

Date: 08 February 2023

County Council - Thursday 9th February 2023

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 9th February 2023 meeting of the County Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed:

- Questions

John Henderson
Chief Executive

Enc



Question No. 1

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023

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

By Councillor Pritchard

Question

According to a report compiled by SunLife UK that looked at several indicators, Tamworth has been ranked the 4th safest place in England and Wales for the over 60's to live. Top in Staffordshire. The report measured consistently low, on average, burglaries, theft, ambulance waiting times and flu mortality. The same report concluded that Staffordshire is the safest county out of England and Wales for the over 60's to live. Would the Leader agree that this is very positive news and will he join me in thanking the public services involved in the indicators measured in this report?

Reply

We are delighted to see that Tamworth has been ranked the 4th safest town in England and Wales for the over 60's. Lichfield, Stafford and Newcastle-under-Lyme are also in the top 20 towns, and Staffordshire is ranked the safest county in England. The ranking appears to be a consequence of low crime rates and low flu mortality rates among the over 60s.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Cllr Yates**

Question

Last weekend, I submitted a highways report, through the Staffordshire County Council Portal, that had 25 separate photographs attached, together with a statement regarding the poor condition of Meadows Way (A527) as it goes through Biddulph. This report was declared invalid, as I am asked to report each pothole/defect individually. On Saturday (4th Feb) I walked the 1.6km of Meadows Way and recorded 138 potholes and defects worthy of such individual report.

My in box is full of requests to get this road "sorted"

Instead of consuming my valuable time, officers valuable time, and inspectors valuable time, can I instead have a firm, dated commitment to resurface this, our one and singular "A-Road" in Biddulph?

Reply

I am pleased to confirm that the A527 principal route through Biddulph is identified in the provisional highway capital maintenance programme over the next two financial years for a combination of structural and preventative measures.

The section from the county boundary heading south to the junction with Grange Road is included in the preventative surface treatments programme this coming summer.

The next section from the Grange Road junction heading south to Tunstall Road roundabout (nr the new Aldi development) will also see surface pre-patching works during 2023, with surface treatment planned in summer 2024.

Preventative treatments are not suitable however for high stress roundabout locations. Therefore, the three roundabout junctions: Congleton Road roundabout, Wharf Road roundabout and Tunstall Road

roundabout, along with their approach roads, have also been identified as high priorities for remediation subject to future funding availability.

The fourth roundabout with Tunstall Road was recently resurfaced in conjunction with the S278 highway improvements for the Aldi development.

With regards to the reporting of highway defects we do, of course, welcome reports from the public about the condition of the highway network; however, all of Staffordshire's roads are routinely assessed by a team of Highway Inspectors who identify safety defects and assign a classification for repairs based on the risk the defect poses to the travelling public.

The A527 through Biddulph is inspected on a monthly basis and any actionable defects identified at that time are assigned a classification and necessary works are raised to keep the road in a safe condition.

In addition to this the Council can receive between 3,000 to 5,000 reports a month in relation to highway matters. Visitors to our website are advised of the routine inspections which will log each individual pothole if it meets our intervention criteria at the time of the Inspector's visit.

If a customer raises an individual defect through our website or MyStaffs app, our current digital technology provides a specific reference number which is used to provide updates to the customer on the status of that particular defect's repair. Recent development work to improve this process has included the provision of photographs to assure customers that the specific defect they reported has been actioned.

A significant element of the Highways Transformation programme is to improve the customer journey and further development work will be taking place to expand the way in which defects can be reported and enhance the information available to customers.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor Tagg
Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure
and Climate Change****By Councillor Afsar**

Question

Urban Tree planting is critical for maintaining good air quality. What else can be done to plant more Trees in urban areas and do you have any district by district year to year comparative statistics on Urban tree planting in Staffordshire?

Reply

A corporate Tree Management Strategy is currently under development. This will include future tree planting and maintenance programmes, which amongst other things is a key part of the council's Climate Change Action Plan.

There are already several programmes of tree planting activity taking place. Examples include:

- a. A free tree giveaway that will be taking place in the coming weeks via the Country Parks. 5000 trees will be made available to residents to plant in their gardens to encourage urban tree planting.
- b. Economic regeneration schemes also include tree planting, and over the last two years the County Council has planted over 20,000 trees through this approach.
- c. Tree planting schemes involving schools taking place in many urban areas.

District and Borough councils are engaged in their own tree planting programmes and have a key role by influencing planting in new developments through their planning functions. Recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework mean that all new streets must now be tree-lined unless there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate. Opportunities are also taken to incorporate

trees elsewhere in new developments, such as parks and community orchards.

Last summer Cabinet approved a new highway tree strategy, within which it is now stipulated that where any existing highway tree has to be removed it will be replaced with at least 2 large or 3 smaller new trees. Borough District and Parish Councils are also supported to plant and maintain highway trees in suitable places.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Charlotte Atkins**

Question

How many speed cameras are there on Staffordshire roads? What percentage of them contain live working cameras capable of detecting speeding offences? How often are the working cameras switched between different locations? What criteria are used to determine which locations will have live cameras?

Reply

The use of camera enforcement across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent is managed through the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership, of which Staffordshire County Council is one of a number of members. Enforcement of speed cameras is the responsibility of Staffordshire Police.

Across the Staffordshire County Council area, there are 217 fixed cameras. The aim of fixed cameras, whether operational or not, is to encourage compliance with the speed limit to improve road safety. As such, the partnership does not make the status or number of individual cameras known publicly so that sites that are not in use can still provide a deterrence to speeding.

The use of fixed speed cameras has historically been prioritised based on the recent collision history of the location. This approach is currently being incorporated into an improvement programme which will consider upgrades to some older camera housings. This will increase the number of operational cameras and enable newer digital enforcement technology to be used. The improvement programme is being funded through the Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Hussain**

Question

Many gullies do not function even after cyclical cleaning and maintenance; however, replaced gullies work effectively and are proving to be a sustainable remedy. Will the council prioritise the replacement of old gullies to prevent roadsides flooding as a long-term solution?

Reply

Most examples of standing water are as a result of intense periods of rainfall exceeding the design capacity of highway gullies. Most often once the intensity of the rainfall eases the ponding water is able to drain away.

However, where standing water is identified as a regular problem, investigation is needed to determine the cause. Often problems exist with other parts of the drainage system managed by third-parties – for example at the outfall or within the carrier system, but sometimes the problem can be with the highway gully chamber itself.

Where the highway gully chamber is at fault, repair or replacement is programmed in accordance with the level of priority determined by risk to public safety and/or property damage.

Highway drainage systems are routinely inspected and modernised as part of planned programme of highway capital maintenance and renewal schemes.

In recent years the council has also invested in a programme of old Victorian gully pot replacements in Burton that were known to be causing particular local problems.

If a particular gully or collection of gullies is of local concern the local member can also use their local DHP funding allocation and local leverage to help accelerate repair or replacement.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Clements**

Question

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways explain what if anything will be done about residents using sockets within their home to charge their electric vehicles which potentially means trailing cables across footpaths and highways?

Reply

The County Council does not permit any cable to be placed across the public highway (even if covered or inserted into a gully); as it represents a health and safety hazard, and an impediment to the safe use of the highway by the visually and/or mobility impaired, or other affected user groups.

Under the Highways Act 1980, action may be taken to remove cables that are deemed unsuitable or unsafe. This method of on-street EV charging is therefore not considered a suitable approach for residents without off-street parking provision to charge their EV on-street.

We recognise the difficulties for people without off-street parking. To help with this, we are working alongside district and borough councils and the private sector to facilitate the development of a convenient and accessible network of charging points in Staffordshire.

This approach is set out in the Staffordshire County Council Public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy that was approved last month by Cabinet and will be signed off by each of the Districts/Borough councils. This document sets the scene for why we need to act, explains the current picture, and outlines the role that SCC will play as a supporter and coordinator of efforts to promote greener travel across the county. The Strategy will assist in enabling EVs to be a viable option for residents, visitors and businesses whilst helping to support the aims of the Council's Strategic Plan, through contributing towards achieving carbon net zero and improving the quality of life for residents through a reduction of noise and air quality impacts.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor Wilson
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture****By Councillor Pardesi**

Question

Which job roles, formerly delivered by Staffordshire County Council, are now undertaken by volunteers and the community and charitable sector?

Reply

The public sector landscape has changed fundamentally over the last decade, but in terms of how people chose to access and engage with services and the resources available to deliver them. When we started this journey in 2009 our communities told us they wanted to take care of themselves and each other, and that the public sector should do its best to enable this. We have therefore worked closely with our communities and Staffordshire's vibrant Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to ensure our residents can access support locally in a way that meets changing lifestyles while still providing value for money.

As a result, the Council has moved away from traditional service delivery models to working in a very different way alongside our communities. This has seen fundamental changes to the way services are offered to residents across a range of areas, including our Community Managed Libraries, Children's Centres and Family Hubs, country parks, highways maintenance, Archives and Heritage, our offer for young people, and more. Using Community Managed Libraries as an example, we now have 27 Community Managed Libraries across the county. They are managed by 18 partner and community organisations with support from 642 volunteers who help to enhance and shape their local library offer.

Through the activities set out in our Strategic Plan 2022-26 and our Communities Delivery Plan, we continue to build on this work with our partners and the VCSE sector, making sure our residents can access the right support at the right time to help them be healthy, independent, and live in sustainable communities. As the way we work with communities across these areas has changed so much and continues to evolve, it is not possible to provide a direct comparison between what is currently available to communities and what was formerly delivered by the Council.

County Council Meeting – 9 February 2023**Question to Councillor David Williams
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Flunder**

Question

What are the results from any recent traffic count surveys over a 24 hour average period, along the A53 Leek Road in Endon, between Moss Hill in Stockton Brook and Claylake in Endon?

Reply

There haven't been any recent 24-hour traffic count surveys carried out along the A53 Leek Road, Endon.

Traffic and pedestrian surveys will be carried out before the end of this financial year following your DHP request made on 18 January 2023 to consider the feasibility of replacing the existing zebra crossing with a push-button controlled pedestrian crossing.

The local team will keep you updated of the results in the coming weeks.
