

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 25 July 2019

Present:

Attendance		
Ben Adams	Michael Greatorex	Paul Snape
Philip Atkins, OBE	Gill Heath	Bob Spencer
Ann Beech	Phil Hewitt	Mike Sutherland
David Brookes	Jill Hood	Mark Sutton
Gill Burnett	Syed Hussain	Stephen Sweeney
Ron Clarke	Keith James	Simon Tagg
Tina Clements	Julia Jessel	Martyn Tittley
John Cooper	Bryan Jones	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mike Davies	Dave Jones	Ross Ward
Derek Davis, OBE	Ian Lawson	Alan White
Mark Deaville	Alastair Little	Philip White
Alan Dudson	Johnny McMahon	Conor Wileman
Janet Eagland	Paul Northcott	Bernard Williams
Ann Edgeller	Jeremy Oates	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Ian Parry	Mark Winnington
Keith Flunder	Kath Perry (Chairman)	Susan Woodward
John Francis	Kyle Robinson	Mike Worthington
Colin Greatorex	David Smith	

Apologies for absence: Charlotte Atkins, Maureen Compton, Trevor Johnson, Bernard Peters, Jonathan Price and Natasha Pullen

PART ONE

15. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

The following Members declared an interest in accordance with Standing Order 16.5:-

Member	Minute Nos.	Interest	Reason
Bryan Jones Paul Snape Bob Spencer Mark Sutton	20	Personal	Served in the Police with one of the proposed appointees to the Independent Remuneration Panel
Martyn Tittley	N/A	Pecuniary	Managing a contract awarded to his employer in respect of HS2

Janet Eagland Helen Fisher Phil Hewitt Johnny McMahon Susan Woodward	18 and 23	Personal	Trustee/Member of Chasewater Friends
Susan Woodward	23 and 24	Personal	Husband is Opposition Leader at Lichfield District Council
Johnny McMahon	N/A	Personal	Family owned property in Blithbury affected by the proposed line of HS2

16. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 May 2019

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 23 May 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

17. Chairman's Correspondence

Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday Honours

The Council extended their congratulations to Sue Ball in being awarded an MBE in Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday Honours for her services to Libraries. Sue began working in Staffordshire in 1988 as the Wombourne Mobile Librarian and was currently responsible for strategy and policy in Staffordshire. In recent years she had overseen the transfer of Stafford and Newcastle town centre libraries into new premises.

The Council also extended their congratulations to two foster parents from Burton upon Trent, Margaret and William Foster who had both been awarded MBEs for services to fostering in Staffordshire.

Honorary Alderman Tim Corbett

The Chairman informed the Council of the recent death of Honorary Alderman Tim Corbett. Mr Corbett was a Member of the County Council between 2001 and 2017 and represented the Needwood Forest County Electoral Division. He served on a number of the Council's Committees including the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; Planning Committee (of which he was Chairman between 2009 and 2017); Corporate Review Committee; Charities and Trusts Committee; Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee; Assets and Budget Select Committee; Enterprise, Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee; and the Regeneration and Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee. Mr Corbett was appointed as an Honorary Alderman in 2017.

Members paid tribute to Mr Corbett and then stood in silence in his memory.

Former County Surveyor – Allan Onions

The Chairman informed the Council of the death on 16 July 2019, of past County Surveyor, Allan Onions. Mr Onions had been Area Surveyor at Lichfield Area Office before becoming Deputy County Surveyor and then County Surveyor in 1983 retiring at the end of 1987. He was also President of the Chartered Institution for Highways and Transportation (CIHT) in 1985-86.

Members paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr Onions during his employment with the County Council.

Councillor Syed Hussain

The Council extended their best wishes to Cllr. Hussain who was about to embark on a Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

18. Statement of the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council presented a Statement outlining his recent work since the previous meeting of the Council.

New Supported Living Dynamic Purchasing System

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Dave Jones concerning how placements were quality assured, Mr Alan White indicated that not only were there mandatory systems in place through the Care Quality Commission, but the Council's own commissioning quality officers also ensured that placements were appropriate and of the required standard. He added that the Council also relied on those in receipt of placements, their family, Members of the Council who visit care settings and also Healthwatch to raise any concerns they may have.

Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards – Amendments to the Mental Capacity Act 2005

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward expressed her concern that the Council had been reprimanded by the Local Government Ombudsman and had appeared to have been singled out for the way in which it triaged Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) applications despite, as reported to the Council's Audit and Standards Committee, other local authorities adopting similar approaches. She enquired as to whether the Council's Safe and Strong Select Communities Committee would be permitted to continue to look into and monitor the situation? In response, Mr Alan White indicated that the approach the Council had taken on DoLS was down to its interpretation of the legislation and, to his knowledge, the vast majority of local authorities were similarly non-compliant. As a consequence, legislation to replace DoLS had been laid before Parliament and was currently awaiting Royal Assent.

The Staffordshire County Council Apprenticeship Strategy

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Mr Philip White welcomed the introduction by the County Council of its Apprenticeships Strategy which aimed to embed Apprenticeships within the county council's workforce, achieve maximum levy spend and work towards meeting the public sector target. He added that the Council would work with its other public sector partners and also businesses to make sure that maximum benefit is secured from the levy funding.

Adult Learning Disability Community Offer 2022 Programme

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward indicated that she welcomed the Council's Adult Learning Disability Community Offer Programme and suggested that, with regard to sustainability of the Offer, financial sustainability should not be the only driver. In response, Mr Alan White gave an assurance that the proposed Offer would not only be financially sustainable but also sustainable from the point of view of users of the service and also for the staff cohort who provided the service. He added that a range of options were currently being considered and would be referred to Scrutiny before being considered by Cabinet.

Development of Council Owned Older People's Nursing Homes

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Mr Dave Jones welcomed the proposals for the Council to develop its own nursing home provision and enquired as to what role Members could play in helping to identify those areas where there was a shortage of provision. In response, Mr Alan White indicated that he would welcome Members' input in relation to identifying area where there was a shortage in provision.

Mr Clarke also indicated that he welcomed the proposals and, in particular, the decision to refurbish the former Hillfield site in Burton. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that the Hillfield site was the first of three proposed sites for the Council to build new nursing homes.

Mr Alan White indicated that the funding of social care still remained a major cause of concern and, despite extensive lobbying by this and other local authorities, the Government's Green Paper on this matter was still awaited. He added that, with this in mind, the Council was to bring forward, within the next couple of months, its own Green Paper on Social Care in Staffordshire although this did not obviate the Government from publishing its Green Paper on the future funding of social care.

Domestic Abuse Tri-Partite Agreement

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward and Mr Adams enquired as to whether the services provided under the two Domestic Abuse Tri-Partite Funding Agreements were bedding in appropriately and efficiently. Mrs Woodward also expressed the hope that the new arrangements would deliver what they had promised and that the Council's Scrutiny Committees would have a role in monitoring the performance of the service. In response, Mrs Heath indicated

that the new contract arrangements commenced in October 2018 and that she would look to bring a report back to Members on the performance of the service.

Mr Sutton added that domestic abuse was one of the major factors that led to children being taken into care and that it was therefore important that the Council, together with its partners, had this issue at the forefront of its thinking.

Final Outturn Report 2018/19 (Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Mr Brookes paid tribute to his fellow Members who served on the MTFs working group and the Corporate Review Committee for the valuable contribution they had made during the budget setting process.

Mr Sutherland added that the spending controls which were put in place during the year had enabled the Council to achieve the necessary savings and he extended his thanks to all members of staff who had assisted in the delivery of those savings, to Rob Salmon and his colleagues in the Finance Team and also to the MTFs working group.

Enjoying the Summer Safely (Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward indicated that she was sure that all Members of the Council would wish to join her in extending sympathy to the family of Carl Storer who died as he heroically went to the aid of a young girl in Chasewater. She also referred to another recent water related death in Stowe Pool in Lichfield. She enquired as to whether there was a need to review the “no swimming” signage at Chasewater to make it absolutely clear about the dangers of swimming in open water. Mrs Woodward also referred to the additional demands placed on the Ranger service during warm weather when they had to inform people not to swim in Chasewater. In response Mr Winnington reiterated the dangers of swimming in open water and indicated that, following a recent review, additional signage and floatation aids would be installed at Chasewater.

Mr Atkins, Mr Deaville and Mr Alan White echoed the points made by other Members about the dangers of swimming in open water and Mr Deaville also referred to the death of a young person at Westport Lake last summer. He also informed the Council that the Fire and Rescue Service was doing a lot of work around raising awareness and water safety.

Highways Investment (Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Mr Clarke enquired as to whether highway maintenance teams, when they went out to undertake a pothole repair, had the discretion to carry out additional repairs in the immediate vicinity to the job there were sent out to do. Mrs Jessel also expressed similar concerns to those raised by Mr Clarke. In response, Mr Atkins confirmed that the highway teams did have that discretion but there were other factors involved such as whether they had sufficient materials on board their vehicle to be able to undertake those additional repairs.

Mr Flunder and Mr Hewitt referred to how Divisional Highway Programme (DHP) monies were being used effectively in their Division to support the provision of minor highway works requested by local communities.

Mr Brookes indicated that whilst he welcomed the £20,000 available to each Member to invest in local highway projects, he was concerned that as much as 20% of this funding may be swallowed up in administration costs. In response, Mr Deaville indicated that all works would have an element of administrative fees and these would be included in the final invoice for those works.

Mrs Hood also raised the issue of repairs not being carried out correctly the first time round and thus requiring additional visits from the maintenance crews. In response, Mr Parry stated that his understanding was that the cost of such additional visits rested with the contractor and not the County Council. He, and Mr Atkins, also referred to the additional investment made by the Council in highway maintenance which was now starting to have an impact on the ground. Mr Bryan Jones also indicated that, in recent weeks, he had seen a reduction in the number of highway related issues reported to him by his constituents.

Mr Hussain also referred to the poor quality of some of the reinstatement works undertaken by the utility companies.

Air Quality

(Paragraph 13 of the Statement)

Mr Robinson, Mr Tagg and Mr Wileman referred to recent initiatives for promoting cleaner air and also the need for the County Council, as highway authority, to work closely with the district and borough councils to ensure the implementation of action plans to tackle air quality issues. Mr Parry also indicated that the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee had also debated this matter and the need to tackle the issue through a mixture of regulation and behavioural shift. Mrs Trowbridge added that Staffordshire High Schools should be invited to have an input in developing policies on improving air quality as young people often had innovative ideas.

Mr Philip White referred to the issue of parents leaving their cars idling outside schools and the need to tackle the associated air quality issues through a mixture of raising awareness and also the possibility of persuading parents to walk their children to school or park away from the school and walk the last few hundred metres.

Staffordshire Warmer Homes Fund

(Paragraph 14 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Dudson as to whether the Fund could be utilised to cover the cost of providing cladding to improve the insulation of concrete homes, Mr Alan White indicated that such funding did not fall within the scope of the scheme and it was for local housing authorities and Housing Associations to pursue this issue with Central Government.

Mrs Hood welcomed the initiative and spoke about the need for publicity to raise the awareness of the scheme particularly as older people could be suspicious about

anything that was offered for “free”. She also enquired as to whether landlords could apply for funding under the initiative. Mrs Trowbridge responded by indicating that those tenants who met the criteria could request their landlords to apply for funding under the scheme. Mr Colin Greatorex also indicated that officers were contacting individuals directly concerning their eligibility under the scheme. He, along with Mr Alan White, added that there was also a vital role to be played by Members in promoting the scheme to their constituents who were eligible for the funding.

Dignity in Care Awards

(Paragraph 17 of the Statement)

Mrs Clements, Mr Michael Greatorex, Mr Alan White and Mr Atkins referred to the Council’s Dignity in Care Awards and paid tribute to those people in Staffordshire who provided both paid and unpaid care for others in the community.

Your Staffordshire Card

Mrs Woodward referred to the call-in of the Cabinet Member Delegated Decision relating to the withdrawal of the Your Staffordshire Card and expressed her thanks to the Members of the Corporate Review Committee for their constructive debate on the call-in and for allowing a member of the Youth Parliament to address the Committee. She did however express concern that, following the announcement of proposals to withdraw the Card, members of the Youth Council had emailed Members of the Council to express their concerns but, in the majority of cases, had not received a response. She urged Members that, when they received emails from young people, they provided them with the courtesy of a response.

RESOLVED – That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

19. Notices of Motion

Mr Wileman moved, and Mrs Woodward seconded, the following motion:

“The County Council values the importance of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals including the global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation and prosperity, and welcomes the importance placed by HM Government on all levels of government working together and that its partnership with local government is a key component to successful domestic implementation of the SDGs and that the county council has a vital role to play in terms of the planning, implementation and monitoring in Staffordshire which will be key in delivering the UK’s progress on meeting the ambitions of the Agenda 2030.

This County Council therefore:

- Calls upon Her Majesty’s Government to explore supporting domestic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through funded partnership roles within each local authority area;
- Encourages councils to continue their work on linking their local priorities with the overall ambitions of the SDGs;

- Declares a ‘Climate Emergency’, and commits to supporting Staffordshire councils in their work to tackle climate change by providing a strong unified voice for councils in lobbying for support to address this emergency, and sharing best practice; and
- The county council refreshes the good work of Hard Rain, Hard Rain 2 and Green Shoots to meet these new targets and share best practice across all councils.”

Mrs Woodward indicated that she, together with the other Members of the Opposition Group were in support of the motion and, following a short debate followed by a vote, it was:

RESOLVED – The County Council values the importance of the UN’s 17 Sustainable Development Goals including the global challenges of poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation and prosperity, and welcomes the importance placed by HM Government on all levels of government working together and that its partnership with local government is a key component to successful domestic implementation of the SDGs and that the county council has a vital role to play in terms of the planning, implementation and monitoring in Staffordshire which will be key in delivering the UK’s progress on meeting the ambitions of the Agenda 2030.

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- The county council refreshes the good work of Hard Rain, Hard Rain 2 and Green Shoots to meet these new targets and share best practice across all councils.

20. Recommendations to the Council

(a) Members’ Allowances Scheme – Independent Remuneration Panel Report

Members were informed that the County Council was required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on its Members’ Allowances Scheme. Any decision on the nature and level of allowances was a matter for the full Council, but the Council must have regard to any recommendations submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel before establishing or amending the Members’ Allowances Scheme. The Panel met each year to consider the recommendations to be made to the Council in respect of the level and nature of the forthcoming year’s allowances.

The Council, at its meeting on 21 March 2019, considered the Independent Remuneration Panel report of March 2019 and resolved that “The Council does not accept at this moment in time their recommendation for an increase in overall

allowances of 2% in line with the NJC pay award to staff.” It was also resolved that “The Council also feels in a time of change, that the recommendations of the Panel to make changes to the levels of remuneration be deferred for further consideration later this year, as the recommendations do not reflect the future ongoing developing roles of Members.”

Mr Tittley moved consideration of the following recommendations contained in the Panel’s report:

(i) That, in line with normal practice, the level of allowances be increased by 2% in line with the employee pay award for 2018-19.

(ii) That the three opposition leads supporting Select Committees be more formally recognised through the creation of three Opposition Select Committee Vice-Chairman from the single Shadow Cabinet SRA together with the Opposition Deputy Leader formally taking the Opposition Select Committee Vice-Chairmanship of the Corporate Review Select Committee.

(c) That the Chairman of the County Council, in consultation with the Leader of the County Council, be authorised to increase the allowance paid to the Vice-Chairmen of Committees to the level of the corresponding Chairman’s allowance if they are required to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman for a sustained period and, in those circumstances, the Chairman’s allowance will cease for the duration of their absence.

Mrs Woodward indicated that she was in full support of “(ii)” above as it recognised the input of the lead opposition members in respect of the Council’s scrutiny function.

Following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED – (a) That the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel that, in line with normal practice, the level of allowances be increased by 2% in line with the employee pay award for 2018-19, be agreed and be implemented with immediate effect.

(b) That the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel that the three opposition leads supporting Select Committees be more formally recognised through the creation of three Opposition Select Committee Vice-Chairman from the single Shadow Cabinet SRA together with the Opposition Deputy Leader formally taking the Opposition Select Committee Vice-Chairmanship of the Corporate Review Select Committee be agreed and that the Council’s Constitution be amended to include the provision of a Shadow Select Committee Vice-Chairman.

(c) That the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel that the Chairman of the County Council, in consultation with the Leader of the County Council, be authorised to increase the allowance paid to the Vice-Chairmen of Committees to the level of the corresponding Chairman’s allowance if they are required to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman for a sustained period and, in those circumstances, the Chairman’s allowance will cease for the duration of their absence, be agreed and that the Council’s Constitution be amended accordingly.

Note by Clerk: It is uncertain as to whether the Panel's report was adopted in full in addition to the specific resolutions minuted so the next full Council meeting in October will be asked to clarify the position.

(b) Independent Remuneration Panel - Appointment

The Council were informed that, at the County Council meeting held on 21 March 2019, it was agreed "That the Audit and Standards Committee be requested to carry out a further recruitment process for the Independent Remuneration Panel as soon as possible" so as to increase the Panel's Membership from three to five. This process had recently been completed and the Special Panel of the Audit and Standards Committee recommended to the Council that Mr William Read and Mr Anthony Styles be appointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of four years ending 31 March 2023.

Mr Tittley also paid tribute to the contribution made by the outgoing members of the Panel, Mr Les Trigg and Mr Tom Roach.

RESOLVED – That the recommendation of the Special Panel of the Audit and Standards Committee to appoint Mr William Read and Mr Anthony Styles to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of four years ending 31 March 2023 be approved.

21. Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel - Annual Report 2018-19

Mr Sutton moved consideration of the Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2018-19. He extended his thanks to Members of the Panel, and the officers who supported them, for the valuable contribution they had made.

Mr Bryan Jones outlined some of the vital work undertaken by the Council in its role as a corporate parent including the "Care Leavers Offer" and the work of the "through care team". Mrs Woodward also extended her thanks to the Corporate Parenting Panel and enquired as to whether every district/borough council in Staffordshire was represented on the Panel. In response, Mr Sutton confirm that all boroughs/districts were represented and that some Members of the Panel were dual members, representing both the County Council and a borough/district council.

RESOLVED – That the Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2018-19 be received.

22. Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees

With the consent of the Chairman, Leader of the Council withdrew this item.

23. Questions

Mr Brookes asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Could Members be assured that the extra investment allowed for each division within the budgets for highway improvements can be used in full and that there will be minimal and little administrative costs to allow maximum highway investment for the much-needed improvements and repairs ensuring maximum value to the ratepayer and residents of Staffordshire?

Reply

This one-off additional funding has been devolved to Members for locally identified maintenance priorities to directly replace or enhance the life of existing highway assets.

Members have been given the opportunity to discuss how to maximise the impact of the investment; including consideration of pooling divisional allocations, combining wider Divisional Highway Programme funding and the utilisation of the funding to secure additional external contributions.

A significant number of Member priorities have now been identified and work programmes are being drawn up and delivered. To ensure the available funding makes the greatest impact, effective planning and co-ordination is essential and delivery will take place throughout the financial year, with the majority of works completed by 31 March 2020.

Estimates for each element of identified work have been provided but all costs are indicative and are heavily dependent on factors such as site constraints, adverse weather and existing asset condition. In addition, works that involve excavations or tying in to existing structures can sometimes lead to unforeseen costs once on site.

The estimated costs for the Member's £20k maintenance schemes will include all associated activities to get the work on the ground, such as any necessary design; community engagement; legal noticing; statutory liaison with utility companies; and traffic management requirements (e.g. road closures, temporary traffic signals etc.). There are no additional funding streams to cover these activities and they would also have to be factored in to any works you were to commission yourself through a local contractor.

Mr Brookes asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Where wild flowers have been sown on or adjacent to the road verges, does the contractor moderate their cutting regime to allow the wild flowers to finish flowering and go to seed, encouraging further biodiversity within our landscape in both urban and rural highways?

Reply

Several years ago, the highways team worked with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to review rural grass cutting specification and help protect local biodiversity. Across the Staffordshire Moorlands there are significant lengths of rural verges that are cut just once each year in late September / early October in order to preserve the self-seeded wild flowers. Elsewhere, rural highway verge cutting is kept to just one swathe width (approximately 1m), or full visibility splays at junctions, and carried out 2 or 3 times per year to maintain highway safety.

In the urban areas most grass verges are maintained by Borough, District and Parish Councils through effective two-tier working arrangements. The County Council makes a financial contribution to meet minimum highway safety requirements in terms of visibility splays and to prevent excessive overgrowth adjacent to footways. However, the frequency, extent and timing of the grass cutting is determined by the respective local Councils to meet different local needs, including balancing local biodiversity and amenity value.

Supplementary Question

I would ask that the Cabinet Member take on board the fact that we need to review some of the contracts for mowing as some verges on rural roads in my area were mown in May, before the wild flowers had finished flowering, which was inappropriate?

Reply (by Chairman)

Mrs Fisher is not here to respond to you but I am sure that the issue you have raised will be taken back to her for consideration.

Mr Lawson asked the following question of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Were you aware of the list that has been produced, rating the performance of CCGs in the Northern sector, where the Staffordshire Moorlands had two of their CCG's rated in the lowest sector, and the others not a lot better. With the ongoing problems here in the Moorlands, i.e. Hearing Aids and 2 Hospitals awaiting decisions, I would like your comments on the situation? This comes at the request of the Staffordshire Moorland Health Committee which met last week.

Reply

All CCGs have been given a rating by NHS England for 2018/19 based on their performance against a national Improvement and Assessment Framework. This includes consideration of the extent to which they have good outcomes and good services for their registered populations, as well as their financial position. North Staffordshire is one of eleven CCGs nationally rated 'inadequate'. This is largely due

to their financial position, with a substantial overspend in 2018/19, and forecasted again in 2019/20.

The CCGs intend to review provision of hearing aids for non-complex audiology in the wake of NICE Guideline NG98 - Hearing Loss in Adults: Assessment and Management and expect to consult with the public commencing September 2019.

The CCGs have recently completed a public consultation on the future of community hospitals in North Staffordshire. The findings were considered by their Governing Body at their meeting of 25 June 2019 and will be reflected in the Decision Making Business Case, which is under development and which will form the basis of a final decision, anticipated in December 2019.

CCG ratings are here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ccg-annual-assessment-report-2018-19.pdf>

The CCG Improvement and Assessment Framework is here:

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CCG-IAF-2018.19.pdf>

Minutes from the CCG Governing Body meeting 25 June are here:

file:///C:/Users/rhar1sc/AppData/Local/Packages/Microsoft.MicrosoftEdge_8wekyb3d8bbwe/TempState/Downloads/NS%20SOT%20CCGs%20Extraordinary%20GB%20in%20Common%2025%20June%202019%20v2.pdf

Mrs Woodward asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

After the recent tragedy at Chasewater when a young man lost his life, statements by the Council have indicated that there is to be no full safety review of the site. The Cabinet Member reiterated the message in the media that Chasewater is “not a swimming lake” yet, three weeks previously, the well-publicised Ironman event took place in the same waters. Does the Cabinet Member agree that the County Council is sending out mixed messages about swimming at Chasewater and, if so, what does he intend to do about the ongoing safety concerns of those who know Chasewater best?

Reply

- At all times of the year, public swimming/ use of Chasewater for recreational swimming is prohibited and there are signs around the lake which make this very clear to all who make use of the Park.
- When we know that there is a period of warm weather, communication is increased to reiterate this message and as this is recognised as good practice it will continue.

- Staffordshire County Council Rangers patrol the area as much as possible, they use a megaphone to inform people in the water why swimming is not allowed. All incidents are logged. If people refuse to come out and there is any indication that they may be under the influence of alcohol etc, or if children are at risk, the police are called.
- Following the incident, staff from Rural County and SCC Health & Safety reviewed the provision of signs and life rings at Chasewater. There are numerous life rings in place and these are regularly checked, as well as a significant number of signs, as noted above.
- We will await the outcomes of the inquest into the recent tragic incident and will review our approach with input from emergency services to see if there is anything further which we can do.
- **Ironman** is a professionally planned and managed event; the welfare of the competitors is at the forefront of the planning process and therefore there are extensive safety measures in place. The competitors have experience of open water swimming and they're wearing wetsuits which trap a layer of warmth and guard against cold water shock.

We do recognise that there are other users of the water who do swim in the reservoir (i.e. Chasewater Open Water Swimming and Tri Club), however, as with Ironman these are time limited, regulated and fully supervised.

Supplementary Question

I have sent some correspondence to the Cabinet Member in relation to water safety and the work that the Local Government Association is doing on a cross-party basis to ensure that the message gets out there. One of the ways in which this can be done is by setting up a water safety partnership with all of the relevant authorities. It would be good to have the Cabinet Members response in respect of the correspondence I sent to him and may I have his assurance that any opportunities to improve water safety will be looked at?

Reply

I have received your correspondence and, yes, it would be interesting to talk to other Councils about the issues. I will respond to you about the LGA's work on this matter but I would reiterate that we have made it abundantly clear that Chasewater is not for swimming in.

Mrs Woodward asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Cllr White will be aware that Lichfield District Council says that the condition of Friary Grange Leisure Centre is "poor" and that "the age, condition and investment required would not represent good value for council tax payers". Can Cllr White tell me who

has been responsible for the condition of the Leisure Centre and any investment that was required for its maintenance – the County Council, the District Council or Friary School – and when was this arrangement put in place?

Reply

The Joint Use Agreement for community use was signed in 1971. The original building consisted of sports hall and changing facilities only. Various extensions to the original building have been made over the years since the original building was conceived. The County Council & The Friary school have maintained the sports hall, original changing rooms, the dance studio and associated changing facilities, and the external all-weather pitch. All other parts of the building are the responsibility of Lichfield District Council. The Friary School and Lichfield District Council share the utility costs for heating and lighting the building on the basis of their hourly usage.

Supplementary Question

There has been a fair amount of confusion, doubt and potential blame shifting. A condition survey was undertaken of the swimming pool area. Does the Cabinet Member know when that report was produced and, if not, can he find out and forward me the details?

Reply

I will look into this and will respond to you in writing.

Mr Robinson asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Communities whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

The communities of Kidsgrove, Butt Lane and Talke have recently been severely affected by a spike in crime and anti-social behaviour. As the local County Councillor, I have raised these matters with the Local Policing Team, the Staffordshire Commissioner and Newcastle Borough Councils Anti-Social Behaviour Team.

Out of many discussions I have had with the above organisations, it has been highlighted that there is a distinct lack of youth services in our community despite local volunteers and Staffordshire Clubs for Young People doing what they can to offer some youth activities. What extra support and resources can the County Council provide for the communities I represent, which are in desperate need of more youth services and facilities?

Reply

Staffordshire County Council is committed to Placed Based working and Kidsgrove, Butt Lane and Talke has been the area that was initially targeted in Newcastle-under-Lyme to ensure that the partners worked collaboratively in the best interests of families and communities in this area.

To do this they used an Early Help Performance Framework, which took data from a range of places including the borough council, police, health and many more. Anti-social behaviour was one of the indicators that was considered. At this time the data and local intelligence identified that there was a range of youth activities available for young people and this was not an area that should be an immediate priority.

SCVYS have an interactive map which shows some of the provision available for young people <http://staffscvys.org.uk/find-activities/> and partners in the district undertook a mapping exercise and worked with the community and based on feedback from young people the view of the group was that there was adequate provision locally.

A further area the council is seeking to embed is people helping people. As such we are encouraging #DoingOurBit which is about the local community doing more to help families and communities in need. One of the areas that could be explored is how people locally can deliver activities for young people. Within your area could the Kidsgrove Local Area Partnership work to secure additional funding or people to deliver this extra support?

In addition, each county councillor has £2,500 to allocate through the People Helping People Fund, to projects in their area which will help children, young people and families who need support, or help adults to stay healthy and independent. It is aimed at expanding existing provision or helping new groups to get off the ground – if local volunteers are available, this could be a fantastic opportunity to help them get going.

Supplementary Question

We are working extremely hard to provide youth services in the area and we have been looking at different initiatives to set up to get more people engaged. Will the Leader and the Cabinet Member do more to ensure that this Authority supports the initiatives being set up in this area?

Reply

Yes, we will support such initiatives including help with publicity.

Mr Robinson asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Could the Leader please outline what steps this Council has taken to protect pollinators across Staffordshire? Will he commit the Council to planting pollinator friendly wildflower corridors on County Council owned land and in our County Council owned parks?

Reply

The reason for the decline in pollinators is thought to be mainly due to decline in habitats such as wildflower meadows. The Council considers the needs of pollinating insects in the following ways:

Management of Country Parks

Pollinating insects are considered in our management of countryside sites, in the context of the habitat types they contain. For example, Apedale, Deep Hayes and Greenway Bank Country Parks have important meadows and flowering grass verges including some with rare orchids. We have developed management approaches, e.g. a low intensity grazing plan for the meadows at Apedale to control the more vigorous grasses so that wildflowers can thrive. These will continue to be protected and managed.

Another important habitat for pollinators is heathland, found mainly in Cannock Chase and Chasewater but on many other sites in the county. Our management plan for both sites includes bare ground management for solitary bees and wasps, which are important pollinators.

Cannock Chase and Chasewater heaths have been managed as mixed habitat areas consisting of lowland heath (for which is has been given international status), gorse scrub, scattered trees and copses and areas of woodland and also include important areas of wood pasture and wetlands. By maintaining a diversity of habitats within a site, there are likely to be flowering species across the majority of the seasons when pollinators are active.

Regeneration Sites

The Council advises on the development of regeneration sites and manages habitats on some sites. An example is at Redhill where good meadows have been created and enhanced.

Road Verges

Road verge management is another important way that flower-rich grassland can be maintained. The most flower-rich verges have been managed to ensure that wildflowers can flower and set seed, providing a nectar source for a range of invertebrate species, whilst preventing scrub and bracken from displacing these wildflower species.

Planning advice

When providing ecological advice to third parties, we work hard to retain natural habitats wherever possible, pushing for mitigation or habitat compensation where this is not possible in line with planning policy and relevant legislation.

In artificial situations, e.g. where natural habitats are not present, our advice is to request pollinator enhancements including planting of appropriate flower species and creation of nesting habitat etc. as required

Supplementary Question

The National Pollinators Strategy calls on local authorities to do much more to support pollinators on their land. Will the Leader ensure that Members do have an input into any initiatives to do with pollinators so that all divisions can get involved and be part of this?

Reply

I think that what the Council should be doing is looking at ways we can incentivise self-interest so that these things can happen.

Mr Smith asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Twelve months ago, on the 11th July 2018, together with a County Officer, I had a meeting with Mr Francis Thomas, Head of Corporate Affairs at West Midlands Railway.

At the meeting Mr Thomas gave an absolute assurance that they would not introduce charging at Shenstone Station until they had completed a full public consultation which would include highway proposals for on street parking and a study into the point of origin of vehicles before introducing parking charges.

My understanding is that there was an understanding that WMT were intent on introducing charging for parking at Shenstone (and Penkridge) and they would work with the County Council so any displacement of vehicles onto the surrounding highway was managed properly.

Can you advise what progress has been made with WMR to see, now they have introduced charging without consultation, what we can do to help ease the situation?

Reply

As Chair of West Midland's Rail Executive, I was naturally very disappointed to hear that WMT were proposing to introduce parking charges at Shenstone Railway Station without undertaking the proper promised consultation and in a manner that would have been uncoordinated with the necessary parking restrictions on adjacent roads – some of which the County Council has offered to finance.

Whilst the bottom line is that we can't stop WMT introducing parking charges at their controlled stations, they really need to explain to their customers why they think charging is a good idea especially as parking at stations within the TfWM area is free.

However, my understanding is that whilst ticket machines have been installed parking charges have yet to be introduced.

WMT had initially indicated that charging was going to be introduced from 1st July 2019, but the active involvement of County Council officers has delayed this introduction. An officer met with WMT to raise our concerns with respect to the car parking charges and to discuss the wider positives surrounding station travel planning. The latest correspondence received yesterday states that WMT has now carried out a study which includes station/train user engagement along the Lichfield line including Shenstone and has promised to provide the County Council with a copy of their report.

WMT has now also agreed to work with the County Council prior to the introduction of parking charges to look at both the level/pricing of charges and the management of vehicle displacement onto the local highway network. They are also looking at a cycle parking investment programme.

I will continue to press the matter.

Supplementary Question

I would like to invite the Cabinet Member to come to my Division and to have a look at the implications for traffic flows where people are cascading down from the middle and the north of the County to find the most convenient place to park near to the railway station?

Reply

Yes, I will.

24. Petitions

(a) Request for 20mph speed restriction along the roads forming the Cathedral View and Roman Heights Developments, Streethay

Mrs Eagland presented a petition from residents of Fradley and Streethay seeking a 20mph speed restriction along the roads forming the Cathedral View and Roman Heights Developments in Streethay.

(b) Save the Friary Grange Leisure Centre in Lichfield

Mr Colin Greatorex presented a petition opposing the possible closure of the Friary Grange Leisure Centre in Lichfield.

Chairman