

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 10 December 2020

Attendance

Ben Adams	Colin Greatorex	Natasha Pullen
Charlotte Atkins	Gill Heath	Kyle Robinson
Philip Atkins, OBE	Phil Hewitt	David Smith
Ann Beech	Jill Hood	Bob Spencer
David Brookes	Syed Hussain	Mark Sutton
Gill Burnett	Keith James	Stephen Sweeney
Ron Clarke	Julia Jessel	Simon Tagg
Tina Clements	Trevor Johnson	Martyn Tittley
John Cooper	Ian Lawson	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mike Davies	Alastair Little	Ross Ward
Derek Davis, OBE	Johnny McMahon	Alan White
Alan Dudson	Paul Northcott	Philip White
Janet Eagland	Jeremy Oates	Conor Wileman
Ann Edgeller	Ian Parry	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Kath Perry, MBE (Chair)	Victoria Wilson
Keith Flunder	Jeremy Pert	Mark Winnington
Richard Ford	Bernard Peters	Susan Woodward
John Francis	Jonathan Price	Mike Worthington

Apologies for absence: Mark Deaville, Bryan Jones, Jason Jones, Paul Snape, Mike Sutherland and Bernard Williams

PART ONE

25. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 October 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 8 October 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

26. Chairman's Correspondence

Covid-19 Pandemic

The Chairman made the following statement:

“As we move from the second national lockdown into the Very High Alert Level under the Government’s new tier system for England, may I take this opportunity to pay tribute to those frontline and key workers who continue to care for and provide support to everyone within our communities. I’d like to extend an unreserved thank to each and every one of you for your continued commitment, selflessness and hard work.

We all have a responsibility to help to keep people safe, keep Staffordshire open and do everything we can to prevent further restrictions and disruption to businesses, schools and our way of life. This means that we should all abide by the Government’s guidance,

means wash our hands, covering our face in shops or on transport, and keep social distancing.

Christmas this year will be very different for many of us, but I would like to wish my fellow Members, Council staff and their families all a Merry Christmas and a healthy and safe new year in 2021”.

Staffordshire residents recognised in Queen’s Birthday Honours

The Council extended their congratulations to the following Staffordshire people who had been honoured by Her Majesty the Queen in her Birthday Honours 2020:

- Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for Ms Suzanne Banks, of Stone, lately Chief Nurse at Sherwood Forest NHS Foundation Trust, for services to nursing in the NHS;
- Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for Mr Richard Gill, of Lichfield, CEO of the Arthur Terry Learning Partnership, for services to Education;
- Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for Mrs Carol Shanahan, of Stone, Founder and Trustee of the Hubb Foundation, for services to the community in Stoke-on-Trent, including during the Covid-19 response;
- Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for Ms Elizabeth McWhirter, of Croxton, Officer in the British Transport Police, for services to policing and public safety, particularly during Covid-19;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mrs Dorothy Bailey, of Stoke-on-Trent, for services to the Scouting movement and the community in Staffordshire;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mrs Jennifer Ann Dunn, of Cannock, for services to the community in Cannock;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mrs Molly Henriques-Dillon, of Penkridge, Quality Nurse Team Leader for the Birmingham and Black Country CCG, for services to nursing during Covid-19;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mr Peter Jackson, of Tamworth, for services to the community in Tamworth;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mrs Carol Kind, of Newcastle-under-Lyme, for services to the community in Stoke-on-Trent during Covid-19;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mr David Moreton, of Tittensor, General Manager at Oak Tree Farm Rural Project, for services to people with learning disabilities in Staffordshire;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mrs Hazel Lillian Nelson, of Halmer End, Practice Nurse at Cobridge Surgery and Queen’s Nurse, for services to nursing and the community in Staffordshire;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Dr Richard Edward Painter, of Swindon, for services to the community of Swindon in Staffordshire;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mr David George Robins, of Alton, Honorary Secretary of the North Staffordshire Grenadier Guards Association, for services to veterans in North Staffordshire;

- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Ms Susan Sheppard, of Newcastle-under-Lyme, lately biodiversity officer at Staffordshire County Council, for services to the Environment;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Mr Joseph Luke Trusselle, of Codsall, a Sergeant at West Midlands Police, for services to neighbourhood policing;
- Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for Ms Anne Elizabeth Ward, of Burton, for services to the community in Burton.

Honorary Alderman Terrence Crowe

The Chairman informed the Council of the death, on 18 November 2020, of former County Councillor Terrence Crowe. Mr Crowe served on the County Council between 1978 and 1997 and represented the former Berryhill (Stoke-on-Trent) County Electoral Division.

He served on a number of the Council's Committees including the Planning Committee, Education Committee, Policy and Resources Committee, Social Services Committee, Police Committee, Fire and Public Protection Committee and the Joint Consultative Committee for the Fire Brigade.

Mr Crowe was appointed as an Honorary Alderman for his services to the County Council in 1999.

Members paid tribute to Mr Crowe following which they stood and observed a one-minute silence to his memory.

27. Statement of the Leader of the Council

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

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2020/21

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Cllr Woodward referred to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and encouraged all Members to liaise with their local schools with regard to ensuring that they had Education and Care Plans in place for those pupils who required them.

Staffordshire Better Care Fund 2020/21 and the Disabled Facilities Grant

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Cllr Charlotte Atkins enquired whether the Leader was aware of the poor reputation of Millbrook Health Care in respect of their delivery of the contract for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), particularly in relation to poor workmanship, delays and lack of promotion of the scheme. Cllr Woodward also enquired as to what the County Council was doing to assist the district councils in respect of the underspend on the provision of DFGs. In response Cllr McMahon indicated that he would look into the matter to see what assistance the County Council could give but that it was his understanding that responsibility for the spend on DFGs rested with the district councils.

Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation – October 2020 Update

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Members spoke about the impact of Covid-19 on their local communities and discussed a number of matters including the Council's support for the local economy including through the roll-out of the 5G network, the provision of enterprise centres, apprenticeships and the building of appropriate infrastructure to support businesses; the important on-going role played by Support Staffordshire, SCVYS, other voluntary organisations and local communities throughout the pandemic; and how Covid-19 had indirectly impacted positively on the climate change agenda including through the creation of new "green" businesses.

Cllr Oates added that he hoped that many of the advances and improvements brought about as a result of the pandemic, such as through the use of information technology, would not be lost when things returned to the norm. He also referred to the need for both Central and Local Government to "build back better".

Cllr Philip White thanked Members for their comments and indicated that the Cabinet, at their meeting on 16 December 2020, were to receive a report on what the Council was doing to support the Staffordshire economy. He also informed the Council that, despite the pandemic, unemployment rates in Staffordshire remained below both the regional and national averages and that the vast majority of employees who had been furloughed had recently returned to work.

Update from COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Members spoke about the important and vital role played by the COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board. They also paid tribute to the Council's Director for Health and Care and the staff within the Public Health team for their on-going work in leading the local response to the pandemic. Cllr Charlotte Atkins also expressed the view that she hoped that Central Government would recognise its mistakes and learn from the excellent work undertaken by local councils.

Cllr Sutton also informed the Council of the availability of funding for those in need through the Covid-19 Winter Grants Scheme and indicated that he had recently written to all Members with details of the scheme. Cllr Woodward added that some details of the eligibility criteria under scheme were still awaited, such as how those people without children could access the funding, and she sought an assurance that this information would be circulated to all Members of the Council and also the public as soon as it became available. In response, the Leader confirmed that the information would be circulated as soon as it was available.

Support Provided to Business Start-ups in Staffordshire

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Members welcomed the support provided by the Council to encourage Business start-ups in Staffordshire. Cllr Robinson asked for details as to in which parts of the County

the new start-ups were to be concentrated. In response, Cllr Philip White indicated that, in Newcastle Borough, two new Town Deals were proposed, one for Newcastle itself and the other for Kidsgrove. He also referred to the expansion of the Innovation Centres at Keele University.

Cllrs Price, Trowbridge and Worthington indicated that they welcomed the news of the £1.6m scheme to re-invigorate the Shirehall in Stafford, including the provision of facilities for small business start-ups. Cllr Philip White thanked Members for their comments, and he paid tribute to the work of the Council's Economic Development team.

Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer: Update on Learning Disability Services Directly Provided by Staffordshire County Council
(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Cllr Woodward indicated that she supported the proposals for the expansion of day opportunities in Lichfield and Tamworth for adults with learning disabilities and expressed the hope that the new facilities would be put in place soon. Cllr Adams also welcomed the proposals and added that he was pleased that the associated transport issues were being addressed.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins indicated that, in rural areas such as the Staffordshire Moorlands, Learning and Disability Services were few and far between and needed to be made more accessible. She also expressed the view that it was important to monitor the quality of the services provided to ensure that they were of an appropriate standard. In response, Cllr McMahan indicated that much had been learned during the Covid-19 pandemic in relation to alternative ways of providing access to services. He added that, going forward, rather than these centres acting as silos, it was proposed that they be turned into hubs, supporting their local communities and thus making the service more accessible as well as improving resilience.

Covid-19 Latest
(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Cllr Francis and Cllr Brookes expressed their thanks to the Leader for writing to the Prime Minister recently to state Staffordshire's case in respect of the impact the Covid-19 restrictions were having on businesses in the County and, in particular, those in the hospitality and tourism sectors.

Cllr Hussain and Cllr Peters spoke about the impact of the growth in the number of Covid-19 cases on hospital admissions and they paid tribute to staff within the NHS.

Cllr Jessel referred to the need for people to comply with government guidance including on the use of face masks, social distancing and washing hands regularly.

Testing
(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Cllr Winnington praised the contribution made by NEXUS whose staff were supporting the roll-out of lateral flow testing in Staffordshire. Cllr Francis also paid tribute to those staff from the County Council who were also assisting with the testing.

Cllr Robinson spoke about the increase in the number of Covid-19 cases in north Staffordshire. He stated that difficulties were being encountered by some people in getting tested due to the inadequacy of good public transport links to the test Centres. He asked that action be taken to address this issue. In response, Cllr McMahon indicated that he would arrange for Cllr Robinson's concerns to be investigated.

Government Spending Review (Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Cllr Brookes moved, and Cllr Clements seconded, the following motion:

“That, in light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s announcement of a public sector pay freeze for the next financial year, this council resolves that there be no increase in elected members’ allowances for the period 2021/22.”

Several Members expressed their concern at the Government’s announcement and indicated that they felt that this was a “slap in the face” for public sector workers and would adversely impact those on low pay.

Members expressed their support for the motion before the Council and, following a vote, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

In response to a question from Cllr Woodward in respect of the Shared Prosperity Fund, Cllr Alan White indicated that details of the Fund were still awaited from Central Government.

Cllr Alan White and Cllr Jessel also spoke about the funding provided to date to the Council by Central Government to support the local economy and to tackle other issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staffordshire Story (Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Cllr Woodward referred to new Staffordshire story and emerging plans to promote the county and reignite its economy following the Covid pandemic and indicated that, in her view, Members needed to be involved in the development of the proposals.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins and Cllr Brookes also referred to the need for “supporting local businesses” to be central to the Council’s procurement strategy.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

(b) That, in light of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s announcement of a public sector pay freeze for the next financial year, this council resolves that there be no increase in elected members’ allowances for the period 2021/22.

28. Recommendations to the Council

Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members

Members were informed that the Council, at their meeting on 23 May 2019, passed the following motion:

“(a) That this Council notes that Staffordshire County Council does not currently have a formalised policy relating to Parental Leave for elected Members as there is at present no legal right to Parental Leave for those elected to public office.

(b) It is proposed that this Council should adopt a Parental Leave Policy for elected Members on a new addition to their family. This council resolves to set up a working group to consider the attached policy proposals on Parental Leave.”

On completion of the Working group’s consideration of this matter, the draft Parental Leave Policy was submitted to the Audit and Standards Committee at its meeting on 12 October 2020 who resolved “That full Council be recommended to approve the proposed Parental Leave Policy for Members.”

With regard to the payment of allowances to Chairmen of Committees who take parental leave, in 2019 the County Council approved that the following paragraph be added to Annex 1 to the Members’ Allowances Scheme:

4.3. The Chairman of the County Council, in consultation with the relevant group leader, has delegated authority to increase the allowance paid to a Vice-Chairman of a Committee to the level of the corresponding Chairman’s allowance if they are required to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman for a sustained period. The Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Chairman of the Committee will be suspended during this period.

It was suggested, however, that this be amended as follows:

4.3 The Chairman of the County Council, in consultation with the relevant group leader, has delegated authority to increase the allowance paid to a Vice-Chairman of a Committee to the level of the corresponding Chairman’s allowance if they are required to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman for a sustained period. The Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Chairman of the Committee will be suspended during this period unless the Parental Leave Policy has been applied.

Several Members spoke in support of the proposals. Cllr Little and Cllr Clements added that by adopting the Parental Leave Policy, the Council may encourage more young people to enter into local politics.

Recommendation – (a) That the Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members be approved.

(b) That paragraph 4.3 of Annex 1 to the Members’ Allowances Scheme be amended to read as follows:

The Chairman of the County Council, in consultation with the relevant group leader, has delegated authority to increase the allowance paid to a Vice-Chairman of a Committee to the level of the corresponding Chairman's allowance if they are required to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman for a sustained period. The Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Chairman of the Committee will be suspended during this period unless the Parental Leave Policy has been applied.

Note: The Chairman adjourned the meeting until 1:25 pm

Present at 1:25 pm:

Ben Adams	Gill Heath	David Smith
Charlotte Atkins	Phil Hewitt	Bob Spencer
Philip Atkins, OBE	Jill Hood	Mark Sutton
Ann Beech	Syed Hussain	Stephen Sweeney
Gill Burnett	Julia Jessel	Simon Tagg
Ron Clarke	Ian Lawson	Martyn Tittley
John Cooper	Alastair Little	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mike Davies	Johnny McMahon	Ross Ward
Derek Davis, OBE	Paul Northcott	Alan White
Alan Dudson	Jeremy Oates	Philip White
Janet Eagland	Ian Parry	Conor Wileman
Ann Edgeller	Kath Perry, MBE	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Jeremy Pert	Victoria Wilson
Keith Flunder	Bernard Peters	Mark Winnington
Richard Ford	Jonathan Price	Susan Woodward
John Francis	Natasha Pullen	Mike Worthington
Colin Greatorex	Kyle Robinson	

29. Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Cllr Francis enquired as to whether the Fire and Rescue Service was still undertaking Fire Safety Risk Assessments in people's homes during the Covid-19 pandemic and also how the Service was liaising with Social Workers who may identify risks in the homes of their clients. In response, Cllr Sweeney indicated that he would seek a response to Cllr Francis' question from the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

30. Questions

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

Question

The Cabinet Member will be aware that £50,000 of funding was allocated in or before 2017 to prepare a design brief for Public Realm works at Sankey's Corner, Burntwood, which would include much-needed traffic management improvements. Discussions have continued between Burntwood councillors and the lead officer since then and a range of options were brought forward in July of this year. However, there is no allocation in the Capital Budget as yet for any proposed works to take place.

Can the Cabinet Member therefore provide me, please, with an update on progress and an assurance that funds will be allocated for these works during the next budget round with a view to early implementation?

Reply

Please see below breakdown of the Section.106 spend to date on the project.

2018-19 (circa. £9k)

Inception meetings, site meetings / investigations / observations, traffic surveys at various locations (including turning counts), public realm best practice research, land searches and highways extents enquiries, accident data, feasibility report (commenced) and topographical surveys.

2019-20 (circa. £20k)

Preliminary design options for Sankey's corner (3no.) including bus terminus layout, traffic calming options for Cannock Road and the surrounding area, A5190 cycle route design in conjunction with Sustrans, preparation and attendance at Town Council Meeting, data collection for signage review (including extensive on-site surveys), feasibility report development including traffic data analysis/accident data analysis and extensive drainage CCTV survey including a report.

2020-21 (circa. £21k)

Topographical survey extension along Bridge Cross Road (for inclusion in public realm design), drainage survey review, detailed design of public realm 3no. options (based on preferred preliminary option from 2019-20 designs) including material palettes and accompanied by technical note including budget estimates, attendance at Town Council meetings, review of comments from meetings and final report compilation.

The County Council has secured £128,000 for 2021/22 from the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Getting Building Grant for the delivery of the following:

- 0.3km cycle and pedestrian provision along A5190 Milestone Way between High Street and Sycamore Road, including upgraded toucan crossing, footway widening and cycle provision

Further funding in 2021/22 for additional schemes in Burntwood will be dependent on the availability of resources and other spending commitments throughout the County. The decision on the final 2021/22 programme will be made by Cabinet in April 2021.

Supplementary Question

Will this scheme be considered as a priority for the County Council as significant funds have already gone into the planning and design phase?

Reply

Yes, you can rest assured that it will be treated as a priority.

Cllr Hewitt asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Cannock Chase residents, along with others in Staffordshire want their towns to flourish.

How will the County Council Support Staffordshire Towns in accessing the Chancellors £4bn "Levelling Up Fund"?

Reply

Supporting our town centres and high streets to thrive is a priority for Staffordshire County Council. In our Economic Recovery Strategy, Staffordshire Means Back to Business, approved by Cabinet in June this year, we identified the need to support our town centres and high streets as a key component for responding, recovering and once again thriving as a County. We are absolutely committed to working with our partners across all Districts and Boroughs to access the funding required to enable all our towns to thrive.

The new £4 billion Levelling Up Fund will provide a comprehensive approach to driving prosperity, taking the unique circumstances of each local area into account. We recognise there is much to do to return our town centres to locations of great vibrancy. We supported our Boroughs and Districts in making comprehensive submissions to access Levelling Up funding. Staffordshire has subsequently been successful in being awarded places on the Town Deal and Future High Street Programmes, each promoting a potential £25M investment in a locality. Kidsgrove, Newcastle and Burton Upon Trent have been successful in securing places on the Town Deal Programme, whilst Stafford, Newcastle town centre and Tamworth have been successful in securing places on the Future High Streets Programme. We believe our partners are well placed to be awarded funds.

All of our towns and service centres are important to our communities, and therefore alongside the above we are working to deliver a comprehensive proposition to support the regeneration, renewal and prosperity of all our town and service centres which are so important to us all, regardless of whether they fall under central government initiatives. This will be shaped under the place brand, to deliver all the components of successful areas including opportunities for employment, homes, education, and open space.

To further aid this process, we will deploy our relevant expertise (particularly skills, infrastructure projects and regeneration) to support our Districts and Boroughs and to ensure they have the full strategic case as part of developing further Levelling Up propositions.

In summary, we are working to ensure as a County, with our respective Districts and Boroughs working with us, we have the strongest possible proposition for securing Levelling Up funding.

Supplementary Question

Would the Cabinet Member meet with the Local Members for Cannock Chase in the near future?

Reply

Yes, it would be my pleasure.

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

Question

On Thursday 12th November the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee resolved a recommendation to ask the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture to look again at the consultation which has taken place in relation to the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation and reconsider whether it was sufficiently robust and inclusive, particularly regarding car parking proposals.

Many members of the public have been in contact with County Councillors to continue to raise their concerns about some of the proposals to significantly relocate parking to other areas. A main concern is the impact that these changes will have on disabled people and their carers.

Can the Cabinet Member please give an update on any progress she has made since the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee meeting in November and can she confirm what action she has taken to ensure all residents are given an opportunity to feed in their concerns regarding the proposed changes to the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation?

Reply

Part of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation proposals to spend £7.8m on a 15-year conservation programme includes reducing the number of parking locations in the most sensitive areas of the Chase and increasing parking capacity where the flora and fauna are more robust. In the end, as well as managing recreational pressure, there would more parking capacity overall and 50 free parking locations across the Chase.

As well as those raising their concerns about aspects of the conservation proposals, the council has received correspondence from other people who wholeheartedly support the actions proposed. In relation to access for people with disabilities, we have made clear that access will remain available and should in fact improve. Proposed improvements to the car parks that will remain, and associated paths and tracks, are likely to make access easier. Parking for blue badge holders will continue to be free at SCC sites. As a county council, we are also investing in the repair of our all ability route at Brindley Heath.

Following discussions at Select Committee, I am considering how the proposals should be taken forward and discussing this with key partners and will report back to Select Committee in the new year.

Supplementary Question

Will the Cabinet Member and Council Officers do all they can to respond to the correspondence and views expressed by the public in relation to these proposals and ensure that those views receive a fair hearing?

Reply

Yes, we are considering the options available and will take very seriously the views which have been expressed.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Which Staffordshire schools now have contracts with Entrust? In 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020 how many (1) maintained and (2) Academy schools had contracts with Entrust? How satisfied is the County Council with the services provided to schools by Entrust?

Reply

Entrust provides a range of education services for schools. For the education improvement services which includes Early Years, School Improvement Services and Governor Services the following information is taken from 2016 and 2020. Entrust was founded in 2013. Between 2016 and 2020 the number of schools purchasing education improvement services has increased as shown in the table below:

Number of Staffordshire schools and academies buying Entrust education services

	2016/17	2020/21
Packages/Products	276	293
Training	274	313

Entrust provides a range of services to schools and if the non-educational services (such as school property, human resources and school finance) were also included in this answer, the number of schools purchasing would be greater.

The table below provides responses between September 2019 - Nov 2020

Service	Response	Key data
Early Years SENCO	110	99% of respondent rated their consultant as Good or Excellent (86% of respondents rated the consultant as Excellent) 95% agreed that the service they received enabled them to identify and implement improvements in practice to support children.
Primary Behaviour Support	35	97% of respondents rated their consultant as Good or Excellent 94% agreed that the service they received enabled them to identify and implement improvements in practice to support children.
Governor Services	74	98.65% of respondents rated the Clerking services as Good or Outstanding 95% rated the customer service provided by the Governor Services office team as Good or Outstanding 97% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "Our assigned Entrust Clerk has a clear understanding of governance and can be relied upon to provide good quality advice and guidance"
School Improvement	128	100% of respondents rated their Consultant as Good or Outstanding (76% outstanding) 92.1% would recommend Entrust Education Improvement to others 100% of respondents were satisfied with their visit
Early Years	35	89% of respondents said that the support overall was Good or Outstanding

Supplementary Question

Is there a break clause in the Entrust contract due next year and, if so, were the County Council proposing any changes to the contract?

Reply

I will check with officers and respond in writing in the next few days.

Cllr Northcott asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

My Division is mainly rural but across the district of Newcastle it's a mixed picture with the urban areas such as the Towns of Newcastle and Kidsgrove having similar

needs. I would like to ask the Portfolio holder how is the County working with the Districts to support the self-employed, SME's and start-up businesses through the economic uncertainty we find ourselves in today and the work required to aid the regions recovery moving forward?

Reply

Supporting our economy is a top priority for Staffordshire County Council. Our Economic Recovery Strategy, Staffordshire Means Back to Business, approved by Cabinet in June 2020, builds on how Staffordshire can continue to be one of the best places in the UK to recover and grow. This strategy is a roadmap of how we'll further support business by continuing to invest in the conditions all businesses need to thrive, and how we'll renew the economy by supporting the creation of those clean, digital, highly-productive businesses that will provide the jobs of the future.

Our partnership with the Districts/Boroughs is key. We are operating on an open dialogue basis to ensure there are no delays in identifying issues in addition to ways that we can work together to find solutions. We have weekly briefings with our District Regeneration and Economic Development Directors to ensure they have appropriate assistance to deliver the various support mechanisms being channelled through them by central government, most recently Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG).

From the start of the Covid 19 crisis, communications were considered essential and enhanced campaigns including 'Staffordshire Means Back to Business', #ShopSafelyinStaffs and #EnjoyStaffordshireSafely were launched through traditional and social media sources in partnership with District and Borough Councils, promoting the County and importantly town centres and their reopening. In response to their request for information, we have also developed a monthly Bulletin, providing detailed data on the issues facing our economy.

The Growth Hub, which we are a key partner to, publishes weekly newsletters and news bulletins which are shared with nearly 8,000 Staffordshire Businesses and partners. These publications are shared widely across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and information is included on Local Authority schemes as well as national government initiatives.

Measures have been put in place by partner organisations including the SSLEP, Growth Hub and District/Borough Councils which have been heavily promoted by the County Council. Some of the main interventions made so far include:

- a. £143m of Government grant being passed through to businesses by Districts and Boroughs;
- b. The Countywide Redundancy Task Group where more than 20 local partners are working together to support businesses and employees with potential redundancies.

Responding to information relating to how businesses were struggling, the County Council has developed a new partnership with the Federation of Small Businesses

(FSB) to provide a business support package to small employers (1 to 4 employees). This is jointly funded between all the Districts and Boroughs and will start in January 2021.

Referring once again to ARG, the County had made a detailed proposal to our Districts and Boroughs relating to how they can utilise this grant support to work with the County Council on a number of its activities including business support and apprenticeships. All tailored to focus on those most heavily impacted by C19 including young people and those in the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors.

Turning to rural areas, we are working to develop a Rural Economic Strategy, in conjunction with partners, to ensure that businesses based in rural areas are provided with the support they need to grow and diversify. This will be considered by Cabinet early in 2021 and be the subject of consultation with District and Boroughs and wider stakeholders.

In all the County Council is working closely with our partners, both rural and urban, to deliver our Staffordshire Means Back to Business strategy and to once again enable our businesses to thrive.

Cabinet will receive the first of a new monthly economic recovery update at their December meeting. The report is comprehensive and covers a range of activities the County Council and are partners are involved with, I would encourage all Members to read this important report.

Supplementary Question

Would the Cabinet Member agree to take part in further discussions with the Employment and Skills Group in Newcastle?

Reply

Yes, I would be delighted to be involved in the work of the Group.

31. Petitions

Land south of the A513 near Orgreave and Alrewas

Cllr Eagland informed the Council of the receipt of a petition from residents of Orgreave, Alrewas, Kings Bromley and Fradley objecting to proposals by Cemex to construct a concrete factory on land south of the A513 near Orgreave and Alrewas.

Chairman