

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 16 March 2022

Present: Alan White (Chairman)

Attendance

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

Cabinet Support Member in attendance: Johnny McMahon

Apologies: David Williams

PART ONE

121. Decision notice of the meeting held on 16 February 2022

Decision – That the notes of the meeting held on 16 February 2022 be approved.

122. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including Putin's invasion of Ukraine and Staffordshire's willingness to offer Ukrainian refugees a warm welcome to our county should our help be needed; the Government's announcement of new funding to find permanent homes for children in care and the Council's work with Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Stoke-on-Trent Councils through our Together4Children regional adoption partnership which has found homes for more than 100 children; the County Council's further investment to meet growing demand for support for children with special educational needs and disabilities which will fund a range of practical support, help us to assess children more quickly, and provide more support in mainstream schools; the receipt of an additional £20m from the NHS through the Better Care Fund which will enable us to sustain key services during 2022/23 and allow us to increase rate we pay home care providers; the Council's work to create the right conditions for our economy to grow and generate more better-paid jobs and opportunities for people in Staffordshire; and proposals for major improvements along the A50/A500, from Cheshire to the East Midlands which is vital to Staffordshire's future growth, supporting businesses including JCB and major learning institutions including Staffordshire and Keele Universities; be noted.

123. Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 2 March 2022

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

124. 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:

- Although we have seen an increase in Covid cases recently, the number of people in hospital with Covid remains stable and deaths are at or below pre-pandemic levels for this time of year. The Covid vaccination programme continues to make progress with a gradual increase in uptake of first and second doses as well as boosters in all age groups.
- From 24 February the legal requirement for people who test positive to isolate has been withdrawn and replaced by guidance to avoid contact with others for at least 5 days and get two negative rapid Covid tests on consecutive days before resuming normal activities. Routine contact tracing has also been discontinued.
- From 1 April public testing, both PCR testing for people with symptoms and lateral flow device testing, will be removed. Testing will continue in some settings, for example PCR testing for people admitted to hospital with respiratory illnesses, and asymptomatic testing of health and care staff and care home residents.
- There remains a risk of resurgence of the virus, especially if a new variant emerges. Ongoing precautions will be required in high-risk settings such as care homes, and the country will need contingency plans and resources in place to manage escalating numbers of cases that put unsustainable pressure on health and care services.
- The Council is planning that we will be able to continue to support prevention and management of outbreaks in high-risk settings such as care homes. We are prepared to manage localised surges in cases if necessary. We will continue to support the vaccination programme including any further boosters that are required during 2022/23. We will continue to provide public health advice to the public about the sensible precautions they can take to limit the spread of infection.
- The Covid Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board has moved to monthly meetings and the ongoing requirement for the Board will be reviewed in line with emerging Government policy.

- The Board would once again like to thank residents, schools, businesses, the voluntary sector, care providers, the NHS, the Council's own staff and everyone else who has contributed to the pandemic response. It has been a magnificent collective effort and leaves Staffordshire in a great position to face the future.

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

(b) That it be noted that the above is the final update planned from the Board.

(c) That the Council's thanks be extended to all those who have played a role in managing the pandemic.

125. 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 war in Ukraine, the sanctions on Russia and the consequent impact on businesses and business people in our country and county including higher energy prices; higher prices for non-energy commodities including industrial metals and foodstuffs such as wheat, as well as fertilisers; and higher overall costs alongside a tight labour market causing wage pressures that will put further pressure on profitability, potentially leading some firms to scale back employment or investment plans.
- Businesses needing to manage debt following the Covid-19 pandemic which was likely to be compounded by a rise in Bank of England interest rates to address inflation concerns.
- The confidence that Staffordshire and its economy was strong, robust and in a good place.
- The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that were claiming work-related Universal Credit continued to fall and currently stood at 4.2%. Encouragingly this month Staffordshire had seen a further decrease in the youth claimant count with a decline of 90 to a total of 2,760, reflective of more young people being able to return to work in hardest hit sectors such as retail and hospitality and the record levels of job vacancies currently available.

- Staffordshire’s claimant rate of 3.1% of the working age population in January compared to 5.4% regionally and 4.4% nationally
- Private sector investment was continuing at pace at i54, ROF Featherstone, Pets at Home at Redhill and of course Chatterley Valley. These developments would generate further jobs, supply chain opportunities and represented the strong confidence in Staffordshire as a place for business.

126. Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2022/23

	<p>“Staffordshire’s huge road network is vital for keeping our county connected and its residents and businesses on the move.</p> <p>This year we are investing over £50 million in a range of major projects, vital local improvements, and general road maintenance, including an additional £15.5M funded by the County Council to fix more roads.</p> <p>However, we recognise that there is always more to be done and we continue to lobby central Government for the money necessary to keep Staffordshire’s roads in the condition we expect and ensure local communities and businesses are able to see the benefits of an improved highway network”.</p> <p>Cllr David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the proposed 2022/23 Highways and Transport capital investment programme.

Decision – (a) That the Highways and Transport capital investment proposals be approved.

(b) That, further to the above, a detailed structural maintenance and drainage programme be developed and submitted for approval by the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation in consultation with Cabinet Members.

(c) That the progression of the programme of developer funded s.278/s111 highway improvement projects be approved and that authority be delegated

to the Director of Economy, Infrastructure & Skills to agree the details of the works agreements and authorise the contracts for works to be entered into.

(d) That the Assistant Director for Highways and the Built County monitors progress of the overall programme and be given delegated authority to make any in-year alterations in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation.

127. Economic Strategy



“Our economic strategy underpins how we as a county council will help to steer Staffordshire’s continued growth post pandemic, building on our strengths and successes and supporting our ambitions over the next eight years.

It is a priority to us to ensure our communities have more opportunities through higher paid, higher skilled jobs. For us to achieve that goal we will lead on attracting major investment to the county – something we have demonstrated through delivery of projects like i54 South Staffordshire and the Stafford Western Access Route.

We’ll do all we can with our partners to support start-up and small businesses which employ thousands of people across Staffordshire. Our plan also focuses on our key transport routes – working with partners to improve them and making the most of our superb connectivity.

Making our economy stronger can only be done through close working with businesses themselves together with our district and borough councils and other partner organisations, meaning we can secure more funding from Government more effectively and attract new businesses to the county.

We want to make sure we’re getting this right and that partners and communities are involved. We’ll be launching a four-week consultation very soon and hope people will take the time to give us their valued feedback”.

Cllr Philip White, Deputy Leader and Cabinet

	Member for Economy and Skills
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals to undertake a 4-week public consultation to provide the opportunity for partners, local stakeholders, residents, and businesses to help shape the Council’s new Economic Strategy.

Decision – (a) That the Consultation Draft of the Economic Strategy be approved.

(b) That a 4-week public consultation be conducted on the draft Economic Strategy, seeking views from stakeholders, businesses, and residents.

(c) That the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills take the draft Economic Strategy to the next available Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration and input.

(d) That the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills and the Director for Economy, Infrastructure & Skills be authorised to agree changes and finalise the Economic Strategy based on feedback received from the public consultation, Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee and in response to Government policy announcements including the Levelling Up White Paper.

(e) That, working with those Cabinet Members with associated responsibilities, the Director for Economy, Infrastructure & Skills be authorised to progress the development of supporting delivery plans, working with our partners as appropriate.

128. Agreement for Mental Health Act (Section 117) Aftercare needs

	<p>“Good, timely care after leaving hospital is an essential part of successful rehabilitation so that people can develop the necessary skills to live independently.</p> <p>This new funding arrangement continues services at less cost to the Council, without in any way reducing the quality of care provided to those who need it.”</p> <p>Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the proposed agreement between Staffordshire County Council and Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning

Groups for meeting and funding Mental Health Act (Section 117) Aftercare needs.

Decision – (a) That the Council enter into an agreement with Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Groups under Section 256 of the Health and Care Act 2006 related to a new funding arrangement for provision of aftercare services provided under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

(b) That a transitional funding agreement be negotiated for the period 2022-24 in order to ensure that this new funding arrangement is affordable for the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

(c) That the Director of Health and Care and County Treasurer be authorised to finalise the details of this funding agreement.

129. Capital Programme for Schools 2022/23

	<p>“Every Staffordshire child deserves the best possible education, and to leave school or college with the learning and skills they need to succeed in further education or the workplace.</p> <p>It is therefore essential that we continue to maintain and improve our school buildings to ensure Staffordshire children can learn in surroundings that enhance their education and give them the best possible start in life. Our capital programme for 2022/23 sees a proposed investment of £35.5 million into ensuring our 400+ schools are fit for the future”.</p> <p>Jonathan Price, Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the 2022/2023 Capital Programme for Schools.

Decision – (a) That the Schools Capital Programme 2022/23 investment proposal, as set out in the report and supporting appendices, be approved.

(b) That the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets monitors progress against the Programme and makes any necessary in-year alterations in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND).

(c) That authority be delegated to the Director of Corporate Services to approve:

(i) All subsequent call-off contracts under the CWM framework Agreement to be awarded and entered into with the successful providers under the CWM Framework Agreement.

(ii) Any novation of call-off contracts to new providers or variations to the terms of call-off contracts, in accordance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

130. Children's Homes Block Contract

	<p>“While a great deal of preventative work is underway to try and safely keep children with their families wherever possible, we currently face a situation where local authorities must manage increasing demand on children’s services.</p> <p>Entering a joint agreement with other councils and providers enables us to guarantee regular good-quality provision of care at a known price and remove some of the uncertainty caused when demand, on occasion, exceeds supply”.</p> <p>Cllr Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals for a children's home block contract for 13 beds with an option to extend for a further 26 beds.

Decision - (a) That the County Council procures a block contract for 13 children homes placements in the private/voluntary sector with the ability to increase the contract where required to provide the ability to increase up to a further 7 homes (i.e. up to a maximum of 26 placements if needed).

(b) That the County Council enters into these arrangements for a maximum period of 8 years subject to demand.

(c) That authority be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities to award to the successful bidder.

(d) That the County Council agrees to deviate from its standard Price / Quality split of Price 70% and Quality 30% to Price 30% and Quality 70% for this contract.

(e) That the County Council agrees joint procurement activity with a joint contract led by Dudley.

131. Local Bus Concessionary Payment - Final Covid 19 Support Package

	<p>“The bus industry has still not recovered from the effects of the pandemic and central Government subsidy is essential for services to be maintained in Staffordshire at the moment.</p> <p>This authority is very restricted in how it can influence local commercial services but has been providing financial support where it can.</p> <p>Now we are extending that financial support for a further six months to ‘top up’ Government grants while bus operators promote their services to encourage the return of passengers”.</p> <p>Cllr David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport</p>
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Note by Clerk: In accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (Regulation 16), the Leader of the Council has obtained the approval of the Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the decision detailed below to be exempt from call-in as any delay caused by the call-in process was likely to result in potential loss of vital bus services in Staffordshire.

Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals for concessionary travel reimbursement to local bus operators to be maintained beyond March 2022 for a period of 6 months in line with the extension of government funding, to help stabilise the network and allow for patronage levels to be rebuilt.

Decision – (a) That the County Council maintains pre-covid levels of concessionary reimbursement on all operating routes until 1 October 2022, in line with government’s Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) funding.

(b) That it be agreed that payments to bus operators will be maintained (as per “(a)” above) providing operators –

- i. comply with BRG terms and conditions
- ii. maintain existing commercial bus service levels
- iii. demonstrate how they will rebuild patronage.

(c) That the Council reserves the right to reduce concessionary reimbursement and / or pay against actuals, in instances where an operator

does not comply with “(b)” above and asks that Transport Operations and Future Connectivity Team manage this process.

(d) That the Transport Operations and Future Connectivity Team be asked to develop a transition plan for concessionary reimbursement from October 2022 onwards.

132. 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 proposals for the future delivery of the Early Years Coordination Service.
Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)	In approving the Admission Arrangements for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools 2023/24 & Coordinated Admissions Scheme 2023/24.

133. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 20 April to 17 August 2022, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

Subject Matter	Contact
Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204
Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan	Name: David Walters Tel: (01785) 854024
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
Corporate Delivery Plan 2022/23	Name: Kerry Dove Tel: 07855 679112
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme	Name: Clive Thomson Tel: (01785) 276522
Digital Connectivity in Staffordshire	Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984
Mobilisation of Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres	Name: Clive Thomson Tel: (01785) 276522
North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan	Name: Clive Thomson

(NSLAQP)	Tel: (01785) 276522
Families Health & Wellbeing (0-19) Service - from April 2024	Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976 191079

134. 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.

PART TWO

135. Exempt Decision Notice of the meeting held on 16 February 2022

(Exclusion paragraph 3)

Decision – That the exempt notes of the meeting held on 16 February 2022 be approved.

136. Staffordshire Highways Transformation: Infrastructure + Service Changes 2022

(Exclusion paragraph 3)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals for a change in the way that asset management, safety/reactive inspections and highway claims administration are commissioned within the Infrastructure Plus Strategic Highways Partnership.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

Alan White
Leader of the Council