

COUNCIL AGENDA

To:- The Members of the Staffordshire County Council

Notice is given that the meeting of the Staffordshire County Council will be a Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams at 10:00 on Thursday, 10 December 2020 to deal with the matters set out on the agenda.

Note: Attendance by the public and press is via webcast only which can be viewed here - <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Henderson
Chief Executive
2 December 2020

AGENDA

(Note: The meeting will begin with prayers)

PART ONE

General Housekeeping and Declaring an Interest

1. **Apologies for absence (if any)**
2. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**
3. **Confirmation of the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 October 2020**
(Pages 5 - 22)
4. **Chairman's Correspondence**

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

5. **Statement of the Leader of the Council** (Pages 23 - 28)

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

6. **Recommendations to the Council** (Pages 29 - 38)
7. **Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel** (Pages 39 - 42)

8. **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

9. **Petitions**

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

10. **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”.

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) 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, 7 December 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) nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 30 November 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 11 February 2021 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 1 February 2021.

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 8 October 2020

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

Apologies for absence: Ann Edgeller

PART ONE

17. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

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

| Member | Minute Nos. | Interest | Reason |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|---|
| Mark Deaville | 20 | Personal | Director of Nexus |
| Jill Hood | 20 | Personal | Trustee of Stafford Age UK |
| Alan White | 20 | Personal | Wife works for a major supplier of flu vaccinations |
| Mark Winnington | 20 | Personal | Non-Executive Director of Nexus |
| Mark Winnington | 20 | Personal | Member of the Sow and Penk Internal Drainage Board |

18. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 July 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 23 July 2020 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

19. Chairman's Correspondence

Death of Former County Councillor Douglas Constable

The Chairman inform Members of the recent death of former County Councillor Douglas Constable.

Mr Constable represented the former Burntwood Saints County Electoral Division between 1989 and 1993 and served on the Council's Education, Fire and Public Protection, Policy and Resources and Planning Committees.

Cllrs Alan White, Philip Atkins and Susan Woodward paid tribute to Mr Constable following which Members observed a one minute silence in his memory.

Covid-19

The Chairman extended the Council's thanks to all those people who were playing their part in assisting in Staffordshire's recovery from the pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

She added that it was fantastic to see children return to schools last month and she paid tribute to headteachers, school and council staff who were doing an incredible job, making classrooms safe for learning, and acting quickly to keep them that way. She also paid tribute to the school transport team for rising to the challenge of getting all entitled children to and from school safely.

She also added that while many people were following government guidance and staying at home, this was not an option for frontline and key workers, who continued to care for and provide support within Staffordshire's communities. On behalf of the Council, the Chairman extended an unreserved thank you to each and every frontline and key worker.

The Chairman also indicated that everyone had a responsibility to help to keep people safe, keep Staffordshire open and to do everything they could to prevent further restrictions and disruption to businesses, schools and our way of life. This meant that everyone should abide by the Government's guidance, wash their hands, cover their face in shops or on transport, and keep social distancing.

20. Statement of the Leader of the Council

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 1, 2020-21

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Cllr Charlotte Atkins concerning the on-going financial crisis in the Children and Families Service and also in Social Care, and progress of the Council's Social Care Green Paper, Cllr Alan White indicated that, in the absence of the Government's Green Paper, Cllr McMahan was taking forward proposals for a Staffordshire Green Paper. Cllr McMahan added that Covid-19 had had a profound impact on the care home market and that the Council was to review its strategic

approach and plans to ensure that they addressed the ongoing challenges facing the sector. Cllr Sutton indicated that, with regard to the Children's Services, the County Council had invested £8.1m in the service to improve outcomes for young people and also to reduce the number of children who needed to be taken into the Council's care. He added that, amongst other initiatives, the Council was progressing with proposals for its own in-house residential Children's Home provision and was participating in the Big Fostering Partnership which was aimed at increasing the number of foster families and reduce the need for children to be taken into residential care.

Cllr Winnington spoke about the effect of Covid-19 on businesses in Staffordshire and made the following three pleas:

- At the next Council meeting can greater reference be made in the Leader's Statement to the economy and jobs;
- Can the County Council work with partners to ensure that Staffordshire businesses had the best offer in the West Midlands; and
- Can business start-ups be given the greatest priority possible.

In response, Cllr Philip White explained that the County Council had established an Economic Recovery Group; expanded the work of the Redundancy and Recruitment Task Force; was developing a Young Persons Business Start-up Scheme; introducing a Business Start-up Loans Scheme; working with the Local Enterprise Partnership to roll-out two new programmes in South Staffordshire and Tamworth; progressing measures to help the regeneration of Stafford town centre; were working on a comprehensive proposal to bring about a Staffordshire version of the Towns Fund; and was working in coalition with other authorities on a growth corridor. Cllr Alan White also added that the Cabinet, at its next meeting, were to receive an update on the impact of COVID-19 on Staffordshire's communities and economy.

Cllr Robinson referred to the overspend in Quarter 1 and to the Local Government Association's calling on the Government to provide additional funding for local authorities. He enquired as to whether the Leader shared the view that without this additional funding the Council would struggle to maintain the provision of front-line services at current levels. In response, Cllr Alan White confirmed that the County Council was continuing to lobby hard to secure additional funding for Children and Families and also Social Care.

The Award of the Service and Testing of Domestic Water Systems Framework Agreement

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Cllr Bryan Jones spoke about the importance of safe water systems which were considered to be the cornerstone of public health. Cllr Deaville added that the framework agreement would ensure value for money for Staffordshire taxpayers.

Provision of Apprenticeship Services

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Cllr Clements stated that she was pleased that the Council was to continue to procure apprenticeship training as this would support the next generation in receiving hands on

training and put their skills into practice. In response, Cllr Philip White indicated that the County Council currently had 118 apprentices in 22 different occupations and were working hard to increase those numbers. He added a note of concern that due to the Covid-19 pandemic the number of apprenticeships in the hospitality and leisure sectors may fall. He also added that the Council was lobbying Central Government for more flexibility locally on how the apprenticeship levy was spent.

Cllr Woodward referred to the Kick Start Scheme and how this was similar to the previous Future Jobs Scheme.

Delegation of authority to issue Directions under the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Cllr Philip Atkins indicated that although the Cabinet had delegated authority to issue direction notices to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Director for Health and Care in his capacity as Director of Public Health, it was important that there was a political input into those decisions and the Cabinet had therefore decided that, before issuing the notices, the Chief Executive will inform the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing and the Local Member of the intention to issue such notices.

Treasury Management Report for the Year Ended 31 March 2020

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Cllr Sutherland indicated that the County Council had retained its Treasury Management Policy of using internal cash balances instead of borrowing money. This had delivered significant savings for taxpayers, as the infrastructure to deliver more skilled, better-paid jobs was being funded at a lower cost.

#DoingOurBit Community Grants Scheme

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Several Councillors expressed their support for the scheme and also paid tribute to officers for the assistance they had given to Members in supporting local communities and voluntary groups through the People Helping People and Covid-19 Scheme Funding.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins enquired as to when the Community Grants Scheme would go live and how it would be publicised. She also asked when details of Members' spend under the People Helping People and Covid-19 Schemes would be published. In response, Cllr McMahon indicated that the Community Grants Scheme would go live shortly with the intention of the grants being paid to successful bidders by Christmas. Cllr Wilson added that the applications would open next week and aimed to support groups and organisations that helped meet the needs of vulnerable and older adults and/or the needs of vulnerable children and families in the county. The maximum grant size was £2,500 and successful bidders would be notified by 30 November.

With regard to Cllr Charlotte Atkins' question as to the publication of details of Members' spend under the People Helping People and Covid-19 Schemes, Cllr Wilson indicated that this information was available on the Council's website.

Cllr Woodward enquired as to who would make the decision on which bids would be successful under the Community Grants Scheme. In response Cllr Alan White indicated that the panel charged with making those decisions would consult with the Cabinet Community Support Members and the local Member.

Cllr Hood indicated that she hoped that the Council could improve its offer to those suffering with mental health issues.

Update from COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board (Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Cllr Flunder indicated that he found the regular update reports from the Local Outbreak Control Board very useful and he requested that Members continue to receive those updates. Cllr Oates, Cllr Deaville and Cllr Peters also praised the work of the Local Outbreak Control Board.

Cllr Parry and Cllr Adams expressed concern that, during the current pandemic, residents were finding it more difficult to gain access to GP services and asked whether the Council could challenge its health partners on this issue. Cllr Pert added that around 80% of consultations by GP's were now being done virtually. Cllr McMahon indicated that Government were aware of these issues and also the impact of Covid-19 on screening services.

Cllrs Charlotte Atkins and Kyle Robinson referred to the issues which had arisen around national Covid testing capacity and asked whether this could be better managed locally. In response, Cllr McMahon indicated that he agreed that this could be managed better locally and that these views had been expressed to Government. Cllr Charlotte Atkins also enquired as to whether the Council had looked at local lab testing capacity.

Cllr David Jones expressed his thanks to the council for its swift response to the Covid-19 outbreak in Silverdale. He also paid tribute to staff at Keele University who had taken action to ensure that students could return safely.

Cllr Clarke outlined his concerns that the local Borough Councillors were no longer taking part in the briefings on the actions being taken to address the Covid-19 outbreak in four wards within Burton upon Trent and asked whether this could be addressed.

Strategic Review of the Older People Care Home Market in Staffordshire 2020 (Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Cllr Brookes spoke about the need for a national planning reform to make it easier for people to obtain planning consent for changes to their homes where those changes would enable them to care for an elderly relative. He also called for a reform to the rating system.

In response to a question from Cllr Charlotte Atkins on the viability of care homes and the current occupancy rates, Cllr McMahon indicated that, initially, the demand for care home places fell dramatically due to Covid-19 and, at the end of September, occupancy levels had improved and stood at 87%. He added that Cabinet had therefore reviewed the Council's strategic approach and were making plans to ensure that they addressed the ongoing challenges facing the sector arising from the pandemic. Cllr Alan White added that the lack of action by Central Government had meant that the County Council had had to look at the levers available to the authority to care for and meet the needs of its older residents. He added that the Council had also been lobbying government to delegate to the Authority the power to do those things that were best managed locally.

Recommissioning of Home Care in Staffordshire

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Cllr McMahon referred to the Council's aim to support the development of home care, increasing supply and encouraging innovation, whilst avoiding large-scale disruption of the market. He also referred to the need to make job opportunities in the sector more attractive and more highly valued.

Nexus Trading Services Limited - Annual Report 2019/2020

(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Cllr Deaville expressed his thanks to the staff of Nexus for their hard work and commitment in supporting those people who needed the Council's care. Cllr Francis also commented on how well the Company was run.

Street Lighting – LED Invest to Save Initiative

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Cllr Brookes referred to complaints he had received from local residents that some street lighting had not been installed correctly and was causing issues such as light pollution on neighbouring properties and were failing to dim in the early hours of the morning.

Cllr Jessel and Cllr Greatorex indicated that upon completion of all four phases the project, energy consumption would be reduced by 8,627,502 kWh which equated to a carbon emission reduction of 2,650 tonnes and energy savings in the region of £1.6m per annum. Cllr Woodward, Cllr Hussain and Cllr Smith also expressed their support for the initiative. Cllr Hussain also requested that Members receive information of the timescales for the project so that they are aware of when works would be undertaken in their area.

Additional Investment in Community Highways Issues

(Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Cllr Brookes highlighted the difficulties which arose when utility companies failed to give notice of their intention to undertake works on the County's roads. Cllr Woodward and Cllr Smith also spoke about flooding and the Council's relationship with Severn Trent Water in relation to drainage issues. Cllr Dave Jones added that a lot of flooding was a direct result of Severn Trent Water's aging and inadequate infrastructure and urged the

Cabinet Member to take them to task over this issue. Cllr Pert also requested that the Cabinet remind landowners of their role regarding the discharge of water from private land; address all known flooding hotspots; and oppose planning applications that might bring a risk of flooding or require unfunded infrastructure improvements.

Cllr Jessel informed Members that one of her main priorities this year was to review flood risk management and the working arrangements with partner organisations.

Cllr David Williams added that priority was to be given to gully emptying, additional grass cutting, encouraging farmers to comply with their responsibilities where public rights of way crossed their land, increased road sweeping to help alleviate the risk of blocked gullies and bringing forward improved information for Members.

Consultation on Proposals for Changes to Marshlands School and Greenhall Nursery

(Paragraph 13 of the Statement)

Cllr Francis welcomed the proposals for changes to the two Schools and expressed the view that they were jewels in Staffordshire's crown. Cllr Price added that the changes were necessary and that they were supported by the governing bodies of both schools.

Thank you to schools

(Paragraph 14 of the Statement)

Cllr Robinson and Cllr Dave Jones indicated that they echoed the Leader's thanks to teachers, the wider school staff and to parents for their efforts and support in getting Staffordshire schools ready to welcome pupils back this term. Cllr Robinson added that, during the pandemic, many Staffordshire schools had stayed open to provide for the children of key workers. He, together with Cllr Dave Jones, Cllr Hood and Cllr Price, also extended their thanks to all schools, colleges and universities in Staffordshire.

Flu

(Paragraph 15 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Cllr Dave Jones concerning whether there was an adequate supply of the Flu vaccine in Staffordshire, Cllr McMahon indicated that this matter had been raised with the Chair of the Integrated Care System for the County. He added that he was reassured that when the local resources were depleted, there was a central resource which would be utilised. He also encouraged those who were eligible for the vaccine to ensure that they received it.

Covid-19 Testing

(Paragraph 16 of the Statement)

Cllr Trowbridge asked Members to encourage their residents to download the NHS Covid-19 App for their smartphone as this was vital in helping to tackle the pandemic. In response, Cllr McMahon thanked Cllr Trowbridge for raising this matter but added a note of caution and reminded Members that installing the App should not lead people into a false sense of security as it would not prevent them from contracting Covid-19.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins indicated that it was laudable that the County Council had tried to fill the gap arising from the inadequacies of the national testing system but enquired as to whether the national and the Council's local systems were coordinated. She also enquired as to whether care home residents and staff were tested regularly and routinely and also whether the Leader thought that the Government had learned from its mistakes on testing and tracing. In response, Cllr McMahon indicated that the booking systems for the national and local testing were separate and that residents were requested to first check availability on the national site and if there was no availability, they could then go on to the local site. With regard to the testing of care home residents and staff, Cllr McMahon confirmed that staff were tested weekly and residents monthly.

Cllr Dave Jones referred to the capacity for Covid testing at laboratory level and indicated that there was additional capacity sitting in universities across the Country but that this was not being used due to "red tape", and that this issue needed to be addressed by Central Government. Cllr McMahon thanked Cllr Jones for his comments and undertook to pursue this issue further.

Cllr Pert spoke about the long-lasting impact of the pandemic on people's mental health and the role which Members could play in promoting good mental health. In response, Cllr McMahon referred to how the County Council was supporting communities through initiatives such as the #DoingOurBit Community Grants Scheme.

Cllr Alan White informed the Council that he, together with the Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, had sent an open letter to the Secretary of State imploring that the Government gives the Councils the resources they required.

Covid-19 – The Next Six Months (Paragraph 17 of the Statement)

Cllr Philip Atkins and Cllr Tagg spoke about the need to "keep Staffordshire open for business" and the impact of the Covid pandemic on businesses particularly in the hospitality and leisure sectors, which were likely to see redundancies, and the need for the Council to plan to respond to this eventuality. In response, Cllr Alan White indicated that it was inevitable that some businesses would suffer as a result of the on-going pandemic but that the County Council was doing what it could to address the situation through a range of initiatives.

Cllr Hussain spoke about the need for residents to follow the Covid-19 guidance including wearing face masks, social distancing and washing hands regularly. He also referred to the tremendous support given by the County Council in responding to the Covid-19 outbreak in Burton upon Trent. Cllr Peters also paid tribute to the faith groups in Burton for the important role they had played.

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

21. People Helping People Fund - Annual Report and next steps 2019/20

Members considered the Annual Report for the People Helping People Fund. They were informed that the Fund saw £2500 allocated to each County Councillor, to invest in projects about keeping people independent, healthy and supported within the places

they live. Councillors were able to use as much or as little of this £2500 as they wanted to support projects which needed it, or even to work together with other councillors and jointly support bigger projects.

The rules of the Fund were designed to ensure that projects would make a tangible difference, were things that mattered to the local community, and were about building on the success and energy that already existed across Staffordshire, or helping to create it where it didn't exist already.

As a new way of working, the People Helping People Fund in 2019/20 had been a successful shift and formed a great foundation to build on. Though the coronavirus pandemic meant that the County Council naturally refocused its resources to help with the crisis, it was hoped that by next year the timing would be right to move the County Councillors' fund back towards a targeted approach aimed at making a real and lasting difference – building on the success so far and taking it further.

Members noted that:

- The final total grant awarded was £86,127 (out of £155,000 total budget)
- This raised a total match value of £276,035, which in terms of a return on investment was more than £3 for every £1 spent through the Fund.
- The Fund had supported the delivery of projects (or parts of projects) worth a total of £362,162.

Several Members spoke about how the Fund had been utilised in their area and had made a difference to people's lives.

Cllr Little asked that when introducing similar initiatives in the future, neighbourhood fetes etc should not be forgotten as they played an important role in social cohesion. Cllr Snape also paid tribute to those officers who had assisted Members in considering the applications and awarding funding under the scheme.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

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

Cllr Adams indicated that he welcomed the news that the HMICFRS PEEL inspection of Staffordshire Police in 2018/19 had given an overall rating for Staffordshire Police as "Good". He, together with Cllr Trowbridge, added that, alongside the Fire and Rescue Service report, this showed that the two Services were working well for the people of Staffordshire. Cllr Adams and Cllr Deaville also paid tribute to the Panel for the robust way in which they challenged the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire.

Cllr Hood spoke about crime levels in Stone and the need for additional Police Officers on the beat. Cllr Lawson also enquired as to how many new Police Officers had been recruited in the Staffordshire Moorlands area. Cllr Smith referred to an issue in his area whereby 999 calls were directed to the West Midlands Police Force rather than

Staffordshire and indicated that he had raised this issue with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. In response, Cllr Sweeney indicated that the next meeting of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel was due to take place on 26 October and if Member had a question for the Commissioner they could attend the meeting or submit the question in writing to the Chairman of the Panel.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

23. Questions

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

Question

Seven years ago, Amey started to identify and to monitor 186,000 drains and gullies across Staffordshire, the purpose was to bring about a schedule which would allow drains to be cleaned, either once every one, two or three years. It would also identify drains which are in need of repair or need to be replaced, again this would enable the County Council to plan a maintenance schedule over a long-term period.

All this information should now be in place. Would the Cabinet Member get Amey to distribute this information to all Councillors, so that we get a clear picture of the issues in our divisions, and allow us to work with Amey to meet the above objectives?

Reply

The routine gully cleansing programme is now available on the Members portal. This allows Members to see how often the gullies in their division are emptied and when the next planned visit is due.

The data collected as part of setting up this system shows that around 5%, or 10,000, of our highway gullies have been identified as needing repair – for example to loosen jammed lids or replace collapsed brickwork.

As part of the recently announced £2.0m in-year investment into Community Highway and Rights of Way priorities around £1m has been allocated towards these kinds of local gully hotspot repairs.

Local Members have been asked to work with their local Highway Officers to help identify and prioritise those requiring the most urgent attention. A full schedule is currently being compiled. This will be shared with Members to help track progress of their own priorities.

It is likely that some of these repairs and other investigatory work will also identify issues requiring more substantial work and many of these are also likely to be complicated by the involvement of third-parties like Severn Trent Water (STW), the Environment Agency (EA) or private land-owners. This new schedule of issues will be of further help to local Members in engaging with those third-parties.

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

Question

In June, Government announced a fund to support those in need of food and basic essentials during the Covid19 crisis. In response, the County Council set up its “Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies” in August with a grant from Government of approx £800,000. Of this, £600,000 was allocated to Family Hubs for distribution to families in need via Edenred food vouchers, each voucher being worth £15. Can the Cabinet Member tell me please how many vouchers have currently been allocated to Staffordshire families in each of our Districts?

Reply

Defra announced the Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Emergency Supplies. This grant was made available from 05 August 2020 to support all residents of Staffordshire who may require support. This includes families, individuals and those asked to self-isolate due to COVID-19 with limited alternatives to access food and emergency supplies.

The grant made it clear that the Local Authorities (LA) had discretion on how we identify those most in need. As a result, we have used a broad definition to include those entitled to benefits or those who people identified in immediate need of help and those who are struggling to afford food and essentials due to COVID-19.

The grant suggested that LA’s should consider using cash or vouchers where practical as this may reduce pressure on your local partners. It also allows people the flexibility to get the food items that they most need.

In addition, the grant seeks to ensure that we provide information to people to help them access longer term support they might need, such as benefits and community support.

The government did anticipate that most of the funding will be spent within 12 weeks. However, in Staffordshire we were keen to ensure that funds were available to allow for flexibility to use as slightly longer-term support.

The amount allocated for the Family Hubs was £600,000 for food and emergency supplies. In total 1287 Vouchers in total have been issued (as of 05.10.20), more detail is provided below:

| District | Total Vouchers Issued |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Cannock | 122 |
| East Staffordshire | 134 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| Lichfield | 205 |
| Newcastle | 210 |
| South Staffordshire | 75 |
| Stafford | 207 |
| Staffordshire Moorlands | 208 |
| Tamworth | 126 |
| Total | 1287 |

There has been an increase in the number of referrals in the last 2 weeks which has seen the distribution of these vouchers double within this time and we continue to seek members support to promote this scheme to local residents who may need assistance.

The information on how to access this support is available here <https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/service.page?id=X8GSyOF0ADQ>

Supplementary Question

Can the Cabinet Member consider changing the messaging around the availability of vouchers so that more people can access this valuable resource?

Reply

Yes, I certainly will.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

I am grateful to the Cabinet Member for the interest he has shown in the Kniveden Partnership, The Mount, Leek. I recognise that the site owned by the County Council is to be developed for housing but could he clarify whether:

- The site has been sold;
- The North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust has been asked to vacate the site;
- NSCHNT has yet indicated what their intentions are for the future of this vital mental health service at the present site or elsewhere in the area;
- A formal agreement is to be put in place between the County Council and NSCHNT to allow the service to be reopened on the site before it is redeveloped for housing?

Reply

In response to your points above:

- **The site has been sold.** No, the site is earmarked for sale as part of the Council's estates' strategy, but we do not expect to sell it imminently. If and when the Kniveden site is sold we have offered to assist NSCHT with finding alternative local options for their service users; we would also provide support should they wish to continue to operate their service at a different location in the area.
- **The North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust has been asked to vacate the site.** No, we have not asked NSCHT to vacate the site.
- **NSCHNT has yet indicated what their intentions are for the future of this vital mental health service at the present site or elsewhere in the area.** No, NSCHT have yet to indicate whether they intend to continue to provide the service.
- **A formal agreement is to be put in place between the County Council and NSCHNT to allow the service to be reopened on the site before it is redeveloped for housing?** Yes, the Council has asked that that if NSCHT wish to continue to use the Kniveden site then we enter into a formal arrangement in order to give us appropriate cover for insurance purposes. The Council has not indicated that we would charge rent and have no intention of doing so.

Supplementary Question

Would the Cabinet Member help encourage the North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust to facilitate the return to the Kniveden Partnership site as soon as possible so as to alleviate the distress of its sixty clients?

Reply

I will write to Peter Axon and ask him if he will reopen the site and get the relevant manager to sign it off as Covid compliant.

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

Question

The Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on the provision of school crossing patrols.

So:

- How many vacancies are there now for school crossing patrols and at which schools;
- How many school crossing patrols have left the service in the year since September 2019;
- How many have been recruited since September 2019;
- When was the last review of the school crossing patrol service;
- During that review, which schools were added to the list of schools requiring a school crossing patrol and which were removed?

Reply

Vacancies

There are currently 29 vacancies out of 240 positions countywide, that's a vacancy factor of around 12%. This changes frequently and some of the vacancies are long standing and hard to recruit to.

[Details available in Appendix 1]

Recruitment

Since September 2019 approximately 34 patrols have left or retired and 40 have been recruited.

Review

The last full service review was carried out towards the end of 2018. No new schools were added or removed from the service.

Appendix 1 – School Crossing Patrol (SCP) vacancies – 5/10/2020

Newcastle and Moorlands

Pepper Street, Silverdale
Priory Road / Abbot's Way Newcastle
High St. Wolstanton, by the Post Office
Galleys Bank, Kidsgrove
High St Maybank jct Upper Marsh (Zebra)
Old Rd/New Rd, Audley
Knutton Lane / Ashfields New Road, Newcastle
Dimsdale Parade/Hassam Parade/Clare Ave
Newcastle Rd/Crewe Rd - by Madeley Heath War Memorial
Leek Road, Endon
Clayton Lane, Clayton High School, Newcastle
Chapel Lane, Harriseahead
Alexandra Road, Wolstanton
The Avenue Kidsgrove (By zebra/Library)
Gloucester Avenue, Kidsgrove
Station Rd, Barlaston

Cannock, Rugeley and South Staffordshire

Wolgarston Way/Cannock Rd, Penkridge
The Parkway/Gainsborough Dr, Perton
School Rd, Wombourne
Hazelslade Primary
Chillington Drive, Codsall

Stafford, Burntwood & Lichfield

Great Haywood, Stafford
Cheadle

Burton-upon-Trent, Uttoxeter & Tamworth

Branston Road/All Saints Road, Burton-upon-Trent
Clarence St/Queen St, Burton-upon-Trent
Church Hill St/Eldon St, Winshill
Wetmore Road, Burton on Trent
Station Road, Barton Under Needwood
Main St, Yoxall

Supplementary Question

How can schools which desperately need a school crossing patrol make their representations heard and understood as the reviews are so irregular?

Reply

I am not aware of any schools approaching the County Council regarding requests for additional school crossing patrols. Reviews are undertaken every two years, however, if Cllr Atkins wishes to make representations on behalf of a school I would be happy to listen to her.

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

Question

I noted the announcement regarding the Leader of Solihull welcoming the massive funding from the Staffordshire apprentice scheme of £250k. Why wasn't this money raised in Staffordshire spent to help our residents from this fund?

Reply

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced by government in April 2017 and focuses on large employers with a wage bill of over £3m per annum. The levy takes 0.5% of the wage bill and places it into a digital account that can only be used to fund apprenticeship training.

It is right that we are focussed on growing apprenticeships nationally, however the rules that apply to the scheme mean there are challenges for organisations in spending all their levy. Despite the challenges Staffordshire as a place is currently performing above the national averages, especially in supporting apprenticeships for young people.

Part of the management of the levy allows organisations to spend (also known as "gift") up to 25% on funding apprenticeships in their supply chain or local economy. Staffordshire County Council has been successfully funding external apprenticeships in partner organisations that deliver our priorities and through local businesses. We also joined up with councils from across the West Midlands to jointly promote the initiative to Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) across the region. The benefit of this approach being efficiencies of scale in terms of marketing and administration.

Another benefit is that there are other private businesses in the partnership and if any council uses its full allocation the private businesses are asked if they will fund additional applications which means we get more funding to use in the area if we need it.

Within the partnership it is a rule that each local authority uses its own allocation for its own businesses and residents. All of Staffordshire's £250,000 that has been allocated through the partnership has gone to Staffordshire businesses and residents to help them in recruiting apprentices or in developing existing staff.

Supplementary Question

Who is responsible for ensuring that we get best value in Staffordshire from the Apprenticeship Levy?

Reply

I can assure Cllr Brookes that every single penny raised from the Levy in Staffordshire has been spent on supporting businesses within that area.

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

Question

I have a question from Steve in Burntwood. He wants me to ask - "When white paint is put around a pothole on a footpath trip hazard of broken slabs, does it mean that it will be repaired within the next two or three years?". What can I tell Steve?

Reply

The condition of roads and pavements, together with the speed and quality of repairs remains a top issue locally and nationally. This has been partially dealt with through the £5m/year investment made by the Council since 2017 to reduce the backlog of defects and the recent additional in-year investment of £14.284m made by Central Government. In the coming months Cabinet will also be considering the medium and long-term funding needs of our highway assets.

All highway defects, including broken paving slabs, are identified from a combination of our own routine safety inspections or customer defect reports. And repairs are prioritised in accordance with the level of risk they present to public safety or property damage.

The latest performance monitoring shows that despite the recent difficult weather conditions:

- over 90% of the most urgent emergency and category 1 defects have been repaired within 24-hours; and
- 92% of other high-risk category 2 defects have been repaired within 7-days.

Lower risk defects do of course take longer, but local Members also have the discretion of using their local Member funding or other funding contributions to accelerate the speed of repairs where necessary.

The use of spray markings does not have any bearing on the level of urgency or timescale of the repair. They are just used in some occasions to help identify the location or show the extent and quantify the amount of work for planning purposes.

Supplementary Question

Is it the case that the white lines painted around road defects really are just a cosmetic exercise giving false hope to people that work is going to take place quickly but doesn't?

Reply

There is no difference between a white line around a category three defect and one around a category one defect. The white lines mean that the defect has been recorded and categorised.

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

Question

What direct representations has the County Council leadership made to the Government to request urgent commitment to ensuring free school meals are provided for eligible pupils throughout this year's autumn half term and Christmas school holidays?

Reply

Senior officers within the County Council have requested ongoing national support for those eligible for free school meals whilst the country remains in the current status of alert. This includes holiday periods including the October half term and Christmas. We are currently awaiting a response from the DfE. We are making arrangements for the 'family hubs' to provide support for families in an emergency should there be no additional support from government.

Supplementary Question

Will the Cabinet Member let Members have sight of any written representations which have been made to the Government on this issue?

Reply

I will check whether I am able to provide that information for you. I also intend to write to the Secretary of State this afternoon on this issue.

24. Petitions

Brookes indicated that he was in receipt of two petitions from local residents in respect of speeding in Uttoxeter.

Chairman

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2, 2020/21

The Cabinet have received an overview of the County Council's progress, performance and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. They noted that, at the end of Quarter 2, the overall assessment on the Council's performance and financial position was amber. Significant progress had been made in the recovery of services and the organisation, whilst there were some areas of risk in Adult Social Care and Families and Communities. The latest revenue forecast outturn showed a forecast overspend of £1.809m (0.3%). This is mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Cabinet have also approved the use of £0.384m of Contingency to fund part of the agreed pay award for 2020/21.

(Cabinet – 21 October 2020)

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

The Cabinet have considered details of Staffordshire Better Care Fund (BCF) performance, 2019-20; BCF Funding for 2020-21; BCF Guidance and Planning for 2020-21; and the transfer of Disabled Facilities Grant funding to Districts.

It was noted that whilst National Health Service England acknowledged that BCF plans from April 2020 will have not been formally approved, they had indicated that for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations should assume that expenditure of BCF funds should continue on existing services as in 2019/20 in order to maintain capacity in community health and social care. In line with this advice, there would be no substantial change to the BCF Schemes included in the BCF Plan for 2020-21. The proposed schemes for 2020-21 were therefore:

- Admission Avoidance / Discharge to Assess
- Ensuring the Sustainability of Adult Social Care
- Enhanced Primary and Community Care

The Cabinet have also agreed the passport of monies received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the Disability Facility Grant to the district/borough Councils.

(Cabinet – 21 October 2020)

3. West Midlands Regional Supported Accommodation Framework Contract

The Cabinet have approved proposals for a regional commissioning approach to the procurement of supported accommodation provision across the West Midlands to support children in care in their transition to independence.

Under the proposed arrangements, Staffordshire would join with other West Midlands local authorities with responsibilities to "Looked after Children" in creating a Flexible

Framework Agreement to ensure that the local authorities involved can meet their responsibilities to provide supported accommodation for young people who are in the process of leaving care. Staffordshire was to lead the setting up of the Flexible Framework Agreement on behalf of the following West Midlands local Authorities be supported: Birmingham City Council / Birmingham Children's Trust, City of Stoke-on-Trent Council, City of Wolverhampton Council, Coventry City Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Herefordshire Council, Sandwell Children's Trust, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Telford and Wrekin Council Walsall Council Warwickshire County Council, Worcestershire County Council (through Worcestershire Children First).

(Cabinet – 21 October 2020)

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

The Cabinet have considered the approach to be taken by the Council regarding its planning and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted that, as an organisation, the Council became a more flexible and dynamic workforce by successfully employing agile working practices and digital solutions. Internal and external collaborations and relationships also improved. A culture of trust was created through staff empowerment, support for and by communities in Staffordshire was accelerated and we were able to share data and make intelligence-driven decisions.

The Cabinet also noted that recovery had provided an opportunity to shape a different future, addressing threats and building on the positive outcomes from this emergency. The Council was to reset its five strategic priorities and four principles as it emerged from the emergency, developing a revised strategic plan and MTFS process to address the impacts of COVID-19 on the Council's strategies (digital, people, communities and climate), transformation programmes and organisation, and the reshaped vision of the future.

It was also noted that, as detailed in the June Cabinet paper (Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Approaches), each directorate was leading recovery for its own area, and recovery which cut across all the directorates was being led through recovery groups linked to the four principles – communities, digital, people and climate change. Any coordination of activity required was being managed through the SCC Planning and Recovery Group.

(Cabinet – 21 October 2020)

5. Update from COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board

The Cabinet have received an update from the COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board and have received details of the Council's continuing efforts to prevent and control the spread of Covid-19; the rapid increase in the number of cases of Covid-19 in Staffordshire at the end of October and its impact on the NHS, compounded by staff shortages due to sickness and/or self-isolation; the profound effect of the ongoing restrictions on physical and mental well-being and the economy including rising levels of obesity and poor diet; the Council's management of incidents

in a range of settings, including care providers, schools and workplaces; improvements to the availability of testing, with more NHS Test and Trace facilities available, complemented by a Community Testing team at a range of sites across the county and plans to roll out rapid testing.

The Cabinet were also informed that the Department for Work and Pensions had announced a significant package of extra financial support for those most in need of help with the cost of food, energy and water bills, and other associated costs this winter. The £170 million COVID-19 Winter Grant Scheme would be available from December until the 31 March 2021, with the County Council receiving just over £2.2m to support people in Staffordshire. At least 80% of the total funding would be ring-fenced to support families with children, with up to 20% of the total funding to other types of households, including individuals. For Staffordshire this equated to £1.77 million for children and £440,000 for adults. The Cabinet has delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to decide the eligibility criteria for distribution of the Covid-19 Winter Grant Scheme.

(Cabinet – 18 November 2020)

6. Support Provided to Business Start-ups in Staffordshire

The Cabinet have considered the support provided to Business Start-ups in Staffordshire and have approved proposals for the creation of a digital Start Up Prospectus for potential new business in Staffordshire. They have also noted the progress being made to identify the County Council properties that could be used as incubation space in an Enterprise Quarter for Start-Up's; and have approved the funding and delivery of a student start-up programme targeted at young people in the final year of further education with aspirations to progress into self-employment.

(Cabinet – 18 November 2020)

7. Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer: Update on Learning Disability Services Directly Provided by Staffordshire County Council

The Cabinet have reviewed proposals for the future of adult learning disability services directly provided by Staffordshire County Council to ensure that they will remain appropriate post COVID-19. They have also considered proposals to develop a single integrated Adult Learning Disability service and extend the range of support offered for people in their homes and communities as well as continuing to provide care for people during the day and overnight, offering people a better experience.

They have noted the progress;

- With commissioning of supported living services from the independent market to replace the residential service provided by the Council at Greenfields House in Staffordshire Moorlands and the care provided by the Council at Horninglow Bungalows in East Staffordshire.
- Of the redevelopment of residential care in Lichfield.

- Of the refurbishment of Wilmott Drive to provide residential replacement care alongside specialist day opportunities in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The Cabinet have also requested that an options analysis be undertaken for future provision of residential replacement care in Staffordshire, with results being presented to Cabinet in the first quarter of 2021; have approved an extension to the current contractual arrangements for residential replacement care in Cannock and East Staffordshire with the current contracted provider; and have asked that a business case be developed for the potential expansion of specialist day opportunities and residential replacement care to offer a greater range of support for people in their homes and communities as part of a single integrated service and that service users, carers and stakeholders be engaged in the codesign of a service model.

(Cabinet – 18 November 2020)

8. Half Yearly Treasury Management Report for the Period Ended 30 September 2020

They Cabinet have considered a summary of the Council's borrowing and investment activities during the first six months of the year and have noted that the UK economy continued to face an uncertain environment in 2020/21, with Brexit negotiations and the impacts of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic. They also noted that the County Council has continued to adhere to its Treasury Management Policy of using internal cash balances instead of borrowing money and that this had delivered significant savings for taxpayers, as the infrastructure to deliver more skilled, better-paid jobs was being funded at a lower cost.

The Cabinet also noted that the Council had a large cash holding for the financial year 2020/21. This had been regularly discussed by the Treasury Management Panel and arrangements were made for the secure deposit of cash in line with the Annual Investment Strategy. The impact of this was that the variable interest rate prudential limit was exceeded. This indicator was calculated based on the highest expected cash balance in the year which, as a result of additional grant announced after the budget setting process, had been higher than forecast. In view of this the indicator was being revised from £183million to £255million.

(Cabinet – 18 November 2020)

9. Covid-19 Latest

During the second national lockdown we did see case rates across the county fall significantly. However, despite everyone's best efforts, together with Stoke-on-Trent, we were placed in the Very High Alert Level on December 2.

The challenge now is to build on the progress we have made and keep figures down. Our priority now is to see the restrictions lifted as quickly as possible so we can all go back to some of the freedoms we once enjoyed.

It is hugely important too that business which have been forced to stay closed, reopen as quickly as possible.

The Government looks at a number of factors when deciding which tier an area is placed in, including the capacity at our local hospitals, so unfortunately it is not as simple as just looking at case numbers.

The next review will be on December 16 and we are continuing to work with our MPs to do the best for Staffordshire.

10. Testing

Staffordshire is one of 66 authorities taking part in the mass roll out of the rapid Covid-19 testing for people with no symptoms. This will complement the testing for people with symptoms at the national sites across Staffordshire.

For us, the focus initially will be on large employers, post-16 education and community Covid hotspots. This will be in addition to national testing in care settings and in universities.

Keele University has been running its “military-style” testing this month to make sure as many students as possible can go home for Christmas. The great thing about the new tests is that results take around 30 minutes, so it means the students can be packed and ready to go as soon as they get the second negative test they need.

Over the coming weeks, we will be testing many more people, eventually looking to test around 10 per cent of the Staffordshire population every week. Scaling up from a few hundred tests per week to more than 80,000 will of course take significant logistical planning.

11. Government Spending Review

Following the Government Spending Review, we are currently going through the finer details of the review to examine what the benefits to the council, to residents and to businesses may be. This is especially important given the huge strain that the Covid-19 has put on public finances this year.

Dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic and protecting lives and livelihoods has been our top priority and from the outset we have done and spent what is needed. We have already had significant financial support from Government of over £80m, which is helping us in the current year, but the future is less certain.

The Chancellor also made it clear the “economic emergency” from the pandemic “has only just begun” and with this also announced a pay freeze for public sector workers outside the NHS, which is a reflection on the economic picture and certainly not on the hard work of staff such as those here at the county council.

12. Staffordshire Story

In a year dominated by Covid-19, it is very easy to lose focus of the great things about living and working in Staffordshire.

Behind the scenes, public and private sector leaders have been working together throughout 2020 to develop a new story and approach to promoting the county, to attract investment, and create more well-paid jobs and opportunities for Staffordshire people.

More than 200 businesses and organisations came together for a virtual launch via Zoom at the end of November. During the event they heard about a new Staffordshire story and emerging plans to promote the county and reignite its economy following the Covid pandemic.

After the year we've had, it is more important than ever that we look to the future, raise our heads, and raise the profile of this great county.

13. Finally

It has been an incredibly difficult year and undoubtedly more hard work and new challenges still lie ahead.

However, I am incredibly proud of the efforts made across this county from care homes, to schools, to our army of volunteers, to our staff and indeed to people in this chamber.

I have been truly humbled at times by the steps people have taken and the sacrifices people have made.

However, this year has proven to me that here in Staffordshire we have the determination, the resilience and the strength to get through this pandemic.

Christmas this year will be very different for many of us, but I would like to wish you and your families all a merry Christmas and a safe, peaceful and more hopeful new year in 2021.

Recommendations to the Council

Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members

The County Council, at its 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.”

A copy of the Policy is attached as Appendix A to this report.

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 is suggested 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.

Recommendation – (a) That Council approves the attached Parental Leave Policy for Elected Members.

(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.

Parental Leave Policy for Members

1. Principal / Aim of the Policy

- 1.1. To provide a positive environment for members with family responsibilities so that our cross-section of members are representative of our community. Families are at the heart of Staffordshire County Council and as such wishes to champion an environment to support members.
- 1.2. This policy offers guiding principles for members to be able to continue to fulfil their role whilst benefiting from parental leave.

2. Leave Provisions of the Policy

- 2.1. Maternity Leave Provisions: An elected member can take up to 52 weeks 'leave' away from their member duties after the birth of their child in the child's first year.
- 2.2. Antenatal Appointments: All members will be supported in attending antenatal appointments whether for themselves or for their partners.
- 2.3. Still Birth: If still birth occurs before 24 weeks of pregnancy, members are not entitled to maternity leave however discretion given for shorter period of leave of absence. If still birth occurs after 24 weeks of pregnancy full maternity benefits and leave apply of up to 52 weeks following birth.
- 2.4. Breast Feeding Facilities: The promotion of breast-feeding is a priority in the UK. Exclusive breast-feeding for the first six months of life offers major health advantages to mothers and babies, so it is important that mothers are enabled to continue breast-feeding when they return to their Councillor duties.

2.5. Whilst on Maternity Leave should a female member wish to attend any Council Meetings and need to be able to breast-feed their infant they will not be precluded from entering the chambers and participating in proceedings. Similarly, if a member needs to bottle-feed their infant, again they will not be precluded from doing this.

2.6. Adoption Leave Provisions: A member can take up to 52 weeks leave away from their member duties after the placement of their child in the first 12 months of the child's first year.

2.7. Paternity Leave / Maternity Support Leave Provisions: A member who is the Father/ Significant other responsible for child & mother well-being at the time of the birth can take up to 2 weeks 'leave' away from their duties after the birth of their child.

2.8. Shared parental leave provisions: A member can take up to 50 weeks 'leave' away from their member duties, less any time the mother of the newborn child has taken as maternity leave (minimum of 2 weeks must be taken by mother).

2.9. Parental leave provisions: A member can take up to 13 weeks leave from their member duties, up to their child's 18th birthday. A member can only take a maximum of 4 weeks in any one year.

3. Basic Allowance & Special Responsibility Allowance During Parental Leave

3.1. There will be no change to a member's allowance as a result of any time taken for any of the provisions of this policy.

4. Practical Guiding Principles for Parental Leave

An accompanying paper sets out the procedure for an elected member who would like to take parental leave.

4.1. Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

4.1.1. Basic and SRA will not be affected by a member taking parental leave.

Replacement member / nomination undertaking the duties to be paid SRA if they are not currently in receipt of a SRA. [Link to Nomination Process.](#)

4.1.2. Where the Chair is on parental leave, the Vice Chair should cover duties.

4.1.3. Wherever possible duties should be spread across more than one other member.

4.2. Responding to Emails

4.2.1. Members are responsible for putting on an out of office message redirecting queries to a designated /alternative member. However, if they still wish to respond to emails/ correspondence whilst taking parental leave, they are at liberty to undertake this activity.

4.3. Local Divisional Duties and Nomination Process

4.3.1. Wherever possible, members who take parental leave will be able to nominate another member to deal with local issues in their Division. It will be the responsibility of the member to hold discussions with their preferred nomination to arrange this. Where this hasn't been possible, the member taking parental leave will need to raise this with their

relevant Political Group Leader.

4.3.2. Where a member has limited alternatives to nominate due to low political representation, the Leader / Deputy Leader will decide with the member the most appropriate way in which their divisional duties can be covered.

4.4. Attendance at Meetings

4.4.1. There is a legal duty under the Local Government Act 1972 to attend a meeting of the Council within a 6 month period. However, an exception is where the Council Meeting agrees to a request for an extended leave of absence prior to the expiration of that 6 month period. Members who are taking long term parental leave (such as Maternity) may still attend such meetings if they wish to do so (see notes on breast-feeding).

4.5. Parental Bereavement Leave

4.5.1. The new Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Act will give all employed parents a day-one right to 2 weeks' leave if they lose a child under the age of 18 or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy from April 2020. Employed parents will also be able to claim allowance for this period, subject to meeting eligibility criteria. This right will be extended to elected members.

Parental Leave Policy for Members

Procedure for Members Taking Parental Leave

The steps outlined below, set out the procedure for an elected member who would like to request Parental Leave as per the Parental Leave Policy for members (2020).

1. Make formal notification (in writing) to appropriate Group Leader to have period of absence covered by the Policy.

Application should state:

- Reason for leave notification i.e.
 - Maternity¹
 - Paternity²
 - Adoption³
 - Shared Parental Leave⁴
 - Parental Leave⁵
- Expected duration of absence in weeks (and expected return date)

2. Group Leader to acknowledge notification for leave (within 3 working days)

Group Leader forwards **notification** to Member & Democratic Services (MaDS)

3. MaDS office arrange meeting⁶ as appropriate (to take place as practicable as possible) between:

- Leader of the Council
- Representative of Senior Leadership Team
- Other Party Group Leader (should the request come from a member of that Group)

Meeting takes place to:

- Consider notification
- Initial discussion on who will pick up duties whilst member is taking parental leave

¹ S4 of MAPP Policy

² S47 of MAPP Policy

³ S18.2 and 22.1 of MAPP Policy

⁴ S30.1 of MAPP Policy

⁵ S51 of MAPP Policy

⁶ Or telephone conference call if deemed more appropriate i.e. leave is requested is of a sensitive nature

- Address any other matters arising from member’s leave including support that may be required

4. The member should, ahead of leave start date:

- Set up an out of office message within Outlook⁷
- Include details of who will pick up constituency casework (will usually be a member from within same district/borough)⁸
- If in receipt of SRA, the member should agree with the Leader of the Council, or Leader of the Opposition, as appropriate who will take on SRA position responsibilities. The general guiding principles are:
 - Cabinet member responsibilities will pass to Cabinet colleague
 - Cabinet support member responsibilities will pass to appropriate Cabinet member
 - Community Cabinet support member responsibilities will pass to Cabinet member for Communities
 - Committee Chairman responsibilities will pass to appointed Vice Chairman
 - Leader of the Opposition responsibilities will pass to Deputy Leader of the Opposition
 - Deputy Leader of the Opposition responsibilities will pass to nominated opposition member
 - Opposition Vice Chairman of Select Committee responsibilities will pass to nominated opposition member
- Notify MaDS of arrangements

5. MaDS to inform relevant officers of arrangements:

- Senior and Wider Leadership Team
- Chairmen of appropriate committees
- Communications Team

6. When to apply

| Type of Leave | When | Maximum duration of leave permitted |
|---------------|--|--|
| Maternity | By the end of the 15th week before her expected week of childbirth (EWC) or as soon as | Up to 52 weeks ‘leave’ away from their member duties after the birth of their child in the child’s first year. |

⁷ Template to be provided by MaDS

⁸ Expected that the member taking leave will consult with Group Leader and designated ‘cover’ to agree

| Type of Leave | When | Maximum duration of leave permitted |
|---------------|--|---|
| | <p>is reasonably practicable of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that she is pregnant • of the expected week of childbirth (EWC) • of the date her maternity leave will begin. This cannot be earlier than the beginning of the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth. | |
| Paternity | <p>Before the 15th week before the baby is expected or in the case of adoption within 7 days of being notified that a child has been matched, unless it is not reasonably practicable, you must inform your manager in writing of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That you intend to take paternity leave the week the baby is due/or in the case of adoption the week the child is expected to be placed for adoption and the date when you were notified that you were matched with a child for adoption; • whether you wish to take one or two weeks leave; and • when you want the leave to start⁹ | Up to 2 weeks 'leave' away from their duties after the birth of their child. |
| Adoption | Within 7 days of being told they have been matched with a child (or as soon as is reasonably practicable) | Up to 52 weeks leave away from their member duties after the placement of their child in the first 12 months of the child's first year. |

⁹ You can change your mind about the start date of leave provided you give your Group Leader at least 28 days notice, unless this is not reasonably practicable.

| Type of Leave | When | Maximum duration of leave permitted |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Shared Parental Leave | At least 8 weeks before date of leave | Up to 50 weeks 'leave' away from their member duties, less any time the mother of the new born child has taken as maternity leave (minimum of 2 weeks must be taken by mother). |

7. Returning to Office¹⁰

If a member is returning to their duties at the end of their full maternity / adoption / shared parental leave entitlement they will not have to give any further notification to their Group Leader.

It will be assumed that the member is returning to their duties at the end of their maternity/adoption / shared parental leave on the date previously notified.

If the member intends to return early, they should provide 8 weeks' notice, otherwise they simply return at the end of the period.

8. What if leave period falls across administration period i.e. County Council Election?

If, when the application for leave is being made, it becomes apparent that the duration of leave takes place over the next County Council Election, it will be assumed that the leave period will cease on the final date of the administration unless re-elected¹¹.

¹⁰ S41 of MAPP Policy

¹¹ By way of an example, the term of office for 2017-2021 expires on Thursday 6th May 2021

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on Monday 26 October 2020.

The main items considered were:

Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC)

Details were submitted of 4 decisions published by the Commissioner since the last Panel meeting:

- **Tamworth Belgrave Shared Estate**
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCPF-D-202021-002.pdf>
- **Crest Support to LCJB Performance Framework Product**
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-002-4.pdf>
- **Space 2020**
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-003>
- **Purchase of X2 Taser Devices**
<https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk/cms/wpcontent/uploads/SCP-D-202021-004>

COVID 19 (Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service) - Update

The Panel received an update on the activity undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Service since the last meeting in July 2020. The Service had continued to be fully involved in all aspects of the multi-agency commitment and had participated in both the strategic coordination group and the recovery coordination group in order to influence and support the ongoing Local Resilience Forum approach. The Service had continued to perform well despite a 2.5% reduction in staff with Covid related absence. Some proactive work had been curtailed but most of the non face to face prevention work had continued.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Fire and Rescue Service- Update

The Panel received an update on the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy which included information on the following:

- Update to current year's budget
- Update to future years' MTFS assumptions
- The impact of COVID-19 on financial performance and position
- Sensitivity analysis around key financial items
- Update on capital programme

The Covid-19 pandemic had impacted on the in-year savings as well as the ongoing potential impact on future Fire funding. The Fire and Rescue service has adapted

quickly to new ways of working and Service delivery. The work had been complex and cut across numerous partner organisations and government departments locally, regionally, and nationally.

£1 million in grant funding had been received from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in order for the Service to deal with the additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic. To date the Service was forecasting to spend around £0.5m of the £1.0m grant by the end of October 2020. This did not take into account potentially the impact of a second wave and further lock down restrictions during the winter. This money had been made available through a Section 31 Grant, and any balance remaining at the end of the year would be earmarked to support the reduction in Council Tax receipts.

The Coronavirus pandemic is affecting funding across the wider public sector and it was unclear if further support would be provided by the Government as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2021/22. Without further support the Staffordshire Commissioner would need to consider how the financial position can be supported through; Council Tax increases, the delivery of further savings, and also the intelligent use of reserves.

The report included a table that gave the best and worst case scenario which would be developed further as more information was made available by the billing authorities. It was estimated that there would be a 4.5% deficit, £1.2m for the Fire and Rescue service.

Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan 2020 /24 - Update

The Panel was updated on the progress to date on the four priorities that the Service is delivering against which were: -

- a) Prevention and Early Intervention
- b) Protecting Staffordshire and its people
- c) Public Confidence
- d) Service Reform.

COVID 19 (Staffordshire Police)- Update

Staffordshire Police's approach to policing Covid-19 had been governed by a Gold structure (Op Jafar) which at its height was meeting 3 times a week, more recently fortnightly. Since August, with the rise again of infections and the imposition of further changes to Covid legislation and restrictions, the Gold group has stepped up its frequency once again to weekly.

The focus of the response to Covid-19 is as follows:

- Compliance and Enforcement
- Workforce -
- Workplace - Covid secure
- Operation Affinity (Impact of the EU Exit)

The Commissioner informed the Panel that the number of Covid cases amongst the police force had nearly doubled recently and he paid tribute to all the emergency services for their support and approach to “encouraging” individuals to comply with rules rather than the “heavy handed” approach adopted in some areas.

This led to a question on the impact of the new tier system and the enforcement of new regulations. The panel was informed that it was more complex, but the principle was to treat individuals as adults and encourage compliance.

The initial lockdown period had led to a reduction in crime which was due to several factors including pub closures and more working from home

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Staffordshire Police – Update

The Panel considered the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners update on the current Medium-Term Financial Strategy covering the years 2021/21 to 2023/24.

The outturn forecast for the current year was £212.232m. This was a positive variance of £0.170m (0.08%) against the annual net revenue budget of £212.402m.

The review of the current MTFS highlighted that 93% of current year savings have been delivered. However, it did identify a number of savings that were at high risk of non-delivery, slippage in delivery or have been impacted on by external events such as the Governments Uplift programme. These total £0.801m over the four-year MTFS period. These will continue to be reviewed.

New pressures totalling £1.528m for 2021/22 had been identified by directorates:

- Of these, just under half (£0.736m) relate to national increases in costs such as Home Office IT charges (£0.319m), increase in national airwave charges (£0.127m) and the National Police Air Service (£0.290m). These are outside of local control.
- Of those pressures identified as ‘local pressures’ a number of these relate to inflationary pressures above the estimate contained in the MTFS for inflation (Insurance £0.160m), Fleet costs, in part as a result of greater usage due to increasing Officer numbers, (£0.131m), reduction in specific income streams (£0.178m)
- A pressure of £0.055m has been included due to the planned increase in Special Constabulary Numbers to cover of the expenses of Special Constables.

The possibility of local Police Officers being transferred to areas with higher levels of crime was discussed. The Commissioner confirmed that work was being undertaken nationally to ensure that this would be from areas that could accommodate the reduction and governance would not be lost.

The report stated that there would be a continued growth in the Police Officer numbers through 2021/22 and 2022/23. For the current year the uplift had been 90 Officers (in addition to replacing those retiring and leaving); based on the Home Office applying the same distribution formula at a local level this would result in an additional 120 in 2021/22 and 90 in 2022/23. This was on the back of the

Commissioners investment in Police Officer numbers since 2017/18 which would result, by the end of 2022/23, in an additional 391 Officers since 2017/18. The Panel were concerned that the increase in Staffordshire numbers may not materialise as originally envisaged.

Safer, Fairer, United Communities for Staffordshire - Update

Due to Covid-19 the elections for Police, Fire and Crime Commissioners, were postponed until 7 May 2021. When the election is held, it will be for a reduced, three-year term with the following election scheduled for May 2024. In the interim period, the Commissioner determined that his priorities, as set out in the Strategy would remain broadly the same for his extended term of office:

- Modern Policing: A police force that is fit for a changing future
- Early Intervention: Tackling root causes before they become a problem
- Supporting Victims and Witnesses: Making it easier for victims and witnesses to get the support they need, when they need it
- Managing Offenders: Preventing offending in the first place and reducing the likelihood of reoffending
- Public Confidence: Creating opportunities for communities to shape policing, with greater transparency and openness to increase confidence in policing.

Implementation of Reforms to the Police Misconduct and Complaints Regulations 2020

A report was considered that updated the Panel on the implementation of Police Misconduct and Complaints Reforms, as set out in the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 which came into place on 1 February 2020. Up to the end of September 2020, the Commissioner's Office had received 25 requests for a review. Between the 1st October and the 12th October an additional 7 requests have been received making the total 32.

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson (01785 278502 e mail mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk)

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Stephen Sweeney
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel Chairman