

**Date:** 13 December 2023

**County Council - Thursday 14th December 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 a copy of the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was circulated.

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7. **Questions**

(Pages 3 - 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 Tradewell  
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services





**Question No. 1****County Council Meeting – 14 December 2023****Question to Councillor Victoria Wilson  
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture****By Councillor Yates**

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**Question**

In specific regards to Biddulph Town Footpath 89 which was logged by Biddulph Town Council with the County as a footpath dispute under the Highways act 1980 section 130 (6) on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 (almost five years ago), could the cabinet member give an update on the backlog of applications in relation to the definitive map: time taken to resolve; waiting list; etc. As a follow-up (or as context) you could report the progress to date on footpath path 89 that my residents are particularly concerned about?

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**Reply**

Public Footpath No 89 Biddulph Town is recorded as a cul-de-sac footpath on the County Council's Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way with no connection between Mill Cottage and Hurst Road. However, an application made under section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 has been submitted to the County Council.

At the present time the *route* from Mill Cottage to Hurst Road is not a public highway and the status of this *route* is in question. Previous case law states that we ought not to take action to remove any obstructions until its status has been determined via the s53 process.

The section 53 application is currently being worked on with a view to the draft report being circulated for informal consultation in the New Year and will hopefully go to the Countryside and Rights of Way panel in the spring, subject to any further comments/evidence which may be received following the informal consultation.

With regard to the backlog of s53 work, the council currently has a backlog of 278 undetermined Definitive Map Modification Applications, and of those the number of undetermined applications on which it has been directed by the Secretary of State to determine within a specified timeframe is 49. These 49 applications have been prioritised. Of the determined

applications, the Council has a backlog of 77 Definitive Map Modification Orders to be made and published.

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**County Council Meeting – 14 December 2023****Question to Councillor Philip White  
Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy  
and Skills****By Councillor Pardesi**

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**Question**

How can SCC help get the economically inactive back into suitable employment?

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**Reply**

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) supports the economically inactive into suitable employment through a number of routes both directly by its own services, and through relationships with key partners. SCC delivers the Staffordshire Jobs & Careers Service, a single point of contact for residents to secure job opportunities and career ambitions. The service offers a bespoke offer to candidates including CV support, promotion of jobs fairs and the matching of skills and qualifications to job vacancies.

SCC also delivers Community Learning and Multiply programmes through its direct delivery arm and delivery partners. The programmes provide adults with skills required to progress to employment. Community Learning courses are designed to provide adults with the skills to be connected to the digital world, improving employment opportunities, financial and social well-being. Multiply is aimed at those who may want to develop their numeracy skills for work or progression and those that want to brush up and develop their numeracy skills for everyday life and work.

SCC also works with the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and key partners to promote employability opportunities for residents. The [Work and Health Programme Pioneer](#) is DWP's contracted employment provision to support the economically inactive, persons who have a disability, the long-term unemployed and specified disadvantaged groups, to find sustained work.

SCC is also working with key partners to support programmes, recently announced under the governments back to work plan, particularly targeting economically inactive and those with mild to severe health conditions acting as a barrier to employment. Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire Integrated

Care Board is preparing a submission for the [WorkWell Vanguard](#). Vanguard areas will design and deliver a new early-intervention assessment and support service. It will provide participants with light-touch holistic support for their health-related barriers to employment through return to/thrive in work plans, and a single, joined-up view and gateway into the services that are available locally to manage their specific needs.

Also the [Universal Support](#) programme has been announced by government that will provide employment support to help the economically inactive, people with disabilities, people with health conditions and people with additional barriers to employment, to progress into sustained work.

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**County Council Meeting – 14 December 2023****Question to Councillor David Williams  
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Charlotte Atkins**

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**Question**

When and how will bus services in Staffordshire Moorlands benefit from extra money from the Government as a result of the cancellation of the northern leg of HS2?

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**Reply**

I can confirm that last week, the Department for Transport confirmed our Network North: Phase 3 BSIP funding allocation of £4,982,000 million of revenue funding to support delivery of our Bus Service Improvement Plan in 2024/25. This funding is in addition to our existing Phase 2 BSIP (BSIP+) funding allocation of £2,655,346 million that covered the period 2022/24. At the same time the government announced the BSIP+ extra funding, the previous Bus Recovery Grant payments came to an end (worth approximately £0.7M per year).

The Bus Recovery Grant (£0.7M) had been used to subsidise existing services that had become unviable as a result of passenger drop off post-covid. In addition, the funding to bus operators was changed resulting in their post-covid extra funding reducing by around 20% and more services therefore being deregistered as non-viable, which SCC have stepped in to support and maintain from the new BSIP+ funding.

In the Staffordshire Moorlands, BSIP+ funding has been allocated to introduce from February a Saturday service to route 94 alongside a new service (95) commencing on the 8th January that will serve Audley, Kidsgrove, Mow Cop, Harriseahead and Biddulph. The additional BSIP funding will enable these services and all services across the county that require subsidy to continue to at least March 2025 where it is anticipated that additional BSIP funding will be made available from the Department for Transport.

One of the challenges that we are aware that operators are facing is in relation to recruiting drivers even though hourly rates of pay have

increased. The impact of this is that operators have been unable to tender for evening and weekend enhanced services.

Alongside ensuring existing connections are maintained, the Local Bus and Community Transport Team and I welcome ideas that can be investigated for further enhancements to the Bus Network. BSIP funding expenditure will have a focus on accessibility when we are assessing local need as well as current and future provision. This funding cannot be utilised for capital expenditure for example bus stop upgrades to improve accessibility, however through our work to audit every bus stop across the county, a programme of improvements will be funded through the Capital Programme where possible.

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**County Council Meeting – 14 December 2023****Question to Councillor David Williams  
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Hussain**

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**Question**

The pavements on Anglesey Road, Uxbridge Street, and Branston Road have deteriorated in several areas, making it difficult for both wheelchair users and pedestrians to navigate. Additionally, there are issues with flooding along the roadside of these three streets. What reassurances can the cabinet member provide to address and resolve this problem?

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**Reply**

Good roads, footways and cycleways are important to residents and businesses, which is why as a well-run council we will continue to invest in them.

Over the next three years, we will be investing an extra £51m on repairing and maintaining our 6,200km of roads and 4,500Kms of footways and cycleways.

The forward investment programme for 2024/25, which amongst other things includes funding allocations to footway and drainage repairs, is currently being compiled in accordance with the council's highway asset management plan and will be available in March ahead of the new road repair season.

To minimise the impact and disruption to local communities and businesses, and to protect our investment from the risk of being dug up again, the timing of individual maintenance schemes will also need to be co-ordinated with other planned works, including for example superfast fibre network providers.

Where the council's strategic maintenance programmes don't include a locally important maintenance need the local Member retains the ability to use their own local pothole fund together with Member's existing Divisional Highway Programme, to bring local footway and drainage repairs forward.

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**County Council Meeting – 14 December 2023****Question to Councillor Julia Jessel  
Cabinet Member for Health and Care****By Councillor Afsar**

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**Question**

With the rise of Mental Health cases may I ask what actions the Council are taking to prioritise Mental Health Support services, both in terms of prevention and treatment for the residents of Staffordshire especially in light of the challenges posed.

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**Reply**

We are seeing an increase in mental health problems in the wake of the Covid pandemic and as a consequence of the challenges facing people, the raised awareness of mental health and the lifting of any stigma which has so long been associated with poor mental health.

The Council and the local NHS have recently published the Good Mental Health In Staffordshire Strategy for 2023-28. This describes how we will aim to help everyone improve and maintain their mental well-being, help those who have short periods with problems to regain their mental health and well-being, and help people of all ages with severe long term mental health problems to live productive and fulfilling lives.

The Council will maintain support for those eligible under the Care Act or Mental Health Act. The NHS is responsible for diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions.

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