplace and personal guidance with a careers adviser, to engagement with employers, colleges, training providers and universities. The benchmarks are non-statutory but support schools and colleges by providing a framework around which they can develop their careers programme in line with their legal requirements to provide independent careers guidance to pupils throughout their secondary education (11 to 18-year-olds) (the Gatsby Benchmarks). Benchmark 6 sets out that every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.

This benchmark is less about work experience and more about experiences of the workplace. Employers will have a critical role in providing 16 to 18-year-old students with first-hand experience of their chosen occupational area in an authentic setting over a long period of time.

County Council Meeting – 13 October 2022**Question to Councillor Jessel
Cabinet Member for Health and Care****By Councillor Charlotte Atkins**

Question

What effective involvement does Staffordshire County Council have with the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board?

Reply

Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Integrated Care Board (ICB) are now responsible for arranging NHS services in Staffordshire. The Council is involved with the ICB in a number of ways:

1. The Council's Chief Executive sits on the Board of the ICB.
 2. The Council and the ICB are statutory partners in the Integrated Care Partnership, which is co-chaired by the leaders of Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council.
 3. The ICB is a statutory member of the Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board.
 4. The Council and the ICB co-operate on a range of programmes to improve and integrate health and care services – for example hospital discharge services, creating a single health and care record, sustaining the workforce and supporting independent sector providers to improve quality of care.
-

County Council Meeting – 13 October 2022**Question to Councillor Sutton
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People****By Councillor Pardesi**

Question

What is this Council's response when headteachers across the country report that children are so hungry they are eating rubbers, hiding in the playground because they don't have lunch money and even pretending to eat out of empty lunch boxes?

Reply

Children in reception and Key Stage 1 aged 4 – 7 years old are entitled to universal free school meals and so are able to access a cooked meal each day at school. Where headteachers are aware of children attending school hungry, they will support parents in checking the eligibility for free school meals. If there is no eligibility, then the school would look to support children so that they are not going hungry. Schools will also signpost families to other agencies who will be able to assist with food parcels and vouchers to be used during certain school holidays.

Parents claiming some benefits can claim free school meals for any of their children who are registered at a Staffordshire school and who would normally be at school at lunch time. School meals are a good way to ensure that your child eats well at lunchtime, and you can save yourself time and money. [Overview - Free school meals - Staffordshire County Council](#)

We have been using the Household Support Fund allocated to Staffordshire County Council to ensure that throughout the school holidays children in receipt of free school meals are able to access food vouchers to ensure people have access to help and support when they are not in school. This has resulted in:

1. A £15.00 Voucher to children eligible for Free School Meals over the May Half Term and for two weeks over the summer holidays.
2. Vouchers to support our care leavers.
3. Provided additional funding to enable the [Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme](#).

If you would like more information on how Staffordshire County Council will use this funding, please click on the link - [Household Support Fund \(HSF\) - Cabinet Report, May 2022](#)

[Household Support Fund 2022 | Staffordshire Connects](#)