

## **COUNCIL AGENDA**

### **To:- The Members of the Staffordshire County Council**

Notice is given that the meeting of the Staffordshire County Council will be held via Microsoft Teams at 10.00 am on Thursday, 23 July 2020 to deal with the matters set out on the agenda.

John Henderson  
Chief Executive  
15 July 2020

## **AGENDA**

(Note: The meeting will begin with prayers)

### **PART ONE**

#### **General Housekeeping and Declaring an Interest**

1. **Election of the Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year**
2. **Apologies for absence (if any)**
3. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**
4. **Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 March 2020 (Pages 5 - 22)**
5. **Election of the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year**
6. **Chairman's Correspondence**

The Chairman will mention a range of recent items of news which may be of interest to Members

7. **Statement of the Leader of the Council (Pages 23 - 30)**

The Leader will inform the Council about his work and his plans for the Council, and will give an overview of decisions taken by the Cabinet (and Portfolio Holders) since the previous meeting of the Council

8. **Recommendations to the Council (Pages 31 - 36)**
9. **Access to Information Rules - Special Urgency Notices (Pages 37 - 38)**

Report of the Leader of the Council

10. **Annual Scrutiny Report 2019/20 (Pages 39 - 52)**
11. **Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel Annual Report 2019-20 (Pages 53 - 68)**
12. **Committee Membership - TO FOLLOW**

To consider the appointment of the members to Committees on the nomination of Group Leaders.

13. **Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels - TO FOLLOW**
14. **Appointment of members to Outside Bodies 2018/19 - TO FOLLOW**

15. **Questions**

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

## 16. **Petitions**

An opportunity for Members to present and speak on petitions submitted by their constituents

## 17. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman of the Council will move the following motion so that the County Council can consider confidential business in private:-

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

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### **PART TWO**

(All reports in this section are on pink paper)

## **Note for Members of the Press and Public**

### **Filming of Meetings**

The Open (public) section of this meeting may be filmed for live or later broadcasting or other use, and, if you are at the meeting, you may be filmed, and are deemed to have agreed to being filmed and to the use of the recording for broadcast and/or other purposes.

### **Recording by Press and Public**

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.



## NOTICES FOR COUNCILLORS

### 1. Questions

- 1.1. Questions must be addressed to the Chairman, or to the Leader of the Council or to a Portfolio Holder or to the Chairman of a Committee. Notice in writing of any question must be emailed to the office of the Director of Corporate Services ([michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk)) by no later than 1:00 pm on the third working day preceding the Council Meeting i.e. **by not later than 1:00 pm on Monday, 20 July 2020**. All questions and answers will be circulated around the Chamber before the commencement of the meeting.
- 1.2. Questions may be addressed to the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council, any Cabinet Member or a Committee Chairman. The Leader of the Council may refer questions asked of them to the relevant Cabinet Member if they consider it appropriate.
- 1.3. Each Member may submit a maximum of two questions each, however only the first 15 questions received by the Director of Corporate Services before the deadline will be dealt with at the meeting. All other questions will receive a written answer.
- 1.4. Questions and written responses will be circulated to all members at the start of each meeting and will be made available online to accompany the webcast but will not be read out at the meeting.
- 1.5. Each questioner will be entitled to ask up to one supplementary question on each question/answer and the time limit for supplementary questions and answers will be at the sole discretion of the Chairman.

### 2. Notices of Motion

- 2.1. A Notice of Motion must reach, by email, the Director of Corporate Services ([michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk)) nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 13 July 2020**. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Paragraph 11 of Section 12 of the Constitution.  
**NB. Notices of Motion for the County Council meeting on 8 October 2020 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 28 September 2020.**

## RULES OF DEBATE

### 3. Speaking at Council Meetings

- 3.1. Councillors shall conduct debate politely and with due respect for others.
- 3.2. Councillors shall not use foul or offensive language.

3.3. As far as is possible, Members should use notes for reference where necessary but should avoid reading directly from a script. This will assist with engagement in debate and the ability of the microphones to pick up the sound.

#### **4. Content and Length of Speeches**

4.1. Subject to Paragraph 4.2 below, no Member may speak for more than five minutes during debates by the Council unless the Chairman gives an extension.

4.2. When the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members nominated by the Leader or Committee Chairmen propose reports to the Council they may speak for up to ten minutes. Members who have been nominated by the Leaders of minority political groups as spokesmen on a report discussed by the Council may also speak for up to ten minutes.

4.3. Members will confine their speeches to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or a point of order. No Member may question another Member's motives or use offensive expressions to any Member of the Council or Officer.

4.4. The Chairman may call the attention of the Council to continued irrelevancy and tedious repetition or any breach of order by a Member and may direct them to discontinue their speech. If the Member continues to disregard the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may ask them to retire for the remainder of the sitting. Should a Member refuse to retire the Chairman may order their removal from the meeting.

4.5. The Council operates a 'traffic light' system for speeches. During any speech, the amber light will come on notifying the speaker that they have 60 seconds left.

4.6. Where a Local Member is presenting a petition, they may speak for a maximum of two minutes. The amber light will come on for the final 30 seconds.

4.7. If there is serious disorder or persistent disregard of the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may, without prejudice to any other powers which they have, direct that the Meeting be suspended for such period as they consider desirable.

## GUIDANCE ON DECLARING DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AT MEETINGS - WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY

### DEFINITION OF WHAT IS A DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

A 'Disclosable Pecuniary Interest' is an interest of yourself or your partner, ie your spouse or civil partner, a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners, (but only where you are aware that your partner has the interest) within the following descriptions:

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from Staffordshire County Council) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you or your partner in connection with you carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between you or your partner (or a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest) and Staffordshire County Council- (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of Staffordshire County Council
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of Staffordshire County Council for a month or longer
Corporate Tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) (a) the landlord is Staffordshire County Council and (b) the tenant is a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where- (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of Staffordshire County Council; and (b) either-  (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class

You are also required to declare a pecuniary interest if an issue being considered at a meeting where you're present affects your or your partner's personal well being or financial position to a greater extent than it affects that of a member of the general public.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?**

If you also have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you must notify the Chairman of that interest and withdraw from the room when the matter is being discussed.

An example of what you should say

*"I have a disclosable pecuniary interest in item number..... on the agenda. The interest is ..... I shall leave the room when that matter is being discussed"*

### **DECLARING INTERESTS AT FULL COUNCIL**

The Code of Conduct only requires that disclosable pecuniary interests are declared where the matter to which the interest relates is being considered. Some items will be mentioned in the papers for Full Council but are not actually being considered by Full Council. In particular, some items are mentioned in the Leader's Statement as having been dealt with in Cabinet but are not actually mentioned or discussed at full Council. In such circumstances the Monitoring Officer's advice to members is that there is no need to declare an interest unless the particular matter is mentioned or discussed. As a general rule, members only need to declare an interest at full Council in the following circumstances:

- Where a matter is before the Council for a decision and/or
- Where the matter in which the member has an interest is specifically mentioned or discussed at the Council meeting.



**Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 19 March 2020**

Present:

<b>Attendance</b>		
Ben Adams	John Francis	Kyle Robinson
Charlotte Atkins	Colin Greatorex	Mark Sutton
Philip Atkins, OBE	Phil Hewitt	Stephen Sweeney
David Brookes	Jill Hood	Simon Tagg
Tina Clements	Julia Jessel	Carolyn Trowbridge
John Cooper	Bryan Jones	Ross Ward
Mike Davies	Jason Jones	Alan White
Mark Deaville	Paul Northcott	Philip White
Alan Dudson	Jeremy Oates	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Ian Parry	Mark Winnington
Keith Flunder	Jeremy Pert	Susan Woodward
Richard Ford	Jonathan Price	

Apologies for absence: Ann Beech, Gill Burnett, Ron Clarke, Maureen Compton, Derek Davis, OBE, Janet Eagland, Ann Edgeller, Gill Heath, Syed Hussain, Keith James, Trevor Johnson, Dave Jones, Ian Lawson, Alastair Little, Johnny McMahon, Kath Perry MBE, Bernard Peters, Natasha Pullen, David Smith, Paul Snape, Bob Spencer, Mike Sutherland, Martyn Tittley, Conor Wileman, Bernard Williams, Victoria Wilson and Mike Worthington.

**PART ONE**

**50. Appointment of Chairman**

Mr Atkins moved, Mrs Atkins seconded, and it was:

**RESOLVED** – That, in the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the County Council, Mr Parry be appointed as Chairman for the Meeting.

**51. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Minute Nos.</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Reason</b>
Mark Winnington	56	Personal	Chairman of West Midlands Rail
Ben Adams	57	Personal	Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Candidate
Susan Woodward	59	Personal	Resident of Ironstone Road, Chase Terrace

## **52. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 February 2020**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 13 February 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **53. Chairman's Correspondence**

There were no items of Chairman's Correspondence on this occasion.

## **54. 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. In introducing his statement, the Leader also informed the Council of the following additional matters:

### **Committee and other Member Meetings during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

"In order to make sure we are following the Government's advice, I am reviewing which meetings we need and which we can manage without over the coming months. What I am proposing is that:

We categorise our meetings into essential, desirable and non-essential:

- The essential meetings (Cabinet, Property Sub and Full Council) will continue to meet unless cancelled by the Leader or Chair due to lack of essential and urgent business.
- The desirable meetings (which includes our Scrutiny committees) will only meet where the Chair considers it necessary in order to conduct essential and urgent business.
- The non-essential meetings (Schools Forum, SACRE etc) will be postponed until further notice.
- We will run our meetings with bare quorums, and no Member will be expected to attend if they fall into the 3 vulnerable categories.

I am sure Members will understand the need for these changes in the current circumstances, and I will obviously keep the arrangements under review in light of emerging government advice and I will consult with the Opposition as appropriate."

### **Coronavirus COVID-19**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing also made a statement on the Covid-19 Pandemic and the County Council's and Central Government's response thereto, a copy of which is attached as Annex A to the minutes.

Mrs Atkins thanked the Deputy Leader for his statement and said that this was an unprecedented national crisis during peace time. She enquired as to how long people could be expected to self-isolate to keep themselves safe; how the Council could ensure that the efforts of the volunteer groups which were springing-up were not duplicated? She also expressed the hope that the County Council would work closely with the

borough and district councils to tackle the issues which arose and that the lessons learnt could be utilised to help communities in Staffordshire in the future, for example, through different ways of working.

### **Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025**

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward referred to the cleaning contracts for the Council's community managed libraries and expressed the concern that, although members of the controlling group had been briefed on the arrangements, that information had not be shared with members of the opposition group. She requested that opposition members be kept informed when changes to services were to take place. She also enquired as to what measures were being put in place to monitor the performance of the contractor. In response, Mr Winnington indicated that County Council staff would be working with the volunteers in the community managed libraries to ensure that the services provided by the contractor were to an appropriate standard.

### **Integrated Performance Report 2019/20 - Quarter 3**

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Mrs Atkins enquired as to what assessment had been made into the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the financial health of the County Council and whether Central Government would indemnify the Council in respect of additional costs incurred by the Authority in helping to resolve the crisis. In response, Mr Alan White indicated that, as part of its planning to respond to the pandemic, the Council was assessing the financial impact on the Authority and would be having the appropriate discussions with Central Government. He added that this was a fast moving and evolving situation and would be factored into the Council's MTFS.

### **Coronavirus**

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Mrs Hood asked the Deputy Leader whether he was confident that the County Council had the necessary resources to support and safeguard the County's vulnerable children during the pandemic.

Mrs Woodward indicated that although social media often contained miss-information, it was also necessary to look at the positives such as the recent offers of support and offers of help for those people in need; individuals being able to keep in touch with families and friends through platforms such as "WhatsApp". She added that she had been massively encouraged and heartened by the recent gestures of good will and through the setting up of new local volunteering groups. She concluded by indicating that it was time for everyone to be creative and think about ways to help their communities without compromising their safety.

Mr Philip White referred to the closure of schools and informed Members that national guidance had been issued to them regarding support for vulnerable children and also looking after the children of "key" workers. He added that, with regard to the announcement that this year's GCSE examinations were to be cancelled, this was obviously a worrying time for those pupils who were due to submit the examinations. Mr

Alan White added that discussions were also to take place with the Schools' Commissioner to ensure that "Key" workers could continue to carry out their vital roles

Mr Tagg assured Members that the County Council and the Borough and District Councils in Staffordshire were working closely together to tackle the issues arising from the pandemic and ensure the continuity of services where possible.

Mrs Trowbridge referred to the Council's "I Count" initiative for staff and enquired as to whether Members could also volunteer. She also referred to the initiative she was setting up in her Division to help those who were vulnerable and/or self-isolating and she encouraged other members to consider setting up a similar initiative in their area.

Mr Winnington referred to the important role played by the Council's Superfast Broadband initiative in helping to ensure that people could keep in touch with families and friends and in enabling them to work from home.

Mr Robinson expressed his thanks to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council for their briefing on the response to Covid-19 and stated that it was important that the Council showed leadership at this difficult time. He also indicated that, like Mrs Woodward, he had been moved by the "army" of volunteers who had been putting themselves forward to support the elderly and vulnerable in their respective communities. Mr Robinson added that he was extremely disappointed by the actions of some individuals who had exhibited selfish behaviour through panic buying/stockpiling, making it difficult for the elderly especially, to get basic food supplies such as bread and eggs. He indicated that the message needed to get out to the public that there was absolutely no need to panic buy and that, if everybody acted responsibly, the measures put in place by the Supermarkets would ensure that shelves were kept stocked. Mr Robinson also referred to the potential impact of decisions to close local facilities such as Day Centres and how this could put additional pressures on families. He stated that, before such decisions were taken, careful consideration needed to be taken of the potential impact.

Mr Bryan Jones, Mr Deaville and Mr Atkins praised the work of the Council and, in particular, its Incident Management Team, in its continuing efforts to deal with the impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic. Mr Deaville added that the Council was working closely with the Emergency Services to ensure a combined and co-ordinated response. Mr Bryan Jones also referred to the important role played by Support Staffordshire and the Council's Cabinet Community Support Members in supporting Staffordshire's communities. Mr Ward added that Parish and Town Council's also had a vital role to play at the grass roots level.

Mr Brookes spoke about the potential impact of the pandemic on the farming community.

Mr Alan White informed Members that the County Council was setting up a helpline for self-isolators to call when in need and that links were being established with the voluntary sector to assist in providing the necessary assistance to those calling the helpline. He added that the Council was looking to recruit students and others to bolster the Home Care workforce.

Mr White also explained that, in accordance with Government guidance, most day care facilities would be closed in order to reduce social contact and the spread of the virus amongst vulnerable people. He added that a vaccine was being worked on; that promising progress was being made; and that clinical trials had recently commenced but it was likely that it would be ready for deployment before the Spring of 2021.

Mr Atkins stated that it was important that the public listen and adhere to the Government advice which was being issued and that they should try to stay calm. He added that the County Council remained open for business and that staff would be redeployed where necessary to continue to ensure the provision of essential services. Mr Atkins added that the funding made available to Members to support their local communities would continue in 2020/21 but would be refocused to assist in the recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

### **School Places**

(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward welcomed the news that, in Staffordshire, 90% of parents had been allocated a place at their first choice of Secondary school for their child. She enquired that, with regard to the 10% who had not been given a place at their first choice of Secondary School, which areas of the County were the most affected. In response, Mr Philip White indicated that 97% of parents had been allocated a place in one of their top three choice of Secondary Schools for their child and that he would write to Mrs Woodward with regard to those areas where there had been an excess of demand, but this tended to be for those schools which were rated as “excellent”.

### **New Recycling Campaign**

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Mr Robinson stated that he welcomed the Council’s “Plastic Bottles: Recycle One and All” campaign and asked the Cabinet Member if he agreed that more could be done by businesses to recycle waste rather than send it to landfill. In response, Mr Deaville stated that, although businesses tended to adopt a responsible approach to the disposal of waste, improvements could be made the County Council needed to do more to work with them to improve recycling rates.

### **Budget**

(Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Mrs Atkins asked the Deputy Leader whether he shared her concern that, in every crisis, the Government goes into overdrive with regard to the funding for the NHS but forgets about social care and the role it plays in freeing-up hospital beds. In response, Mr Alan White indicated that finding a solution to the long-term funding of social care had been overtaken by recent events and that the Council was doing everything it could to help to ensure that people were transferred out of hospital as soon as it was safe and possible to do so. Mr Atkins added that, in the short-term, it was important that the County Council had the necessary additional financial resources to deal with the cost of responding to the Coronavirus pandemic. In the longer-term, a solution to the funding of social care needed to be found.

Mr Brookes expressed his disappointment that Project B on the A50 in Uttoxeter had not been allocated the necessary funding from Central Government. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that more work needed to be done to make the case for improvement scheme.

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

## **55. Recommendations to the Council**

### **(a) Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 - Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011**

The Council were informed that it was a legal requirement of the Localism Act 2011 for the County Council to have a Pay Policy statement which must be published annually before 31 March.

Mrs Woodward referred to the lease car subsidy available to some senior officers as part of their contract of employment and enquired as to whether there had been any consideration as to the environmental impacts of the policy and whether all officers who were eligible claimed the subsidy. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that he did not have the detailed information to hand and would therefore respond to Mrs Woodward in writing and would ensure that all Members of the Council received a copy of the response.

**RESOLVED** – That the Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21 (as set out in Annex A to the report) be approved.

**Note by Clerk:** Mr Dudson abstained from voting on the recommendation.

### **(b) 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 decisions on the nature and level of allowances were 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 annually to consider the recommendations to be made to the Council in respect of the level and nature of the forthcoming year's allowances.

As part of their deliberations this year, the Panel proposed that, in line with normal practice, Members' Allowances be increased by 2% in line with the employee pay award for 2019-20. The Panel also expressed the view that the Planning Committee Chairman's Special Responsibility Allowance should remain at the same relative level, providing that they were also the Chairman of the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel. The Panel did not propose any other changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme.

Mr Dudson expressed the view that the workload of the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel was such that it should be treated as a separate Committee of the Council and not as a "sub-committee" of the Planning Committee. In response, Mr Atkins suggested that Mr Dudson should write to the Independent Remuneration Panel setting out his views

Mrs Atkins referred to the remuneration paid to Community Cabinet Support Members and expressed that, some were proactive and performed well and others less so. She enquired as to how the Leader of the Council intended to ensure that there was a more consistent approach to the role and how their effectiveness would be assessed. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that a new job description/specification was being prepared for the role with clear guidelines on the approach to be adopted.

Mrs Trowbridge extended her thanks to the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the robust manner in which they had conducted their investigations and for the recommendations they had made. Mr Atkins also extended his thanks to the Members of the Panel.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the Council’s thanks be extended to the Independent Remuneration Panel for their report.

(b) That the recommendations contained in the Independent Remuneration Panel’s Report be agreed.

**Note by Clerk:** Mr Dudson abstained from voting on the recommendations.

## **56. Notices of Motion**

Mr Atkins moved, and Mr Winnington seconded, the following motion:

“Now that the Prime Minister has given the go ahead for HS2, at the very least this brings an end to years of uncertainty for our communities.

From the outset as a county council, while opposing HS2, we have been committed to getting the best deal for Staffordshire if HS2 gained Parliamentary approval, and our resolve to achieve this remains as strong and as firm as ever.

Therefore, this council moves that we now:

- (i) Work constructively with the Government and HS2 Ltd to mitigate the impact on Staffordshire, our communities and our diverse natural landscape.
- (ii) Welcome the appointment of a new dedicated HS2 Minister.
- (iii) Ensure that Staffordshire shares in any economic benefits from HS2.
- (iv) Ensure that Staffordshire benefits from improved connectivity and access to HS2 including compatible trains via Stafford.
- (v) Continue to work closely with our strategic transport partners to ensure that Staffordshire benefits from an integrated approach to connectivity across the region.”

Mr Atkins indicated that this was the third Notice of Motion brought to the Council in respect of HS2 and would enable the Council to talk to HS2 to get the best mitigation possible for the communities which would be affected.

Mrs Atkins stated that the County Council had no alternative but to work with the Government on HS2 and that it would be years before HS2 would bring any economic benefits to the West Midlands and the North of England. She added that there were a number of other projects which were “shovel ready” which would improve local commuter routes, remove bottlenecks and make a real difference to the local economy. However, such schemes were likely to be starved of cash due to the imperative to proceed with HS2. She there stressed the need to impress on Government the need to invest in local commuter routes to end the daily misery of commuters.

Mr Pert indicated his support for the motion and expressed his concern at the impact on the local community of the proposed railhead at Yarnfield, particularly during its construction phase which would see 2,500 lorries per day using the local highway network. He urged the Council to lend its support to seeking the relocation of the proposed railhead. Mrs Hood added that she shared the concerns expressed by Mr Pert in relation to the proposed railhead and its impact on Yarnfield, Stone and the surrounding area. She requested that the Council to use its influence with the MP’s representing constituencies in Staffordshire to press for the relocation of the proposed railhead.

Mr Francis indicated his support for the motion and added that he welcomed the news that the Handsacre Junction was to go ahead as this would lead to new employment opportunities in Stafford, Stoke and Crewe. He also indicated that he still believed that the HS2 project was fundamentally flawed and that the funding for the scheme could be better spent on other transport projects.

Mrs Trowbridge also expressed her support for the motion and indicated that she shared the concerns expressed by other members. She added that one positive that had recently arisen was that the Government, through the University of Wolverhampton, had put on free construction courses with the aim of filling the void of skilled workers.

Mr Sweeney confirmed his support for the motion but indicated that he did not agree with the comments of other Members of the Council in relation to the need for lobbying to secure the relocation of the proposed railhead away from Yarnfield to a site near Madeley.

Mr Winnington indicated that, with regard to local commuter services, West Midlands Rail were proposing to improve capacity through the provision of additional carriages and timetable changes. He added that with regard to bottlenecks on the West Coast Main Line, one of the biggest bottlenecks was at Norton Bridge and that work had recently been completed to address this matter.

Mr Atkins added that the County Council would continue to make available the necessary support communities to enable them to “make their case” in respect of concerns in relation to HS2.

Following a vote it was:



**RESOLVED** – That this Council will:

- (i) Work constructively with the Government and HS2 Ltd to mitigate the impact on Staffordshire, our communities and our diverse natural landscape.
- (ii) Welcome the appointment of a new dedicated HS2 Minister.
- (iii) Ensure that Staffordshire shares in any economic benefits from HS2.
- (iv) Ensure that Staffordshire benefits from improved connectivity and access to HS2 including compatible trains via Stafford.
- (v) Continue to work closely with our strategic transport partners to ensure that Staffordshire benefits from an integrated approach to connectivity across the region.

**Note by Clerk:** Mrs Hood abstained from voting on the motion.

#### **57. Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel**

Mr Adams suggested that the Council should offer its support to the Emergency Services in respect of the additional pressures on them as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

Mrs Woodward urged Members to respond to the current consultation document on “Have your say” on the future direction of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on Trent Fire and Rescue Service.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be received.

#### **58. Questions**

Mrs Woodward asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

##### **Question**

Following the County Council’s recent social media campaign recognising the ‘inspirational’ contributions of women to life in Staffordshire, will the Leader now commit to ensuring that the default form of address for all members, male and female, is the title ‘Councillor plus surname’ rather than the discriminatory use of ‘Mr’ for male councillors and ‘Miss, Mrs or Ms’ for female councillors?

##### **Reply**

I applaud the inspirational contributions of women to society and life in Staffordshire.

The proper title is County Councillor not Councillor.

On your election ballot paper, you can choose how you are known.

When officers are contacted by members of the public calling themselves councillor, to avoid confusion with parish and district councillors, a convention of preferred title or first name was adopted.

So, I would refer to myself as Philip Atkins, County Councillor for Uttoxeter Rural, and might be addressed in return as Mr Atkins or county councillor in any reply by an officer, as they may feel uncomfortable in addressing me by my first name.

This also avoids confusion where members have the same name, with for example County Councillor Charlotte Atkins

### **Supplementary Question**

I think the use of the term “Councillor” would be more formal and appropriate in this Chamber. When is the Leader going to consider the wishes of Members who do not wish to be referred to as Ms, Miss or Mrs?

### **Reply**

I refer to my written answer.

Mrs Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

What plans does the County Council have to increase per - pupil funding to special schools in line with the increase in mainstream school funding?

### **Reply**

In 2020/21 special school budgets have been set in line with rises recently approved for all maintained schools next year, i.e. an increase in the underlying lump sum factor to £114,000 (up from £90,000 in 2019/20), a minimum funding guarantee of 1.84% (significantly higher than the MFG set by Government of 0%) and no capping of gains.

As Government set the amount for planned places, any increase providers receive will be through the top up rates and, in particular, the specific School Adjustment Rate to ensure that, on a like for like basis, all schools receive an overall funding increase next year of at least 1.84% (note: the average increase in school funding is estimated to be around 2.3%). Individual school budgets for 2020/21 were confirmed at the end of February and will be regularly updated going forward to reflect changes in the school roll arising throughout the year.

### **Supplementary Question**

I'm being told by Special Schools that they are not effectively getting an increase in their budgets. There appears to be some confusion over this and there obviously needs to be clarification. I'd be grateful if you could clarify the confusion?

### **Reply**

I have responded to the Head of a Special School with a more detailed briefing. I will copy that briefing to all Members. If, following that, there needs to be more clarification, I am happy to arrange a more detailed briefing from an officer from Finance.

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

### **Question**

What plans does County Highways have to address residents' concerns about the state of the pavements in Westwood Park Drive, Leek?

### **Reply**

In recent years over half a million pounds has been invested in replacing kerbs and reconstructing footways in the Westwood Park area of Leek. However, it is recognised that there are further footways in the area that are life expired and require reconstruction. These remain on our forward programme, alongside many other similar needs across the County, for prioritisation in accordance with our Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan and the level of funding available.

In the meantime, these locations will continue to benefit from routine safety Inspections and any dangerous defects attended to so that the footways remain safe for use. And of course, you have the option as a local member to spend your own Highways Funding on these issues.

### **Supplementary Question**

The complainant was particularly aggrieved when Amey came along and repaired the area which was "least bad" but failed to rectify the "worse bad". This is a trip hazard and residents are disappointed that the matter has not been resolved. Can I urge the Cabinet Member to ensure that the remedial works to the rest of Westwood Park Drive are completed as a matter of urgency?

### **Reply**

I am aware that more needs to be done in your Division and I believe that you have spent your DHP for this year in another area. DHP funding will again be available this coming year. I don't think you are alone in that we all have works to be done in our respective Divisions. However, we do have plans to spend money on footpaths this coming year and I'll have more information on that in the coming weeks.

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

**Question**

Community First Responders are volunteers who support the work of West Midlands Ambulance Service and provide vital assistance to those in need of emergency care. In 95% of cases in Staffordshire, First Responders arrive at the location of a call out before an ambulance; and are then able to provide primary first aid at the most important time in an emergency.

The proposal, from the Ambulance Service, to prevent the highly trained Enhanced Community First Responders from using emergency blue lights and from carrying essential drugs in our County is utter folly, particularly when there is no legislation which requires this to be the case. In other authority areas, where CFRs are unable to use blue lights, they arrive first to an emergency in as few as 70% of cases, meaning that if these proposals were to be adopted up to 25% of ambulance call outs in Staffordshire might see a delay in the provision of vital, emergency care.

Will the Leader of the Council agree to write to the CEO of West Midlands Ambulance Service to express concern and to ask that he reconsiders this proposal in order that Enhanced Community First Responders are able to continue to operate in the same way and to help prevent unnecessary delays in emergency care?

**Reply**

The Council recognises the valuable work of the Enhanced Community First Responders and I would be very happy to write to the CEO of West Midlands Ambulance Service to clarify the position in respect of blue lights and ensure that Enhanced Community First Responders have the support they need to operate effectively.

**Supplementary Question**

Since submitting the question, I've been made aware of a briefing released by the West Midlands Ambulance Service which suggests that the legislation changes they refer to goes back to the Road Traffic Act 2006. It is now 2020 and things have changed significantly, and our Health Service is in a very different place, facing many more pressures. Enhanced Community First Responders have become a more integral part of providing services to people, especially in parts of rural Staffordshire. Does the Leader agree with me that these issues have to be looked at again?

**Reply**

Yes, this is a living situation which requires continual monitoring.

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

**Question**

Staffordshire County Council may receive a large amount of Government funding in the near future to reinstate bus services in Staffordshire that were previously cut due to austerity. How can elected members have more of an input to decide where this new funding will be prioritised and spent in their divisions to help improve public transport?

### **Reply**

The county council are required to submit a statement of intent to Department for Transport in order to release the funds (£583,372 for Staffordshire). As the amount is a one-off payment and we are conscious that the funds should be used both fairly and in a way that maximises the likelihood of the services that are funded continuing beyond the period of funding, we propose that the funds are spent over 2 years and in the main are spent on reinstating Sunday services across the county. This recommendation takes account of feedback from the detailed consultation undertaken during the review of local services 2 years ago.

As required by DfT, all MPs and bus operators have been consulted on our recommended approach, and feedback and support to date has been overwhelmingly positive.

As the deadlines were extremely tight, it was not possible to consult all members. However, in light of the recent developments concerning the pandemic, some timescales may change.

### **Supplementary Question**

If we can find time to consult Members of Parliament, who are not members of this Authority, but not consult Members of this Authority, it is not good enough. In future, we need to ensure that members of this Authority are consulted.

### **Reply**

I do appreciate that the deadlines were extremely tight and I am happen to share with all Members what we sent out to the MPs.

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

### **Question**

I welcome the fact that Staffordshire County Council does not allow hunting with dogs on land in its ownership and management. Is the Council aware of any infringements of this ban in recent years?

### **Reply**

You're correct – hunting with dogs on land the County Council owns or manages is not something we allow, and I'm not aware of any infringements in recent years.

### **Supplementary Question**

It's a little vague at the end of the response where it says that "I'm not aware of any infringements in recent years". How long ago does that relate to?

### **Reply**

I do not have that information to hand and will therefore respond to you in writing.

### **59. Petitions**

#### **Flooding in Ironstone Road, Chase Terrace**

Mrs Woodward presented a petition from residents of Ironstone Road, Chase Terrace, requesting the Council to find an effective long-term solution to the flooding issues between the road's junctions with Biddulph Park and Kingsdown Road.

**Chairman**

## Coronavirus COVID-19

### Background

- 1) In December 2019 we began to hear reports of a new coronavirus that had emerged in the city of Wuhan in China. Coronaviruses are common: they are one of the viruses that cause the common cold. This new virus appears to cause more serious illness, especially in the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions. The illness has been named COVID-19.
- 2) It spreads via the respiratory route. Infected people produce droplets when they cough or sneeze, these can be breathed in by others who are in close proximity, or contaminate surfaces and then be picked up on others hands and transferred to the mouth, nose and eyes. As it is a new virus, no-one is immune and everyone is susceptible. It has already spread to 146 countries around the world.
- 3) There are over 200,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 7,500 deaths globally. In the UK there are over 2,000 confirmed cases and 100 deaths, including 10 confirmed cases in Staffordshire. The number of cases is increasing day by day. Note that in addition to the confirmed cases there will be many more cases that will not have been diagnosed.
- 4) The government is planning for a 'worst case' scenario under which 80% of the population contracts the coronavirus over the next few months. Of these about half would have no symptoms and the majority would have a mild illness.
- 5) However a significant proportion might require hospitalisation, and up to 1% might die, with the risk of complications and death highest in the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions. We are still learning about the virus so whilst we are planning for the 'worst case' scenario we don't know for sure how many cases there will be.

### UK response

- 6) The government has developed a coronavirus COVID-19 action plan which includes three phases, contain, delay and mitigate, with research throughout to learn more about the virus. We are currently in the delay phase. The aim is to push cases into the summer months and distribute them over a longer period to reduce the pressure on NHS, social care services and wider society.
- 7) To achieve this the government is rolling out a series of control measures to create 'social distancing: reducing contact between infected people and the rest of the population, and especially between infected people and the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions.
- 8) People with symptoms of COVID-19 are being asked to stay at home and self-isolate for seven days. The main symptoms are a new, persistent cough and/or a

fever above 37.8C. If they live with other people then the whole household is being asked to stay at home for 14 days.

- 9) Everyone else is asked to stop all non-essential contact. This includes working from home where possible, not going to pubs, cinemas, restaurants, theatres, bars, not using public transport unless absolutely necessary, and avoiding gatherings with friends and family.
- 10) This advice is particularly important for people over 70 and people with underlying medical conditions. In addition they are asked to stay at home and limit face-to-face interaction with friends and family for 12 weeks.
- 11) Emergency services support for mass gatherings has been withdrawn and it is likely therefore that organisers will need to cancel large events.

### **Staffordshire response**

- 12) The County Council has stood up an Incident Management Team to co-ordinate our response. The wider public sector has also convened a Strategic Co-ordinating Group to co-ordinate multi-agency actions.
- 13) At the moment we are focusing on:
  - a. Keeping the public and other agencies informed.
  - b. Making sure we have plans in place to maintain critical services during a period of staff absence due to sickness and the government's control measures.
  - c. In particular planning to maintain social care services as far as possible to support the local NHS.
  - d. Planning how we support local businesses and keep the economy going in the face of disruption from sickness and the government's control measures.
  - e. Managing individual cases and incidents as they arise.
- 14) We are providing advice and direction to Council staff about who can work from home, and encouraging hand washing and 'social distancing' for those who are required to come into the workplace.
- 15) In order to free up staff to maintain critical services and to implement 'social distancing' we will start to suspend some services. These include day services, libraries, educational residential centres, children's centres, and school crossing patrols.
- 16) We have launched the I Count campaign to encourage staff working in non-critical roles to volunteer to switch to supporting the Council and our residents in critical services such as care or children's services.
- 17) We may start to find that some of our normal business activities, for example responding to enquiries from residents, are delayed. And if fellow Members have questions of officers it may be worth reflecting on how urgent they are given the current situation.



## How can people help?

- 18) **Wash your hands.** One of most important ways to stop the virus spreading is hand washing regularly for 20 seconds with soap and water, or a hand sanitiser if you are out and about. This is further strengthened by avoiding unnecessary physical contact with others such as hand shaking, and avoiding touching your mouth, nose and eyes. It's particularly important to wash your hands when you arrive at work, when you get home, and before you prepare or eat food.
- 19) **Be prepared to stay at home.** Plan ahead in case they need to self isolate if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Think about what provisions you might need, what activities you might have to cancel, as well as what IT equipment would be useful: it may be possible to work from home if you are feeling well enough.
- 20) **Use health services wisely.** Most people with COVID-19 will have a mild illness, which can be managed at home with over the counter medications such as paracetamol. Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital as you could pass the infection to others. Visit [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus) or call [NHS 111](https://www.nhs.uk/111) if you need to speak to someone. Services like [999](https://www.nhs.uk/999) or [Accident and Emergency](https://www.nhs.uk/emergency) should only be used for genuine emergencies.
- 21) **Stay informed.** Use official information sources such as the government or Council website. There is a lot of misinformation on the internet that could cause unnecessary anxiety or even harm.
- 22) **Help out.** We need people to volunteer to support older and vulnerable people, for example if they are asked to stay at home and self-isolate for a prolonged period.

## Conclusion

- 23) The next few months will be a difficult time for Staffordshire. Some of us will lose loved ones. Some of us will lose livelihoods. But we will get through this.
- 24) The Council has a huge role to play in minimising the impact of COVID-19. The county and the people who living here are looking to each and everyone us for leadership, guidance and reassurance and there has never been important for us to demonstrate this than now.
- 25) I know that our Members and staff will rise to the challenges. We will do everything we can to maintain critical services: social workers will still be visiting at risk families; people will still visit those who need care at home; and we will do everything we can to support care homes to protect their residents. We will also work with government to support local businesses and keep the economy going.
- 26) And I call on everyone else do play their part. This is a time for people to pull together and support each other. To show the best of what Staffordshire can do.



## Statement of the Leader of the Council

### **1. Award of the Construction Project Framework Agreements (REF IA1585 and IA2060)**

The Cabinet have approved arrangements to procure and manage two Framework Agreements for Construction Projects – Ref IA1585 ('traditional' build) and Ref IA2060 ('modular' build). This will enable the Council to carry out new build works, alterations, extensions, refurbishment and fit-outs to county council-owned buildings. These will mainly be schools, academies and education projects and occasionally corporate estate construction and refurbishment.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

### **2. Keeping Staffordshire Moving - Highway Permit Scheme**

The Cabinet have approved arrangements for the introduction of a permit scheme which will enable the authority to grant permits to works promoters to undertake works on the highway and which will provide greater control over works enabling: the promotion of better working practices; improved asset protection and coordination of works; better informed residents and highway users; and reduced impact whilst essential works to the highway or utility apparatus is taking place.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

### **3. Renewal of the Contract for the Provision of Agency Workers**

The Cabinet have approved arrangements to recontract for the supply of agency workers to provide cover for the Council's vital frontline services. A 2 +1+1 year call-off contract from Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework agreement 653F – Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR3) is to be entered into with Comensura Limited.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

### **4. Staffordshire Autism Joint Implementation Plan 2020-2023**

The Autism Act (2009) places a duty on all Local Authorities to produce an Autism Strategy. Cabinet have endorsed the Staffordshire Autism Joint Implementation Plan 2020-2023 which is a joint plan between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). It covers Children and Young People and Adults and has been based on the 15 "I Statements" from the national Autism Strategy. A comprehensive engagement was undertaken to inform development of the Plan. This included an event for professionals and providers, and two events for people with lived experience of Autism. An on-line survey was also conducted to capture the views of people who were unable to attend the events or wished to contribute in this way. The Plan will be used to inform future planning and commissioning of services.

*(Cabinet – 18 March 2020)*

## **5. The County Council's Response to COVID-19**

The Cabinet have considered the progress made to date on assessing the current Coronavirus pandemic's impact on the Council services and finances. They have noted that in order to free up staff to maintain critical services and to implement 'social distancing' some services had been suspended in line with Government advice. These include day services, libraries, educational residential centres, children's centres, day centres for older people, facilities at country parks and school crossing patrols. The Council's smart working policy has also enabled the majority of staff to work from home or switch to other roles.

The Council had also launched the:

- I Count campaign encourages staff working in non-critical roles to volunteer to switch to supporting the Council and our residents in critical services such as care or children's services. So far more than 750 staff have signed up; and
- I Care campaign, a public facing campaign, recruiting members of the public to step up and help us deliver personal care in people's homes. As of April 3, more than 400 people (including Council staff) have volunteered.

Care providers continue to face financial pressures from COVID-19 and there remains considerable concern nationally about the sustainability of the care market. The Council has reacted swiftly and decisively to this with extra funding of £13.6m for care providers in 2020/21: £10.6m from the first grant of £22.3m and £3m as planned in the MTFS. To meet the ongoing financial pressures facing care providers the Cabinet have agreed proposals to offer further extra non-recurrent funding of £4.3m

Whilst it was far too early to predict the full cost of the pandemic on the Council's finances, work was on-going to understand the short, medium- and long-term impacts.

*(Cabinet – 15 April and 20 May 2020)*

## **6. Staffordshire County Council's iCare Campaign**

A key element of Staffordshire County Council's response to the coronavirus pandemic is to safeguard the most vulnerable people and residents in the County. As part of this response the Local Resilience Forum and Staffordshire County Council's Incident Management Team have been planning for how to bolster social care provision in the event that the market starts to fail, through a Rapid Response Workforce, known as the iCare Campaign. The Cabinet have given their support for the actions that have been and will need to be taken to ensure suitable social care (especially personal care) provision can be maximised to support vulnerable people and residents across Staffordshire, particularly throughout the peak of the virus, via the use of volunteers and new employees sought via the iCare process.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **7. Integrated Performance Report 2019/20 - Quarter 4**

The Cabinet have considered an overview of the County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against the Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They have noted that at the end of Quarter 4, the overall assessment on Staffordshire County Council's performance and financial position is Amber. Particular areas of risk are in Adult Social Care and Children's and Families.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £1.728m (0.3%), compared to the forecast overspend of £4.360m (0.9%) at Quarter 3.

The latest capital outturn projection is £116.1m, compared to the quarter 3 position of £123.0m, a decrease of 5.6%. This projection is a fully funded position. This decrease is mainly due to the removal of Railway Station projects from the programme of £4m as these assets are not held by the County Council.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **8. Schools Capital Programme 2020-21**

The Cabinet have approved the Schools Capital Programme for 2020/21. The Programme is made up of:

- Maintenance/Improvement projects
- Basic Need/pupil place provision projects

The funding available to deliver the 2020/21 capital programme includes:

- Government Capital Grant School Condition Allocation (SCA)
- Government Basic Need Capital Grant
- Section 106 contributions from developers
- Contributions from schools (DFC)
- Third Party contributions
- Contributions from other Government grants and bids including:

- i. Free Schools Wave 13
- ii. Special Provision Capital Fund

The DfE are yet to confirm the 2020/21 SCA allocations so the School's Capital Programme 2020/21 is based on an estimated SCA of £4m. The programme will need to be reviewed once the funding allocation is announced to ensure affordability and that investment is targeted in SCC maintained schools (excluding Basic Need).

The Head of Commercial and Assets will monitor progress of the programme and, subject to the agreement of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability, will make any necessary in-year alterations.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **9. Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2020/21**

The Cabinet have approved the Highways and Transport Capital Programme for 2020/21. The programme is made up of:

- i. Highway Maintenance (including Bridges)
- ii. Integrated Transport improvements.

Additional capital funding for Highways and Transport comes from other government bid grants, the County Council's own investment decisions, contributions from developers and other stakeholders.

The Programme provides for a £42.7 million investment over the current financial year. This will enable the Council to deliver a comprehensive package of improvements that will bring long-term and value for money improvements.

The Council's Commissioner for Highways and the Built County is to monitor progress of the Programme and make any necessary in-year alterations in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **10. Executive Responses to All Party Working Groups Recommendations on Isolation and Aspiration**

The Cabinet have considered the initial Executive Responses from the portfolio holders with regards to the recommendations from the two All Party Working Group investigations focusing on Aspiration and Isolation.

The Aspirations All Party Working Group undertook an Overview approach looking at the question of "How can communities raise the level of aspirations across Staffordshire?", focused on younger people.

The Isolation All Party Working Group undertook an Overview approach considering "How can communities ensure that no-one is lonely and isolated?"

The findings and recommendations of the All Party Working Groups were submitted to the relevant Cabinet Members for consideration and Action Plans have been developed in response to the agreed recommendations. The implementation of the Action Plans will be monitored as necessary on behalf of Cabinet, helping to plan for and address some of the long-term issues that affect the communities of Staffordshire.

*(Cabinet – 15 April 2020)*

## **11. Procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

There has become a global shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This equipment is a vital resource in Staffordshire's response to the impacts and effective infection control management of the Covid-19 pandemic. Care Homes and frontline

workers need PPE beyond their normal stock levels, and their existing supply chains are often late with deliveries, have increased their prices significantly, or their orders are not accepted or delivered.

In order to ensure that no care provider in Staffordshire goes without the PPE it needs if it runs out, the Cabinet have approved proposals to procure supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) with a view to maintaining a rolling supply sufficient to last 12 weeks based on usage.

*(Cabinet – 20 May 2020)*

## **12. Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisational and Recovery Approaches**

Your Cabinet have been informed that, in order to ensure that the Council moves forward to a new normal following the COVID-19 emergency, a timeline is being developed for re-setting the Strategic Planning and the MTF process, which will include engagement with Cabinet and SLT, and senior managers across the organisation. Work is also being undertaken with the leads of the five council priorities and four principles to reassess plans, mitigate risks and exploit new opportunities.

Each directorate is leading recovery for its own area, and recovery which cuts across all the directorates is being led through recovery groups linked to the four principles – communities, digital, people and climate change. Any coordination of activity required is managed through the Council's Planning and Recovery Group. The Cabinet have endorsed the high-level priorities and plans from each of the recovery areas.

*(Cabinet – 17 June 2020)*

## **13. Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy**

The Cabinet have approved the Economic Recovery, Renewal and Transformation Strategy which sets out Council's priorities to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and subsequently recover, renew and transform the local economy.

The Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for the next five years through four non-linear phases:

- Respond – support our businesses and residents through the COVID-19 crisis.
- Recover – create the conditions to support our businesses and residents to return-to-work as soon as possible.
- Renew – continue to progress those priorities that will play an important role in achieving our ambitions to develop the local economy beyond the current crisis.
- Transform – utilise the opportunities presented by the current economic conditions by supporting the transformation of the local economy to be digital, clean and higher-value.

The Strategy will both support and shape the wider recovery planning through both the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Resilience Forum and the Local Enterprise Partnerships. In addition, it will feed into and shape wider regional and cross-boundary approaches such as the Constellation Partnership and the Midlands Engine.

As part of early delivery of the strategy, extensions to the Cannock Chase and Silverdale Enterprise Centres have been reviewed and remain an important part of the future development of the local economy. In support of the response to the crisis and in support of the local recovery, a business start-up scheme has also been developed to enable and support residents at risk of redundancy in starting their own business.

*(Cabinet – 17 June 2020)*

#### **14. Final Financial Outturn Report for 2019/20**

The Cabinet have received details of the final position for both revenue and capital budgets at the end of the 2019/20 financial year. They have noted that the quarter 4 forecast was a small overspend of £1.728m and since then the coronavirus had become a global pandemic which was having a severe impact on the economy. The government had issued two payments of grants to local authorities in order to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services during the pandemic while protecting both workforce and local residents. The first grant payment was received at the end of March and was £22.3m. This was carried forward for use in 2020/21, apart from £0.680m which was used to fund those Covid-19 related costs that were incurred prior to 31st March. Following the use of this grant, a small saving of £53,000 on services was left and was transferred to general balances.

They also noted that no further amount had been required from the Contingency budget and therefore £4m remained unspent at the end of the year, which could be transferred to reserves to be available for future investment requirements.

The capital programme showed total expenditure of £110.464m. This reflected the Council's continued investment in school places, highways and economic regeneration.

*(Cabinet – 17 June 2020)*

#### **15. Local Outbreak Control Plan**

At the start of the month, we published our Local Outbreak Control plan, which sets out how we are working with partners to identify, manage and contain any localised outbreak of Covid-19.

We have seen from areas like Leicester, how quickly spikes can occur, and we are doing everything we can to prevent a second peak of infections here in Staffordshire.



We are mapping cases, including the Pillar 2 community tests, to ensure we can identify any likely hotspots and areas of concern.

With an outbreak classed as two or more cases in a setting within fourteen days there have and will be more outbreaks to manage over the coming months.

It is, therefore, as important as ever that everyone sticks to the rules. This means washing your hands regularly, following the latest advice on social distancing and co-operating with the test and trace service.

## **16. Economic Recovery**

Now the lockdown restrictions have eased, focusing on kick-starting the economy must run alongside our efforts to prevent a second peak in Covid-19 infections.

As a county council, we have put measures in place to support our businesses as part of our “Back to Business Campaign”.

While it was great to see the Chancellor Rishi Sunak announce measures to help get people spending, to encourage businesses to take on young people and to help companies rehire furloughed staff, these are very much short-term measures and we need to look ahead to the medium and longer-term.

With the loss of big brands such as John Lewis in Tamworth for example, we need to play on the strengths of Staffordshire.

As part of this we are working with business leaders, our universities and other public sector partners to grow Staffordshire’s economy and create more, better paid jobs for our people.

This work includes an exciting project to create a new place brand to build local pride and confidence in our great county, and to help us promote Staffordshire as a place to live, work, study, visit and invest in.

So, if you haven’t done already, please do share your thoughts.

## **17. Dignity in Care Awards**

We all know what an amazing job our carers, both paid and unpaid, do to support the most vulnerable people in Staffordshire.

Our Dignity in Care Awards Ceremony is our way of recognising the contribution each and every one of them makes.

This year we have even more reasons to say thank you and, although we have had to rearrange the date of the event, people can still nominate a carer until July 31.

If you do know somebody who always goes above and beyond then please to do tell us their story.

## **18. Long-Term Legacy**

Finally, none of us could have predicted 12 months ago what 2020 would bring and what toll Covid-19 would take on families, on businesses and on livelihoods.

Normally at this annual general meeting we reflect on what we have achieved in the previous year. This year, as we meet four months to the very day since the start of lockdown, I think we can all be incredibly proud of what this council and what this county has achieved together to tackle Covid-19.

And it is this spirit, resilience and the endeavours of Staffordshire people which will come together over the coming months to make us even prouder of the county we all call home.

**Recommendations to the Council**

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**Amendments to Procedural Standing Order to Facilitate “Virtual” Meetings**

As a result of the current Covid-19 pandemic, the Government has introduced legislation, The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 (‘the Regulations’) which enable local authorities to hold “virtual” meetings.

As a consequence of these Regulations it is necessary to make changes to the Council’s Procedural Standing Orders as detailed in the attached Appendix.

**Recommend** – That the amendments to the Council’s Procedural Standing Orders to facilitate “virtual” meetings, as detailed in the attached Appendix, be approved.



## **Changes Required to Council's Standing Orders in Consequence of COVID-19**

This appendix to the Constitution serves to identify the changes required to the Council's standing orders in consequence of The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No.392 ('the Regulations').

### **1A Access to Information**

For all purposes of the Constitution, the terms "notice", "summons", "agenda", "report", "written record" and "background papers" when referred to as being a document that is:

- (a) "open to inspection" shall include for these and all other purposes as being published on the website of the council; and
- (b) 'to be published, posted or made available at offices of the Authority' shall include publication on the website of the Authority.

*Amends Access to Information Rules (Access to Agenda and Reports before the Meeting) and (Notices of Meeting)*

### **2A Remote Access to Meetings**

(a) For all purposes of the Constitution the term "meeting" is not limited in meaning to a meeting of persons all of whom, or any of whom, are present in the same place, for which purposes any reference to:

- (i) "place" is to be interpreted as where a meeting is held, or to be held, includes reference to more than one place including electronic, digital or virtual locations such as internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers: and
- (ii) "open to the public" includes access to the meeting being through remote means including (but not limited to) video conferencing, live webcast, and live interactive streaming and where a meeting is accessible to the public through such remote means the meeting is open to the public whether or not members of the public are able to attend the meeting in person; and

(b) If the Chair is made aware that the meeting is not accessible to the public through remote means, due to any technological or other failure of provision, then the Chair shall adjourn the meeting immediately. If the provision of access through remote means cannot be restored within a reasonable period, then the remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair. If he or she does not fix a date, the remaining business will be considered at the next ordinary meeting.

*Amends Access to Information Rules (Access to Agenda and Reports before the Meeting) and (Notices of Meeting)*

### **3A Members in Remote Attendance**

(a) A Member in remote attendance is present and attends the meeting, including for the purposes of the meeting's quorum, if at any time all three of the following conditions are satisfied, those conditions being that the Member in remote attendance is able at that time:

(i) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, the other Members in attendance.

(ii) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and

(iii) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

(b) A Member in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance contained in (a) above are not met. In such circumstance the Chair may, as they deem appropriate;

(i) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for remote attendance of a Member contained in (a) above to be re-established; or

(ii) Count the number of members in attendance to confirm the presence of a Quorum and, if so, continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the Member in remote attendance.

*Amends Procedural Standing Order 21 (Quorum)*

### **4A Remote Attendance by Members of the Public**

(a) A member of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting is in remote attendance at any time if all three of the following conditions are satisfied, those conditions being that the member of the public in remote attendance is able at that time:

(i) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, Members in attendance;

(ii) to hear, and where practicable see, and be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by, any other members of the public entitled to attend the meeting in order to exercise a right to speak at the meeting; and

(iii) to be so heard and, where practicable, be seen by any other members of the public attending the meeting.

(b) A member of the public in remote attendance will be deemed to have left the meeting where, at any point in time during the meeting, any of the conditions for remote attendance contained in Standing Order 4A(a) above are not met. In such circumstance the Chair may, as he or she deems appropriate:

(i) adjourn the meeting for a short period to permit the conditions for remote attendance contained in Standing Order 4A(a) above to be re-established;

(ii) suspend consideration of the item of business in relation to the member of public's attendance until such time as a following item of business on the agenda has been transacted and the conditions for the member of the public's remote attendance have been re-established or, on confirmation that this cannot be done, before the end of the meeting, whichever is the earliest; or

(iii) continue to transact the remaining business of the meeting in the absence of the member of the public in remote attendance.

*Amends any scheme for public participation in respect of planning, licensing and other committees*

## **5A Remote Voting**

Unless a recorded vote is demanded, [which may be confirmed by the requisite number of Members confirming the demand verbally when requested by the Chair,] the Chair will take the vote:

(a) by the affirmation of the meeting if there is no dissent [by assent]; or

(b) the Chair will take the vote by a named vote and the number of votes for or against the motion or amendment or abstaining from voting will be recorded.

Amends Procedural Standing Order 14.9.2 (Voting)

## **6A Members excluded from the meeting**

Where a Member is required to leave the meeting, the means of remote attendance and access is to be severed whilst any discussion or vote takes place in respect of the item or items of business in which the member or co-opted member may not participate.

*Amends Procedural Standing Order 16 (Members' Interests in Contracts and Other Matters)*





**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING – 23 JULY 2020**

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION RULES - SPECIAL URGENCY NOTICES**

**Report of the Leader of the Council**

**1. Background**

1.1 In accordance with the Access to Information Rules contained within the County Council's Constitution, the Leader of the Council is required to submit quarterly reports to the Council detailing those key decisions taken by the Cabinet where it had not been possible to give the requisite 28 days public notice of the intention to take such a decision. The quarterly report should include the number of decisions so taken and a summary of the matters in respect of which those decisions were taken.

1.2 Similarly, where a decision being taken by or on behalf of the Cabinet or the Property Sub-Committee is urgent and any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests or the interests of any person(s) to whom the decision relates, then the Leader of the Council may seek the approval of the Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee to that decision being exempt from call-in. A report on the use of this procedure must be submitted to Council on a quarterly basis.

1.3 Below is a schedule detailing the use of the above powers since the last meeting of the Council.

The Cabinet, at their meeting on 15 April 2020, took a key decision relating to the provision of a fee uplift and financial stability measures for Care Providers during the Covid-19 pandemic.
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The Cabinet, at their meeting on 20 May 2020, also took a key decision on further extra funding of £4.3m from the additional grant to support care providers.
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1.4 As it had not been possible to give the requisite 28 days public notice of the intention to take the above-mentioned decisions, the provisions referred to in paragraph 1.1 above were utilised. In addition, as there was considerable concern nationally about the risk of care providers failing, which would have a catastrophic impact on people and the NHS, the approval of the Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee was sought to the decisions being exempt from call-in in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 1.2 above.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 That the use of the special urgency and exemption from call-in provisions contained in the Council's Constitution in respect of the Cabinet's decisions on 15 April 2020 (on the provision of a fee uplift and financial stability measures for Care

Providers during the Covid-19 pandemic) and 20 May 2020 (on further extra funding of £4.3m to support care providers), be noted.

Staffordshire County Council

# Annual Scrutiny Report

2019/20





# Introduction

**Welcome to Staffordshire County Council's Annual Scrutiny Report. I have pleasure in introducing this report which summarises the work that our Select Committees have undertaken over the last 12 months.**

Good scrutiny is essential in any well governed local authority. It plays a vital role in influencing services and shaping plans which affect our citizens. It allows elected members to focus time and effort on issues that matter most. Scrutiny has given members the opportunity to hear from experts in a number of different fields who have helped to challenge performance and policy direction to ensure that we are getting the absolute most we can from the resources we have.

At the time of writing this foreword, we have entered into a period of national lockdown due to the Coronavirus, Covid 19. We, as a council, are having to operate differently and rise to the challenge and demands facing our citizens. Scrutiny is doing the same. We are meeting online for the first time and trying to find different ways of holding both the Executive and our partners to account. On behalf of the Chairman of our Select Committees, I would like to thank all Councillors and Officers for their continued support during these ever-challenging times.



**Councillor David Williams**  
*Chairman of Corporate Review Committee*



## Scrutiny Structure

Staffordshire County Council's Constitution allows for four Select Committees covering the following areas:

### Corporate Review

This is the Council's Principal Scrutiny Committee, responsible for the overall management and coordination of Select Committees as well as; overall performance; Strategic Corporate Planning; improvement and transformation; the Local Enterprise Partnership; and the Council's support services. It also deals with any Executive decisions that have been called in.

### Healthy Staffordshire

The Select Committee is responsible for scrutiny of matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the Authority's area, including public health and adult social care, in accordance with regulations made under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance.

### Prosperous Staffordshire

The Select Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth including highways infrastructure and connectivity and flood and water management, education, learning and skills.

### Safe and Strong Communities

The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism.

The Select Committees investigate issues affecting the communities of Staffordshire. Each Committee is made up of County Councillors from the different political parties represented on the County Council. Some Committees also have several co-opted members who are either district or borough councillors or who are co-opted for their particular expertise. Each Select Committee has a Chairman, Vice Chairman and an Opposition Vice Chairman. Committee meetings take place regularly and are usually open for the public to attend. In addition, Select Committees are broadcast on the Staffordshire County Council website.

A key role of a Select Committee is to make recommendations that will lead to improvements in services. One of the ways that they will do this is to investigate a topic in depth, this is called a scrutiny review or working group. Review reports are usually reported to Cabinet or the lead for an external organisation, for example the Chair of a Clinical Commissioning Group.



## Corporate Review Select Committee

The Corporate Review Committee is the Council's principle Scrutiny Committee and as such plays a key role in challenging and monitoring performance. Every year, the complaints report is considered and each quarter the performance report. This enables us to highlight any problem areas to refer them to the relevant Committee for further investigation ensuring poor performance doesn't go unchallenged.

The Committee set up a working group to look at the **Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**. The County Council has significantly reduced its running costs, whilst spending a record amount on social care for a growing ageing population as national funding has reduced. The Working Group challenged the major risk assumptions within the MTFS. They met over several months and interviewed Cabinet members covering the greatest risk areas. The final report made recommendations that span 5 categories covering Health and Care; Digital and Community First; Children and Young People; Environmental Maintenance; and General issues. It also made a request to the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee to monitor the Children's Transformation Plan in order to ensure savings are achieved and continue to transform the way it delivers services to meet the ever increasing demand for care services, best practice and ensuring value for money. The report also highlighted the four enablers to achieving MTFS as well as focusing on the risk areas. The group was widely viewed as a success in involving members of all Political Parties in pre decision scrutiny. It is due to reconvene in September to continue its pre-decision scrutiny brief prior to next year's budget setting.

In July, the Committee considered a **Call-In** involving changes to the **Your Staffordshire Card Scheme (YSC)** scheme.

The main concern and reason for the call-in was that not all areas of the County had alternatives to the scheme, and some bus operators were not offering affordable alternatives, which left some young people with only the YSC for subsidised travel. Staffordshire Youth Parliament made representations at the meeting and a Staffordshire Youth Union member was invited to speak on behalf of young people in the County.

Despite the Committee agreeing with the implementation of the decision, it was agreed that further scrutiny should take place to consider how best to address some of the geographical issues raised during the debate.

**The Vision and Strategy for Public Services** is a critical document for the County Council. Its aim is to develop a unifying vision for the County to enable better civic leadership and outcomes. It had been developed through Network Staffordshire, a group of senior leaders from across the County, including Councils, Universities, Police, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Fire and Rescue Service and the Commissioner's Office. Information gathered from a series of interviews with key systems leaders across the County had been fed into a workshop of Network Staffordshire, resulting in three emerging themes for collaborative working being agreed. These were: Smart Staffordshire and 5G; better use of data across Staffordshire; and, place branding. The Committees suggestions included; a more proactive use of new and developing technologies in exploring solutions rather than focusing only on identifying problems; Partnership working and climate change; and the opportunities for investment, were noted and agreed to influence future developments.

**David Williams**  
Chairman

## Corporate Review Select Committee

### Items considered during the year

- Integrated Performance Reports at each quarter (4 reports per year)
- Review of Property Strategy, Property Sub-Committee to include an update on the Penda Property Partnership
- Overview of the Select Committee Work Programmes
- Call-In of the Cabinet Member Delegated Decision - Changes to the Your Staffordshire Card Scheme (YSC) - scheme to end on 31st August
- Scrutiny Outcomes Report - January - June 2019
- Feedback from SEND Working Group -
- Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2018 - 2019
- Vision and Strategy for Public Services
- Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group - Final Report
- County Fleet Care and Transport
- Learning and Development Commissioning Plan

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:  
<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=604>



## Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee

To ensure that the whole of the County's geographical area is represented on this Select Committee, all eight District and Borough Councils are entitled to an elected member representative with full voting rights. We also invite a representative from Staffordshire Healthwatch to attend the meetings and offer evidence on whatever subject we are considering. This has been a busy year for the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. The main areas of business can be split into two main categories:

### Social care:

- Pre decision scrutiny was carried out on the Adult Learning Disability Community Offer and the day opportunities purchased from the independent sector. The Committee recommended clarity on the marketplace service specification, quality standards and the delivery of safe, quality services.
- Patients with Complex Care needs and how and where their care is provided, was discussed following the BBC Panorama programme into Whorlton Hall. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were questioned on their quality assurance checks and how they ensured that the best, appropriate care was provided.
- Pre decision scrutiny of the services and support that the County Council provides to carers, contained in the 'All together for carers', strategy was considered. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that further consideration of the options for young carers to contact service providers via technology should be given; better signposting to relevant sources of information or services; current engagement with schools being expanded to include liaison with Special Education Needs and Disabilities Hubs to support awareness raising and identification; and mitigation of the various risks highlighted in the report should be a priority.
- Consideration of the Autism Implementation Plan led to a range of recommendations being made to the Cabinet and partners around awareness raising and the need for culture changes.
- A new approach to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy was considered in some depth. Members expressed concerns over the proposed timescales and suggested more work takes place on the support needed into the prevention of negative consequences of social media and the link between physical health and the relationship with mental health. The Committee also suggested the introduction of exit interviews. They also felt that there needed to be closer links with early years identification, thus supporting people before issues escalate.

### Health (NHS) issues.

There have been a number of events during the year which have led to the Committee scrutinising the delivery of health care services.

- One of these was a fire at the George Bryan Centre which led to the emergency closure of the Community and Mental Health Care Centre. The Committee strongly argued that a treatment centre should remain in the south of the county in Tamworth and are waiting to hear if this will be the case.
- The formation of One Single Strategic Commissioning Organisation was also considered in some depth. The Committee felt that the proposal was financially led, that the commissioning policies hadn't been considered and that the North and South of the county had very different population needs which should be recognised. Following the consultation, the proposals were withdrawn to enable further development.



- This year the CCGs Annual Assessments were published with five of the six CCGs receiving an overall rating of inadequate. The Committee invited the Accountable Officer to answer questions. One of the issues discussed at length was the financial issues suffered by both the CCG and the County Council and the extent of delayed discharge problems, particularly in the South of the County.

This discussion paved the way to a task group being set up to look at the whole urgent care provision. Unfortunately, this has been delayed due to the Covid 19 crisis, but this will be carried forward into next years' work programme.

**Johnny McMahon**  
Chairman

## Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee Work Programme 2019/20

### Items considered during the year

- Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer
- University Hospital North Midlands - Quality/Improvement, Cancer targets, financial deficit
- Patients with Complex Care needs
- NEXXUS Care
- Healthwatch Performance report
- George Bryan Centre Engagement Plans
- Single Strategic Commissioning Organisation
- East Staffordshire CCG Community Services Procurement
- Integrated Urgent Care (GP Out of Hours and NHS 111 services)
- STP 5 Year Strategy refresh -Including STP workstreams and urgent care systems
- Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer: Staffordshire County Council Learning Disability Services and the Carers Strategy 'All together for carers'
- Clinical Commissioning Groups Annual Assessments 2019
- Clinical Commissioning Groups Brexit preparations
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy - update - include a briefing on the Trailblazer bid.
- Emotional Health & Wellbeing for Children & Young People, Contract
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT)
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) - Child Care and Maternity services
- Autism Implementation Plan
- All Age Carers: Future Delivery Options
- Non-merger of CCGs and their commissioning intensions;

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ielistmeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=871>

## Prosperous Select Committee

One of the most productive meetings that the Select Committee held this year was the one which considered the **Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy**. We invited expert witnesses from Amey, who assisted members in their questioning. With a high asset value of £7.5 billion the Staffordshire highway network is the largest and most visible asset for which the County Council is responsible. In recent years the investment in highway infrastructure and its performance has been increasingly under the scrutiny spotlight. The current financial challenges and increased public demands and expectations have meant the management of our highway assets has never been more important to ensure we achieve our outcomes. We asked questions on lobbying government for funding and what support would be given through HS2; the decline in customer satisfaction; and concern over communications with Amey; information on personal injury claims and the average response time from enquiry to inspection.

The Committee have also looked at the performance of two long-term highway service delivery contracts those being; **Infrastructure+ and the Streetlighting Private Finance Initiative**, the reporting system; the quality of repairs made by utility companies and the timetable of the streetlighting PFI asset replacement programme.

Whilst discussing the **Draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP)** we asked for expert advice from Professor Martin Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Staffordshire University and Matthew Lowe, Policy Manager at Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, who helped to formulate questioning streams which we used to develop our response and shape the work around the SIP. It was felt that without links to other documents/strategies such as the Local Industrial Strategy, the Plan lacked direction and economic vision. The Committee will be considering this item again along with evidence of forging strategic relationships with key infrastructure providers and external funding providers.

Members had input into the Capital Funding for New Schools and the Education and Skills Strategy, requesting that more information on the role of governors be included in the document and asked if the size of the

geographic footprint could be raised with the Regional Schools Commissioner. These suggestions were taken on board.

We monitored the position of the County's 'alternative Education Provision' and commented on the Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025. We also received several Economic Growth Programme Updates which enabled us to keep on top of the level of activity in the county.

We have been actively engaged with the pre-decision scrutiny of the activities and projects surrounding Staffordshire Air Quality. We concentrated on the potential harm caused by airborne pollution, particularly from motorised traffic and the Councils key role in finding a Highways and Transport solution for roads and car usage. We were informed that the Council had been successful in putting in a joint bid with Stoke on Trent City Council and Newcastle Borough Council in Staffordshire for monies from the government's Clean Air Fund. This will continue to be scrutinised well into the next municipal year.

The Committee has three co-optees representing schools and they have full voting rights on all education matters.

**Ian Parry**  
Chairman

## Prosperous Select Committee

### Items considered during the year

- Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy
- Infrastructure+ and Lighting for Staffordshire Performance Review
- Staffordshire Air Quality Projects
- Education and Skills Strategy: A Partnership Framework for Staffordshire
- Capital Funding for New Schools
- Economic Growth Programme Update
- Draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan
- Update on Section 53 Applications
- Update on the Education and Skills Strategy
- Alternative Education Provision
- Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025
- Mitigation Plans for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation and Update on Countryside Estate Review
- Staffordshire Air Quality Projects

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:  
<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=868>



## Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee

A key area of scrutiny this year has been the **Children's Transformation Plan**, outlining the whole system model for change and highlighting expected outcomes. The system has been scrutinised as it developed, with Select Committee Members conscious of the significant changes to ways of working the Plan brings, considering the business case, values and anticipated impact. We plan to continue to scrutinise the implementation of this new approach, with its aspirational transformation and predicted subsequent savings. We will look at key milestones within the Plan's implementation, evaluating their timeliness, success and outcomes.

One of the significant findings of the **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** Ofsted report was around co-production, so ensuring a relationship developed that allowed relevant partners to contribute to the development of SEND was essential. To enable adequate time for detailed consideration of the issues involved with this, and because of the cross-cutting nature of SEND, we established a joint working group with representatives from both Prosperous and Healthy Staffordshire Select Committees to scrutinise this issue.

**Contextual Safeguarding** is the biggest change to child protection since the Laming report in 2009. It looks at harm to children and young people in a much broader context and is a significant rethink nationally on how to safeguard children. With this change being so important to future safeguarding we held a workshop with our lead safeguarding officers to enable a greater understanding of this new approach and how it will change safeguarding in Staffordshire. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were invited to join us for the workshop. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) had previously been included on our work programme on a quarterly basis. In future CSE will be considered as part of the broader Contextual Safeguarding agenda.

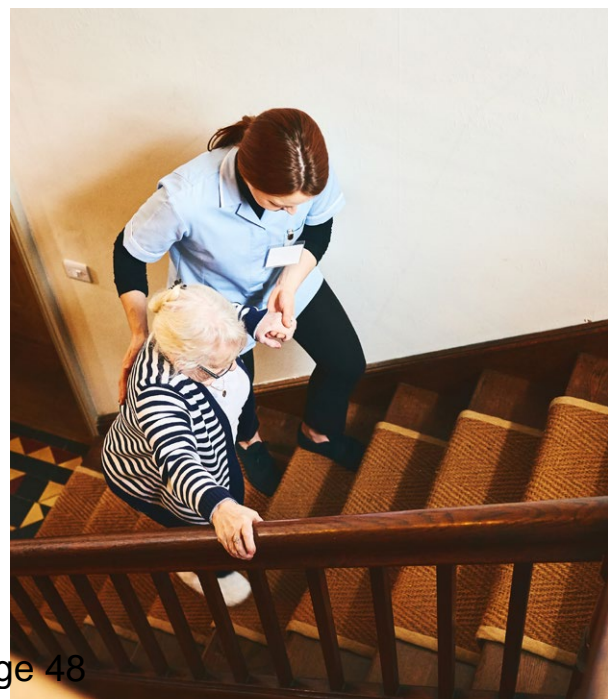
Several areas of scrutiny this year led us to raise the need for further consideration around the **assessment and referral of vulnerable individuals**.

The areas of scrutiny concerned were around: Missing Children and the work of Catch 22; new domestic abuse contracts. The Ofsted inspection which found that the first response service .....

***“Thresholds are well understood among partners, but the quality of referrals received from other agencies varies, meaning that the needs of children are not always initially understood, and further information is often required.....”***

As a result, the Vice-Chairman and Deputy Vice-Chairman met with representatives from the MASH to consider a range of issues, including how safeguarding referrals are made, how the MASH works within this process, and how referrals are made to Catch 22. We were particularly keen to ensure that there was consistency in referrals and sought reassurance that the decision-making process using the one front door approach had the right intelligence base to enable appropriate decisions to be taken. Whilst we are satisfied that referrals are made in a consistent manner and were impressed with the work of colleagues in the MASH and beyond, there are a number of areas for further work which are being considered as part of our future work programme around commissioned services.

**John Francis  
Chairman**



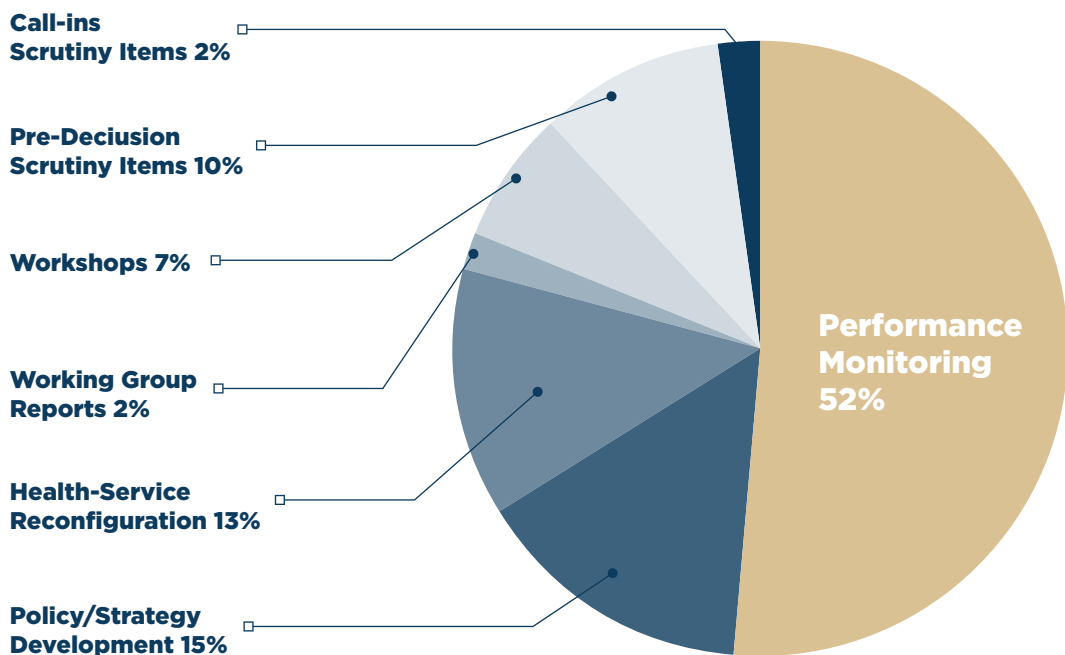
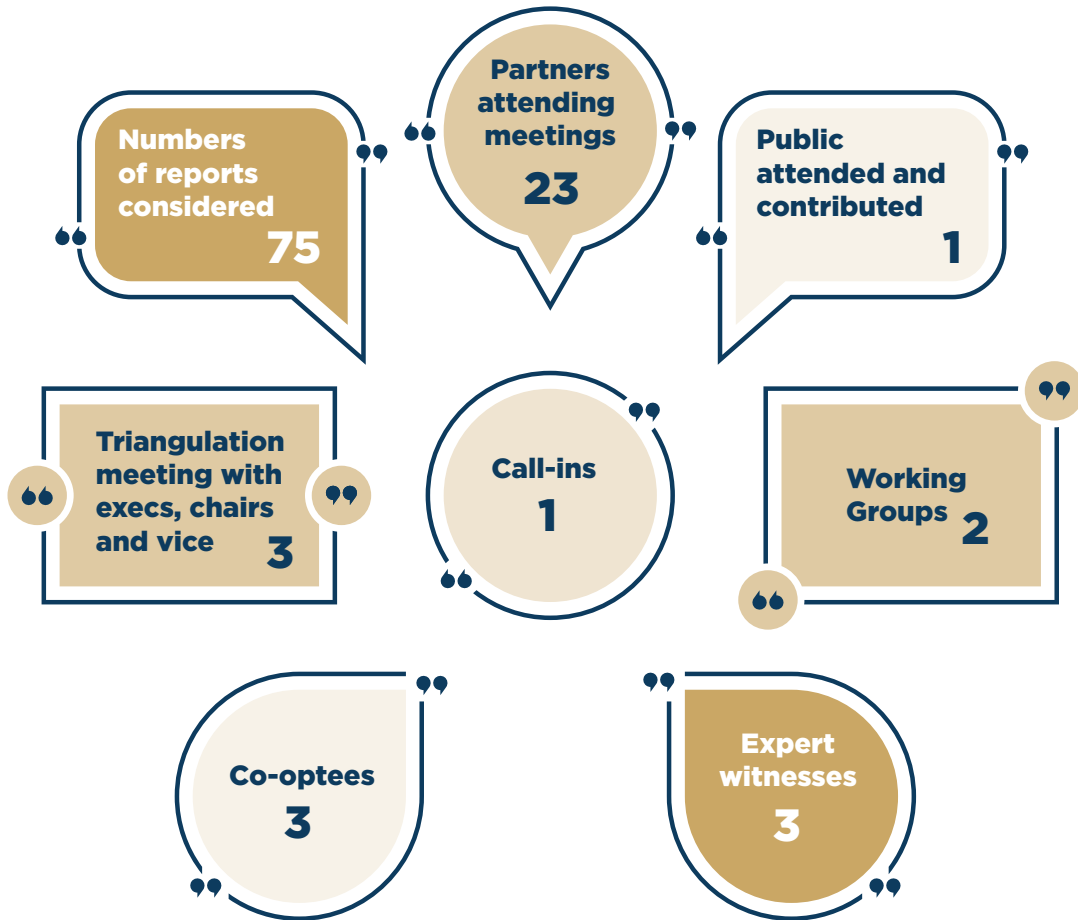
## Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee

### Items considered during the year

- Missing Children
- Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services
- Children's Improvement Plan
- SSCB New Arrangements
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Safeguarding in Education Policy
- Domestic Abuse
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Annual Report 2018-19 - Adults Social Care
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Annual Report 2018-19 - Children's Social Care
- Early Help Family Support (BRFC)
- Children's Transformation Part 2
- Regional Permanency Partnership
- Trading Standards, Rogue Traders & Doorstep Crime
- Adult Safeguarding Referrals - result of audit & developments
- Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Children's Improvement Board update
- Domestic Abuse
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report
- Catch 22
- Safeguarding concerns around Taxi Licensing
- Progress with the Children's Services Improvement Plan

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:  
<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=870>

Select Committee Activity



### What's coming up in 2020/21

The Committees enter the municipal year 2020/21 operating under extremely challenging times. Lockdown continues and virtual meetings look a part of our life for the foreseeable future. This will see us working in different ways and engaging the public and partners with more technology-based solutions.

At the point of writing this, we aren't sure what the next six months holds for us or the challenges it will bring.

At the present moment in time, we have two reviews highlighted. Firstly, the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee has identified a need to look at Urgent Care provision and Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee would like to scrutinise local transport and what the authority can do to support local need.

Safe and Strong Select Committee will continue with its working group monitoring the implementation of the SEND Written Statement of Action and will scrutinise the aspirational Children's Transformation Plan and its predicted subsequent savings, many of which will be severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along the same lines, the Corporate Review Committee will undoubtedly have to review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the impact the crisis has had on the authority's finances and ability to deliver services.

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>







# **Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel**

## **Annual Report 2019-20**

### Chairman's Forward

This year the Corporate Parenting Panel have continued to meet and hold workshops to increase members involvement in what is being achieved for 'Children in our Care'. The panels work programme is developed from the 'Children in our Care' strategy and therefore has a focus on the strategies six key objectives.

Two highlights from this year programme were firstly; the Children in Care Council 'Take over day' when young people run the panel and share their life experiences and secondly; when the panel met Mrs Jean Foster MBE following her award of an MBE in recognition of over 30 years service as a foster carer.

Although the end of the year coincided with the COVID -19 pandemic and the work programme was not fully completed I together with panel members are looking forward to being able to continue the panels positive influence on the lives of children in our care.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the panel members for their commitment to improving the lives of the children in our care.



County Councillor Mark Sutton

Chairman of Corporate Parenting Panel  
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

## Purpose of Corporate Parenting Panel

1. The Corporate Parenting Panel is the means by which the Council discharges its responsibility as a corporate parent and brings together councillors, senior officers in children's social care and partner agencies to consider key issues which affect looked after children and care leavers.
2. The Panel actively engages with and challenges key partners to provide good support and is ambitious for the children in its care.
3. The Panel works closely with our Children in Care Council and Care Leaver forums to ensure all our looked after children have the best possible care, are safe, healthy, happy and achieve. In order to achieve this, the Panel has an annual thematic work programme in which all partners are called to account.

## Governance and membership

4. The Panel provides a key role in supporting members to play their role in ensuring accountability for our looked after children. Whilst all members of the County Council are corporate parents, members of the Corporate Parenting Panel champion and challenge on behalf of looked after children and Care Leavers. The panel is proactive in challenging service delivery and advocates for children in our care and for strong governance principles.
5. The Panel looks to see that the voice of the child is imbedded across services and informs decisions making.
6. The Work Programme is a working document and as such the Panel have requested supplementary reports in order to further explore any areas of concern or challenge.
7. The Panel comprises of 15 elected members of the County Council, including the Chair who is the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Chairman of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee. Members are appointed annually at the Council meeting in May.

The current members and their attendance record in this period are:

Gill Burnett (8/9)	Bernard Peters (5/9)
Janet England (6/9)	Natasha Pullen (2/9)
John Francis (7/9)	Paul Snape (8/9)
Gill Heath (2/9)	Mark Sutton (chairman) (8/9)
Michael Greatorex (to Oct 2019) (2/4)	Carolyn Trowbridge (8/9)
Phil Hewitt (8/9)	Ron Clarke (8/9)
Bryan Jones (vice chairman) (9/9)	Maureen Compton (6/9)
Jill Hood (6/9)	Richard Ford (from Jan 2020) (2/3)

8. Members of Staffordshire’s District/Borough Councils are co-opted onto the Panel as champions for looked after children particularly in areas of housing and leisure facilities.

Ann Edgeller (7/9) Alan Pearson (4/9) Wendy Sutton (7/9) Janice Silvester-Hall (from December 2019) (2/3)	Barbara Hughes (3/9) Jill Waring (0/9) Jeremy Oates (3/9)
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9. The Panel is supported by the Strategic Lead for Looked after Children and Disability Services and the Assistant Director for Commissioning (Families and Communities). A facilitator from the Children in Care Council attends every meeting to ensure the voice of the child feeds into the Panels work programme.

10. The Panel calls on professional advice and assistance/ holds to account:

- The Head teacher of the Virtual School
- Designated nurse for Looked After Children
- County Managers for Leaving Care and Adoption
- Regional Permanency Partnership
- Independent Reviewing Officers
- Youth Offending Team
- Senior practitioner colleagues

11. The Panel calls for witness accounts as appropriate, from:

- Looked after children and Care Leavers
- Care Leaver Ambassadors
- Foster carers

12. The Panel’s Terms of reference were approved by the Panel in 2017 and are attached as Appendix.

13. The Panel met 9 times during the period. It has met formally and in informal workshops to debate key aspects of the service. Due to the Covid19 pandemic the panel was unable to complete its work programme for 2019/20. Items not considered will carry over into the next municipal year.

14. All panel members are required to complete Level 1 Child Protection Training as a minimum.

15. In February, we were reminded of the importance of our role in accompanying the ‘independent visitor’ on Regulation 44 visits to our in-house children’s homes. These management visits are carried out under the Children’s Homes Regulations 2015 and provide an opportunity for independent scrutiny of a home. We continue to undertake Regulation 44 visits on a rota basis.

## Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016-19

16. The challenge and scrutiny role of the Panel is focussed on driving the overarching Looked After Children Strategy 2016-19. The Strategy has 6 key objectives:

- Keeping You Safe
- Where I live
- Your Education and learning
- Your wishes, views and feelings
- Becoming a Care Leaver
- Your Health and Wellbeing

## Key Issues

17. At a workshop **in May**, we identified performance indicators around outcomes for looked after children (LAC) and care leavers and the emerging themes informed our work programme for 2019/20. Priorities were identified as:

- Understanding the reasons behind children coming into care (neglect, abuse etc)
- Looked after children going missing from education and exclusions and how this increases vulnerabilities
- Outcomes for care leavers (suitable accommodation and apprenticeships)
- Emotional health and wellbeing
- Virtual School – raising aspirations and supporting mental health needs.

18. Throughout the year we have monitored the steady continued rise in the numbers coming into care in line with the national trend. The unprecedented rise put a real strain across Children's services and inevitably on performance. In **June** the LAC population peaked at 1225 some of whom were coming into care presenting with really complex problems.

19. We are aware that admitting a child into care is a last resort initiated only when potential and inherent risk to an individual can be demonstrated and when family and friends' options have been exhausted.

20. The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) by Ofsted **in February** had judged the quality of Staffordshire Children's Service to be 'good' overall and identified a number of areas that required further improvement. We explored the resulting Improvement Plan at our meeting in **September**. This comprehensive plan formed the basis of the Children's Services Business Plan for 2019-20. By this time, all areas that had been identified by Ofsted for improvement were on track with policies, procedures and processes reviewed and improved underpinned by training for all staff.

21. Our focus was on the areas which related to Looked after children: Contextualised safeguarding; Children who go missing; and, Contact with care leavers.
22. The increasing looked after children population and the pressure that brought to bear on Children's Services seemed relentless and in **January**, we welcomed the introduction of the New Practice Model in response and which is now embedded consistently across the whole service. Families are supported to enable children to remain at home wherever it is possible and safe.
23. Phase 1 of Children's Services Transformation brought early help and safeguarding together into one team under two heads of service. We endorse the significant investment made by Cabinet in November 2019 of £8.1m to redress the balance in Children's Services.
24. Phase 2 is a whole system reform which will embed a restorative practice approach. All staff are now trained in this approach which is community based and utilises voluntary, community and family resources. We endorse the approach which will be child centred and focussed on a District footprint. Needs will be addressed early on before they escalate and the root causes of children coming into care will be analysed.
25. Systems and processes will be scrutinised and improved to free up social worker time by reducing bureaucracy. Recruitment of social workers and family support workers will step up. Whilst we welcome an early intervention approach, we have warned against a focus on solely reducing the numbers in care and where it can be demonstrated that children need the auspices of local authority care, they must be able to access it. We have been assured that where there are clear safeguarding concerns children will be brought into care, but the service will work proactively with families to try and support children staying at home wherever possible. Ofsted have recognised good practice in Staffordshire's Court and Care Planning teams over many years and the Courts have also acknowledged the appropriateness of the cases brought to them. We are clear that Children's Transformation must be child lead and not finance driven and are assured that the fundamental principle is to improve outcomes for children and families.
26. Increasingly the number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) will help to take children out of the care system. We learned in **January** that SGOs formalise arrangements under Section 31(1)(a) of the Children's Act whereby one or more individuals are appointed to be a child's 'special guardian'. This is intended for children who cannot live with their birth parents and who would benefit from a legally secure placement. These kinship arrangements remove for the child the stigma associated with living in care and continue to offer support proportionate to need with no financial disincentive.

### Key achievements

27. The Corporate Parenting Panel plays a key role in promoting, monitoring and challenging service improvement and achievements.
28. The Staffordshire Pledge reflects what matters to young people in care and all Corporate Parenting Panel Members have signed up to commit to uphold the Pledge and support young people to improve their life chances. We are ambitious about looked after children's futures and enjoy opportunities to celebrate their success and achievements with them.
29. The Take Over meeting (in **January** this year) when young people representing the Children in Care Council take over the meeting has become a highly anticipated and always enjoyable meeting in our work programme. This time, young people presented on Older Life Story Work; Supporting Communication with Children Training and Interviews; National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum; Care Leaver Update; and, the CiCC Regional Conference. We are eager to support young people and for them to challenge us on our commitments to them and we welcome closer integration with the CiCC. As County Councillors, we feel we offer a wealth of local knowledge and experience.
30. In **March**, we celebrated with Mrs Jean Foster MBE her recently being awarded, together with her husband, an MBE in recognition of over 30 years service as foster carers. Mr and Mrs Foster had cared for 186 children over a 35 year period as well as having 7 children of their own.
31. Our Foster Carers took over the March agenda and delivered a presentation which showed the diversity of opportunities to foster children; the many categories of care and the range of backgrounds and circumstances of carers. They acknowledged the support which they receive from the County Councils Fostering Service. This exchange helped us to understand the issues which matter to carers and we were impressed by their dedication and enthusiasm. Unanimously we agreed that closer engagement between the panel and foster carers would be of benefit and should be facilitated.

### Your wishes, views and feelings

32. In addition to Take Over meeting, the Children in Care Council continue to feed their thoughts through their facilitator to all our meetings.
33. The Children in Care Council have worked on a leaflet to widen their engagement and have developed a participation plan hoping to generate interest from a greater cross section of Staffordshire LAC. The Children's' Voice Project who consult via the 'Big Vote' have also been working with Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) through a monthly support meeting.

34. We recognise that Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) can often be the one constant professional on a child's journey through care and are significant as the 'eyes and ears' of the Local Authority. IROs chair reviews for every looked after child, even those placed outside of the county. As with other aspects of the service, they have struggled to cope with the increasing numbers especially those placed outside of the county (some of whom were more than 20 miles away). We agree that IROs need to facilitate and encourage better engagement from looked after children in their reviews and we welcomed their work plan priorities shared with us **in July**.
35. In **October**, the Corporate Complaints Manager summarised the Statutory Children's Service Complaints and Representation Service Annual Report for 2018/19. We raised concern over timescales for responding to complaints. Since then, the Strategic Lead for Specialist Safeguarding has been working with the complaints team to improve performance. We accept that lapsed timescales in the court and care planning process do not necessarily mean progress is not being made and working through issues with parents can take time.

#### Your Health and Wellbeing

36. The looked after children's designated nurse attended meetings twice during this year. **In May**, she presented disappointing performance around the timeliness of health assessments. Previously poor performance had been attributed to turbulence caused by commissioning changes but the backlog of assessments had still not been cleared. Improvement appeared to be happening but slowly and we were assured that better results would follow in the next quarter.
37. Staffordshire had been successful in becoming one of nine pilot authorities approved to run a looked after children mental health pilot and in **June** we endorsed the vision, set out in the document: Starting Well, Living Well, and Supporting Well – a Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Approach to Children and Young Peoples Mental health and Emotional Wellbeing 2018-23. The new system will accommodate the increasing demand, have a better understanding of local need and a focus on prevention and early intervention.
38. The pilot, funded by the DfE, trials a new mental health assessment tool for children who enter care over a 12 month period (July 2019-July 2020) and we look forward to the analysis. The new emotional wellbeing service effective from April 2020 is focussed on prevention and improving pathways: making it easier for individuals to step up and step down through the services.
39. **By February**, the timeliness of health assessments and review assessments for the north of the county was excellent but variable for RHAs, and sometimes poor for southern parts of the county (Cannock, Burton and Stafford). Additional dedicated support has since been allocated and progress is being made. We expressed concern over the pace of progress towards completing all RHAs. We accept that there have been capacity issues and are reassured that the team are now adequately resourced. We continue to receive regular feedback on progress.

### Keeping you safe

40. Looked after children are proportionately far more likely to go missing than their peers. In **September**, we learned that the prevalence of young people going missing in Staffordshire was far higher in the north of the county. The majority of young people only go missing once and just over three quarters repeat three times or more.
41. Repeat missing episodes can lead to placement disruption. Catch 22, a commissioned service, now undertake independent return interviews and the learning from these is shared to help understand motives and mitigate future risk. We are concerned that while Catch 22 undertake return interviews for other local authority children placed in Staffordshire, our children placed outside of the county do not receive the same courtesy and our social workers have to travel to them. Understanding the reasons behind missing episodes should help shape a Care Plan. There is clearly a need to get better at exchanging information with other authorities and we feel that reciprocal return interview arrangements should be a requirement.
42. The Missing Protocol aims to prevent young people from going missing and had been received positively by Ofsted. We accept that it is difficult to prevent someone from going missing if their mind is set to do so, no matter how much support they receive.

### Where I live

43. In **September**, we shared increasing concern for young people placed in provision with an absence of an inspection regime (unregulated) with ineffective safeguarding arrangements and an increased risk of exploitation. The use of unregulated placements for looked after children had recently attracted national attention in the press, the Howard League and by Ofsted. There is provision for young people 16 plus years which offers accommodation and varying levels of support but no 'care'. This 'supported accommodation' is used for young people who choose to live independently: a steppingstone to independence. In most cases the service has a good working relationship with these providers.
44. We were satisfied that the service reviewed all such arrangements for Staffordshire's young people following the negative publicity and ensured there are key decisions on all files reflecting this management oversight. A working group has been established to closely monitor the most vulnerable young people who have been identified as at-risk from criminal and sexual exploitation. We are satisfied that appropriate safeguards are in place in Staffordshire.
45. We asked for more information on why Staffordshire children are placed outside of the county and in **October**, we learned that it happens when there is a complexity of need which cannot be met locally - significant mental health needs, eating disorders or a disability, for example.



46. It can be to break a cycle of Child Sexual Exploitation (C.S.E) or Gang Association; to maintain contact with family members who have moved away or simply because of a lack of places closer to home. The service retains close oversight of out of county placements. At the time of our meeting, 58% of residential placement and 36% of foster placements were outside of the county. We gained an appreciation of the cross border challenges and issues: Police, Youth Offending; Health; Education; young people going missing and safeguarding concerns. We are satisfied that every opportunity to bring young people back within the county is taken.
47. Timeliness is a key focus in the Adoption service as children who experience least delay in being placed with their adoptive families tend to have better outcomes overall. In **December** we learned that the Adoption Scorecard placed Staffordshire above average for England. We are pleased the service is ambitious in terms of placing children. Staffordshire has a strong record of achieving adoption for children with their long-term fostering families.
48. There remains a significant shortage of adopters however and we welcome the collaboration of four local authorities to form the North Midlands Adoptions and Permanency Partnership to deliver adoption services on a regional basis. Permanency encompasses special guardianship, adoption or fostering and the partnership brings together practices and processes in order to deliver Phase 1 by April 2020.
49. Jointly funded and aligning governance arrangements, the potential benefits are significant in terms of commissioning, resources and services and it is anticipated that 85-90% of children will be placed within the regional footprint.
50. The Fostering Service annual report for the period 2018/19, reflected a challenging year as increasing numbers of children became looked after. During that period, 706 children had been placed with Foster carers. In Staffordshire we are fortunate enough to have many experienced foster carers. The service has added an out of hours support service in response to need. The campaign presence is ongoing throughout the year challenging myths and public misconceptions about fostering as we recognise the Fostering Service operates in a very competitive market.

#### Your Education and Learning

51. The Virtual School advocates as a corporate parent for looked after children supporting pupils with SEND ensuring good quality Pupil Education Plans are in place aligned to annual reviews wherever possible and they are good at identifying need and intervening as early as possible.
52. In **June**, the Head teacher of the Virtual School, accounted for their progress towards priorities identified for 2018-19. Vulnerable groups had been rigorously tracked and supported and the aspiration mentoring scheme extended to a

second cohort of pupils. High quality PEPs with smart targets which are regularly reviewed are the key to success. The focus on trauma and attachment training as a whole school approach had remained a focus all year and opportunities explored for looked after children to engage in activities which support their emotional resilience.

53. Moving forward, a priority will be the high number of care leavers NEET who have SEND. Challenges around supporting children with SEND have been well documented and in **October**, we learned that 13.3% of pupils had an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC) or were receiving EHC support. The number of EHCs being maintained by the authority had risen significantly from 3400 in 2015 to 4914 by January 2019.
54. 50% of Staffordshire's looked after children received additional school support or a SEND intervention which is in line with the national trend. Often young people coming into care have received a fragmented education. Most young people respond positively to a graduated support package however some young people's needs on entry to care can be very complex and some can escalate very quickly.
55. We agree that early intervention is key to supporting children with SEND either in the family setting or a school and we endorse the range of alternative services provided for children who cannot access mainstream education.
56. In **January** we received the annual report from the Virtual School who continue to work to increase stability of school placements; challenge schools on their behalf, raise aspirations and avoid disruption, barriers to learning and exclusions. We applaud the VS on achieving no exclusions during this period.
57. The VS has been challenged by the volume of children in the system especially supporting children who enter care at Key Stage 4, the post 16 cohort and mentoring children in school placements which are out of county.
58. We encourage the VS to promote apprenticeships and we have asked for more information about the post 16 cohort. Funding has been approved for a mentor for this cohort which should help monitor their outcomes.

#### Becoming a Care Leaver

59. The Children's Voice Project have created a programme of modules focussing on different aspects of independence skills aimed at Care Leavers. The programme incorporated modules on Good self-esteem; healthy relationships; DIY; tenancy readiness and budgeting. We welcome the independence programme that supports our young people to take two years to work through all the modules.
60. We considered issues of homelessness. We understand that when a young person presents as homeless and is under 18 years, the local authority is notified

and has a duty to assess them and if going home is not an option, the service has to offer them accommodation. At 18 years, responsibility rests with the housing department. The ideal would be a standardised offer from all housing providers.

61. Local Authorities are mandated through the Social Work Act 2017 with creating and publishing a Care Leaver Offer and to monitor its implementation and effectiveness. Ofsted had highlighted that the service needed to make more effort to keep in contact with some care leavers, regardless that they are often a transient group sometimes reluctant to engage.

62. The service has set up a Strategic Board to focus on:

- Monitoring delivery of the Care leaver Offer
- Housing
- NEET

63. The following Care Leaver champions had been appointed in 2019:

Bryan Jones (Chairman) Keith Flunder (Moorlands) Janet Eagland (Lichfield) Jeremy Oates (Tamworth) Gill Burnett (Newcastle)	Alan Pearson (Cannock) Wendy Sutton (South Staffs) Ann Edgeller (Stafford) Bernard Peters (East Staffs) Phil Hewitt (UASC)
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64. Care Leavers had themselves identified finance and accommodation as their greatest challenges. These member champions had been instrumental in developing a county wide housing protocol and continue to meet with Leaving Care Team Managers on a six monthly basis.

#### COVID19 pandemic

65. Due to pandemic the panel has not met in April or May but during lockdown, we have continued to receive updates on how the service is managing in these challenging circumstances.

66. Care Planning & Court Teams are continuing to match children with carers and virtual visits are being done with children in care. Children continue to be matched for fostering and adoption whilst maximising their safety (COVID-19). All parts of the service are working collaboratively and sharing statutory responsibilities, showing resilience and creativity in supporting each other.

67. The current crisis has had a big impact on care leavers and the level of contact with them has been increased, especially the most vulnerable. Intensive support is offered to children and families at risk of breakdown via daily phone calls and visiting in circumstances that require it. All of our children's homes have remained operational to support some of our most vulnerable children and their families.

68. Children's Disability Teams continue to support families where children have challenging behaviour, learning disability and/or physical disabilities. The Virtual School continues to offer advice, guidance and support. The Artslink programme launched by West Midlands Virtual Schools and co-funded by Arts Connect aims to ensure that all children & young people in care are able to digitally access high-quality arts.

#### Priorities for 2020/21

69. In 2020/21 we will continue to implement the Corporate Parenting Strategy, ensuring we align activity with the actions identified and link in with other council services and wider partner agencies. We will refresh the Strategy to ensure it is fit for purpose and reflects current issues. We have aimed to ensure that the participation of children, young people and their carers is central to all that we do and we have committed to further exploring how they can be better involved. We will address the key issues identified by them and monitor outcomes for care leavers and try to improve these.

70. The annual thematic work programme for 2020/21 will include:

- Impact of covid19 pandemic - our response and lessons learned.
- Decriminalisation of looked after children - workshop
- Contextual Safeguarding for looked after children (addressing CSE, Missing, County Lines, Criminal Exploitation)
- Looked After Children's Health including Mental health – emotional wellbeing and Health Assessments.
- Monitoring delivery of the local offer to care leavers in Staffordshire
- Progress on Adoption Regionalisation
- Progress on Children's Services Transformation.

**County Councillor Mark Sutton**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**  
**Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel**

## **Implications**

1. Resources and Value for Money - There are no direct financial implications arising from this annual report. Financial performance, namely resources, budget and spend in relation to discharging the Panel's responsibilities is regularly reported through the Council's budgetary procedures.
2. Equalities and Legalities – it will be an ongoing responsibility for the panel to promote, support and respect the identity of looked after children and care leavers. There are no specific legal implications to the report.
3. Risk - The key issue facing the Panel in its oversight and challenge function is the capacity and financial pressures posed by the increase in looked after children population on all service areas supporting looked after children, and ensuring that as effective corporate parents, this does not hinder the care, support, aspirations or continued improvement in outcomes for our children in care.
4. Climate Change - There are no implications for the local environment.

## **Contact Officer**

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## **List of Appendices/Background Papers**

Corporate Parenting Panel Terms of Reference (Appendix)

Corporate Parenting Strategy 2016-19

Minutes from meetings of Corporate Parenting Panel May 2019 - April 2020



## **Corporate Parenting Panel - Terms of Reference**

### **Context**

Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of the Council to prioritise the needs of children in care and seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children. The Corporate Parenting Panel is designed to provide the necessary leadership that drives an ambitious and multi agency approach to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers by raising aspirations, building stronger relationships and taking time to listen to the voice of the child.

The Panel is a non-political advisory body to the Children's Executive and is chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families. The Panel does not take executive decisions but provides leadership and a governance structure for corporate parenting in order to drive forward the outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

### **Objectives of the Panel**

To provide strategic leadership and hold partners to account for performance against strategies to improve all outcomes for looked after children and young people.

To act as advocates for looked after children and young people and to ensure that the Councils Pledge to looked after children and young people is delivered.

To ensure that looked after children are protected and supported to develop as healthy citizens, able to participate in their community.

To monitor the effectiveness of the Virtual School in improving the educational attainment of looked after children and young people, to narrow the gap of achievement between them and their peers and to maximise opportunities for training and career placements.

To act as champions to increase all County Councillors' awareness and understanding of looked after children and young people and their needs and experiences and consider how they can contribute to improving outcomes.

### **These objectives will be delivered by the Panel in the following ways:-**

Make sure the whole Council and partner agencies commit to the principles of excellent corporate parenting.

Lead on the development, review and promotion of the Corporate Parenting Strategy across the Council and involve partners in order to improve services and respond to changing need.

Be well informed on Government legislation, guidance and policy concerning children and young people in care and their implications for the County Council.

Ensure a dialogue with the Children in Care Council to enable participation of looked after children and care leavers in the corporate parenting agenda and in influencing service re-design.

Receive regular reports, as appropriate, on the level and quality of services and scrutinising performance management information to ensure that any shortfalls are properly addressed.

In accordance with regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001, accompanying officers of the County Council on their visits to children's homes; and accompanying officers on Quality Assurance visits to independent residential providers each month to facilitate communication between looked after children, front line staff and councillors.

Meet children placed in foster homes and hear from their carers and to monitor the ongoing commitment to providing support, training and clarity of expectations to foster carers to achieve excellent and high quality care.

Celebrate the successes of looked after children and care leavers.

Link as appropriate with the Safe and Strong Select Committee and develop a relationship with the Safeguarding Children's Board.

Hold partners to account for their role in the delivery of services to looked after children and care leavers

Encourage all partners whether health, education or social care services or the voluntary sector to work in an integrated way in the best interests of looked after children and care leavers

To appoint elected members as champions for children in care in respect of the following themes:

- Housing
- Employment and training opportunities within council departments and with partner agencies
- Health (including mental health)
- Educational attainment and access to higher education
- Foster carer recruitment and retention

## **Membership**

The Panel shall comprise no more than 20 Members (15 County Councillors plus co-optees) and may include any member of the County Council representing a county-

wide spread and be appointed at the annual meeting of the Council. Representatives from partner organisations may be co-opted onto the Panel as appropriate. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children is chairman of the Panel.

Co-opted membership is invited from the eight District Councils; a foster carer and representatives of the Children in Care Council.

All members will receive appropriate training.

**Arrangements for Meetings:**

The Panel shall meet every month, agree a work programme annually and review it at each meeting. The meetings of the Panel are held in private session.

Meetings of the Panel shall be conducted in accordance with the Procedural Standing Orders in Section 11, of the Councils Constitution although meetings may comprise a range of different formats, visits to different locations and informal meetings with children and young people and those who support them.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will report to the appropriate Select Committee, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board.