

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 16 February 2022

Present: Alan White (Chairman)

Attendance

Mark Deaville	Julia Jessel
Philip White	David Williams
Jonathan Price	Ian Parry
Victoria Wilson	Simon Tagg

Cabinet Support Member in attendance: Johnny McMahon

Apologies: Mark Sutton

PART ONE

109. Decision notice of the meetings held on 19 and 26 January 2022

Decision – That the notes of the meetings held on 19 and 26 January 2022 be approved.

110. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including the approval to the Council's budget which provides for an investment of over £360m for caring for the elderly, people with disabilities and vulnerable children, a further £40m to promote good physical and mental health, promote sexual health and tackle drug and alcohol addiction, and investment in highways, in school buildings, in skills, training and business support, to make a positive difference in the people's daily lives; the Council's plans to tackle climate change and make Staffordshire sustainable, including the Council's approval to a Nature Recovery Declaration to protect and enhance natural habitats across the county; the Government's long-awaited Levelling Up White Paper which aims to close the prosperity gap across the UK; the Council's work to promote apprenticeships through the Staffordshire Means Back to Business programme with more than 240 apprentices appointed so far; and how the Council was working in partnership with councils, the wider public sector, and businesses to make a positive difference on the issues that matter to our people, be noted.

111. Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 2 February 2022

Decision – That the minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 2 February 2022 be received.

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

Reasons for the Decision – To consider an update from the COVID-19 Member led Local Outbreak Control Board including:

- Covid case rates remained high however the number of people in hospital with Covid had fallen and deaths were at or below pre-pandemic levels for this time of year. Health and care services remained under significant pressure due to Covid and winter illnesses, as well as staff absences, but there were some signs that this was starting to abate. The Covid vaccination programme continued to make steady progress with a gradual increase in uptake in all age groups.
- The ongoing course of the Covid pandemic was difficult to predict and there was a need to be prepared for a range of scenarios. A major risk was the emergence of a new variant that escaped the protection afforded by vaccination. Covid cases rates were likely to remain high and there may be a degree of seasonality with cases lower in the summer and higher in the winter. Vaccination should protect most people from the more serious complications and whilst the illness will be unpleasant it should be manageable without unsustainable pressures on health and care services.
- Government policy for ongoing pandemic management was not yet clear, but some insights were available through informal discussions to allow planning for 2022/23. Public spaces and workplaces were likely to be advised to take sensible precautions to limit transmission in order to protect staff and customers: ventilation, hand hygiene, a degree of social distancing. There was likely to be ongoing guidance for enhanced infection prevention and control measures in health and care settings such as hospitals and care homes. There may be further booster vaccinations, perhaps limited to higher risk people, for example the groups who are offered annual flu vaccination.
- The legal requirement for isolation of cases was to end 24 March 2022 and people were likely to be advised to stay at home if they were symptomatic to avoid spreading the virus. Symptomatic testing was likely to be limited to people admitted to hospital and residents of care homes. Population wide asymptomatic testing and contact tracing was

likely to be discontinued in favour of focusing these activities in support of management of outbreaks and community clusters. Local authorities were likely to be asked to lead and support outbreak management – for example in care settings, as well as in schools, businesses and communities where there were high attack rates and/or high numbers of hospitalisations or deaths. Mass testing may be required in the event that a new variant was identified in order to find and isolate other cases.

- The Council had plans in place to maintain a proportionate Covid response during 2022/23 and was prepared for a range of scenarios. Routine outbreak management operations could be sustained without significant impact on other priorities, and contingencies were in place to escalate the response if required.

Decision – That the update from the Covid Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board be noted.

113. Staffordshire Means Back to Business - Oral Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills giving an update on “Staffordshire Means Back to Business” activity including the following matters be noted:

- The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit continues to fall and now stands at 4.2%.
- Our claimant rate has seen a further reduction to 3.1% of the working age population in January compared to 5.5% regionally and 4.5% nationally.
- The overall number of company insolvencies increased by 88% in November 2021 when compared to the same month last year and is now 11% higher than two years previously. We have seen a rapid increase over recent months with levels now above pre COVID due at least in part to government support measures which were put in place to reduce insolvencies having now largely ended. Help is available to businesses through our own Staffordshire Means Back to Business website or the Staffordshire and Stoke Growth Hub.
- As seen nationally, in December we continued to see an increase in job vacancies in Staffordshire, however the increase is slowing. This is reflective of the increasing demand we are seeing for workers across most parts of the economy to aid the recovery from the pandemic which has been further heightened by seasonal job opportunities. Staffordshire saw vacancies increase by 1% between November and

December equivalent to over 400 more job vacancies, this was in line with the increase seen nationally.

- Staffordshire is well placed to work with government to drive forward the Levelling Up Agenda, working closely with our Districts and Boroughs. We have already demonstrated our willingness to invest in supporting business to deliver more higher paid and higher skilled jobs. Our investment in strategic employment sites, infrastructure and skills is extensive and was clearly evidenced only recently when we set our budgets and have allocated an additional £1M to support our economy.
- The Government are to ask Homes England to play a wider role in supporting us as local government to drive forward our ambitions for new affordable housing and regeneration of our respective areas. Our Business & Enterprise Service is to have early discussions with Homes England to understand how they can support us, to not simply provide us with money, but to deliver opportunity.
- The Council is continually looking for opportunities to bring in new employers or HQ relocations as demonstrated by the significant Pets At Home development at Redhill. The "We Are Staffordshire Investment Prospectus," to be submitted to Cabinet in March, will be launched on an international stage at the forthcoming MIPIM event by our Officers. This will be followed up by our attendance at the significant UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum to be held later in the year in Leeds. Working closely with our Districts and Boroughs we have brought together our collective regeneration priorities as a County under one document. This document represents strong Staffordshire branding, a place that is confident and creates opportunity. It demonstrates to investors and developers that we are a connected County, an investment in one locality will benefit from the wider opportunities of being part of the Staffordshire family.
- We will shortly be going out to consultation on our Economic Strategy for Staffordshire and alongside it our Rural Economic Strategy which recognises the specific requirements of our non-urban areas. These plans will provide a clear way forward to build our success, addressing the challenges and opportunities that lie before us.

114. Business Case for Care Home Developments

	<p>“We are committed to ensuring that there is a supply of good quality nursing care which meets the future needs of the population, at an affordable price.</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the county. Added to this, proposed government social care reforms will have a significant impact on the care home market. It is therefore only right we look again at our plans for nursing care in Staffordshire and ensure these are taken into account.</p> <p>By taking some extra time to review our plans, speak to residents and those directly involved in nursing care, we can ensure our plans are fit for the future.”</p> <p>Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To review the need for extra nursing home capacity in Staffordshire as well as the potential location of homes.

Decision – (a) That officers be requested to re-evaluate the recommendation to develop two Council owned care homes, with nursing, taking into account the quality and sustainability of the current market in Staffordshire.

(b) That officers be requested to present a Business Case for Council owned care homes, with nursing, to Cabinet once the outcome of this work is confirmed.

115. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3 2021/22

	<p>“Dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic remains a challenge and we continue to do what is required to control the spread of the virus and keep people safe. The vaccine programme has been a game changer and as of January 2022, in Staffordshire 88% of people over 18 have had their first dose, 86% have had two doses and 71% have had the booster.</p> <p>We continue to do what is necessary to support</p>
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those who need us most, including vulnerable residents, the care sector, local communities and businesses.

Growing our economy, creating better quality jobs, and supporting local businesses with their recovery through the Staffordshire Means Back to Business Programme remains a priority. Putting more money in people's pockets and improving their financial security, especially at a time when living costs are on the increase, is vital.

The cost of social care continues to rise, and we face capacity issues and challenges in the sector. The home care market is continuing to experience rising demand, compounded by ongoing recruitment and retention difficulties but during quarter 3 we have made good progress to mitigate this across the sector.

In October we introduced a new model for the delivery of our Children and families service and our work through the Building Resilient Families and Communities programme continues to support vulnerable families. The programme has already achieved its target for the year. The Staffordshire Warmer Homes programme also continues to grow from strength to strength supporting households with updating heating and has attracted an additional £5.9m funding from Government.

Despite the many pressures facing councils like ours, we will invest to keep growing the county in a sustainable way to make a positive difference in the lives of our residents. We want Staffordshire people to enjoy a better quality of life, in thriving communities, and live longer in good health".

Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council

"Coping with the Covid-19 pandemic continues to put extra pressures on our finances, but we continue to do what is necessary and to manage them effectively. A recent audit report also confirmed this alongside our sound approach to financial management during the pandemic.



All council departments continue to deliver against their recovery priorities, whilst progressing with activities in the organisation's Delivery Plan. The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast saving of £3.963m compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £1.992m at Quarter 2.

Like most local authorities, we still face financial challenges including in adult social care and in children's social services. We have had the announcement from Government on the reforms to social care which was welcome, but we do need to see more details of how this will work in practice. We also have concerns that any funding available will not match the costs.

We continue to keep our finances in as strong a position as possible and to ensure that we provide good value for money for local taxpayers. Well managed finances also mean we can invest in our future and grow our economy post pandemic".

Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

Reasons for the Decision – To consider an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan.

Decision – That the report be received.

116. Potential Joint Coroners Service, Business Case



"It is expected that the merger will improve services for bereaved families and provide opportunities for future efficiency savings as the joint service is embedded, ensuring that the service is sustainable and fit for the future.

Inquests will continue to be heard in both Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent, and there is the potential to use other sites and locations as part of the new joint service".

	Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the creation of a new joint service for Stoke and Staffordshire Coronial jurisdictions.

Decision – (a) That the business case for submission to the Chief Coroner and Ministry of Justice be endorsed, subject to a similar resolution being passed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

(b) That the proposed timeline for the business case to be submitted to the Chief Coroner and Ministry of Justice be agreed, subject to a similar resolution being passed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

(c) That it be agreed that the name for the new service will be 'Staffordshire and Stoke-On-Trent Coroners Service', subject to a similar resolution being passed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

(d) That the Assistant Director, Culture, Rural and Safer Communities be given delegated authority to take all steps necessary to progress the Business Case to completion on behalf of Staffordshire County Council.

117. Decisions taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers

Decision – That the following decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers be noted:

Cabinet Member	Decision
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	In approving entering into the required contractual arrangements with Partners and Providers where required to deliver the Household Support Fund in Staffordshire.

118. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 16 March to 20 July 2022, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

Subject Matter	Contact
2022/23 Schools Capital Programme	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Economic Strategy	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204
Children's Homes Block Contract	Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976191079
Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2022/23	Name: James Bailey Tel: (01785) 276591

Agreement for Mental Health Act (Section 117) Aftercare needs	Name: Jo Cowcher Tel: 07772 011078
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme	Name: Clive Thomson Tel: (01785) 276522
Outcome of the Formal Statutory Proposal / Notice Process for the Proposed Expansion of St Leonard's Primary School, Stafford	Name: Clive Thomson Tel: (01785) 2767963
Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204
Framework Agreement for Demolition Services	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 4 2021/22	Name: Kerry Dove/ Rob Salmon Tel: (01785) 276354
North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan (NSLAQP)	Name: Clive Thomson Tel: (01785) 276522

119. Exclusion of the Public

Decision – 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 Local Government Act 1972 indicated below.

The Cabinet then proceeded to consider the following matter:

PART TWO

120. Entrust Service Delivery Agreement (Exclusion paragraph 3)

Alan White
Leader of the Council