

Cabinet

Wednesday 20 April 2022

10:00

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live which can be viewed at any time here:

<https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell
Director of Corporate Services
12 April 2022

A G E N D A

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16**
3. **Decision notice of the meeting held on 6 April 2022** (Pages 1 - 2)
4. **Leader's Update**

Oral report of the Leader of the Council
5. **Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 6 April 2022** (Pages 3 - 4)
6. **Staffordshire Means Back to Business**

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills
7. **Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 4 2021/22** (Pages 5 - 54)

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
8. **Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan** (Pages 55 - 324)

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

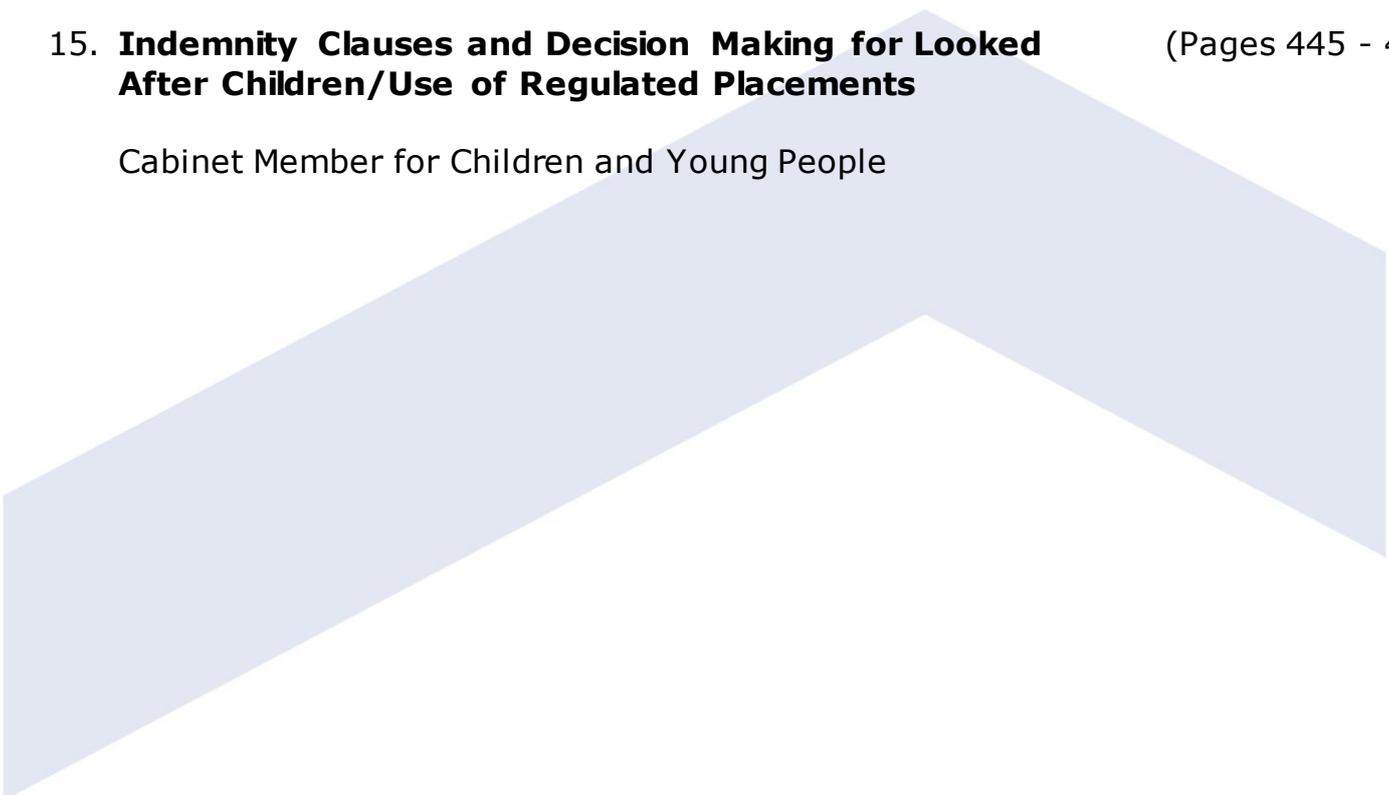
9. **Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy** (Pages 325 - 414)
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills
10. **Formal Report of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** (Pages 415 - 426)
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
11. **Framework Agreement for Demolition Services** (Pages 427 - 436)
Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters
12. **Decisions taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers** (Pages 437 - 438)
13. **Forward Plan of Key Decisions** (Pages 439 - 444)
14. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman to move:-

“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

(All reports in this section are exempt)

15. **Indemnity Clauses and Decision Making for Looked After Children/Use of Regulated Placements** (Pages 445 - 466)
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
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Membership

Alan White (Chairman)	Victoria Wilson
Mark Deaville	Julia Jessel
Mark Sutton	David Williams
Philip White	Ian Parry
Jonathan Price	Simon Tagg
Johnny McMahon	

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

Filming of Meetings

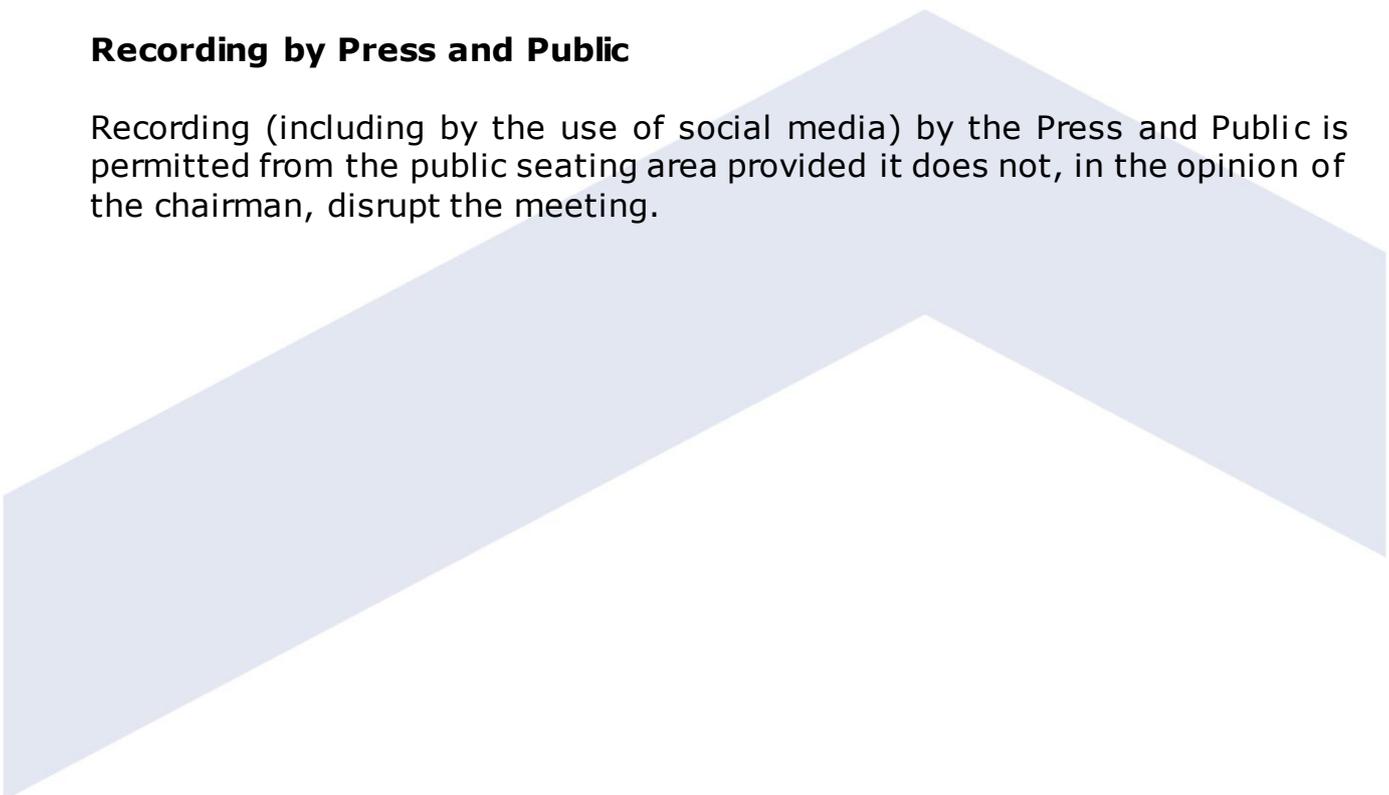
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Recording by Press and Public

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.



Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 6 April 2022

Present: Alan White (Chairman)

Attendance

Mark Deaville
Julia Jessel
Ian Parry
Simon Tagg

Philip White
David Williams
Victoria Wilson

Cabinet Support Member in attendance: Johnny McMahon

Apologies: Jonathan Price and Mark Sutton

PART ONE

137. Decision notice of the meeting held on 16 March 2022

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

138. 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

139. Sale of Bilbrook House site, Codsall
(Exclusion paragraph 3)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals for the sale of the Bilbrook House site, Codsall.

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

Alan White
Leader of the Council

Minutes of the Property Sub-Committee Meeting held on 6 April 2022

Present: Alan White (Chairman)

Attendance

Mark Deaville
Ian Parry

Philip White (Vice-Chairman)

Apologies: Jonathan Price

PART ONE

77. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest on this occasion.

78. Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 March 2022

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 be confirmed and signed by the chairman.

79. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED – 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 paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972.

80. Holding No 25 Greenwood Farm, Green Lane, Whitgreave, Stafford ST18 9SR - Proposed letting - Exemption paragraph 3

Details were submitted for the proposed letting of land at Holding No.25 Greenwood Farm, Green Lane, Whitgreave Stafford ST18 9SR.

RESOLVED – That approval be given for the letting of Holding No.25 Greenwood Farm, Green Lane, Whitgreave, Stafford ST18 9SR on the terms in the report.

81. Income generation through advertising: Billboard Sites - Exemption paragraph 3

Details were submitted for the proposed income generation through advertising at 22 billboard sites across the county.

RESOLVED – That (a) approval be given for the leasing or licencing of the sites identified in the report; all actions required to implement this decision to be delegated to the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets.

(b) any future sites identified for similar activity be delegated to the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets.

82. Former Ellison Detached Playing Field, Lamphouse Way - Proposed Sale - Exemption paragraph 3

Details were submitted for the proposed sale of the Former Ellison Detached Playing Field, Lamphouse Way.

RESOLVED – That approval be given for the sale of the Former Ellison Detached Playing Field, Lamphouse Way on the terms indicated in the report.

Chairman

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 April 2022

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 4, 2021/22



Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

“Dealing with Covid-19 and learning how to live safely with the virus remains a priority and we continue to do what is required to keep people safe. The vaccine programme has been a game changer and vaccination uptake in Staffordshire remains comparatively good with booster uptake now above the national average.

“We continue to do what is necessary to support 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 and energy costs are on the increase, is vital.

“The cost of adult social care continues to rise, and we face challenges in the sector although we have seen a reduction in waiting times for assessments since last quarter. We continue to address workforce issues through the Future Social Care Workforce Programme, which is in its early days, but will help us to understand current local issues and needs.

“The new model for the delivery of our Children and Families services introduced last year continues to embed well and our work through the Building Resilient Families and Communities programme continues to support vulnerable families. An Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection of SEND provision in January found improvements in six out of eight areas under review, with two areas requiring further development. Work continues to make improvements within the service.

“The Warmer Home schemes have provided significant benefits to Staffordshire residents, especially given the rising price of energy. To date 3,500 people have accessed the schemes and received help and advice. This includes 511 families benefitting from 566 home installations, such as gas central heating, replacement boilers or insulation measures.

“Despite the 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.

“In much more sobering news, we continue to be horrified by the events unfolding in Ukraine and as a county we stand with all those affected by the conflict. Staffordshire has a proud history of helping those who have had no choice but to flee war or persecution. We have set up an Incident Management Team and we are supporting the delivery of the ‘Homes for Ukraine’ scheme. We stand ready to offer Ukrainian refugees a warm welcome to our county should our help be needed.”



Cllr Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources said,

“All council departments continue to deliver against their priorities, whilst progressing with activities in the organisation’s Delivery Plan.

“The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast saving of £4.417m (0.8%). This is compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £3.963m (0.7%) at Quarter 3.

“Like many local authorities, we still face financial challenges including in adult social care and in children’s social services, but we continue to keep our finances in as strong a position as possible. Well managed finances ensures that we provide good value for money for local tax-payers and means we can continue to invest in our future and growing our economy.”

Report Summary

This quarterly Integrated Performance Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council’s progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan.

Recommendation

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.
- b. Approves the use of £2.702m from the Contingency budget to fund the national pay award relating to 2021/22. This is not currently included in service budgets as a pay freeze was assumed during the MTFS.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 April 2022

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 4, 2021/22

Recommendation of the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.
- b. Approves the use of £2.702m from the Contingency budget to fund the national pay award relating to 2021/22. This is not currently included in service budgets as a pay freeze was assumed during the MTFS.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations

This is an opportunity for Cabinet to consider and discuss Staffordshire County Council's quarterly performance and finance position.

Quarter 4 Summary

Performance ratings for the individual service areas across the council are as follows:

Service Area	Delivery	Finance
Health & Care	A	G
Families & Communities	A	A
Economy, Infrastructure & Skills	G	G
Corporate Services	G	G

Key highlights

- Shortlisted for LGC Council of the Year Award 2022.
- Shift in COVID approach to 'living safely with COVID'; good vaccination rates.
- Additional £19.25m non-recurrent funding for investment in Staffordshire has been confirmed for the NHS and Social Care for 2022/23 – 2023/24.
- Staffordshire Means Back to Business Programme continues to succeed for Staffordshire's businesses.
- Staffordshire has been confirmed as a continued Earned Autonomy area for the Supporting Families Programme in 2022/23.

Key challenges

- Implementation of Adult Social Care Reform by April 2023 – project in place which will require significant resource.
- Overall demand remains high for adult social care assessments, leading to capacity issues and waiting lists, although some improvement in Quarter 4.
- Continued pressures relating to the number and complexity of children in care.
- Capacity issues in SEND due to need for Accelerated Progress Plan by April 2022; also declining Education, Health and Care plan timeliness.
- Continuing to develop and manage Staffordshire's waste services.

Further details of the above can be found in the main report and accompanying appendices.

1. Summary

This report provides an update on Quarter 4 activities for each service area: Health and Care; Families and Communities; Economy, Infrastructure and Skills; and Corporate Services.

Significant progress has been made across the organisation during Quarter 4, however challenges remain in relation to capacity and demand, particularly within Health and Care and Families and Communities. There also continues to be areas of financial risk in Adult Social Care and Families and Communities, with further details included within this report and its appendices.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast saving of £4.417m (0.8%). There are a number of potential carry forward requests to be made in the Final Outturn report, if all these requests are approved this will reduce the saving to £2.503m (0.4%). This is compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £3.963m (0.7%) at Quarter 3.

2. Health and Care

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Amber	Green

3. Considerable progress has been made across Health and Care in Quarter 4, both in leading the council's move to living safely with COVID and in the recovery of key adult social care services, with an AMBER delivery overall to reflect a number of ongoing challenges, including the implementation of key adult social care reform. The GREEN finance rating reflects significant in-year underspend, despite longer term cost pressures.



4. In Staffordshire, work to implement the Government's new plan for adult social care reform, including a lifetime cap on the amount anyone in England will need to spend on their personal care, is a key area of challenge. The council has commenced a project to understand, design and implement the necessary process and system changes required for Adult Social Care Reform, including implementing the fair cost of care and the lifetime cap on care costs. Like all other local authorities, significant resource will be required to implement the necessary changes by April 2023.

5. Following the national trend, overall demand remains high for adult social care assessments, leading to capacity issues and waiting lists, although there has been some improvement in Quarter 4, with waiting lists

reducing from their peak and improvements in terms of capacity. Capacity improvements in home care are particularly due to focused work with partners in relation to retention of staff, which has mitigated the risk over winter.

6. In the longer term, workforce issues are looking to be addressed by the Future Social Care Workforce Programme, which is in its early days, but will help to understand current local social care sector issues. The programme will work with sector representatives and develop approaches across the partnership to address the identified issues.
7. Brokerage demand remains high with levels consistently above 'pre-Covid' levels (22% higher in February 2022 compared with February/March 2020). Overall timeliness of sourcing has however improved to 70% in February compared to 63% in January. Home/day care sourcing has improved from 59% to 71%, although issues continue for a number of care homes temporarily in lockdown and declining new admissions. Care homes timeliness of sourcing is marginally down from 73% in January 2022 to 69% in February 2022.
8. The council's response to COVID-19 is adapting to align with the Government's shift to 'living with COVID'. There will continue to be ongoing management of outbreaks in high risks settings and there is a need to ensure contingency plans and resources are in place in case there is a surge in cases. Positively, vaccination uptake in Staffordshire remains comparatively good. As of 16th March 2022, Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent recorded a booster uptake of 84.1%, compared to the national average of 81%. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have got the highest uptake for 12–15-year-olds for the first dose across the region at 64.2%. In Staffordshire alone it's 67.5%.
9. With the cost of living increases that are being experienced nationally, Staffordshire has measures in place to help those residents facing financial hardship. One of these measures is the delivery of the Warmer Homes Scheme, which aims to combat fuel poverty across the county and help residents to heat their homes. The scheme is for those residents in receipt of means tested or disability benefits, e.g. Universal Credit, Disability Living Allowance, or on low incomes. The council has recently undertaken further work to understand where Staffordshire's most in need families live, allowing for more targeted campaigns to raise awareness of the scheme in those areas.
10. The current Warmer Home schemes are ending in Quarter 1, 2022/23 and have provided significant benefits to Staffordshire residents, especially given the rising price of energy. As of mid-March 2022, 511 households had benefitted from 566 home installations, such as gas central heating, replacement boilers or insulation measures to ensure houses are kept warm, and over 2,300 people had received wrap around

services through 'Beat the Cold', which include eligibility testing, advice and signposting to further support. Anecdotally, these figures have already increased substantially and will be included in the next report. For those receiving first time central heating, average savings on energy bills have been £657 per year. Households across all districts in Staffordshire have benefitted from the scheme. Of those measures installed, there has been the highest take-up in Tamworth (122), Cannock (100), Stafford (94) and East Staffordshire (69). These are also the districts that have had the highest level of take-up of wrap around services. The focus during 2022/23 will primarily be on the Sustainable Warmth Competition, which helps local authorities to upgrade energy inefficient homes of low-income households and will target around 400 homes in 2022/23, plus the continued wrap-around services. This is subject to £5.9m funding which is anticipated to be approved by the end of April 2022.

11. The Supportive Communities programme has continued to progress during Quarter 4. The programme has started developing a long-term model for voluntary sector provision of unregulated social care support, which will help with the demand and capacity issues faced in Social Care. The Community Help Point referral rate is also continuing to improve. A model and vision for strengths-based working is developing across Health and Care, with a locality focused approach being developed initially in Newcastle followed by Staffordshire Moorlands.

12. From a Finance perspective, the Health and Care forecasted outturn at Quarter 4 is a saving of £1.176m, compared to a £0.982m saving in Quarter 3. There remains a range of high-risk Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings within this area, with the directorate seeking alternative savings where necessary. In addition, the level of client debt is above target and work is ongoing to recover this. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £3.644m.

13. Families and Communities

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Amber	Amber

14. Significant progress has been made across the Families and Communities service area in Quarter 4. The overall AMBER performance ratings reflect much work that has taken place during the quarter, balanced with managing some key issues in relation to demand and capacity.



15. Staffordshire has continued to experience pressures relating to the number and complexity of children in care, as well as challenges associated with the embedding of a large-scale Children's

Transformation. Work to embed the workforce structure continues; leadership and senior management roles have now been filled and wider transformation elements (policy, digital, Power BI) are now live and embedding well. Refurbishment works on the council's new in-house residential unit remain on track for completion by the end of March 2022.

16. At the 28th February 2022, there were 1,277 children in care in Staffordshire, which represents very little change compared to the position reported in Quarter 3 (1,279), however this remains slightly higher than the revised business case number. The rate is 74.6 per 10,000 which is higher than the most recent national benchmark (67 per 10,000 - March 2021) but lower than the regional benchmark (85 per 10,000 - March 2021). In Staffordshire the council has provided crucial placements to 21 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as part of the Government's National Transfer Scheme, which continues to place additional pressures on all local authorities with children's services.
17. The number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) issued in time (within 20 weeks) in Staffordshire has declined during Quarter 4. In February 2022, 30% of EHCPs were issued in time, compared to the most recent national benchmark of 56% (from 2020/21). The overall 12-month position is at 69%, compared to the most recent national benchmark of 56%. Half of the plans 'out of time' were issued within 25 weeks. The issue around timeliness is linked to securing keyworkers following the changes during the transformation. To address this, and the overall increase in demand for EHCPs - which is being experienced nationally, the council has increased the SEND Keyworker FTE from 28 to 35, resulting in less reliance on agency staff. All new keyworker roles have been recruited, but they have not all started yet. Performance of this key measure is also continuing to be closely monitored by the SEND Service and District Operations Teams.
18. In January 2022 the council also had its Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection of SEND provision in the county, which found improvements in six out of eight areas under review, with two areas requiring further development in the next 12 months, through an Accelerated Progress Plan. These areas of development include improving both the relationships with families and the quality of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Changes already planned include developing a recently launched Parent Carer Forum to identify problems and solutions more quickly and working on a national pilot scheme with the Council for Disabled Children to measure the impact of the changes being made.
19. Work has continued to co-produce a new Staffordshire Early Help Strategy with the involvement of children and their families. This joint strategy, developed with key partners, is due to be in place from April 2022. Work is also ongoing to finalise the Early Help & Place Based

Approach Implementation Plan which will underpin delivery of the refreshed Early Help Strategy.

20. Following a standard 10-year review of the agreement between the council and Entrust, a small number of services currently provided by Entrust to the council will be brought back in-house by April 2023. These services include skills and employability, early years support and other property projects. This reflects the changing school landscape in the county and new council priorities. Services Entrust provides directly to schools will remain largely unaffected.
21. More than nine out of ten parents have been allocated their first-choice secondary school in Staffordshire. Out of the 7,964 offers for a secondary school in Staffordshire made to parents, 93.5% were allocated their first-choice school. This is compared to 7,650 applications made for a school place in 2021. Around 98% have been allocated one of their top three preferred schools, above the national average which stands at 93% (2021).
22. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have confirmed Staffordshire will continue to be an Earned Autonomy area for the Supporting Families Programme in 2022/23. In Quarter 4, the council achieved successful outcomes for a further 232 families, taking the total for the year to 1,238 and exceeding its annual DLUHC target of 817.
23. The council has administered over £12 million in the last 12 months to assist people facing financial hardship through the Household Support Fund and other grants made available to the council. These funds have been used primarily to support households most in need with food, energy costs and other bills. The grants have helped over 100,000 people with food vouchers, including children who are entitled to Free School Meals and Care Leavers, and 2,616 households have had support with energy bills. Within the Spring Statement it was announced that the Household Support fund would be extended from the 1st April to 30th September 2022 to continue to support those in need. Further details around the funding and distribution will be included in the next report.
24. From the 22nd March, parents of eligible children in Staffordshire can register for a space on the council's [Easter Holiday Activities and Food Programme \(HAF\)](#). All HAF programmes over the Christmas holidays were delivered despite COVID-19 risks and with more than 20,000 places available across Staffordshire, the Easter programme will offer 67 inclusive activities and healthy meals over the school holidays for children aged 5-16 years.
25. The Staffordshire Resilience Forum is working to plan and prepare Staffordshire's partnership response to the Ukraine crisis. The council has

also established an Incident Management Team, including council senior managers, to help respond to the crisis. The council are also currently supporting the Home Office and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to deliver a new scheme 'Homes for Ukraine.' The scheme sees local people ('sponsors') offer a bedroom in their home for a Ukrainian fleeing war, with checks in place to ensure the safety of the guests. The scheme is being developed across the partnership to ensure that they have access to community support, schools, work, and wider support to help them integrate in Staffordshire. Further work is also taking place to prepare for potential health needs. As of 5th April 2022, there were 144 Staffordshire sponsors who had come forward and agreed to accommodate a total of 370 Ukrainians.

26. A key priority for the council is the provision of domestic abuse services (the council contributes to a jointly commissioned service). Work remains on track to ensure new commissioning arrangements are in place from April 2023, with funding of over £1.5m to support victims and their families living in safe accommodation for 2022/23 awarded during Quarter 4.

27. The Trading Standards team continues to support businesses through safeguarding and compliance advice. Since April 2021 the team have dealt with almost 16,900 engagements and interventions with businesses; with almost £750,000 prevented from being lost to scams and fraud through the council's intervention.

28. Between October and December 2021, the council's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Strategic Capacity Building Partner saw 226 organisations provided with one-to-one development support, c.£1.3m external funding secured by VCSE organisations and 33 individuals supported to access local volunteering opportunities. In addition, the tender for the new VCSE Capacity Building Framework went live on 31st January, with a deadline for applications of 7th March. Evaluation of bids is currently underway, with a go-live date for the new arrangements of 1st August.

29. In terms of the financial position at Quarter 4 for Families & Communities, there is a forecast overspend of £1.357m, compared to an overspend of £1.313m in Quarter 3. Whilst there are various savings which are mainly to do with vacancies the pressure on Children in our Care leads to an overall overspend. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £8.400m.

30. **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills**

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Green	Green

31. Economy, Infrastructure and Skills is currently on track in terms of both Delivery and Finance in Quarter 4. The overall GREEN performance ratings reflect considerable progress made across the service against its key plans, whilst continuing to respond to some key challenges.



32. A key area of focus within the service is in relation to the Hanford Waste Disposal Facility. Discussions with Stoke-on-Trent City Council are ongoing to ensure that there is a cost effective and sustainable waste disposal solution for household residual waste in the north of Staffordshire post 2025.

33. Work is on track to bring the day-to-day management and running of Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres back in-house from April 2022. Risks have been mitigated against and staff have been supported to transition from AMEY. Residents should experience no immediate difference with this changeover, although it is hoped in the short-term improvements to facilities and encouragement of more advanced recycling methods will be noticeable.

34. The council continues to support local businesses to survive, adapt and continue to operate as part of delivering its £6m Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme, which is a unique partnership with Staffordshire's eight boroughs and districts to prioritise support for small businesses and people whose jobs and employment prospects have been impacted.

35. As part of the Back to Business scheme, the Staffordshire Apprentice 500 initiative launched in April 2021 to provide incentives to small and non-levy employers to provide apprenticeships to Staffordshire's young unemployed residents. Between the launch and February 2022, 195 applications have been approved, creating over 300 apprenticeships and over 250 apprentices have so far been recruited.

36. The Staffordshire Start-Up Loan scheme is assisting those made redundant or unemployed to start up new businesses with loans of between £3,000 and £5,000, with no interest or fees. By the end of February 2022, 21 start-up businesses were supported through the scheme at a total of £101,000 with 3 businesses having paid back to the council after 12 months. The Staffordshire Start-Up course (delivered through Staffordshire Chamber) is also progressing. At the end of February 2022, 361 people had signed up to the course and nearly 43% had started trading.

37. The Get Started scheme which launched in November 2021 gives participants extra confidence to launch or continue with their enterprise with the backing of free expert professional support. The scheme is

proving extremely popular with 123 applications received by the end of February 2022.

38.The council has developed a new Economic Strategy that will help to strengthen partnerships with district and borough councils and other organisations, in addition to influencing central Government and attracting investors. Main priorities include the regeneration of town centres, supporting start-up and growing small businesses, ensuring Staffordshire has a higher skilled and higher paid workforce, supporting development of sites so they're ready for business and strengthening transport corridors such as the A50/A500 and A38. A four-week consultation is set to take place soon after its approval.

39.Highways works to create the access from the A34 to the Pets at Home development began in February 2022 and will be overseen by the council. The 670,000 square foot development is expected to create 750 jobs when it opens in late 2022 and will be the company's new national headquarters.

40.We Are Staffordshire, the place marketing delivery vehicle for the council, unveiled the new Staffordshire Investment Prospectus in March 2022 at the international MIPIM property marketplace. The prospectus highlights economic investment opportunity across the whole of Staffordshire and has been jointly prepared by the Make It Investment service and Place Branding teams in collaboration with all district and borough councils. It presents key major projects that will regenerate and transform Staffordshire over the next five years, including Stafford town centre regeneration and Chatterley Valley West – part of the Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone.

41.The Superfast Staffordshire programme will end in 2022. Its success, combined with the commercial roll-out, has enabled 96% of county premises to have available connectivity to superfast broadband (>30Mbs), however 4% currently miss out. [Project Gigabit](#) is a new £123M Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) investment into the region to enable premises that are not commercially viable to get 1,000Mbs connectivity. The council has been working with DCMS on an Open Market Review and Public review to ensure that this investment will deliver value for money and its progress, scheduled for deployment in 2023, will be shared on a new website in May this year.

42.In terms of climate change, over 100 applications were received for the second round of the Climate Change Action Fund which are currently being assessed. Furthermore, the council in partnership with environmental company Veolia launched the Staffordshire EnviroGrant programme in Quarter 4, which made grants of up to £750 available to not-for-profit organisations. Grants could be awarded to projects that

help improve waste and recycling, improve the natural environment, or raise awareness of environmental issues.

43. Positive progress is also being made on the actions in the council's Climate Change Action Plan 2. The council has been working with The Forest of Mercia Community Interest Company on two sites in Cannock Chase district where 17,500 trees will be planted. The planting has been funded by £92,000 of the Government's Trees for Climate Fund. A trial of the use of HVO fuels in the council's heavy goods and heavy plant vehicles has also commenced, which has the potential to save over 1,000 tonnes of CO₂ if it can be rolled out over the council's Highways and Household Waste and Recycling Centre operations. The council has also been successful in securing funding under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme and are looking at converting a new schools heating system from conventional gas fuelled boilers to a heat pump solution.

44. In March 2022, a two-week anti-idling campaign was delivered by the council and local businesses, to help raise awareness of improving air quality in Staffordshire. During the campaign, businesses encouraged employees to turn off their engines when they aren't in use.

45. Since the street lighting LED retrofit programme commenced in April 2021, 12,000 lanterns have been exchanged for energy efficient LED units up to the end of February 2022, reducing the associated energy consumption by almost 1.5m kWh per annum. This figure is ahead of planned delivery targets to convert around 47,000 lanterns by March 2025. When complete this programme will save the equivalent of 2,650 tonnes of CO₂e each year and reduce energy costs by c.£1.6M pa.

46. As part of the wider Medium Term Financial Strategy, it has been agreed that an extra £15.5m capital and minimum £1m revenue will be invested in the highway service during 2022/23. The money is in addition to £50m proposed investment in major projects, maintenance, and local improvements. The council also continues to transform its current Highways arrangements, with agreed changes to strengthen the council's control of highway management. This includes the transfer of the Asset Management, Risk and Liability team back into the council which is progressing well. Consultations have started with the staff involved and HR teams are working together to ensure a smooth transfer.

47. At the end of February, the UK faced 3 storms (Dudley, Eunice and Franklin) in the space of 7 days. All three affected Staffordshire, with Storm Franklin having the biggest impact. Staffordshire Highways Crews worked tirelessly over the week to respond to over 150 calls, including 82 fallen trees, as well as debris and localised flooding issues.

48. The financial position at Quarter 4 for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills is a forecast saving of £1.027m, compared to a saving of £1.228m in Quarter 3, with small forecast savings across the service. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £1.626m.

49. Corporate Services

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
Green	Green

Corporate Services is currently on track in terms of both Delivery and Finance in Quarter 4 and continues to provide vital support to the organisation in delivering on its priorities. Whilst the overall GREEN performance ratings reflect a great deal of activity that has taken place to progress its plans, like other service areas it continues to manage challenges regarding capacity impacting on progress.



50. In February both the council's new Strategic Plan, setting out the ambitions and priorities for the year ahead, and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) were approved at a meeting of Full Council. Work on developing the Corporate Delivery Plan for 2022/23 has now begun, which will include specific activities detailing how we will achieve the vision and priorities set.

51. Over a two-year period, the council aims to raise £17m through the sale of unused land and buildings to fund transformation of services and activity, in line with new Government regulation. To date the council has delivered c.£11.6m in year through the sale of 21 assets.

52. In addition, work on the council's property programme is progressing well, including the Lichfield Day Centre refurbishment which is due to be completed by the end of March. Service transition expected soon after in April 2022. Demolition work continues on Bilbrook House in South Staffordshire, with an expected completion of the end of April 2022. Furthermore, as part of the council's school's capital programme the expansion of Graham Balfour school has been completed and opened in January 2022, and both new primary schools in Uttoxeter and Fradley are on track to open in September 2022 as well as the school expansions at St Johns, Essington, and Princefields First, Penkridge.

53. In March the Judge's Chambers in County Buildings, Stafford became the new home of Stafford Registrar's Office where people will give notice of marriage, civil partnerships and to register births and deaths. This new venue will provide more spacious rooms for appointments and ceremonies. Last year the service hosted 4,000 weddings and registered

over 3,000 births and approximately 6,000 deaths across its various offices.

54. Digital inclusion remains a key priority and work is continuing to address those key barriers. More than 180 devices have now been donated as part of 'Donate IT' Digital Device Recycling Scheme and these are now being distributed to people who are at risk of digital exclusion in the county. Those that have benefitted from the scheme include South Staffordshire Jobs Club who have received three laptops to help people search and apply for jobs and Staffordshire Women's Aid who have received five devices to help victims of sexual and domestic abuse to access counselling and group sessions.

55. The 2022 Community Fund launched in April. It will focus on projects which develop health and wellbeing; support communities caring for and supporting each other and looking after the places where we live and encouraging community spirit, including supporting Jubilee celebrations. The fund will run and make payments throughout the financial year but will close to new applications on 31 October 2022.

56. Over the last quarter there has been significant progress around promoting the Staffordshire story and place brand. This has included developing its plan and priorities for 2022/23, as well as continued delivery of external promotional activity with partners. Specific activities include campaign materials to support the Inward Investment Campaign, including a new investment prospectus brochure, and the council's involvement in the Commonwealth Games. A virtual Ambassador event was held in January, focussing on a prosperous Staffordshire, attracting over 80 online attendees. Further promotional events are being planned, including a potential Staffordshire Day event to take place at the House of Commons on 26th April.

57. In February, a Local Government pensions benefit scheme, Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC Wise) was launched to its members, with 68 applications received so far. This equates to an annual saving of £27,000, which is set to increase as more applications are received. Work also continues to deliver the council's internal People Strategy, including the development of a new careers' website which is expected to go live by late Summer. In addition, as we move towards 'living with COVID' work is taking place to support staff to work in a smart and flexible way.

58. Absence levels continue to rise and year on year we see absence levels worsen with long term absence at 8.23 days lost per employee (Feb 2022), compared to 7.30 at the same point last year. Short-term absence at 3.40 days lost per employee (Feb 2022) compared to 2.38 at the same point last year. Absences relating to diagnosed/suspected cases of COVID-19 account for 1.56 days lost per employee over this period an increase from last year at the same point at 1.1. However, it is worth

noting that pre COVID (Feb 2020) total absence levels were at 11.68 days lost per employee, therefore an underlying improvement from pre COVID. Outside of COVID related absence psychological disorders is the highest absence reason at 3.44 days lost, an increase of 19% from last year. However, 52% (2027) of employees have had no absence and 20% (777) have had less than 5 days absence.

59. In Corporate Services the financial position at Quarter 4 is a forecast saving of £0.652m, compared to a saving of £0.868m in Quarter 3. This is largely due to staffing vacancies and increased incomes. The forecast financial impact of COVID-19 for the directorate is £0.461m.

60. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications of note in relation to this report, which is for information and discussion, not for decision.

61. Resource and Value for Money Implications

Please see Finance Appendices.

62. Climate Change Implications

There are no direct climate change implications of note.

List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Performance Dashboard
- Appendix 2 - Finance Quarter 4 Summary
- Appendix 3 - Finance Quarter 4 Detailed Report
- Appendix 4 - Corporate Checklist
- Appendix 5 - Revenue Forecast Outturn 2021/22
- Appendix 6 - Capital Forecast Outturn 2021/22
- Appendix 7 - Financial Health Indicators 2021/22

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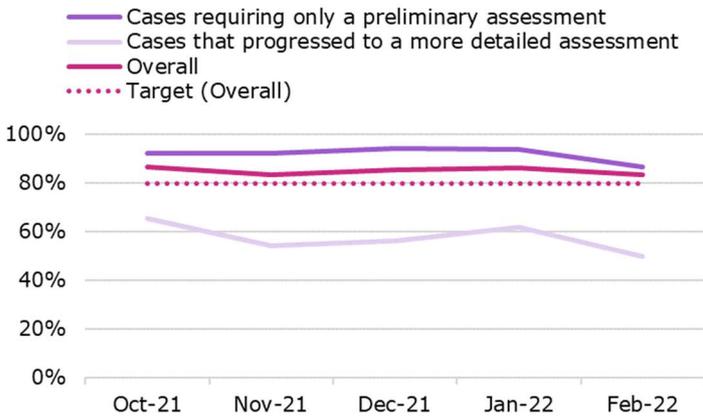
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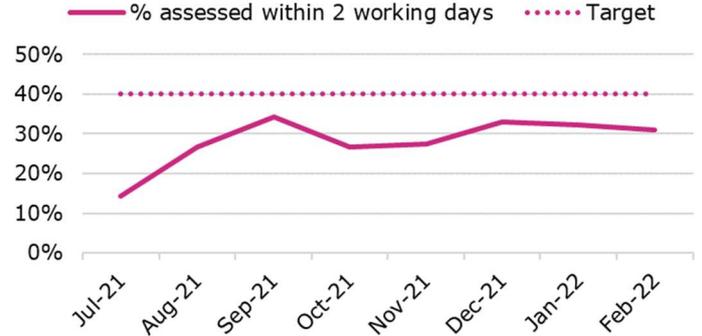
Health & Care Dashboard

Adult Social Care and Safeguarding

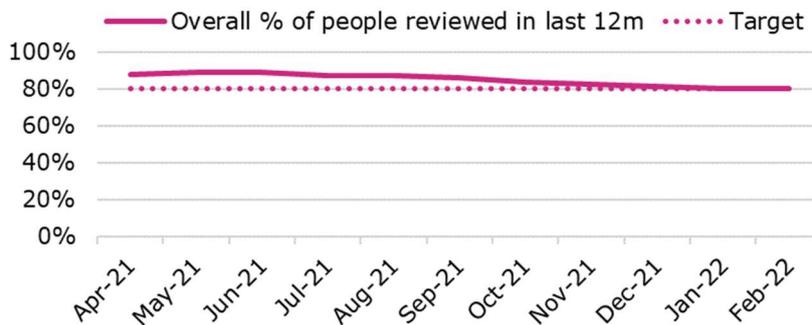
% of Care Act assessments of new clients completed in 28 days



% of safeguarding referrals assessed within 2 working days



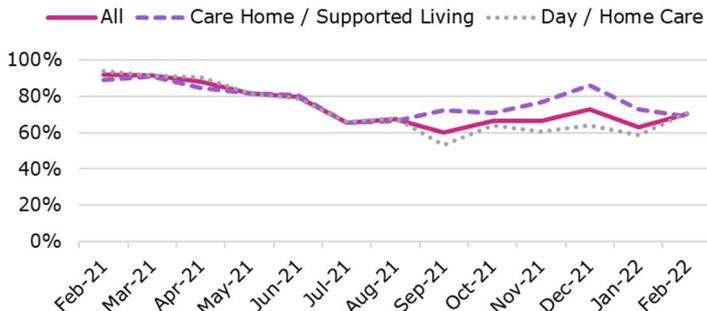
Overall % of people who have been receiving services for 12 months or over, who have had a review in the previous 12 months



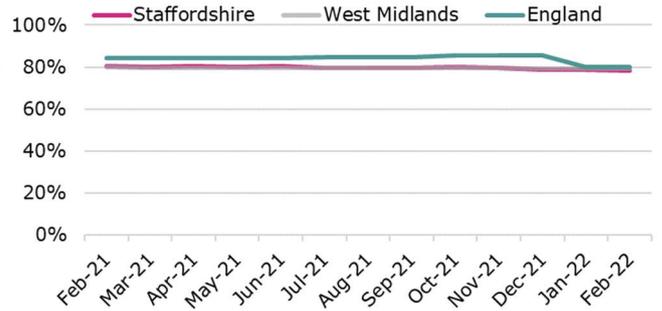
Source: SCC

Care Commissioning

% of brokerage sourced within agreed timescale (by service type)



% of care providers with CQC ratings of Good or Outstanding

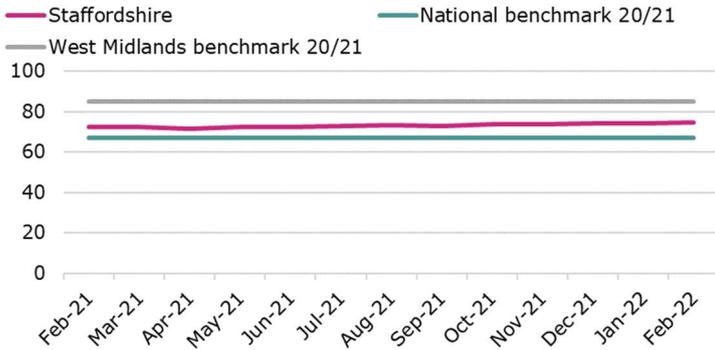


Source: SCC

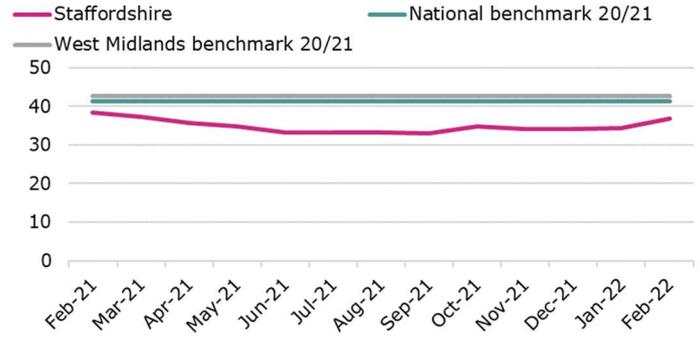
Families & Communities Dashboard

Safeguarding

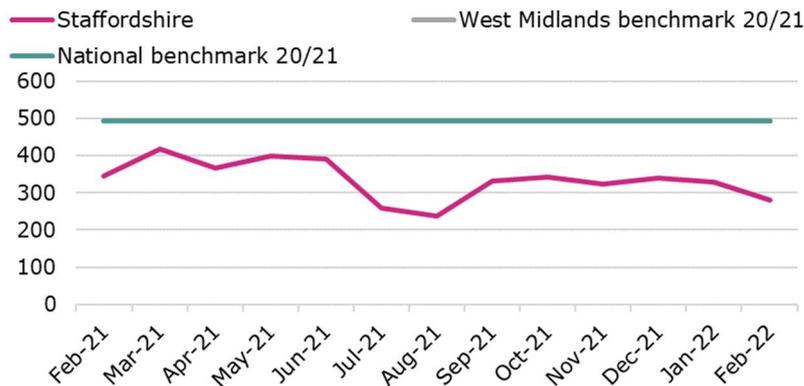
Rate of children in care (per 10,000 population)



Rate of children subject of a Child Protection Plan (per 10,000 population)



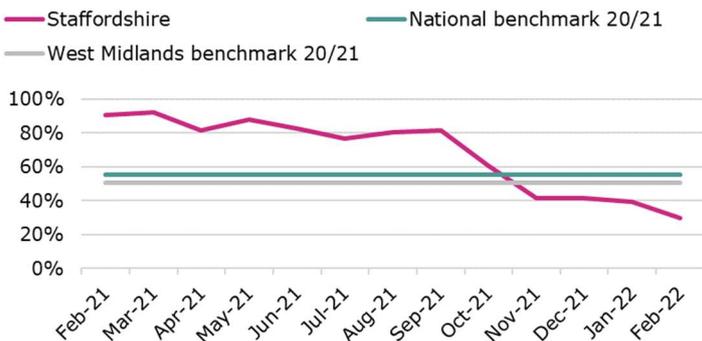
Rate of children referred, rolling 12 month average (per 10,000 population)



Source: SCC and Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

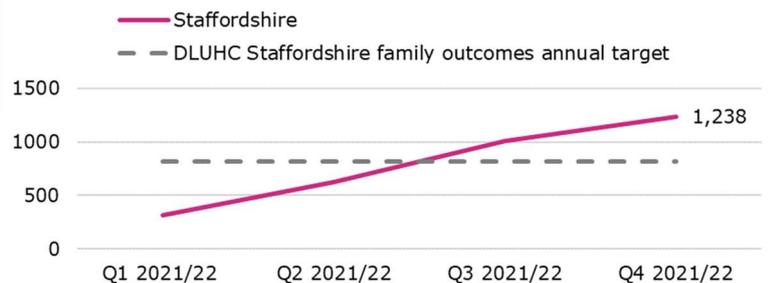
% of Education, Health and Care Plans issued in time, each month



Source: SCC and Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

Supporting Families Programme

Supporting Families Programme - Reported successful family outcomes in 2021/22

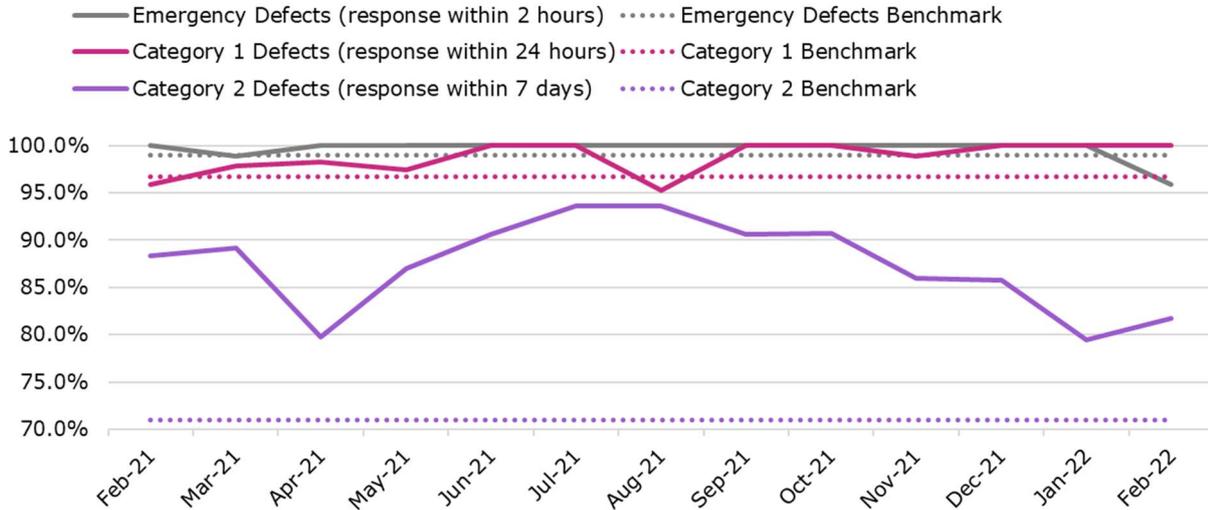


Source: SCC and Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Economy, Infrastructure & Skills Dashboard

Highways

% of Emergency, Category 1 and Category 2 defects repaired in time



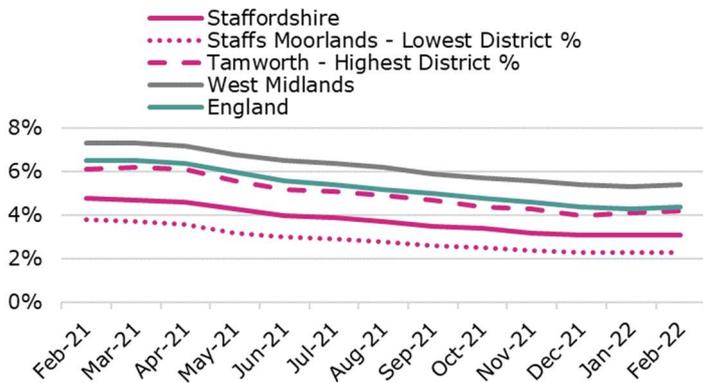
Total number of Category 3 (low-risk) safety defects identified



Source: Amey, Confirm. * Please note the above charts include all asset defects

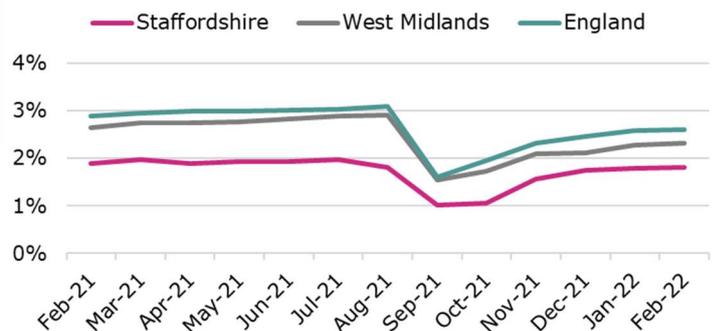
Employment and Skills

Claimant Count



Source: Office for National Statistics

% 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)

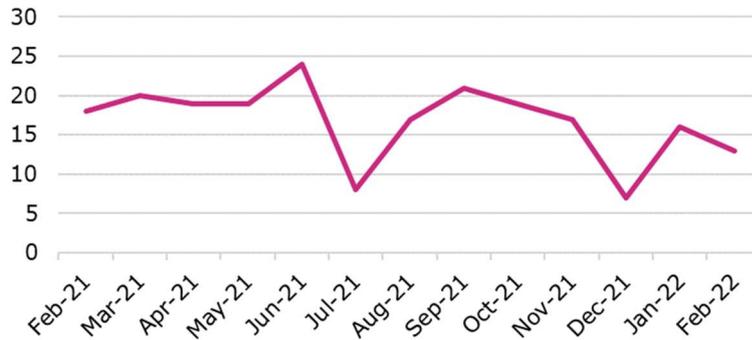


Source: National Client Caseload Information System

Economy, Infrastructure & Skills Dashboard

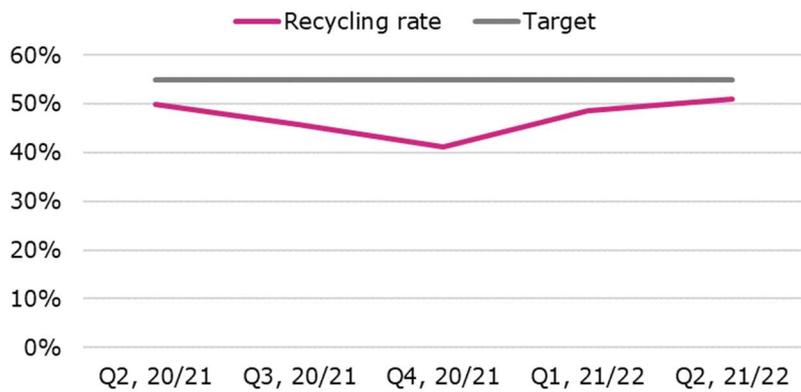
Business

Number of business start-ups assisted by the council



Climate Change and Waste

Percentage of waste recycled each Quarter



Source: SCC

Corporate Services Dashboard

Finance

Revenue outturn forecast variance compared to the overall budget (target no more than +/- 2%)

Quarter 1, 21/22	Quarter 2, 21/22	Quarter 3, 21/22	Quarter 4, 21/22
-1.5%	-0.4%	-0.7%	-0.8%

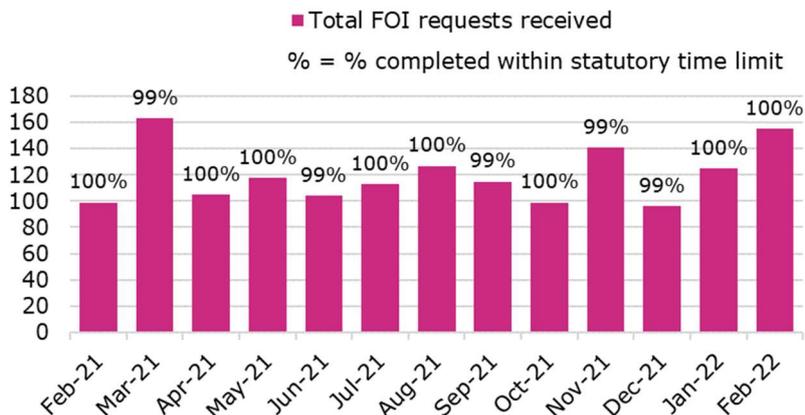
Staff Sickness Absence

Average payroll days lost per employee



Freedom of Information

Number of FOI requests and % completed within statutory time limit



Latest Financial Summary

The following graphs summarise the financial performance of the council. Full details are contained in this report.

The graphs and charts are compiled using quarter 4 forecast information.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a saving of £4.4m (0.8%), which reduces to a saving of £2.5m (0.4%) if all potential carry forward requests are approved. Due to Covid 19 Central Government have issued additional grant payments to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services while protecting the workforce and local residents.

There has been request for the use of £3.618m of the Exit and Transition Fund which was established in 2018/19.

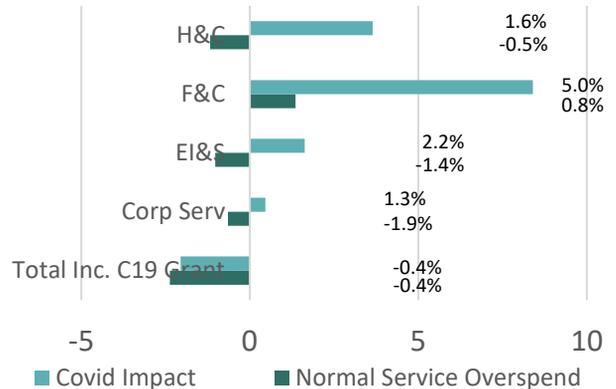
There is a forecast non-Covid saving of £10.5m on Care Commissioning Older People Placements budgets. The reduced number of placements has lead to this forecast – it does also mean that it is possible the forecast income may not be achieved and this will be monitored throughout the financial year.

Savings are categorised into confidence of delivery. There are £4.331m savings that are delivered as at quarter 4. There are £1.351m savings now undelivered, those savings are £1.204m of Adult Social Care Client Income savings and £0.147m for Accommodation Based Care savings.

The latest capital outturn projection is £112.7m, compared to the quarter 3 position of £122.0m, a decrease of 7.8%. This projection is a fully funded position. This decrease is mainly due to Basic Needs, SEND funding and other projects being rephased into 2022/23, offset by new S278 developer schemes being included into the programme. More details can be found in the report.

Within the national context, the retail price index is currently 7.8%, and the latest consumer price index is 4.9%. GDP is estimated to have increased by 0.8% in January 2022. Current unemployment figures show Staffordshire benefit claimant rate remains below that of the West Midlands and Great Britain.

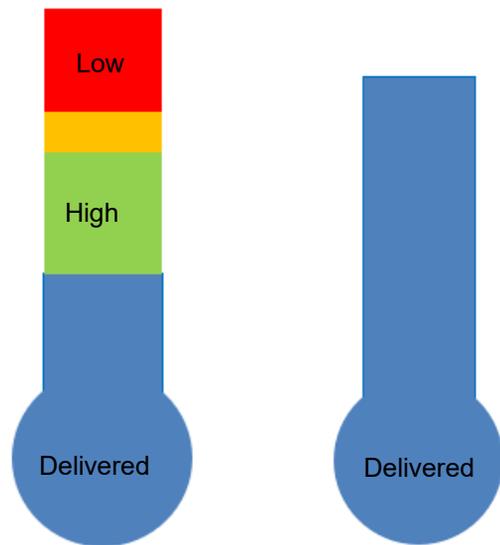
Revenue Budget Variance



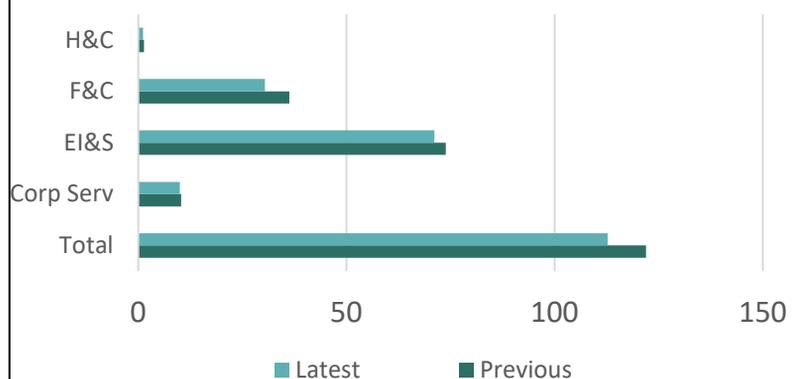
Savings Tracker – Target £5.682m

Quarter 3 - £5.682m

Quarter 4 - £4.331m



Capital Programme



Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

Introduction

Revenue Forecast

1. The latest revenue forecast outturn (as provided in appendix 5) shows a forecast saving of £4.417m (0.8%). There are a number of potential carry forward requests to be made in the Final Outturn report, if all these requests are approved this will reduce the saving to £2.503m (0.4%). This is compared to the previous forecast of a saving of £3.963m (0.7%) at quarter 3.
2. Since 2020/21, Covid 19 has been a global pandemic requiring a combined response from public sector services, which is also having a severe impact on the economy. In 2021/22 Central Government has issued general grant to local authorities, totalling £16.2m, in order to support the additional pressures of continuing to provide vital services during the pandemic while protecting both workforce and local residents.
3. The table below sets out the current forecast of additional costs relating to the pandemic, plus lost income and delayed savings caused by the crisis.

	£m
Additional Costs	2.988
Lost income	2.121
Delayed savings	9.046
Grant funding	(16.204)
Remaining Grant / (Shortfall)	(2.049)

All grants received by Staffordshire County Council in 2021/22 for Covid 19 related activities are listed below. The General Covid Grant can fund activity in all service areas, the remaining grants are specific and go directly to services. All grants allocated for Covid-related activities will be utilised in full, over the medium term, in order to fund the additional expenditure caused by the pandemic.

	£m
General Covid Grant Funding	16.204
Adult Social Care Lateral Flow Testing	7.896
Adult Social Care Infection Control	9.163
Clinically Extremely Vulnerable	1.477
Local Support Grant	2.613

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

Practical Support Framework	1.298
Covid Winter Grant	2.039
Community Testing Grant	0.455
Workforce Recruitment & Retention	6.825
Vaccine Funding	0.359
ASC Omicron Support Fund	0.885
Contain Outbreak Management	4.182
Total	53.397

4. The following paragraphs consider the key financial issues in each of the council's portfolios.
5. **Health and Care** **Covid impact - £3.644m**
Normal service forecast – £1.176m saving
6. *Adults Social Care & Safeguarding* *Covid impact - £0.141m*
Normal service forecast – £0.746m saving
7. Overall, the service is forecast to save £0.846m. Covid related costs are forecast to be £0.141m.
8. There has been a significant number of vacancies in the Adults Learning Disability Team (ALDT) this year which have proven difficult to fill. This has led to a forecast saving of £0.679m. However, a review of the ratio of qualified to unqualified staff is being carried out which is expected to lead to higher costs in future. A Section 75 agreement covering both Mental Health North and South is in place and there is a small forecast overspend of £16,000 due to the inflationary increases being slightly higher than budgeted. The £0.154m MTFS saving for Mental Health North has been delivered in full.
9. Cabinet is requested to approve a carry forward of £31,000 for recruitment of Occupational Therapy resource to tackle the backlog of referrals for Occupational Therapy on the waiting list. Delays in recruitment mean that the team have been unable to recruit the level of resource required in 2021/22.
10. There is a forecast saving of £0.676m in the Learning Disability In-house Residential services due to staff vacancies in advance of a planned restructure.

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

There is also a forecast saving of £0.210m for the Specialised Day Opportunity service due to some transport savings and some additional cross boundary income. A review of these services is taking place which may lead to changes to the way they operate and will have a financial impact in the future.

11. There is an overspend of £1.074m for care systems due to repaying all future years prudential borrowing. Other variances amount to a forecast saving of £0.405m.

12. *Care Commissioning* *Covid impact - £3.503m*
Normal service forecast – £0.330m saving

13. Overall the service is forecast to save £0.330m, and covid related costs are forecast to be £3.503m.
14. The Mental Health budget was increased this year in recognition of the growth in placements costs in 2020/21. It is now forecast to overspend by £0.417m which is an increase from the £84,000 forecast at quarter 3. The placement budget is now forecast to overspend by £0.468m, an increase from the £0.135m forecast at quarter 3 due to an increase in the number of nursing care placements. There is a forecast saving of £51,000 for the Mental Health contracts which is unchanged from the quarter 3 position.

15. The Learning Disability placement budget is now forecast to save £6.769m, an increase from the £5.667m reported at quarter 3. This movement is due to a reduction in the forecast for supported living of £0.663m since we have not experienced the growth in placements expected in the second half of the year and a reduction in the replacement residential care (respite care) forecast of £0.177m due to lower take up due to the pandemic. In addition, the council has saved £1.530m due to the NHS agreeing to meet the full cost of people with learning disabilities or autism discharged from specialist hospitals to community-based settings under the Transforming Care Partnership (TCP) during 2020/21. Partially offsetting these savings has been an increase in the forecast cost of residential care of £0.929m and a further increase in the cost of direct payments of £0.148m compared to quarter 3. Although there has been a slight reduction in the amount of health income, we are still seeing benefits of increases in income negotiated in recent years and will collect significantly more income than assumed in the budget.

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

16. MTFs savings expected from the Community Offer Programme have taken longer than originally planned due to the impact of the pandemic. This means that some of the planned redundancy costs are likely to slip into the 2022/23 financial year which creates a forecast saving of £1.250m against the Health and Care redundancy budget in year. Cabinet have agreed to allocate £2m of the placement savings towards the costs of planned investment in the In-House services to minimise future borrowing costs for the council.
17. As part of the Transforming Care Partnership (TCP), the latest forecast is that the county council could incur costs this year of just of £2.6m. The council is close to agreeing a new cost allocation model with its health partners, resulting in a 50/50 cost share for people in this cohort.
18. The new Carers service went live in April 2021 following a delay caused by the pandemic. It is forecast that there will be a small saving of £17,000 this year. There is also a saving forecast on the Advocacy contract of £77,000 and the £0.150m contract MTFs saving has been delivered in full.
19. Following the resolution of a contract dispute on the Section 75 agreement with the Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT), there is now a small saving on the Reablement contract of £52,000. There is a small forecast overspend of £34,000 on the other contract elements of the Section 75 due to the inflationary increases being higher than budgeted.
20. There is a forecast saving of £98,000 for the Learning Disability and Mental Health Commissioning Team due to staff vacancies held during the year. Cabinet approval is sought to carry forward this saving into 2022/23 to fund some additional temporary commissioning capacity required to support the transformation programme across All Age Disabilities and Mental Health in 2022/23.
21. Prisoners related care activities are forecast to save £0.303m due to staffing savings and lower care costs.
22. The Older People's placements budget is now forecast to save £10.463m compared to the £9.493m saving that was reported at quarter 3.
23. Despite numbers increasing throughout the financial year there are still significantly fewer placements than budgeted. Additional placements have

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

been assumed resulting in a revised forecast saving of £6.375m compared to the position of £6.761m reported at quarter 3. The additional £7m of additional funding provided to mitigate risks in year is not required given the reduced levels of activity resulting from the pandemic.

24. The reduced number of placements has resulted in income forecasts being lower than budgeted and the forecast increase in numbers over recent months hasn't materialised. This has increased the shortfall for independent residential and nursing placements overspend to £3.372m compared to a forecast of £2.897m at quarter 3.
25. The forecast saving on Older People's home care has increased to £1.521m compared to the position of £0.267m reported at quarter 3. This has arisen as the anticipated increase in commissioned hours in the later part of the financial year hasn't yet materialised.
26. The forecast saving on the Older People's Direct Payments budget has increased to £0.311m from the £0.232m forecast at quarter 3, reflecting the ongoing reduction of people in receipt of direct payments.
27. Covid 19 has meant that fewer people are using services than had been budgeted. This has results in a forecast saving of £0.537m on the Older Peoples Day Care budget.
28. The Older People's in-house residential placements budget is forecast to save £0.429m compared to £0.335m forecast at quarter 3, due to the number of service users being impacted by Covid 19.
29. The forecast saving for Older People's short stay respite has reduced to £46,000 compared to £0.246m reported at quarter 3.
30. Approval was sought from Cabinet in quarter 2 to increase the care risk reserve by £7m from the placement savings to mitigate against the risks facing the care provider market including increasing costs as a result of the pandemic and recruitment and retention issues. Additionally in quarter 2, approval was also sought from Cabinet to add £7m to the IT reserve to progress the directorates digital transformation journey.

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

31. The Physical Disabilities Placements budgets forecast saving is £0.673m, compared to £1.120m at quarter 3. This is mainly due to an increase in the number of residential and nursing placements. The forecast saving on the home care budget has increased marginally from £0.415m at quarter 3 to £0.426m and there have also been slight increase on the forecast savings for direct payments from £42,000 to £72,000 and Supported Housing where the forecast saving is now £77,000, an increase from £53,000 at quarter 3. These savings are offset by forecast overspends totalling £0.239m which have reduced from £0.332m at quarter 3. Income forecast remain broadly in line with the budget.
32. Staffing savings of £0.435m are forecast across a number of areas including Care Commissioning, Quality Assurance, Brokerage and the Care Market Team as a result of vacancies or difficulties in recruitment as seen in many sectors.
33. Additional temporary capacity is required in 2022/23 to support initiatives including
 - Undertaking the national cost of care exercise,
 - co-commissioning and co-production across the health and social system
 - development of several strategies such as housing, disabilities and market shaping
34. Some of this work has been delayed because of the pandemic and other requirements as a result of upcoming adults' social care reform. Therefore, Cabinet approval is sought to carry forward £0.520m to meet these staffing requirements in addition to £0.235m to provide a workforce training fund to improve recruitment and retention in the provider market.
35. Other variances amount to a forecast saving of £1.506m.
36. The additional covid related costs of £3.644m consists of
 - £2.646m unachievable savings that have been reprofiled to future years
 - £0.549m additional staffing costs that have been incurred to support the ongoing response to Covid 19 and ensure continuity of services

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

- Additional expenditure of £0.140m incurred to support the provider market such as providing a care home loan scheme
 - £0.310m other exceptional costs
37. The council has received confirmation that any unspent monies from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) can be carried forward into the 2022/23 financial year. However, there are still further conversations ongoing around the future of COMF and updates will be shared as soon as they are available.
38. The latest forecast commitments against the COMF grant for future years have been reported at £6.2m, meaning that £12m in uncommitted in 2022/23. The ambiguity of the email from the UK Health Security Agency regarding future discussions means that there is a risk that they may look to claw back funding at some point.
39. In addition to the funding agreed and submitted in the 2021/22 Staffordshire Better Care Fund Plan, an additional £19.250m of non-recurrent funding has been identified that could be used to improve and sustain health and care services. An amendment has been made to the Staffordshire BCF Plan to include this additional funding and associated expenditure, as summarised in the table below:

Expenditure by service	£
Support to Care Homes	£0.259m
Home First	£6.006m
Section 117 placements	£1.400m
Home Care	£4.500m
Discharge to Assess Beds	£0.710m
Learning Disability - Step up	£1.875m
Children's Services	£1.500m
Healthcare Tasks	£0.750m
Integrated community equipment	£0.750m
Crisis response and intervention - South East	£0.800m
Crisis response and intervention - South West	£0.700m
Total	£19.250m

40. This amendment had been:
- Agreed by the County Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

- Approved by the Health and Well-being Board Chairs in line with the authority delegated from the Board to approve the 2021/22 Staffordshire BCF Plan.
 - Agreed by the West Midlands Better Care Fund manager.
41. The Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups are developing detailed plans for expenditure on each service, including the associated outcomes and governance arrangements. The BCF Section 75 Agreement will be updated to reflect this additional funding, and then approved and signed by the Council and Clinical Commissioning Groups.
42. The total amount of Health and Care client debt at the end of January is £27.068m which has increased slightly from the £26.853m reported at quarter 3. The amount of collectable debt is £14.629m.
43. **Families & Communities** **Covid impact - £8.400m**
Normal service forecast - £1.357m overspend
44. *Children's Services* *Covid impact - £7.590m*
Normal service forecast - £4.352m overspend
45. The forecast position is an overspend of £4.352m which is an £0.5m increase from the position reported at quarter 3 and reflects increased spending on agency social workers, continuing high level of placements in both residential and fostering settings and well as an allowance for a forecast increase in the bad debt provision of £0.2m.
46. Based on latest forecast, the placements spend this year is over budget by £2m. The currently level of demand remains a significant concern and could put at risk the delivery of planned MTFs savings. This pressure is mitigated in part by additional grant funding for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and staffing vacancies totalling £1m.
47. The Families and Communities transformation programme has now been finalised and the new design implemented from the end of October as planned. The redesign, which is informed by best practice, seeks to change both the practice and culture across the children's system and it has impacted upon just over 2,000 staff. It will enable a whole system approach, bringing together children's social care, SEND and Inclusion, the Place Based Approach and

Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Finance Report

commissioning. It is essential for the delivery of revised practices and cultures that underpin the necessary MTFS savings and stabilisation of SEND.

48. The forecast additional redundancy cost is for £3.3m and will be funded from the Corporate Exit and Transition Fund.
49. *Education Services* *Covid impact - £0.571m*
Normal service forecast - £0.729m overspend
50. The forecast overspend is £0.729m a reduction of £0.3m from the quarter 3 position. This overspend is largely a result of additional SEND transport costs of £1.3m as previously reported, however this is offset partially by other budget savings in historical pension costs, and one off revenues by the settlement of an on-going insurance claim relating to one of our schools.
51. The existing underlying pressure on SEND transport has been addressed in the MTFS for next year, however there is a risk that recent rises in fuel costs, exasperated by the current Ukraine conflict, will lead to further additional pressures in 2022/23.
52. *SEND High Needs Block*
53. The High Needs Block is currently anticipated to overspend by £8.2m and reflects continuing growing demand for SEND support. This overspend will be charged against the DSG reserve which at the end of 2020/21 was already £2m in deficit. Staffordshire County Council is not alone in this difficult financial position, it is shared by the majority of Councils across the sector.
54. In 2022/23 the Government has provided for significant additional funding that will see Staffordshire's High Needs Block funding increase to £115m, from £101m in 2021/22. This is insufficient to close the gap and based on existing rises in demand and costs a further overspend is forecast next year.
55. It is anticipated that the SEND transformation programme will provide a more inclusive system that enables the necessary early support and intervention to manage demand within overall resources. However this will take time and will not generate the immediate savings required to address the current shortfall and further action must be taken to mitigate the existing overspend in this area.

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56. *Culture & Communities* *Covid impact - £0.128m*
Normal service forecast - £0.193m saving
57. This forecast saving is due to reduced transport costs and reduced costs associated with the purchase of new books within the Libraries service.
58. *Rural County* *Covid impact - £0.111m*
Normal service forecast - £0.111m saving
59. The forecast saving largely due to on off staffing vacancies of £0.3m offset by increased costs of £0.2m associated with Rights of Way and carpark repairs due to increased usage.
60. *Community Safety* *Covid impact – nil*
Normal service forecast - £0.120m saving
61. The forecast saving is due to additional income and service contract savings which have resulted from the impact of the pandemic and are likely to return to normal levels.
62. **Economy, Infrastructure & Skills** **Covid impact - £1.626m**
Normal service forecast - £1.027m saving
63. *Business & Enterprise* *Covid impact - nil*
Normal service forecast – £0.177m saving
64. The service is forecast to save £0.177m in year, this is a slightly reduced from the quarter 3 position. The main reason for this forecast saving is additional income in Planning Policy and Development Control. The service is now assuming a carry forward of £0.6m into 2022/23, which is a reduction from quarter 3 as more money has been spent on Staffordshire Means Back to Business schemes in year. This carry forward was approved by Cabinet in January and is due to Staffordshire’s successful Community Renewal Fund bid that allows the programme to be funded from grant rather than service budgets.
65. In 2020/21 an Emergency Business Grant fund of £0.5m was established to support Small and Medium sized Enterprises during the initial Covid restrictions. Approximately £0.390m of this has been spend to date on grants, PPE for businesses, Federation for Small Business payments and the start-up

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business loan scheme. There is £0.110m remaining of this initial allocation in reserves and it is proposed to spend this in March 2022 and 2022/23 on the following – the Get Started scheme after the Community Renewal Fund grant money has been spent, additional funding for the start-up business loan scheme, Business Enterprise Support start-up coaching and the Start up Strategy phase 3.

66. *Infrastructure & Highways* *Covid impact - £0.316m*
Normal service forecast – £0.215m overspend
67. The forecast has increased from a break-even position to a forecast overspend of £0.215m. There are various areas of forecast overspends including with Sustainable Development and Highways Maintenance, however these are being mitigated by savings within Community Infrastructure and the Network Management areas. The increase from quarter 3 includes an increase of £0.125m towards the bad debt provision along with £90,000 towards forecast costs for HS2 protestors in 2022/23. This forecast position includes transferring £0.590m of additional permit income to reserves as the forecast over-recovery for the year.
68. The forecast impact of Covid 19 is £0.316m which is largely a continued loss of income from on-street parking and bus enforcement in the Regulation and Governance area, and a small number of increased costs for Safe Operating Procedures such as PPE.
69. *Transport, Connectivity & Waste* *Covid impact - £1.276m*
Normal service forecast - £1.123m saving
70. The Transport and Connectivity area is forecast to save £0.224m, which includes savings in the operational Transport budgets and vacancies in the Transport Planning team. These are offset by making a provision of £0.2m towards a further years Local Transport Assessment Works. It should be noted that there are currently significant planned reductions in the commercial Staffordshire bus network and further service reductions may occur in Autumn 2022 if patronage levels do not return to pre-pandemic levels.
71. Additional Covid 19 costs to date include providing additional cleaning on home to school transport until the end of July 2021 and additional transport capacity to avoid full and standing buses at peak times.

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72. Within Sustainability and Waste, there is a forecast saving of £0.9m, which includes a saving of £0.920m on Climate Change which will be monitored over the next few weeks and look to make a formal carry forward request as part of the Financial Outturn Report. Although much of the Climate Change budget is committed, it is unlikely to be fully spent in year and this carry forward could be utilised on items in the Climate Action Plan in 2022/23.
73. This forecast position also includes a £0.6m provision for likely additional costs (shared 50/50 with Stoke-on-Trent City Council) for consultants working on the Hanford Incinerator project. It should be noted that waste budget are demand led and will need continuous close monitoring until the end of the year and into the new financial year to track tonnages and costs as social restrictions lift and any new normal are established.
74. The impact of Covid on the service is £1.276m, a reduction from quarter 3 which reflects the drop in the level of tonnages in more recent months going to the Energy from Waste sites, allowing some of the additional capacity tonnage to be sold again to third parties and generate income. There is still uncertainty around the impact of Covid 19 moving forwards in this service and as such a £0.5m provision has been made for potential Covid related costs in 2022/23.
75. *Skills* *Covid impact – £12,000*
Normal service forecast - £50,000 saving
76. The service is forecast to save £50,000 which is a small reduction from quarter 3. The forecast saving is due to savings on the Entrust contract and a lack of activity in Community Learning groups. Some of these forecast savings are being used to fund the first-year software costs of a new Brokerage team.
77. *EI&S Business Support* *Covid impact - £22,000*
Normal service forecast - £0.108m overspend
78. The forecast overspend of £0.108m includes the balance of the Health and Safety Executive fine received by Staffordshire County Council for its role in the Isabel Trail incident. We will review the EI&S outturn in accordance with normal monitoring arrangements and make any adjustments, if necessary, as part of the final outturn.

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79. **Corporate Services** **Covid impact - £0.461m**
Normal service forecast - £0.652m saving
80. The service is forecast to save £0.803m, this is a minimal change from the forecast saving reported at quarter 3. This includes a forecast saving of £0.214m within Assets primarily due to staff vacancies. There are also staff vacancies within the Business Support and Strategy areas and forecast one off additional income in Registrars of £0.350m due to the higher number of weddings being booked as restrictions are being lifted.
81. This forecast includes the service making a £0.250m provision towards the potential future costs of the Electronic Document and Records Management project and a further provision of £0.1m towards the net to gross project and new recruitment and lone worker systems. There is also a £0.150m provision for potential Cybersecurity costs that may be incurred in 2022/23.
82. The Covid impact of £0.461m includes the costs of the temporary mortuary facilities and the closure of the first annual leave purchase scheme window.
83. **Centrally Controlled**
84. There is a forecast saving of £1m within Pooled Buildings which relates to loss of buildings, reduced usage of energy and electricity in unoccupied buildings and one-off income received in year. This is offset by a forecast overspend of £0.130m on Insurances services as the premium has increased.
85. **Capital Forecast**
86. Appendix 6 compares the latest capital forecast outturn of £112.7m, a decrease from the quarter 3 position of £122.0m. The key reasons for this decrease of £9.3m are set out in the following paragraphs.
87. **Health and Care** **Forecast spend £1.139m**
88. There has been a decrease of £0.301m due to the finalisation of the Care Director V6 upgrade, and costs did not reach levels previously forecast.

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89. **Families and Communities** **Forecast spend £30.461m**
90. *Maintained Schools* *Forecast Spend £29.289m*
91. There has been a reduction of £5.824m in forecast spend since the quarter 3 report. This is due to £3.7m of Basic Needs funding being rephased into 2022/23, £0.256m of other refinements across smaller projects as well as £2m of SEND funding being rephased into next year.
92. **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills** **Forecast spend £71.110m**
93. *Economic Planning & Future Prosperity* *Forecast spend £7.562m*
94. There has been a reduction of £1.541m in forecast spend since the quarter 3 report. This is due to rephasing of contingency for the A50 project to 2022/23 of £0.706m, slippage on i54 Western Extension of £0.321m and revision of the expected developer payments for Pye Green of £0.3m, along with other smaller rephasing and refinement of budgets.
95. *Highways Schemes* *Forecast spend £62.596m*
96. There has been a decrease of £1.091m in forecast spend since the quarter 3 report. There has been rephasing of £1.295m into 2022/23 for the Stafford Western Access Route project as it nears completion, as well as rephasing of Integrated Transport Budgets of £0.414m and Bridge Maintenance of £82,000. There has been an increase of £0.536m on developer schemes being introduced into the programme, as well as other budget refinements.
97. **Property, Finance and Resources & ICT** **Forecast spend £10.014m**
98. There has been a reduction of £0.342m since the quarter 3 report, which is predominantly as a result of the Wireless Refresh project and delays in obtaining equipment rephasing the budget by £0.150m and delays in Core Switch Replacement project of £0.245m, also rephased to 2022/23.
99. **Financial Health**
100. Appendix 7 provides a forecast outturn performance against the key Financial Health Indicators approved as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process.

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101. There have been 98.0% of invoices paid within 30 days of receiving them at the end of February, exceeding the financial health indicator target. This position also reflects early payments to suppliers to help them with cashflow during the pandemic.
102. The estimated level of outstanding sundry debt over 6 months old is £19.994m, this is over the target of £14.7m by £5.294m. This is a decrease of £2.077m since the quarter 3 report. The debt recovery process involves chasing by a range of methods with the eventual escalation to the external collection agent or to Legal for the possibility of a court decision to recover the debt.
103. The level of CCG health debt over 6 months old is £1.797m below the target figure. This is a decrease of £2.776m since the quarter 3 report.
104. Client debt now stands at £10.254m and could potentially increase as a consequence of the pandemic. A working group has been established to look at why clients are not paying debts and to implement ways to avoid clients getting into debt in the first instance, this includes an initiative to encourage and assist clients with setting up direct debit instructions.

Debtor Type	2021/22 Target	31/12/2021	31/03/2022 Est	Increase / (Decrease)
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Health Bodies & CCGs	3.900	4.879	2.103	(2.776)
Other Govt. and Public Bodies	2.000	3.217	2.840	(0.377)
Other General Debtors (Individuals & Commercial)	4.700	4.388	4.797	0.409
Health & Care Client Debt	4.100	9.587	10.254	0.667
TOTAL	14.700	22.071	19.994	2.077

Appendix 4 – Corporate Checklist

Equalities implications:

Through the delivery of county council business plans, service delivery is increasingly reflecting the diverse needs of our various communities.

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Resource and Value for money implications:

The resource and Value for money implications are set out in the report.

Risk implications:

The risk implications concern the robustness of the forecast outturn which may change owing to pressures on services with a consequent effect on county council functions being able to keep within budgets and a potential call on balances.

Climate Change implications:

Staffordshire's communities are places where people and organisations proactively tackle climate change, gaining financial benefit and reducing carbon emissions' is one of the county council's priority outcomes. Through the monitoring and management of this outcome; climate change and carbon emissions are being addressed in an active manner.

Health Impact Assessment and Community Impact Assessment screening:

Not required for this report.

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Revenue Forecast Outturn 2021/22

	Revised Budget Qtr 4 £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Covid Impact	Normal Service Overspend / (Savings)	Total Variation £m
Health and Care					
Public Health & Prevention	0.263	0.263	0.000	0.000	0.000
Adult Social Care & Safeguarding	41.095	40.249	0.141	(0.846)	(0.705)
Care Commissioning	185.096	184.766	3.503	(0.330)	3.173
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	(0.263)	(0.263)	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Health and Care Total	226.191	225.015	3.644	(1.176)	2.468
Families and Communities					
Children's Services	119.697	124.049	7.590	4.352	11.942
Children's Public Health	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Education Services	30.584	31.313	0.571	0.729	1.300
Culture and Communities	5.438	5.245	0.128	(0.193)	(0.065)
Rural	2.356	2.245	0.111	(0.111)	0.000
Community Safety	9.257	9.137	0.000	(0.120)	(0.120)
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	(3.300)	0.000	(3.300)	(3.300)
Families and Communities Total	167.332	168.689	8.400	1.357	9.757
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills					
Business & Enterprise	2.194	2.017	0.000	(0.177)	(0.177)
Infrastructure & Highways	29.675	29.890	0.316	0.215	0.531
Transport, Connectivity & Waste	39.880	38.757	1.276	(1.123)	0.153
Skills	2.435	2.385	0.012	(0.050)	(0.038)
EI&S Business Support	1.097	1.205	0.022	0.108	0.130
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Covid related capital project costs	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Total	75.281	74.254	1.626	(1.027)	0.599
Corporate Services					
Corporate Services	34.457	34.123	0.461	(0.334)	0.127
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Exit and Transition Fund	0.000	(0.318)	0.000	(0.318)	(0.318)
Corporate Services Total	34.457	33.805	0.461	(0.652)	(0.191)
Traded Services	(0.761)	(0.761)	0.000	0.000	0.000
TOTAL PORTFOLIO BUDGETS	502.500	501.002	14.131	(1.498)	12.633
Centrally Controlled Items					
Interest on Balances & Debt Charges	34.669	34.669	0.000	0.000	0.000
Pooled Buildings and Insurances	27.083	26.213	0.024	(0.870)	(0.846)
Investment Fund	0.798	0.798	0.000	0.000	0.000
Covid 19 Grant	0.000	0.000	(16.204)	0.000	(16.204)
TOTAL FORECAST (SAVING)/OVERSPEND	565.050	562.682	(2.049)	(2.368)	(4.417)

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

	3rd Quarter Budget	Enhancements to Programme	4th Quarter Budget
	£m	£m	£m
Health and Care			
Care and Independence	1.440	(0.301)	1.139
Health and Care Total	1.440	(0.301)	1.139
Families and Communities			
Maintained Schools	35.113	(5.824)	29.289
Rural County (Countryside)	0.616	(0.033)	0.583
Vulnerable Children's Projects	0.222	0.009	0.231
Tourism and Culture	0.358	0.000	0.358
Families and Communities Total	36.309	(5.848)	30.461
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills			
Economic Planning & Future Prosperity	9.103	(1.541)	7.562
Highways Schemes	63.687	(1.091)	62.596
Connectivity	0.680	0.000	0.680
Waste & Sustainability Projects	0.379	(0.107)	0.272
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Total	73.849	(2.739)	71.110
Trading Services - County Fleet Care	0.457	0.053	0.510
Finance, Resources & ICT	0.727	(0.395)	0.332
Property	9.172	0.000	9.172
Total	121.954	(9.230)	112.724

Financial Health Indicators 2021/22

Appendix 7

Indicator	Current Performance	
<p><u>Debtors</u> Level of outstanding general debtors more than 6 months old does not exceed £14.7m (Current Performance – £20.0m)</p>		
<p><u>Payments to suppliers</u> At least 90% of invoices have been paid within 30 days of us receiving them during the last quarter (Current Performance – 98.0%) This reflects early payments to suppliers to help them with cashflow during the pandemic.</p>		
<p><u>Monitoring</u> Quarterly financial monitoring reports have been issued to Cabinet during the last 12 months</p> <p>The council's most recent revenue outturn forecast did not vary by more than +/-2% when compared to the overall revenue budget</p> <p>Quarterly monitoring reports of progress against MTFS savings have been produced for the Senior Leadership Team during the last 12 months</p>	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">    </div>	
 Indicator not met	 Indicator not met by small margin	 Indicator met

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 April 2022

Staffordshire Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan



Cllr David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport said,

“A well-managed highway network that is safe, serviceable, and sustainable is one of the best ways to foster job creation, encourage economic growth and support local communities. It makes an important contribution to social inclusion, community safety, and education and health.

This new plan sets out in detail how the Council will manage and maintain the County’s highway infrastructure.”

Report Summary:

The highway network is the highest valued infrastructure asset owned by the Council, valued in excess of £7 billion. The safe and usable condition of the network is essential in maintaining economic and social connectivity, both within Staffordshire and with the wider region. The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) provides the principles for managing the network, recognising the importance of the highway infrastructure in supporting a number of the Council’s key objectives.

This report provides Cabinet with an explanation on how the Council utilises the principles of the HIAMP to guide the strategy for managing and maintaining the highway infrastructure.

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approve the new Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) for Staffordshire and annex documents.
- b. Delegate the power to approve HIAMP supporting documents to the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills.

Local Members Interest
If report is relevant to ALL Members, type 'N/A' into table Insert Members Name and Electoral Division

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 April 2022

Staffordshire Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Recommendation(s) of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approve the new Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) for Staffordshire
- b. Delegate the power to approve HIAMP supporting documents to the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills.

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

Summary

1. Staffordshire's road network provides a fundamental resource, essential both to the economy of the area and for the quality of life for residents and visitors. Its effective management and maintenance have an impact on activity of all kinds, from day-to-day journeys to work, school, shopping or for leisure, through to the needs of the emergency services and the road freight industry. The appearance of our streets helps to shape the character and quality of the local environment in which people live.
2. Staffordshire County Council is responsible for maintaining over 6,200km of highway network and its associated assets. Our roads, footways, streetlights, street furniture, drains, trees, signs, road markings and bridges are just some of the different types of highway assets that are considered in our Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP).
3. Like many councils, Staffordshire is facing significant challenges in maintaining a safe and reliable highway network during a time of diminishing resources, ageing highway assets, and increasing public expectation. In recent years the investment in highway Infrastructure

and its performance has been increasingly under the spotlight. The current financial challenges and increased public demands and expectations have meant the management of our highway assets has never been more important to ensure we achieve our strategic outcomes.

4. Having a documented approach to highway asset management is good practice. The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan will ensure that the Council as the Highway Authority continues to meet its statutory duties under the Highways Act 1980, optimise the allocation of our resources and secures the maximum available funding from central government.
5. The HIAMP requires a suite of individual supporting operational process documents to be developed and/or reviewed. The management of unsurfaced roads and highway trees are included as annexes to the HIAMP. It is proposed that further documents when available are approved under delegated powers by the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and skills, in conjunction with the County Treasurer and County Solicitor.

Report

Background

What is a HIAMP?

6. The Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Plan is the link between our strategic objectives and our operational activities. The HIAMP sets out in detail how the authority manages each of our highway assets to meet strategic goals in the most effective manner having regard to statutory requirements, customer expectations and funding constraints.
7. The HIAMP supports delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and also ensures we are able to maximise DfT Incentive Fund resource, make the case for additional funding, and optimise our ability to defend claims. The format and content is based on national guidance, linking optimum allocation and resources to achieve the council's strategic ambitions.
8. For a connected Staffordshire, the HIAMP will help all those involved in delivering highway services, including members, senior decision makers, asset managers, service providers and practitioners, to embed asset management principles into the management of the asset.

The HIAMP for Staffordshire

9. The current HIAMP was approved by Cabinet in March 2019. Despite making significant progress in recent years, we, like other highways authorities, are in an increasingly challenging environment, with deteriorating assets, increasing demand, uncertainty around future funding and, more recently, facing the impacts of the covid pandemic. It is therefore timely to develop a new single and updated HIAMP document, to identify a clear investment strategy and action plan for the future that is fit for purpose and recognises the challenges and opportunities ahead.
10. The new document is a forward-looking document covering the next three years which sets out:
- how highways asset management, as a key enabling service, contributes to achieving strategic outcomes and delivering Staffordshire Council's strategic plan
 - describes how we go about asset management and risk-based decision-making
 - explains what we know about the condition of our assets both now and going forward based on various investment levels
 - sets out our service levels in terms of what we do and what we do not, alongside an assessment of associated risks
 - outlines our progress in implementing the recommendations contained in Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice which provides guidance to councils regarding the management and maintenance of local roads.
11. The HIAMP was presented to the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 28 February. The committee endorsed the approach taken in the new HIAMP.

Link to Strategic Plan

12. Asset management supports making the case for funding, for better communication with stakeholders, and facilitates a greater understanding of the contribution highway infrastructure assets make to economic growth, climate change and social well-being of local communities, in line with the outcomes and priorities set out in the Council Strategic Plan.

Legal Implications

13. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

14. The new revised plan has no detrimental impact on operations or costs.

Climate Change Implications

15. Maintenance of highways, forms part of a sustainable transport system capable of supporting the County's environmental, social and economic objectives sustainably.
16. The HIAMP considers the direct and indirect impact of highway maintenance on the environment and our communities by ensuring whole life carbon costs are taken into account when determining interventions, materials and treatments.
17. The HIAMP is aligned to support the net zero aspirations of the Council and the targets set in the Highway Infrastructure Roadmap to Net Zero 15-year plan.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan
Appendix 2 – Management of Highway Trees
Appendix 3 – Management of Unsurfaced Roads

Contact Details

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Community Impact Assessment

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Matthew Thomas, Highway Asset Senior Engineer

Date Thursday, 07 April 2022

➤ Equality Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty is part of the Equality Act 2010, and this Duty requires us as a public body to have ‘due regard’ to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimization and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act. It requires us to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a ‘relevant protected characteristic’ and people who don’t.

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Age - older and younger people	The HIAMP recognises the impact well maintained footways, can have on promoting a healthier lifestyle and ensuring elderly residents stay active and connected with their communities.	Funding is not sufficient to maintain all footways in a condition that the elderly would consider navigable.	A risk-based approach is advocated in the HIAMP which will be implemented in scheme prioritisation to reflect community need and priorities.
Disability - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.	The HIAMP encourages that when highway maintenance work is undertaken, existing access provision should be reviewed to see how it can be improved.	No risk identified	n/a.
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a
Religion or Belief - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a
Sex - men or women	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a
Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes	No specific benefit identified for this protected characteristic	No specific risks identified for this protected characteristic	n/a

➤ Workforce Assessment

Key considerations:

- Consider the impact of your proposal on staff with different **protected characteristics** – the staffing profile data can be a useful source of evidence and can be presented below in graph form to supplement your narrative.
- You should consider the impact of job losses (pre and post change), changes to terms and conditions, available support for staff and what the HR protocols are.
- For support to complete this section, please contact your People Operations Adviser.

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
n/a			

➤ Health and Care Assessment

Key considerations:

- Determine how the proposal will impact on resident's health and wellbeing (mental and physical), and whether the proposal will impact on the demands for, or access to health and care services for those eligible for care and support under the Care Act 2014.
- Also consider whether your proposal promotes healthy lifestyles, personal responsibility, and independence (including independent living) with support from family, friends and/or the community.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Will the proposal promote independence and personal responsibility, helping people to make positive choices around physical activity?</p> <p>Does the road network provide accessibility to healthcare facilities?</p> <p>Does the proposal reduce or increase the risk of falls in older people?</p> <p>Will the proposal impact on people's ability to live independently in their own home with care and support from family, friends, and the community?</p>	<p>The HIAMP recognises that the quality and condition of our highway network impacts on the ability of people to of people to travel to health and care services, to receive support in their homes and to engage in leisure activities which promote good mental and physical health.</p> <p>Reducing exposure to defects manages the risk of accidents and falls on our highway network.</p>	<p>The HIAMP sets out the increasing demands placed on the management of our highway which is reflected in increased numbers of enquiries, defects and maintenance backlog.</p> <p>Funding is reducing in real terms and the ability to maintain the current condition of the entire highway network is impractical.</p>	<p>The HIAMP promotes a more sustainable planned maintenance provision which ensures that available funding is targeted in the right place at the right time which optimises network condition and reduces the likelihood of defects forming.</p>

Key considerations:

- Determine whether your proposal will provide opportunities to strengthen community capacity to create safer and stronger communities and provide opportunities for volunteering.
- Consider the different localities and communities your proposal may impact, identifying any communities that could be more adversely impacted than others, for example, rural communities.
- Engage with [Strategic Delivery Managers](#) (SDMs) – they have a great deal of knowledge about their relevant localities and will be key to providing insight and expertise.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Will the proposal affect the ability of people/ communities/ business to travel?</p> <p>Will the proposal impact on walking/ cycling opportunities?</p>	<p>The HIAMP recognises that the quality and condition of the highway network impacts on the ability of people, communities, and businesses to travel.</p> <p>The HIAMP also recognises the opportunities and benefits to a modal transport shift.</p>	<p>No risks identified</p>	<p>n/a</p>

➤ **Economic Assessment**

Key considerations:

- Determine whether the proposal will impact economic growth and whether it will promote Staffordshire as a 'go to' location for new businesses to invest and start up and existing businesses to grow.
- Consider whether the proposal will impact upon resident's income and access to good quality jobs.
- Also consider how the proposal will allow residents to improve, diversify and adapt their skills and qualifications.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Will the proposal promote the county as a "go to" location for business, and make it easy for businesses to start up, innovate and expand?</p>	<p>A well-managed highway network is essential to attracting business enterprise and investment and to making the county a great place to live and work.</p> <p>A well-managed highway network also drives local economic activity - it enables new housing and business developments, encourages trade, and attracts investment to local areas.</p>	<p>No risk identified</p>	<p>n/a</p>

Key considerations:

- Our mission is to ‘Make Staffordshire Sustainable’, and we have made a commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across every aspect of our service provision and estate. Our [Climate Change StaffSpace page](#) sets out our plans to achieve this which will help you to consider the impact of your proposal on Climate Change and how it helps us to achieve our vision of “net zero”.
- If the project has some negative aspects with this strategic goal in mind, then you should demonstrate how this is to be mitigated.
- It would also be useful if there could be a carbon impact (tons of CO2e), attributed to the completion of the entire project.
- Any carbon saving that can be attributed to the proposal, should also be explained and quantified.
- If there are no climate change implications arising as a result of the project, you can provide background to show this has been considered.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Does this proposal have any Climate Change implications?	<p>The new HIAMP recognises the challenges faced with Climate Change and documents approaches which can be considered for reducing the carbon footprint of maintenance activities to achieve the Council’s net zero targets.</p> <p>For example, the HIAMP aims to encourage the use of</p>	No risk identified.	n/a

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	recycled materials and the re-use of existing materials when carrying out maintenance activities to reduce the carbon footprint.		

Environment Assessment

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Key considerations:

- consider whether your proposal will affect: the built environment; the rural environment including agriculture; air, water and land quality; waste and recycling; and ability to travel/access to transport, particularly sustainable methods.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
How does the management of the highway network affect the built environment and the wellbeing of the community?	A well-manged highway improves the journey experience and minimises the negative impacts of transport such as noise, air pollution and accidents.	No risk identified.	n/a

Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan

Change Control

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Introduction

If you live, work, or pass-through Staffordshire whether on foot, cycling, using public or personal transport you will use the largest and most visible asset Staffordshire County Council is responsible for – the highway network.

The Council recognises the vital role played by the local highway network in supporting the Council's Strategic Plan. The Plan 2018-22 describes the Council's vision of a County where big ambitions, great connections and greener living give everyone the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

A well maintained and managed network that is safe, serviceable, and sustainable is one of the best ways to foster job creation, encourage economic growth and support local communities. It makes an important contribution to social inclusion, community safety, and education and health. The appearance of our streets helps to shape the character and quality of the local environment in which people live.

The highway network is a huge and complex system that includes the inspection, maintenance and renewal of roads, footways, cycle routes, bridges, tunnels, retaining walls, lighting, drainage, traffic signals, trees, land and much more – filling potholes is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Council understands that effective asset management will deliver clarity around standards and levels of service and help it to make best use of its available resources. This document sets out Staffordshire's approach.

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

Asset management has been widely accepted by central and local government as a means to deliver a more efficient and effective approach to management of highway infrastructure assets through longer term planning, ensuring that standards are defined and achievable for available budgets. It also supports making the case for funding and better communication with stakeholders, facilitating a greater understanding of the contribution highway infrastructure assets make to economic growth and the needs of local communities.

In Staffordshire County Council we have significantly developed our approach to asset management in highways in recent years, including introducing measures to implement the Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure code of practice. As a result, we have been able to maximise Department for Transport Incentive Fund resource, secure additional funding, and continue successfully defending claims.

Despite making substantial progress in recent years, we recognise we are in an increasingly challenging environment, with deteriorating assets, increasing traffic volumes, uncertainty around future funding and, more recently, coronavirus impacts.

We have therefore developed this comprehensive Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP).

This is a forward-looking document covering the next three years which:

- Sets out how asset management contributes to achieving strategic outcomes, including environmental.
- Describes how we manage our assets and make decisions based on risk
- Explains what we know about current and predicted asset condition
- Sets out our service levels alongside an assessment of associated risks
- Sets out how we prioritise schemes into a forward works programme
- Supports the use of sustainable modes of transport
- How we meet our statutory obligations.

This document seeks to highlight the importance of consistency of funding and approach over that longer period, to enable us to deliver a more efficient service with better condition outcomes.

STRUCTURE OF THE HIAMP

This document comprises five parts:

- Part 1: Overarching Principles: describes the background to our highways asset management principles and sets it in the context of our legal obligations and strategic objectives.
- Part 2: Policy Framework: How the HIAMP fits with the council objectives and local and national agenda.
- Part 3: Implementing Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice describes the recommendations of the Code of Practice for highway maintenance and our subsequent implementation of key components of it.
- Part 4: Implementing Asset Management Principles in Highways sets out the principles that directly influence the organisation's asset management systems and plans and how this may affect future condition, stakeholder perception and investment.
- Part 5: Managing our Assets: takes a detailed look at what our approach to asset management means for each of our asset groups, and what that means for each group over the next three years.

MANAGING OUR ASSETS

Asset Management describes a common sense, systematic approach for managing our highway assets through their design, construction, maintenance and replacement. It provides a connection between the high-level strategic context and the day-to-day decisions we make in maintaining our highway network.

Implementing the principles of effective asset management ensures we make transparent, consistent, well-communicated and better-informed decisions.

The consequence of poorly maintained highway infrastructure across the County impacts directly on all road users - both businesses and domestic - has a detrimental impact on the local economy and on user's perception of Staffordshire. Poor roads mean increased vehicle operating costs, delays and less safe roads, and as a result is likely to influence business investment, decisions about where people live, work and travel as well as leisure and tourism. Our communities rely on a good road system as a basis to access jobs, health care, education, social interaction and to propagate pride in our communities.

This plan sets out how an asset management led approach, puts the customer at the heart of our service. Our members are elected by the local community to represent their views. This HIAMP recognises the importance of member engagement in order for local priorities to be reflected in our highway service.

THE HIGHWAY NETWORK

The scale of the task of maintaining Staffordshire's highway infrastructure and the resources needed to do this are significant. The replacement cost of our highway assets is calculated at in excess of £7billion.

The highway network in Staffordshire includes :

- Over 6,200km's of carriageway
- More than 4,360km's of footway
- 200km's of cycleways
- Over 1,000 structures
- 150,000 road gullies
- 115,000 streetlights
- Over 500 signal-controlled junctions or crossings
- 475,000 trees
- 2.2 million square metres of urban grass and 5,800km's of rural grass verges
- Over 400 milestones and other historic monuments
- 16 pumping stations
- 6 reservoirs
- 261 electronic warning signs

In addition to the assets above, we are responsible for road markings, traffic signs, road studs, pedestrian barriers, vehicle restraint systems, cycle stands, bollards, hedges, embankments, grit bins, catchpits, lagoons, trash screens, kerbs, laybys, ditches, grips, weather stations and much more.

The Council's highway infrastructure is continuing to grow in length, size and quantity which will increase maintenance costs by approximately £162k per annum, based on the last ten years growth.

CONTEXT

Managing the highway network is challenging in the context of national legislation and guidance, climate change, reducing levels of funding, asset growth and increasing customer expectation.

The Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for funding local roads renewals and upgrades, while the Ministry for Housing, Communities and

Local Government (MHCLG) provides revenue support to local highways authorities for routine road maintenance.

Capital funding is used to provide renewal and replacement of all highway assets including carriageways, footways, structures (bridges), safety fencing, drainage, traffic signals and signs but as noted above, excludes street lighting in Staffordshire which is managed under a PFI contract.

Revenue funding is typically spent on all other areas that support the operation of the highway infrastructure such as routine maintenance such as grass cutting and energy for street lighting

Historically, capital maintenance grant falls somewhat short of the threshold required to achieve optimum whole-life-cost management of our highway infrastructure. The variable nature of Government funding year on year impacts on the ability of the service and its supply chain to plan and invest in resources and the future workforce.

Highway infrastructure is increasingly fragile and less resilient to damage from wear and tear, ageing, the changing nature of traffic and the impact of climate change. Public pressure can result in short term fixes, to potholes for example, rather than properly planned and implemented longer term solutions such as preventative maintenance.

The condition of our highway infrastructure is forecast to decline over the period of this plan at the expected levels of funding. As capital funding reduces the amount of reactive type work required to keep the network in a safe and serviceable condition increases.

DEMAND AND EXPECTATION

The highway infrastructure is accessed on a daily basis by residents, businesses and visitors. As such we recognise the importance of engaging with the public to understand their levels of satisfaction and obtain their views on the condition of our highway infrastructure, service standards and levels of performance. Therefore, in order to better understand residents views we commission the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Public Satisfaction Survey annually.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

In July 2019, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and subsequently developed its Climate Change Strategic Development Framework, which committed the Council to reach the target of net-zero carbon by 2050; and also sets out how the council will work collaboratively to protect the future of the county and its residents. In addition, our four-year plan, sets out a series of actions up to 2025 to cut carbon, improve air quality, reduce

waste, improve the natural environment and support people in changing their behaviour to become more environmentally friendly.

Highway infrastructure related contributions to carbon reductions include supporting the creation, protection and enhancement of our green estate, recycling materials and arisings, material innovation, LED replacement programme.

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Part 1: Overarching Principles

1.1. WHAT IS ASSET MANAGEMENT

Highway asset management describes a common sense, systematic approach to designing, constructing, maintaining, modifying, and replacing assets in the most cost-effective manner whilst also taking into consideration the performance of the asset and the risks involved in managing it. Asset management supports making the case for funding, for better communication with stakeholders, and facilitates a greater understanding of the contribution highway infrastructure assets make to economic growth and social well-being of local communities, in line with the requirements set out by the Council Strategic Plan¹.

The benefits of this approach are now widely recognised. National government have stressed the importance of highway asset management in order to deliver some of the required public-sector efficiencies.

1.2. ASSET MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

When putting together our works programmes, we have two key questions to consider:

1.2.1. Which roads shall we treat?

Because we look at the long-term impact of our decisions, we do not simply prioritise our programmes based on what appears to be most pressing at the moment but rather we look to pick the package of works, which, within the budget available, will give us the best long-term result for the network.

What this means for road maintenance is that we consider over a much longer term all the roads in the county in relation to one another when working out which ones to maintain or repair first, rather than automatically fixing the roads which look worst. This enables us to make the best use of the limited resources we have but sometimes causes confusion when people see us working on roads that appear to be in better condition than some others.

1.2.2. Which treatment shall we use?

Since our programmes are limited by the available budget, each pound we spend on a particular road is a pound that is not available to be spent elsewhere. It is not, therefore, simply a case of selecting the 'best' treatment for a particular road, we must select the most cost-effective treatment for that road - they are sometimes the same thing, but not

¹ [Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 - Staffordshire County Council](#)

always. If a low-cost option will significantly delay the need for more expensive repairs, then it deserves serious consideration even if a more expensive option would deliver a wider range of benefits.

For example, when looking at some roads in a particular area, we may find one road in a really bad condition and three other roads in a slightly better condition – not yet 'bad' but, perhaps, vulnerable if we should have another period of severe weather.

Within the set budget available to us we have to decide whether to spend all our money on fixing the worst road (and let the other three roads continue to deteriorate into a worse condition) or whether to spend the minimum amount necessary to keep the worst road safe and invest the remaining budget in preventative maintenance works on the three vulnerable roads to protect them and stop them deteriorating into the same poor condition as the first road.

Preventative maintenance is usually cheaper, so we can often maintain three or four roads for the price of fixing one bad one. It is also generally more sustainable and less disruptive than full repair work and so it offers better value all round, but, with competing demands on the programme it means that we need to be prepared and able to take the tough decisions and do the minimum on the bad road to keep it safe while spending most of the money (in this example) on less bad roads in order to maintain and protect them.

To conclude the example, if we repaired the worst road first, we could find, in a year's time, that we have one good road (the one we fixed) and three other 'bad' roads (the vulnerable ones that we ignored, which have subsequently deteriorated) all needing a larger amount of money spent on them. However, if we spend the budget on preventative maintenance on the three vulnerable roads, in a year's time we would find that we have three good roads and only one bad road to spend our budget on.

In the long term, it is obvious that this is a good way for us to spend the set amount of money we have for our road network. However, in the short term, it may appear that we are ignoring those roads which appear to be in the greatest need of our attention, but this is not the case.

This is just one illustration of how asset management can be applied, there are many others too. For instance, it can help us make decisions about which type of streetlight offers best value for money and it can help inform our improvement works to make them cheaper to maintain in the future.

1.3. THE BENEFITS OF ASSET MANAGEMENT

There are many benefits of asset management. The County Council sees the main benefits as:

- Captures stakeholder and community feedback and shapes the service to take account of local needs and priorities.
- A comprehensive understanding of extent and condition of the highway infrastructure assets.
- A clear methodology for linking goals, aspirations, and objectives with levels of service.
- A sound approach for predicting the levels of funding required to deliver the desired levels of service at minimum cost over the asset's whole life.
- A mechanism for assessing the impact of funding constraints.
- Better understanding risks associated with these assets, not simply health and safety, but also financial risks, environmental risks and hazards which may affect the service it provides; for example, preventing the closure of a bridge.
- An opportunity to maximise funding and ensure that secured funding is used efficiently and effectively.
- A route to minimising lifecycle costs and reducing expensive reactive repair costs.
- Alignment and co-ordination of existing initiatives, including competency development.
- Greater engagement of the workforce, including leadership, communications, and cross disciplinary teamwork.
- Making better informed decisions about investments. Decisions are made using a long-term 'whole-life' approach leading to optimum outcomes.
- Aligning highway maintenance service provision to the County Council's objectives, including the plan to reduce carbon emissions.
- Increasing transparency of the challenges faced and the performance of the asset as well as how we are meeting out statutory duties leading to improved customer satisfaction, stakeholder awareness and confidence.
- Understanding the consequences of changes to investment levels.

A key benefit of an asset management approach is to move decision making away from the imminent and the urgent to a planned regime where the needs of the asset are better understood so that appropriate preventative maintenance treatments can be planned within a wider whole-life approach. This enables decisions to change from those based on a worst-first priority to those that delivers greatest value.

1.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE HIAMP

The objective of this Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) is to lay out, in a clear and transparent manner, how Staffordshire manages our highway assets to keep them safe for use and fit for purpose.

This HIAMP recognises that a well-managed highway network is the lifeblood of our local communities. Our communities rely on a good road system as a basis to access jobs, health care, education and social interaction.

It is easy to think of our highway network as simply a means for people to travel from A to B. In reality, the highway network has many other functions. Our roads form vital components of residential areas, affecting the overall quality of life for local people and helping to engender pride in our communities.

The term 'highway' as used here refers to the highway maintainable at public expense (HMPE) by Staffordshire County Council and to all assets (physical components) in this area. The types of assets covered in this HIAMP include carriageways, footways, highway structures, lighting (including lighting columns), and other assets, such as Vehicle Restraint Systems (VRS) and the green estate (trees and planted and grassed areas). The HIAMP is an organic document and will be revised from time to time as necessary.

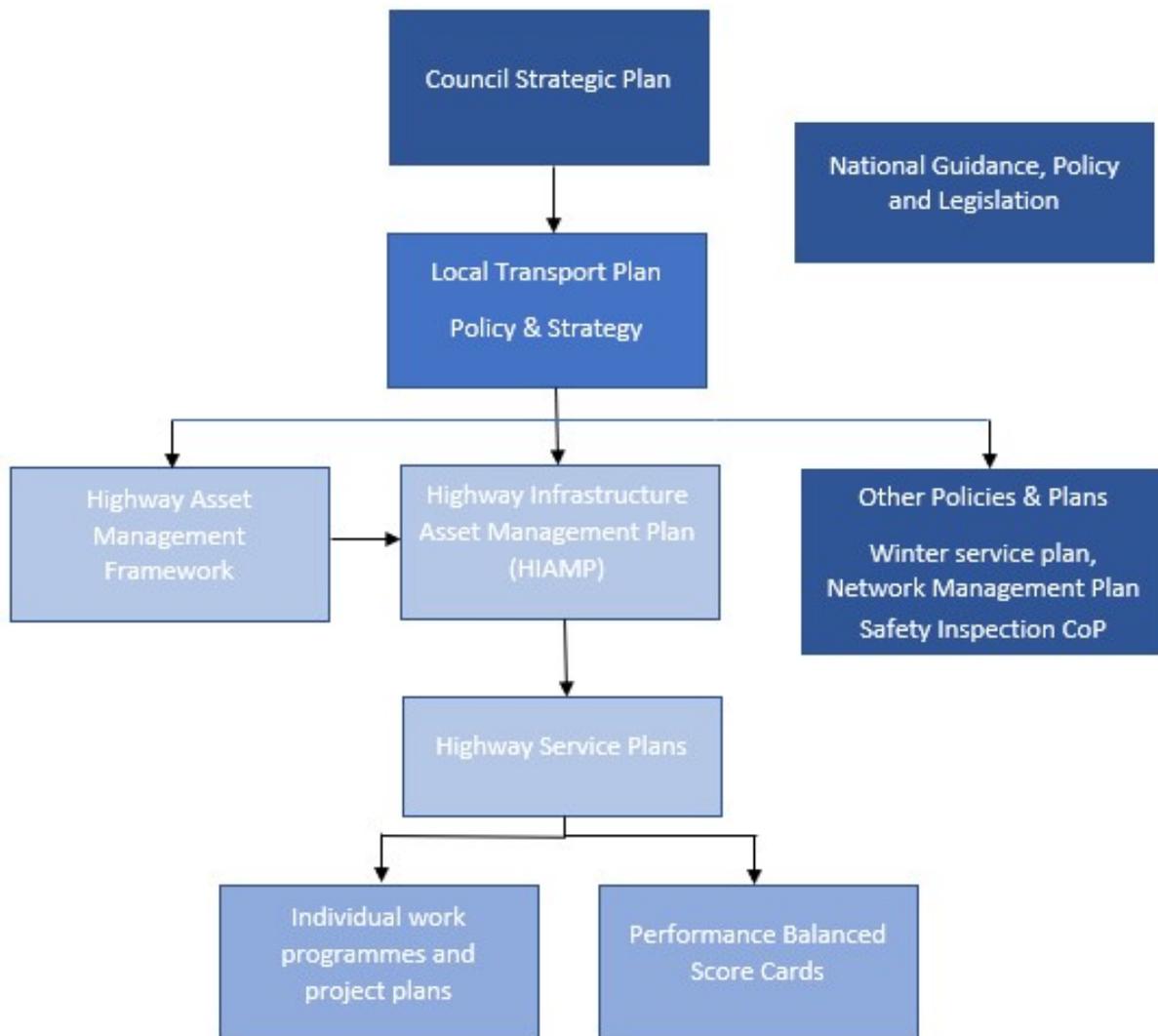
One key role of the HIAMP is to make the connections between the higher-level legal and strategic context governing work (for example, the Highways Act 1980²) and the day-to-day decisions the Council makes to maintain its road network.

Following this approach of linking strategy with practice, the document sets out the levels of service which we intend to provide from the physical assets themselves. The HIAMP explains the processes undertaken to assist in providing this service efficiently and achieving value for money. In particular, the HIAMP aims to explain how decisions are made to replace or extend the life of an asset (through capital renewal) or repair it (as part of operational management).

1.5. LINKS TO OTHER DOCUMENTS

This HIAMP together with the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy will form the link between the Council Strategic Plan, Corporate Strategy, Local Transport Plan and individual service delivery plans.

² [Highways Act 1980](#)

Figure 1 – Highway Asset Management Document Framework

Staffordshire County Council’s Highway Service has developed an Asset Management Policy³, outlining its approach towards effective asset management in line with the member-approved commissioning strategies developed by the authority as a whole.

Staffordshire County Council’s Highway Service has further developed an Asset Management Strategy⁴, outlining its approach towards formalising strategies for investment in key highway asset groups through life-cycle planning, defining affordable service standards, improving how the highway assets are managed and subsequently enabling more effective and efficient highways services to be delivered.

The HIAMP contains a series of annexes that provide further detail regarding the management of each highway asset group.

³ [SCC Highway Asset Management Policy](#)

⁴ [SCC Highway Asset Management Strategy](#)

Details of the winter service and the highway safety inspection process undertaken by Staffordshire County Council are outlined in separate documents named the Winter Service Operational Plan and the Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice. These documents are not included as annexes to the HIAMP due to their very specific legal requirements.

1.6. SCOPE OF THE PLAN

The document will comprise of a number of Volumes, each outlining a specific Asset Group.

Each Asset group Volume will contain the following information:

- Legal Framework,
- Asset Condition,
- Asset Management,
- Asset Inspection
- Asset Programming.

All these core elements generate a consistent approach to best practice asset management and put into practice the demands of good lifecycle planning outlined within the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy.

Part 2: Asset Management Framework

2.1. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Stakeholder expectations and effective customer communication are highly important to Staffordshire County Council, with a Communication Action Plan⁵ in place for the authority. This has driven the Communications Strategy for Highways, Pitching the Message, written in line with service delivery and the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP).

2.1.1. Aims

The aim of our communications is to:

- To engage and listen to our citizens and our communities' concerns about the highway network and to meet their needs and feedback our progress on a regular and timely basis.
- Inform the public about physical road works, operational highways issues (including defect repairs, winter maintenance etc) and value-for-money highways and transport activities in a timely manner.
- Communicate proposed changes to highways asset management in Staffordshire, encourage public engagement through our communications and raise awareness about changes if these are adopted.
- Encourage people to make the best use of reporting channels – e.g., 'self-serve' via our website.
- Ensure the public is aware of funding bids awarded to the council to help maintain and enhance the local transport network.

The plan sets out how an asset management led approach, puts the customer at the heart of our service. Considerations for this strategy and the communication of Highways Asset Management have been developed to and in excess of recommendations within UKRLG Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance document⁶.

2.1.2. Key Groups/Stakeholders

People, groups of people, or organisations that can affect or be affected by the policies and actions of Staffordshire County Council are all stakeholders of the highway network. Effective engagement with stakeholders is a key

⁵ [SCC Communications Action Plan](#)

⁶ [UKRLG Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance](#)

issue in managing expectations and therefore satisfaction with the highway service.

We will seek to engage and communicate with a wide range of people and organisations that have a stake in Staffordshire's road network. The Highway Infrastructure Communications Strategy identifies our key stakeholders.

2.1.3. Stakeholder Expectations

The Council monitors stakeholder expectations using the National Highways and Transport⁷ (NHT) customer satisfaction survey and through ad-hoc consultation exercises.

The County Council participates in the NHT customer satisfaction survey each year and the outcomes of this survey are used to inform asset management planning. As well as the levels of satisfaction that are also reported levels of service, of particular relevance to this plan in the context of dealing with the challenge set out in the medium-term financial strategy, is the levels of service which are not acceptable to reduce.

The survey collects the public's views on different aspects of Highways and Transport in local authority areas, it covers:

- Pavements
- Cycle Routes/Lanes
- Local bus services
- Local taxi services
- Community transport
- Demand responsive transport
- Safety on roads
- Traffic congestion
- Levels of traffic pollution
- Street Lighting
- Condition of roads
- Local rights of way network

It asks detailed questions about each of these aspects in turn.

The Staffordshire public consistently place most importance on 'Safety on roads' and 'Condition of Roads'. In terms of satisfaction the public are most satisfied with 'Street lighting' and least satisfied with 'Condition of roads'.

The biggest difference between how important and how satisfied the public is with the 'Condition of roads'.

⁷ [The National Highways & Transport Network](#)

With regards to spending priorities the public identified 'Condition of roads' as the area they consider the authority should be spending more to improve the level of service.

These priorities are acknowledged in this HIAMP and will be considered as the asset management approach is developed.

2.1.4. Best Practice – Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

The Midlands Highway Alliance plus (MHA+) is a collaborative alliance for adjacent/peer authorities to share knowledge and good practice. Although not a founding member, Staffordshire was one of the early members of the alliance and remains active in leading in innovation. Many of Staffordshire's processes that ensure the implementation of this Plan, have been developed in conjunction with other local authorities within the MHA+.

The County Council will also be enhanced by benchmarking our data with other similar authorities through the Alliance and the NHT customer satisfaction survey/CQC Efficiency Network.

The County Council is also a member of other national alliances such as the Future Highway Research Group. The council has representation on national groups such as the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG), National Highway Sector Schemes (NHSS), UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) and the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT).

2.2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND GUIDANCE

This section contains information on duties and powers specifically related to highways.

2.2.1. Powers and Duties

There are several pieces of legislation which provide the basis for powers and duties relating to highway maintenance. These include but are not limited to the following:

- Highways Act 1980
- Traffic Management Act 2004
- New Roads & Street Works Act 1991
- Transport Act 2000
- Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984
- Traffic Signs Regulations & General Directions 2002
- Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003
- Local Authorities (Transport Charges) Regulations 1998
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Noxious Weeds Act 1993
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015
- Local Government Act 2003
- The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equalities Act 2010
- Environment Act 2021

2.2.2. Highway Act 1980

The Highways Act 1980 sets out the main duties of Highway Authorities in England and Wales. Section 41 imposes a duty to maintain highways maintainable at public expense. Section 58 provides for a defence against action relating to alleged failure to maintain on grounds that the authority has taken such care as in all the circumstances were reasonably required to secure that the part of the highway in question was not dangerous for traffic.

The Act also identifies other powers that highway authorities can exercise to undertake activities on or within the highway such as improvements, drainage, acquiring land, authorising skips, scaffolds etc.

2.2.3. The Traffic Management Act 2004

The Traffic Management Act⁸ was introduced in 2004 to tackle congestion and disruption on the road network. The Act places a duty on local traffic authorities to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on their road network and those networks of surrounding authorities. The Act gives authorities additional tools to better implement parking policies, moving traffic enforcement and the co-ordination of street works. The Act states that local traffic authorities shall make appropriate arrangements for performing their network management duty. These arrangements must include provision for the appointment of a Traffic Manager whose function it is to ensure that the authority complies with the duty.

The Act introduced a number of provisions:

- National Highways Traffic Officers
- local authority duty for network management
- permits for work on the highway
- increased control of utility works
- increased civil enforcement of traffic offences

⁸ [Traffic Management Act 2004](#)

The most important feature of the Act is Section 16(1) which established a new duty for local traffic authorities 'to manage their road network with a view to achieving, so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard to their other obligations, policies and the following objectives:

- securing the expeditious movement of traffic on the authority's road network
- facilitating the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority'

Section 31 of the Act specifically states that the term 'traffic' includes pedestrians, so the duty requires the authority to consider all road users. The Traffic Management Act 2004 has also strengthened the regulatory regime with regard to works of utilities and others within the highway including permit schemes, new conditions, and fixed penalty notices. The Act changes significantly the provisions of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, but much of the guidance remains valid.

2.2.4. The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991

The New Roads and Street Works Act 1991⁹ (NRSWA) requires highway authorities to coordinate works and develop systems to record works so that utilities could be held financially responsible for failings in their operations and quality of workmanship (reinstatements).

2.2.5. The West and Shires Permit Scheme (WaSP)

The permit scheme that operates in Staffordshire requires any organisation carrying out works in the highway to apply for a permit in order to 'book' time on the highway. The West and Shires is a common permit scheme currently operating in a number of Local Highways Authorities across the country.

We issue permits with conditions attached to better focus the activity in terms of reducing the impact of road users and other stakeholders; this might be in relation to the timing of the works, the traffic management and methodology or any other factor that is deemed important.

Equally, we can refuse to issue a permit if we feel the planning, or the detail of the application is insufficient. The WaSP¹⁰ scheme allows us to recoup the cost of coordinating and managing the activity by charging for issuing a permit.

⁹ [New Roads and Street Works Act 1991](#)

¹⁰ [Permit scheme - Staffordshire County Council](#)

2.2.6. Well Manged Highway Infrastructure

The Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' (WMHI)¹¹ provides guidance to councils regarding the management and maintenance of local roads. The Code of Practice was <published< commissioned by the Department of Transport and came into effect in October 2018.

The Code of Practice is non-statutory however it is deemed to be guidance of best practice by the courts. The County Council is required to demonstrate a robust decision-making process, an understanding of the consequences of those decisions, and how the associated risks are managed to ensure highway safety.

2.2.7. Health and Safety

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974¹², together with the Construction, Design and Management Regulations 2015 set a requirement for highway, traffic and street authorities to carry out work in a safe manner and establish robust arrangements for the management of construction works.

2.2.8. General and Specific Requirements

Much of highway infrastructure maintenance activity is based upon statutory powers and duties contained in legislation and interpretations of these powers and duties provided by the court.

The authority has developed a training and competency framework for asset management to ensure that those involved in highway maintenance have an appropriate understanding of their duties and powers, their implications, and the procedures used to manage and mitigate risk.

2.3. FUNDING

2.3.1. Background

The Department for Transport (DfT) is responsible for funding local roads renewals and upgrades, while the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provides revenue support to local highways authorities for routine road maintenance.

The DfT provides annual capital funding for highway maintenance through the Highways Maintenance Block and Integrated Transport Block. In addition, the DfT, on occasions, provides additional maintenance funding, typically for pothole repairs, or provides the opportunity for local authorities to bid for additional maintenance funding.

¹¹ [Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice](#)

¹² [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

Capital maintenance expenditure is used to add to the value of a fixed asset. Highway works eligible for capital funding include activities that:

- extend the life of an asset, such as reconstructive resurfacing or preventative treatment schemes
- enable the construction of improved infrastructure
- replace an existing feature with an enhanced structure, such as drainage renewal schemes Revenue expenditure covers day to day expenditure, such as works to maintain the value of a fixed asset.

Capital funding is used to provide renewal and replacement of all highway assets including carriageways, footways, structures (bridges), safety fencing, drainage, traffic signals and signs but as noted above, excludes street lighting in Staffordshire which is managed under a PFI contract.

Revenue funding is typically spent on all other areas that support the operation of the highway infrastructure such as routine maintenance such as grass cutting and energy for street lighting

2.3.2. Capital Funding Streams

Highway Maintenance Block (Needs Element)

The Maintenance Block funding allocated to each local highway authority is based on a formula using road length data and the number of highway assets such as bridges and lighting columns for which they are each responsible for.

Highway Maintenance Block funding is not ringfenced and local authorities are free to prioritise their spending as appropriate to meet local needs. However, the DfT do allocate a notional proportion of the total funding to the four elements as follows:

Table 1 – DfT Notional Funding Apportionment

Element	Proportional Allocation
Roads	75%
Split evenly between:	
A roads	25%
B and C roads	25%
U roads	25%
Bridges	14%
Lighting	2%
Cycleways & Footways	9%

Historically, Cabinet has agreed that a 5% top-slice of Highways Maintenance Block funding are used to support other centrally funded capital projects in areas such as Economic Development, Waste Management and Libraries, which receive no such allocation from government and provision has similarly been made in 2021/22.

Integrated Transport Block (ITB)

The Integrated Transport Block (ITB) provides funding support to local authorities for transport capital improvement schemes worth less than £5 million. The ITB is not ringfenced and is spent at the discretion of the authority.

Highway Maintenance Incentive Fund Element

In recent years an increasing proportion of DfT funding has been dependent on the authority being able to evidence that we have fully embedded asset management principles into the management of highway business. The incentive fund does not provide additional funding but incentivises local authorities to ensure they receive their full share of available funding.

Councils are banded 1 to 3. Staffordshire has received its full share of the incentive fund, based on its band 3 status – the top band. In 2021/22 ensuring the authority achieves the top band is worth £2.785m to the authority.

Local Highway Maintenance Challenge Fund

The local highways maintenance challenge fund enables local highway authorities in England to bid for major maintenance projects that are otherwise difficult to fund through the usual formula funding allocations they receive from government.

Staffordshire have been successful in recent years in securing funding from the Challenge Fund for critical maintenance repairs to some of our highway structures.

In 2017 £6.1m investment was secured for St. Peter's Bridge in Burton to replace bearings, safeguarding the future use of the bridge for HGVs while boosting access for businesses and securing skilled jobs locally.

In 2020 the authority was successful in securing £2.35m to restore Chetwynd bridge, Alrewas. The road width was reduced to a single lane following issues identified with the iron road railing following inspection.

Additional Funding

In recent years the Government has provided additional discrete pots of capital funding for local councils to help repair potholes and to undertake other routine maintenance. Funding is allocated in accordance with the needs-based formula, is not ring fenced and is expected to be spent within the financial year.

As part of wider plans to boost active travel the government are placing increasing emphasis on improving and developing walking and cycling infrastructure. Ensuring the council's highway asset management strategy is aligned to the changing nature of government priorities will be important in securing future funding.

SCC Additional Investment

Over the last 12 years the County Council has provided in excess of £82 million of additional investment to support highway maintenance activities, including £5.0m per year in the six years 2017/18 to 2022/23 and additional revenue funding of £929,000 in 2020/21 from Reserves.

In 2021/22, the government grant provided for highway maintenance was reduced significantly and at the time of writing it is assumed will stay at the same level for 2022/23. Consequently, the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) includes an investment in highways in 2022/23 which will help to reduce the maintenance backlog and will mitigate the impact of the grant reduction. An amount of £15.5 million is included in the Capital Programme for this purpose.

2.4. APPROACH TO MAINTENANCE

Staffordshire County Council undertakes various maintenance activities on the highways network which will be outlined throughout the course of this document.

Maintenance activities contribute in varying degrees to the core objectives of safety, customer service, serviceability, and sustainability. Levels of service and delivery arrangements are established having regard to these objectives and focussed on outcomes.

The main types of maintenance are as follows:

- Routine – Regularly scheduled works (often cyclic) e.g., lamp replacement, drainage cleansing, grass cutting and weed spraying etc.
- Reactive – Safety-based, responding to inspections, customer reports or emergencies.

- Planned – Planned schemes include structural and preventative maintenance to extend the life of or renew an asset.
- Regulatory – Inspecting and regulating the activities of others affecting the highway.
- Winter Service – salt spreading and snow ploughing in adverse weather.

2.5. CARBON STRATEGY

The County Council is committed to establishing a clear action plan to embed carbon reduction measures across the Authority and make Staffordshire more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. The Staffordshire County Council Climate Change Strategic Development Framework¹³ sets out the council's approach to achieving net zero by 2050.

The Staffordshire Highways Carbon roadmap sets out a long-term view on reducing carbon emissions and providing network resilience, beyond that of the current Staffordshire Infrastructure+ Highways Service Contract. The strategy sets the investment to ensure Staffordshire has the continued capacity to being carbon neutral.

Transforming the approach in engineering design is the first step in the journey towards creating a low carbon, low cost, highly resilient highway network. Staffordshire Highways will seek to create or identify the tools to assess, reduce & offset carbon, design out waste, reuse materials and design in recycled materials.

Measures will be employed to reduce the Council's carbon footprint in the maintenance of the Highway Services Assets employing measures to:

- Make use of low temperature carriageway and footway treatments
- Recycled and recyclable materials
- Fuel efficient fleet and tools
- Efficient routing of services, including reactive management repairs, inspections and monitoring, winter service, etc.
- Whole life cost calculations including carbon calculations and enhanced design to extend durability.
- Behavioural changes such as green driver training.
- Moving to electric/hybrid fleet where possible.

Staffordshire highways have been a leading authority in areas of carbon reduction. For example, we have had Low Temperature Asphalt (LTA) in our base specification for over 10 years. LTA can achieve carbon savings of around 20% over conventional asphalt.

¹³ [Climate Change Strategic Development Framework - Staffordshire County Council](#)

We crush and recycle around 30,000 tonnes of asphalt per year. Diverting from landfill and putting valuable stone back into the road network. Decreasing the need to quarry new stone. In doing so, we save 37 Tonnes of Carbon output from sending to arisings to landfill. Further to this we save over 1,100 Tonnes of Carbon by not needing to source primary material.

2.6. TRAVEL QUALITY

The way in which the highway network is managed, including works to the highway, and the choice of materials and particular products, can have a significant effect on the travel quality experienced by all highway users.

The predominant activity, in maintenance terms, are structural repairs and preventative works to sustain the highway structure. The provision of such measures as dropped kerbs for disabled people, or parents with prams, can make a journey easier.

Well maintained carriageways with a good riding surface, and well-defined edges, provide a smooth ride and minimise driver stress when travelling and encourage activities such as cycling.

Peak hour roadworks restrictions, vehicle activated temporary traffic signals, and waiting restrictions on the major traffic routes, can help traffic flow.

Textured footway and cycleway surfacing, or audible alerts at pedestrian crossings, help blind and disabled people.

Good information, warning, and regulatory signs can help all road users.

It is therefore important that if the key objectives which relate to travel quality are to be achieved, clear policies and standards exist. The key objectives relating to travel quality are:-

- To ensure that the highway network is able to carry both the volume and weight of traffic, as determined by the road network hierarchy.
- To have regard for the long-term future of the network when formulating expenditure plans, and to ensure efficient and economical use of resources in the maintenance of the network.
- To minimise the impact of adverse weather conditions on travel quality.
- To seek to ensure that the highway network satisfies the reasonable expectations of the community's needs for transport, in business and

leisure activities. The work carried out by the SCC asset management team will complement the traffic management and safety measures implemented by the wider highway design service.

2.7. CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT

The impact of highway management on the environment can take the form of aesthetic or visual intrusion and noise intrusion, conservation, pollution, or the impact on wildlife or other nature conservation interests, as well as the sustainable use of resources.

It is therefore important that the Highway Authority has a clear set of policies and standards which address these impacts. The following are considered in all design stages:-

- To minimise the environmental impact of traffic, especially Heavy Goods Vehicles, on the quality of life of the community.
- To encourage traffic speeds that are appropriate to the nature of the highway and surrounding environment.
- To maintain and enhance the environment of the highway corridor in a manner which is sympathetic to the nature of surrounding area.
- To conserve energy and other natural resources, wherever possible, in the Network Management process, and avoid the use of materials known to be harmful to the environment.
- Contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development to ensure that flood risk is properly managed.

2.8. SERVICE LEVELS

Levels of Service is a term used to describe.

“The quality of services provided by the asset for the benefit of users”.

One of the hardest challenges of asset management is finding a balance between investing in an asset in order to safeguard its integrity and value, while providing a high-quality service to the public.

The Level of Service relates to our highway infrastructure, the way highway services are delivered and how the services are perceived, these include.

- Condition of the asset.
- Performance of the asset.
- Quality of the services that the asset provides.
- Performance of the management in delivering the services.

Levels of service and standards are derived from various strategic considerations with reference to relevant legislation and national guidance and best practice documents.

In defining any such targets and performance levels it is important that they are 'SMART'; that is 'Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-based'.

2.9. RESILIENCE REVIEW

As part of good asset management practice, Staffordshire have established a resilient network to increase the resilience of the highway network during extreme events. This covers events such as extreme heat, increased rainfall, and industrial action amongst others.

Reviews are undertaken every two years to gauge the economic viability of the extent of the network and the efficiency of managing the resilient network.

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Part 3: Implementing Well-managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice

The Code of Practice 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' (WMHI) provides guidance to councils regarding the management and maintenance of local roads. We follow this guidance as best practice to deliver an efficient and effective service.

This HIAMP explains how the County Council is adopting each of the 36 recommendations in the Code of Practice.

3.1. POLICY FRAMEWORK

RECOMMENDATION 1 – USE OF THE CODE

This Code, in conjunction with the UKRLG Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance, should be used as the starting point against which to develop, review and formally approve highway infrastructure maintenance policy and to identify and formally approve the nature and extent of any variations.

The code of practice is founded upon the principles of best value and emphasise the use of an asset management approach to highway maintenance. The intention of the code 'Well-managed Highway Infrastructure' is that authorities will develop their own levels of service through a local, risk-based, approach. This Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan (HIAMP) does just that and has been developed in conjunction with the asset management policy and strategy that is detailed in that plan.

This HIAMP details the mechanisms that will be deployed as we work towards attaining the Council's objectives as expressed in the Strategic Plan 2018-22. This will be through planned performance against the life cycle plans for all major components of the highway asset. This plan sets out the risk-based approach, which will be embedded in every-day decision making.

RECOMMENDATION 2 – ASSET MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

An Asset Management Framework should be developed and endorsed by senior decision makers. All activities outlined in the Framework should be documented.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – ASSET MANAGEMENT POLICY AND STRATEGY

An asset management policy and a strategy should be developed and published. These should align with the corporate vision and demonstrate the contribution asset management makes towards achieving this vision. (HIAMG Recommendation 3)

This HIAMP sets out in more detail the principles outlined in the Council's Asset Management Policy and Strategy which are published on the Council's website.

The highway asset management policy and strategy are endorsed by senior decision makers.

The highway asset management strategy sets out the asset management objectives which support the County Council's core purpose. The policy explains the corporate approach to managing our highway infrastructure.

The objectives state that:-

- Senior decisions makers will adopt the principles of highway infrastructure asset management.
- The principles and approach to delivering highway services are documented and defined.
- We communicate with all staff and stakeholders on our approach to managing all highway infrastructures.

The Highway Asset Management Strategy sets out how the Highway Asset Management Policy will be delivered.

The strategy has been developed to support the Local Transport Plan (LTP) objectives, by utilising investment programmes to provide an efficient and resilient highway network. The relationship between SCC's outcomes and our asset management objectives are clearly defined. The performance of which is measured and enabled through a clear reporting structure and a framework of asset management documents which include the asset data

management strategy, highway inventory policy and the performance management framework.

3.2. STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNICATION

RECOMMENDATION 4 – ENGAGING AND COMMUNICATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Relevant information should be actively communicated through engagement with relevant stakeholders in setting requirements, making decisions and reporting performance.

Our Community Highway Engagement Officers act as ambassadors for the County Council and they are the main contacts for stakeholders including elected County Councillors (Members) when it comes to enquiries relating to highways and transport matters.

Key stakeholders are invited to comment on the policy and strategy, these include the interests of Members, contractors, highways users, neighbouring authorities, local business and key partners, such as the NHS and the Police who rely on the network for delivery of their services.

Through this way of working, we ensure that the delivery of our investment programmes is informed by the intelligence gained through working alongside the community within localities. We also ensure that the work undertaken at a local level complements the activity delivered through our borough wide programme of maintenance and improvement works.

Future work programmes are approved and shared with Members and the public and scheduled or planned work details are set out in simple to understand letters so that when works are taking place residents are clear on the process and who they may contact within the Council if they have additional questions.

3.3. CONSISTENCY OF SERVICE

RECOMMENDATION 5 – CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER AUTHORITIES

To ensure that users' reasonable expectations for consistency are taken into account, the approach of other local and strategic highway and transport authorities, especially those with integrated or adjoining networks, should be considered when developing highway infrastructure maintenance policies.

The Council was one of the early members of the Midland Highway Alliance which has now joined together with the Midlands Service Improvement Group (MSIG) and West Midlands Highway Alliance (WMHA) to form the Midland Highway Alliance Plus (MHA+). The MHA+ is a collective of Councils sharing best practice to drive improvements and efficiencies within the highways and road safety disciplines of Local Authorities. In particular, the Asset Management Task Group has worked to develop a set of High-Level Principles for the Risk Based Approach to safety inspections and defect response times.

Agreements are in place with our neighbouring authorities for cross boundary maintenance and winter service provision.

3.4. INTEGRATED NETWORK MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 6 – AN INTEGRATED NETWORK

The highway network should be considered as an integrated set of assets when developing highway infrastructure maintenance policies.

This plan, and the risk-based approach it details, enables the wide variety of highway assets to be managed as an integrated set. It details an approach to assessing and undertaking maintenance that is used across all assets.

A 'Candidate List' of sites requiring maintenance, for consideration in future works programmes is developed for each asset. These are discussed between teams who lead on the various assets on the network with a view to shaping the integration, scope, and timing of any potential works to ensure value for money efficiencies are achieved. This includes, though not exclusively, street lighting, structures, drainage, and any third-party assets such as those owned by utility companies.

Through programme coordination and visibility of future SCC schemes which may affect other key highway asset or major improvement scheme, we adjust the priority place in the programme so that we can combine activities in order to maximise financial efficiencies.

3.5. RISK BASED APPROACH

RECOMMENDATION 7 – RISK BASED APPROACH

A risk-based approach should be adopted for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance, including setting levels of service, inspections, responses, resilience, priorities, and programmes.

Meaningful risk management is an intrinsic part of the management of our highway infrastructure. Inspections, maintenance, renewals, and improvements present extensive choices and therefore it is vital that the impact of implementation and the consequences of failure are fully understood. In addition, there is a variety of external influences which impact on the performance of the highway network. Weather, budget, political direction, and demand from other service areas also need to be considered when determining the approach to maintenance and investment.

Adopting a risk-based approach has facilitated the establishment and implementation of levels of asset condition and service standards that are appropriate to their circumstances.

We have adopted a risk-based approach for all aspects of highway infrastructure maintenance, including setting levels of service, inspections, response, resilience, priorities, and programmes. The management of current and future risks has been embedded within our approach to asset management and service delivery.

The key actions of this risk-based approach are:

- Understanding our statutory duties and ensuring that these are fulfilled.
- Identifying the value and criticality of the County Council's assets and operations to fulfil the asset management objectives and achieve the levels of service.
- Gathering sufficient and appropriate information to support risk-based decisions.
- Ensuring staff have sufficient knowledge and competency to make risk-based decisions.
- Identifying and prioritising risks associated with the assets using systems that are consistent with the County Council's corporate approach to risk management.
- Implementing appropriate controls.
- Documenting risk-based decisions ensuring that the whole approach is transparent.

- Applying the risk-based approach equitably for all stakeholders and in all locations.
- Communicating the approach and the outcomes of where it is applied to stakeholders.

This HIAMP sets in place the over-arching approach which will be deployed for operational procedures.

Risk management is therefore at the heart of good management practice and corporate governance arrangements. Our approach to risk management is proactive and enables decisions to be based on properly assessed actions and events that balance risk and reward with a view to ensuring that the right actions are taken at the right time.

RECOMMENDATION 14 – RISK MANAGEMENT

The management of current and future risks associated with assets should be embedded within the approach to asset management. Strategic, tactical, and operational risks should be included as should appropriate preventative and mitigation measures.

SCC has a highway infrastructure risk management policy and risk register. The policy links to the corporate risk framework, corporate risk register and the business continuity plan.

The Highway Asset Management Delivery Project Team has been established to regularly review highway asset risks and consists of officers designated as asset leads and service managers. The group maintain a detailed risk register used to assess the potential risks encountered when managing the highway network. The risk register records what the risks are, evaluates the impact, identifies how the risk can be mitigated, the investment required to control the risk and designates a risk action owner.

The Highway Infrastructure Plus partnership has a clear procedure for identifying, reporting, and controlling the escalation of risk.

3.6. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 8 – INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Information to support a risk-based approach to highway maintenance should be collected, managed, and made available in ways that are sustainable, secure, meet any statutory obligations, and, where appropriate, facilitate transparency for network users.

RECOMMENDATION 9 – NETWORK INVENTORY

A detailed inventory or register of highway assets, together with information on their scale, nature, and use, should be maintained. The nature and extent of inventory collected should be fit for purpose and meet business needs. Where data or information held is considered sensitive, this should be managed in a security- minded way.

The Highway Infrastructure Inventory Policy establishes a process for the recording, identification, and accountability of all County Council owned highway infrastructure assets.

The policy requires:

- All highway infrastructure assets shall be identified with unique asset reference, where appropriate this unique reference number shall be affixed to the asset.
- Asset records shall be maintained for each asset.
- The Asset Custodian to make an annual declaration of the accuracy, currency, and coverage of inventory. Commentary on any significant changes to the inventory shall be included in the declaration.
- The Asset Custodian to be administratively responsible for the asset assigned to them.

RECOMMENDATION 10 – ASSET DATA MANAGEMENT

The quality, currency, appropriateness, and completeness of all data supporting asset management should be regularly reviewed. An asset register should be maintained that stores, manages, and reports all relevant asset data.

To provide effective asset management we require knowledge of an asset, its condition, and its use. This entails the collection and importantly management of asset inventory and condition data. A Highway Asset Data Management Strategy has been developed to assess whether the systems and information available to the authority are sufficient to ensure:

- Our approach to highway maintenance is consistent with the current recommendations of the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP).

- Consistency with the code of practice for highway maintenance 'Well Managed Highways Infrastructure'.
- The Council is in a position to secure the full funds available through the Department for Transport's (DfT's) Incentive Fund award process.
- Development of a more analytical and evidence-based approach to managing its highway assets.
- The detailed direction and operational processes required to underpin delivery of the Highway Asset Management Policy and Strategy are available.

Stewardship of asset data is a clear strength of the County Council with named posts in the structure that are clearly responsible for certain sets of data.

RECOMMENDATION 11 – ASSET MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

Asset management systems should be sustainable and able to support the information required to enable asset management. Systems should be accessible to relevant staff and, where appropriate, support the provision of information for stakeholders.

For asset management to be effective it must be supported by quality data. A number of commercial off the shelf systems are available that provide a range of functionality to support the asset management process.

Given the diversity of Highway Services Assets and their individual maintenance requirements, the Council's current asset management systems comprise a number of separate systems that effectively manage asset groups, i.e., structures, carriageway and footway, street lighting, traffic signals. These individual systems are linked through common referencing of asset and association with a common highway network enabling an integrated approach.

Data relevant to the highway network and its Asset Register is held in the Confirm UKPMS Asset Management System used by many local councils to manage highway and transport assets, customer services, maintenance, and performance. Confirm and other performance management systems are used to manage and monitor performance across the Highway service.

3.7. FUNCTIONAL HIERARCHY

RECOMMENDATION 12 – FUNCTIONAL HIERARCHY

A network hierarchy, or a series of related hierarchies, should be defined which include all elements of the highway network, including carriageways, footways, cycle routes, structures, lighting, and rights of way. The hierarchy should take into account current and expected use, resilience, and local economic and social factors such as industry, schools, hospitals and similar, as well as the desirability of continuity and of a consistent approach for walking and cycling.

The network hierarchy recognises that maintenance and management of the Highway Services Assets based on the current classification of A, B, C, and non-classified roads fails to recognise:

- the volume of traffic using particular roads
- their importance in delivering the Council's aims and objectives
- the consequences of failure of certain routes or items of infrastructure
- the impact on the economy and communities

The Council has developed a Network Maintenance Hierarchy and Resilience Strategy based on both network usage and the importance and limitations of particular routes and assets across the network. It allows differing levels of service and maintenance strategies to be applied to the hierarchy of the network ensuring the most effective treatments are employed appropriate to the use and importance of the roads in question and allows for the integrity of routes used by greater volumes or goods vehicles to be maintained to ensure the long-term resilience of those parts of the network.

RECOMMENDATION 20 – RESILIENT NETWORK

Within the highway network hierarchy, a 'Resilient Network' should be identified to which priority is given through maintenance and other measures to maintain economic activity and access to key services during extreme weather.

It is now recognised that climate change is affecting weather patterns. In the UK, this is reflected through greater incidence of prolonged rainfall, strong winds and heatwaves which can combine with other natural events

to create adverse conditions for the Councils transport network. Where practical, there is a need to make the Councils transport networks more resilient to such events.

The increasing frequency, variety, and impact of these extreme weather events prompted the Department for Transport (DfT) to undertake a review of the resilience of the UK transport network to extreme weather events. This review recommended that local highway authorities should identify their resilient network and give it priority consideration in terms of maintenance and availability.

The resilient network will also be used as a tactical tool with which priority can be given to minimise the impacts of extreme weather. This could include the following –

- Additional maintenance interventions/inspections may be used to ensure the asset continues to function.
- Prioritise funding to mitigate the onset of deterioration of the asset.
- Prioritise work programme to reduce the risk of failure in the asset.
- Prioritise reactive maintenance in the case of extreme weather.
- Assisting in emergency planning events including recovering from an emergency event.

At its highest level the network maintenance hierarchy identifies a resilient network of key routes serving the businesses, communities, services and forming links both nationally and between adjoining authorities. These routes will be given priority in planned and reactive maintenance and will be maintained in the event of adverse weather or other emergent events. The resilient network includes a number of assets where failure would result in significant impact to the local economy, and these have been identified and prioritised in the Highway Services Asset Risk Strategy.

3.8. LIFECYCLE/DESIGNING FOR MAINTENANCE

RECOMMENDATION 13 – WHOLE LIFE/DESIGNING FOR MAINTENANCE

Authorities should take whole life costs into consideration when assessing options for maintenance, new and improved highway schemes. The future maintenance costs of such new infrastructure are therefore a prime consideration.

Whole life costing involves predicting the likely deterioration rate of assets based upon usage and material composition plus the treatment cost versus

useful life calculations which give the most cost-effective medium and long-term asset maintenance plans.

Staffordshire works to design specifications contained in the 'Manual for Streets'¹⁴, the Staffordshire Residential Design Guide¹⁵ and the Design Manual for Roads & Bridges¹⁶

Scheme designs are based, as far as is reasonably practicable, on the most sustainable whole life approach to design, specification of materials and construction methods. Such examples include the specification of durable materials and designs, recycling and re-using materials where possible, prioritising repairs and maintenance, undertaking treatments in a timely manner and using innovative techniques often developed through early contractor involvement.

A sustainable approach to maintaining Staffordshire's roads and pavements will assist in reducing whole life costs and ensure continued levels of serviceability of the highway network.

RECOMMENDATION 15 – COMPETENCIES AND TRAINING

The appropriate competencies for all staff should be identified. Training should be provided where necessary for directly employed staff, and contractors should be required to provide evidence of the appropriate competencies of their staff.

To ensure our officers are competent in the principles and practices of asset management, a training and competency framework has been developed which provides the expected qualifications, training, and proficiencies for each prescribed role.

RECOMMENDATION 16 – INSPECTIONS

A risk-based inspection regime, including regular safety inspections, should be developed, and implemented for all highway assets.

All features of the highway, including carriageways, footways, cycleways, and highway structures will be inspected regularly, at intervals depending on the hierarchy of the road and type of survey being carried out.

¹⁴ [Manual for the Streets](#)

¹⁵ [Residential Design Guide - Staffordshire County Council](#)

¹⁶ [Standards For Highways | Design Manual for Roads and Bridges \(DMRB\)](#)

The Council's Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice¹⁷ details the safety inspection regime which forms a key part of the Council's strategy for managing risk. It comprises the following elements:

- Frequency (and mode) of inspections
- Items for inspection
- Degree of deficiency
- Nature of response

Risk based Inspection Frequency

Where a road use changes or reports have been received regularly and/or reactive works have been carried out regularly, safety inspection frequency may be altered, (this may include the use of additional inspections). Similarly, surfacing schemes may trigger a review of the inspection frequency for a certain area due to the reduction in risk. Frequency changes will be determined via risk assessment that takes account of the above considerations and will be reviewed by Highway Services and recorded by the Highway Asset Manager (with the reason for doing so) annually or following a significant change.

A separate guidance document is provided for an inspector that sets out what and how the inspection should be undertaken. This provides guidance on the risk based approach detailed within this plan to establish a response time to defects identified.

Defect Investigation Levels

When assessing the risk associated with defects consideration will be given to its location, the volume of traffic, the nature of such traffic, usage by children, elderly and disabled persons, and the extent of visibility at the site amongst other considerations. The code of practice, Well-managed Highway Infrastructure, does not set out specific intervention levels and refers to legal precedents.

Recording Defects

All highway defects which are noted should be recorded on the mobile devices. To ensure the repair team can quickly identify the precise defect, it is essential that the information provided is simple and easily understood. In order to locate a defect effectively, the repair team records the following information:

- The location of the defect along the length of the highway.
- The position of the defect across the width of the highway

¹⁷ [Highway Safety Inspections Code of Practice - Staffordshire County Council](#)

- The size and type of defect

Defect Response Times

The response times commence from the time that the County Council first become aware of the existence of a defect (i.e., if the Authority is notified via electronic mail, it first becomes aware of the defect when the electronic mail is opened). This is particularly important in relation to defects which require an urgent response. Because the 24-hour response time starts when the County Council is first informed of the defect by a member of the public, only Customer Enquiry reports that are attributed as emergencies will potentially become Category 1 defects. In relation to defects noted by the highway inspector the 24-hour response time commences from the point that the defect was noted.

Out of Hours

Defects identified out of normal working hours are reported to the out of hours Duty Officer (Highways) via the call centre, who will respond based on the information provided by the reporter and in accordance with the risk table in the Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice. If insufficient information is available, then the defect will be considered very high risk and the appropriate response made. Provision is made for an appropriate response during non-working days via the out of hours team and/or the Duty Officer (Highways).

The Duty Officer has a guidance document to ensure that they are able to ensure appropriate responses are taken to ensure a safe network.

Timescales are designed to enable highway defects to be, wherever practicable, actioned by a permanent repair. This balances the immediate risk posed to highway users with the ongoing risk that will be posed as a consequence of a failed temporary repair. In some situations, it may be necessary to respond to certain defects as an emergency, responding as soon as possible (within 2 hours).

When action has been undertaken by the out of hours service that requires a follow up, such as a temporary repair, this will be recorded on the Confirm system for follow up by the normal working hours team.

RECOMMENDATION 17 – CONDITION SURVEYS

An asset condition survey regime, based on asset management needs and any statutory reporting requirements, should be developed, and implemented.

The purpose of highway data collection is two-fold. Firstly, to provide up to date accurate and reliable data to inform operational decisions. Secondly, to co-ordinate the required data gathering to ensure that funding decisions are informed by appropriate, current, and reliable data.

The condition data collection strategy utilises a range of survey types that are either machine based or interpretive, based on a visual engineering observation of whole streets and routes either by high-definition video or on-site survey. The network hierarchy has a large part to play in the selection of survey method and the subsequent maintenance strategy.

3.9. MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, RECORDING AND MONITORING OF INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION 18 – MANAGEMENT OF SYSTEMS AND CLAIMS

Records should be kept of all activities, particularly safety and other inspections, including the time and nature of any response, and procedures established to ensure efficient management of claims whilst protecting the authority from unjustified or fraudulent claims.

Inspection information, maintenance activities and correspondence regarding enquiries are recorded in the Confirm asset management system. These records are utilised for performance monitoring and in the investigation of claims. The procedures for dealing with claims managed within the Council's Insurance Services team include activities to detect and prevent unjustified and fraudulent claims.

Oversight of the systems and processes is provided by the Insurance Claims Delivery Project Team (DPT) which consists of key staff from the county council's insurance, highways and claims teams and the infrastructure partner Amey.

RECOMMENDATION 19 – DEFECT REPAIR

A risk-based defect repair regime should be developed and implemented for all highway assets.

During a safety inspection, where a defect is observed that may be considered a risk, details are recorded, and a risk assessment undertaken. This information is recorded in the asset management computer programme system Confirm. The risk assessment will determine the time

scale for potential repair that is detailed in the risk matrix detailed in the SCC Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice.

All other issues identified are either added to the respective works programme or monitored at future inspections.

3.10. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTATION

RECOMMENDATION 21 – CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The effects of extreme weather events on highway infrastructure assets should be risk assessed and ways to mitigate the impacts of the highest risks identified.

In July 2019 the Council declared a climate change emergency to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across every aspect of our service provision and estate.

To demonstrate a commitment to taking action to reduce climate change impacts we have released a Climate Change Strategic Development Framework and climate change action plan outlining how we are to tackle the council's emissions now and in the future.

The climate change action plan includes a number of highway related actions including reviewing street lighting operation and energy, reviewing fleet operations, reviewing grass verge maintenance, flood management and increasing tree cover.

RECOMMENDATION 22 – DRAINAGE MAINTENANCE

Drainage assets should be maintained in good working order to reduce the threat and scale of flooding. Particular attention should be paid to locations known to be prone to problems, so that drainage systems operate close to their designed efficiency.

The highway drainage system in Staffordshire is designed to take water away from the road surface. We have a total gully asset level of in the region of 165,000 gullies, therefore, associated works are prioritised accordingly.

We operate a cleaning schedule to routinely clean the gullies throughout Staffordshire, using data collated in recent years the frequency of the cleansing is determined by the silt levels readings and road classification.

In addition to a routine cleaning schedule, ad-hoc cleansing operations take place 1 to 2 days a week in targeted locations based on risk assessed priority.

Other drainage asset such as trash screens are on designated cyclical inspection and cleansing regimes.

RECOMMENDATION 23 – CIVIL EMERGENCIES AND SEVERE WEATHER EMERGENCY PLANS

The role and responsibilities of the Highway Authority in responding to civil emergencies should be defined in the authority's Civil Emergency Plan. A Severe Weather Emergencies Plan should also be established in consultation with others, including emergency services, relevant authorities, and agencies. It should include operational, resource and contingency plans and procedures to enable timely and effective action by the Highway Authority to mitigate the effects of severe weather on the network and provide the best practicable service in the circumstances.

Detailed information on Staffordshire's approach to planning for and dealing with civil and severe weather emergencies can be found on the authority's website

Emergencies that may affect Staffordshire include flooding, severe weather, major transport accidents, industrial accidents, outbreaks of disease including flu pandemics and terrorist incidents.

To prepare for possible emergencies within the county the authority will:

- assess local risks in order to identify what needs to be planned for
- write and review emergency plans
- train and exercise with other key organisations to enhance the management of an emergency
- ensure that Staffordshire County Council has plans in place to deliver important services to the public during an emergency.

The County Council also helps to support the emergency services and other organisations with their emergency response in a number of ways:

- arranging emergency accommodation should members of the public be evacuated from their homes
- providing emergency transport to move members of the public from the scene of an emergency to a safe location

- co-ordinating services that the County Council provides which are required as part of the emergency response
- contributing to the running of assistance centres. Assistance centres will be set up in the aftermath of a major emergency to act as a focal point for information and assistance to families and friends of those missing, injured or killed, and to survivors
- providing information to the public
- providing advice and assistance to major sporting venues to ensure that they are prepared for emergencies
- providing guidance to Parish Councils and other community groups, to help communities prepare for emergencies
- providing emergency planning guidance to schools.
- Facilitating community self-help during flooding events- Marchington flood warden's scheme

The County Council provides this as a key partner of the Staffordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF)¹⁸, which is a partnership of local agencies engaged in resilience and response.

Recommendation 24 – COMMUNICATIONS

Severe Weather and Civil Emergencies Plans should incorporate a communications plan to ensure that information including weather and flood forecasts are received through agreed channels and that information is disseminated to highway users through a range of media.

The County Council uses its web pages, along with social media platforms, local radio, and television stations to communicate information updates and advice when disruptions occur. This takes the form of both self-service, whereby people can check for information themselves, or sign up for updates as required.

Recommendation 25 – LEARNING FROM EVENTS

Severe Weather and Civil Emergencies Plans should be regularly rehearsed and refined as necessary. The effectiveness of the Plans should be reviewed after actual events and the learning used to develop them as necessary.

The County Council is a key partner of the Staffordshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF), The strategic aim of the Local Resilience Forum is to establish

¹⁸ [Staffordshire Prepared - Staffordshire LRF](#)

and maintain effective multi-agency arrangements to respond to major emergencies, to minimise the impact of those emergencies on the public, property and environment of Staffordshire and to satisfy fully the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act¹⁹. Knowledge is shared across the forum, especially post event.

Recommendation 26 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

A performance management framework should be developed that is clear and accessible to stakeholders as appropriate and supports the asset management strategy.

Recommendation 27 – PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The performance of the Asset Management Framework should be monitored and reported. It should be reviewed regularly by senior decision makers and when appropriate, improvement actions should be taken.

The County Council monitors its service levels through a range of performance indicators which are routinely reported to senior management for review. These indicators are managed through the Authority's performance management system with the associated data being produced from the asset management systems and external sources such as NHT.

Continual service reviews through monthly development project team meetings are an integral part of the strategic partnership with outturn performance Indicators reported to the Operational Commissioning Board on a monthly basis along with actions required and/or implemented as a result of any under-performance.

Operational Commissioning Board (OCB) comprises of Staffordshire County Council and Amey senior leadership team; its primary objective is to lead the performance of the services and contractual requirements involved in providing the services to enable the Partnership to meet the outcomes. It considers issues raised through the Delivery Project Teams (DPT) and disseminates decisions back. DPTs deliver the services and enable the partnership to meet the outcomes whilst achieving best value for the county council. The partnership is monitored at a number of board levels through a suite of key performance and operational performance indicators.

¹⁹ [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

3.11. FINANCING OF HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE

Recommendation 28 – FINANCIAL PLANS

Financial plans should be prepared for all highway maintenance activities covering short, medium- and long-term time horizons.

Highway maintenance and services are developed, delivered, and measured through a Forward Programme and Annual Plan. These plans will both inform and be prepared in line with the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy with the aim of delivering its long-term objectives.

This Plan sets out how the risk to highway users is managed in a robust and cost-effective way and the Council can demonstrate a thorough and reasonable system of inspection and repair, whilst delivering on the wider objectives across all assets, as expressed through this HIAMP and other related policies and plans.

Maintenance in local highway authorities is funded through a combination of capital and revenue funding. Capital funds come in part via the local highway's maintenance block funding from DfT while revenue comes from MHCLG. There is a consensus about the need to invest in infrastructure, including local highways maintenance with a long-term perspective. It is the uncertainty of future funding which hinders the authority in its medium to long term financial planning.

Recommendation 29 – LIFECYCLE PLANS

Lifecycle planning principles should be used to review the level of funding, support investment decisions and substantiate the need for appropriate and sustainable long-term investment.

Through our highway asset management planning we develop specific lifecycle plans for major assets that detail how we will collect information about condition and then utilise, when resources allow, a system of planned interventions designed to preserve, maintain and enhance our highway assets. This will take account of the following factors:

- Minimising whole-life cost and maximising cost/benefit
- Risk-based approach
- Network priorities and policies set out in the Local Transport Plan and service level plans.
- Agreed levels of service

- Carbon reduction measures

When allocating resources and the delivery of planned interventions across highway assets, we will use the standards and risk-based approach outlined in this plan to deliver, as a minimum, maintenance activities with the intention of maintaining the highway and maintaining highway safety in a reasonably practicable way. To ensure that the Council meets its duty towards the maintenance of the highway across its full extent it is essential that resources are directed towards the highest priorities and deploy the most effective ways to address these. This plan seeks to address this issue through a risk-based approach.

3.12. PRIORITIES AND PROGRAMMING

Recommendation 30 – CROSS ASSET PRIORITIES

In developing priorities and programmes, consideration should be given to prioritising across asset groups as well as within them.

Staffordshire has a 'Whole Street Approach' strategy in place which aims to consider all assets in terms of lifecycle and condition and to pick the optimum time for works to be carried out whilst looking to consider other assets which may also be in or close to their respective maintenance 'window' and works on these can be brought forward in conjunction with the initial identified works to reduce the scale and frequency of disruption to the public.

We are developing an approach to cross-asset prioritisation which will be utilised to understand the budgetary and maintenance requirements of all highway assets holistically and how best to maintain the network in a safe, reliable and sustainable manner.

Recommendation 31 – WORKS PROGRAMMING

A prioritised forward works programme for a rolling period of three to five years should be developed and updated regularly.

All the key asset types have individual work programmes covering more than one year, with support for a 5-year outline programme. The individual asset type maintenance programmes are developed from asset condition data, priorities, and budgets, resulting in a single year detailed programme of work and indicative future programmes for further years.

Co-ordination of these programmes relies on reviews of work planned for the year, finalised after the Council budget setting process. The adoption of a longer-term work programme supports greater efficiencies in co-ordinating works on the highway. In addition, it facilitates the identification of more cost-effective solutions.

3.13. SUSTAINABILITY AND HIGHWAY INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation 32 – CARBON

The impact of highway infrastructure maintenance activities in terms of whole life carbon costs should be taken into account when determining appropriate interventions, materials, and treatments.

Sustainability is a key part of the Council's vision. A four-year plan to reduce the county council's carbon emissions to help tackle climate change and support the authority in achieving a net zero carbon target by 2050 has been launched.

The plan sets out a series of actions up to 2025 to cut carbon further, improve air quality, reduce waste, improve the natural environment, and support people in changing their behaviour to become more environmentally friendly.

The delivery of highway maintenance is undertaken in accordance with good environmental management procedures outlined in the plan so as to minimise environmental impact and sustain Staffordshire's biodiversity and character.

In the selection of materials, and treatment, the environmental impact is considered. We aim to maximise the environmental contribution and sustain the county's biodiversity, character, and heritage by the adoption of good environmental management procedures in highway maintenance works.

Whilst most works are undertaken in accordance with approved works specifications, it is recognised that this should not limit the Council's ability to promote Environmental Sustainability. We promote value and innovation to drive continuous improvement. In each case departures from the approved standards will only take place following an assessment of risk, and with approval of the Highway Asset Manager and Asset Management Delivery Project Team.

Recommendation 33 – CONSISTENCY WITH CHARACTER

Determination of materials, products and treatments for the highway network should take into account the character of the area as well as factoring in whole life costing and sustainability. The materials, products and treatments used for highway maintenance should meet requirements for effectiveness and durability.

The overall street characteristics in conservation and other areas is important to maintain the heritage of a local area and its visual appearance and character. This can be tied to local street attributes, types of asset and materials used. Wherever possible, materials are maintained like for like in such areas with any changes being highlighted through the project control measures. This may involve consultation and incorporating defined requirements from other bodies or local considerations.

The priority for Staffordshire is to have a safe system of roads for the travelling public to use. If there is a conflict between safety and conservation, safety will be given a higher importance.

Recommendation 34 – HERITAGE ASSETS

Authorities should identify a schedule of listed structures, ancient monuments and other relevant assets and work with relevant organisations to ensure that maintenance reflects planning requirements.

Staffordshire has a diverse range of historic landscapes, buildings, settlements, archaeological sites, and monuments which reflect the county's own distinct character. The historic environment provides a sense of identity and belonging for its communities, is a valuable resource for education and enjoyment and can also be seen as a force for regeneration in Staffordshire.

The County Council's Historic Environment service is responsible for providing advice and guidance on the management and conservation of Staffordshire's archaeology, its historic buildings and its historic landscape. It is also responsible for the management and development of the Historic Environment Record.

The Historic Environment Record²⁰ can be accessed online via the Heritage Gateway website. Some information is also available through these maps.

²⁰ [Historic Environment Record - Staffordshire County Council](#)

SCC maintains an inventory of its 'structures' with particular attention to bridges that are either national monuments or are Grade listed.

Recommendation 35 – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, NATURE, CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Materials, products, and treatments for highway infrastructure maintenance should be appraised for environmental impact and for wider issues of sustainability. Highway verges, trees and landscaped areas should be managed with regard to their nature conservation value and biodiversity principles as well as whole-life costing, highway safety and serviceability.

This HIAMP recognises the benefits of choosing appropriate materials and techniques to cause least impact to the environment, to be able to cater for increasingly adverse weather conditions as well as minimising whole life costs and improving safety and serviceability.

Recommendation 36 – MINIMISING CLUTTER

Opportunities to simplify signs and other street furniture and to remove redundant items should be taken into account when planning highway infrastructure maintenance activities.

Staffordshire work with local planning authorities and developers through the development process, to improve the layout and design of streets, and remove any unnecessary clutter both in connection with new development and publicly promoted projects.

Identifying and removing superfluous or redundant items of street furniture and encouraging the co-location of signs to reduce unnecessary street clutter is routinely undertaken through day-to-day inspection and maintenance activities.

Part 4: Implementing Asset Management Principles in Highways

4.1. UNDERSTANDING THE ASSETS WE MANAGE

The highway network is made up of a diverse range of assets including around 6,200 kilometres of roads, more than 1,000 structures, 150,000 roadside drains, 475,000 trees, 108,000 streetlights as well as 4,200 kilometres of footways and over 550 traffic signal sites. The replacement value of these assets is estimated to be in the region of £7.5 billion. We understand different assets have different characteristics and so need to be managed differently.

Figure 2 – SCC Key Highway Assets Overview

Our Key Highway Assets at a Glance					
					
Carriageway	Footways & Cycleways	Structures	Streetlights	Traffic Signals	Drainage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6,200km of roads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4,560km of footway and cycleway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1,234 Bridges 6 Reservoirs 200km of Retaining walls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 115,000 streetlights and illuminated signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 553 Traffic Signal Sites 261 Electronic warning signs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 165,000 gullies, catchpits, headwalls

Other assets such as unlit signs, road markings and street furniture are critical to the safe and expeditious movement of highway users around the county, but we have no reliable record of their location or number.

4.1.1. Asset Information

Understanding both our assets and the effect they have on each other is central to effective asset management and informed decision making. We therefore do not consider the asset groups in isolation but as an integrated whole.

The information we need can be broken down into three categories:

- **Inventory and Condition Information**

This data describes the full extent of an asset and can include location, age, size, construction, and details of previous maintenance. Examples of how we collect this data include digitalisation of historic records and data collection exercises included as part of routine maintenance works.

Inventory and condition information helps us to plan maintenance activities and communicate with the public. It also helps us to understand the cost of replacing our assets with equivalent new assets.

- **Performance Information**

This is the data we use to determine whether assets are doing what we need them to do to keep the highway safe, reliable, and meeting the needs of our residents, businesses, visitors, and local communities. Examples of how we collect this data include condition surveys, routine inspections and testing, customer enquiries, third party claims, records of damage to highway assets, traffic flows and energy bills.

This data helps us to understand where we need to carry out maintenance activities, where our assets are going to need replacing now or in the future and where we need to think about changing, adding, or removing assets. It also helps us to understand the cost of replacing an asset with its modern equivalent, less deductions for all physical deteriorations.

- **Financial Information**

This is the data we use to assess cost: for example, how much it will cost to maintain or replace an asset or how much it will cost to deliver a certain level of service.

4.1.2. Collection of Asset Information

We continually collect information about our new, replacement and improved assets. It is important that the data we collect is accurate, reliable, and useful but data collection can be expensive. We therefore take a risk-based approach to the collection of information, prioritising high risk assets and information that will support our approach to asset management.

The quality, appropriateness and completeness of our asset data are reviewed regularly by our asset custodians, as part of the Asset

Information Plan, to ensure that it fully supports our approach to asset management.

4.1.3. Storage of Asset Information

We store all collected asset data, for each asset group, in an appropriate asset management system in a cost effective and appropriate format to ensure it is readily available to those that need it. Effective asset management relies on systems that can be used to support decision making at all levels.

Our asset inventory, condition and defect data are currently stored and interpreted in a number of ways.

Table 2 – Highway Asset Management Systems

Asset Group	Systems Used
Carriageways and Footways	Confirm, WDM Manager, Horizons. Gaist AssetView
Drainage	Confirm
Bridges, Tunnels & Highway Structures	Confirm
Street Lighting	PFI provided
Intelligent Traffic Systems	Information Management for Traffic Control (IMTRAC)
Soft Landscape	We do not electronically record details of this asset
Safety Barriers	We do not record details of this asset
Unlit Signs, Lines & Cats' Eyes	We do not record details of this asset
Street furniture	We only record a very small proportion of this asset

The systems that we use are also regularly reviewed and monitored by Asset Custodians through the Asset Data Management Strategy. This enables us to ensure that they are providing reliable information in a format that can be used to inform the delivery of our highway maintenance, renewals, and improvements effectively.

4.2. LIFECYCLE PLANNING

The objectives of lifecycle planning are stated by the UK Roads Liaison Group in the Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Guidance as:

- Identify long term investment for highway infrastructure assets and develop an appropriate maintenance strategy.
- Support decision making, the case for investing in maintenance activities and demonstrate the impact of different funding scenarios.
- Predict future performance of highway infrastructure assets for different levels of investment and different maintenance strategies

Lifecycle planning has been undertaken as part of the development of the Asset Management Strategy and provides an outline of the long-term plans and funding requirements for the key asset groups (carriageways, footways, structures, street lighting and signals) to maintain the required levels of service at the lowest whole life cost.

The County Council has undertaken considerable investment in systems and surveys to collect and manage inventory and condition information on the carriageway and this data is utilised to:

- Assess the long-term funding requirements for the maintenance of the network.
- Assess priorities for required maintenance.
- Develop the programme of maintenance schemes.
- Design detailed treatments for the H1 and H2 network.

SCC has reviewed and evaluated various options to assist with lifecycle planning. Following detailed evaluation of options, the county council decided to build upon its existing systems and processes for deterioration and budget modelling which are also utilised for scheme identification, evaluation, and prioritisation.

Building on past experience of in-house deterioration modelling and following the principles of the HMEP Toolkit and other lifecycle planning options, current and historic condition data is used to develop local deterioration curves for all carriageway classes.

4.3. FORWARD WORKS PROGRAMMES

Forward works programmes provide an effective and efficient way of delivering maintenance, repairs, and improvements. They enable prioritisation and optimisation of schemes to meet available budgets.

Identifying work will involve the consideration of current condition of the asset against the required performance and consideration of risk. Local intelligence is an important part of this process, not only to inform about constraints but also to provide engineering solutions which takes into account locally known risks. Prioritisation of the work ensures that for the resources available the County Council generates the maximum value. The

precise process will be tailored to the individual asset groups according to the strategies set out in the life cycle plans but the resources and delivery are considered together as in integrated programme of work.

Developing a works programme is a seven-stage process:

4.3.1. Identification

Potential schemes may be identified from a range of sources including inspections, surveys, local knowledge, customer enquiries, complaints, risk and wider transport or corporate objectives. These schemes are collated into an initial works programme for each asset group.

4.3.2. Prioritisation

The following things are considered when prioritising schemes:

- the maintenance hierarchy of the road
- the safety of road users
- the impact on the movement of traffic if the asset fails
- value for money
- the cost of bringing forward or delaying works
- the lifecycle cost of our highway asset
- the impact on future use of the highway
- the environmental impact
- the impact on the community including damage to property or impacts on local businesses
- integrate all modes, especially active travel, and support modal shift
- local development plans
- planned and potential utility and third party works

4.3.3. Selection

A candidate lists of schemes for each asset group are combined, costed, and listed in priority order. A notional "cut off" point is then determined by totalling up the cost to the point where the budget is fully utilised.

4.3.4. Member Engagement

In order that local priorities are reflected in the planned maintenance programme the candidate list will be consulted on with Local Committees so that members have sight of current and future years work programmes and can prioritise schemes with a particular local importance.

4.3.5. Programming & Optimisation

Selected schemes are optimised within the works programme, based on many factors including deliverability. This is done by coordinating or combining works to minimise both cost and disruption.

Utility companies are a key consultees to manage not only short term and mid-term co-ordination but to also determine where utility companies may have assets that are towards the end of their life but not programmed for replacement at that time.

4.3.6. Approval

Cabinet members will be asked to approve the Highways Capital Programme each year.

4.3.7. Delivery

Finally, a multi-year works programme is confirmed and delivered from the available budget.

We publish our programmes of work on our website, so that members of the public can see where and when we plan to do works.

The Forward Works Plan is currently focused on the carriageway asset group, with a developing footway, drainage, structures, and traffic signals programme. The remaining assets comprising asset such as vehicle restraint systems are being identified and the business case developed for them to be surveyed in time.

The Forward Works Plan will:

- Provide a work bank that can be prioritised in the Council's annual service/works plan within the available budget
- Show the individual asset group and collective works required over the 1, 3 and 5 years forward works plan
- Identify the levels of backlog present
- Show how the backlog will continue to grow if expenditure does not meet the plan requirements
- Enable the timescale of the plan to be adjusted to best tackle the maintenance required to reduce the backlog and provide the agreed Levels of Service.

The prioritisation of the schemes identified within the forward programme will be determined annually by available budget, condition, and risk.

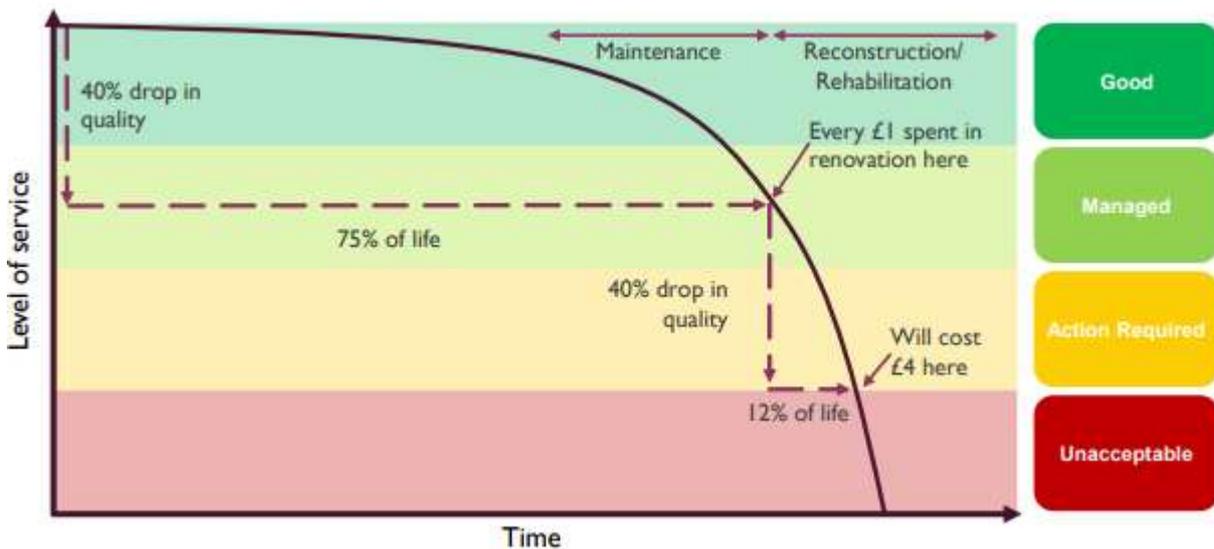
4.4. The Right Intervention at the Right Time

In line with Staffordshire's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy, the authority is committed to an asset management approach encompassing the benefits of whole cost life cycle ensuring the most effective and efficient use of the available highway budget to ensure the appropriate treatment is utilised at the right time, focussed on preventative work and prioritising high risk safety defects for repair.

Preventative maintenance by surface treatments early in the life of a road is significantly more cost effective (typically £5-£10 sq./m) than allowing roads to deteriorate to the point where they require replacement (£40-£100/sq./m) or continuous repairs to potholes. Where pre-surface treatment preparation is required, it should always be specified and undertaken with the principle that any preparatory works should exceed the life of the treatment.

Figure xx below illustrates how effective asset management and early treatment can significantly extend the life of the asset and is a fundamental part of the County Councils Highway Infrastructure asset management.

Figure 3 – Highway Asset Lifecycle



The use of preventative maintenance such as surface dressing during the 'managed' life of the pavement, combined with subsequent further treatment can significantly extend the period of time until replacement is eventually required.

Leaving maintenance work until later in the pavements life results in the formation of defects and, replacement of the surface and/or underlying structure at significantly increased cost as noted above. For every £1 spent on preventative maintenance undertaken in the 'managed' stage of a

pavements life it will cost £4 if maintenance is delayed until the asset becomes unacceptable.

4.5. SUSTAINABLE MATERIAL CHOICES

4.5.1. Re-use of Materials

To facilitate the re-use of materials, specifications will be amended, where technically and financially feasible, to enable the incorporation of recycled material. Traditional materials will, wherever practicable, be re-used, in-situ, or taken up and re-used, or stored for re-use elsewhere.

Traditional materials include York stone, brick pavements, granite kerbs, setts, kidney stone cobbles amongst others.

4.5.2. Materials Sympathetic to the Environment

The selection of materials to be used in highway works in conservation areas, will take into consideration the adjacent buildings and surrounding environment.

During normal structural maintenance operations and design of new works, a choice of different types of material is frequently available. Examples:

- Kerbs – choice of colour and material.
- Paving – natural or artificial.
- Surfacing – choice of materials and colours.
- Street lighting – choice of lanterns, light source, column style.

4.5.3. Maintainability

When selecting materials and surface finishes, it is important to take account of the durability and maintainability of the work in question. The use of 'innovative' materials and surface treatments including coloured asphalt should be avoided where the ability to maintain them in a cost effective and straight forward manner, or the availability of replacement materials is in question.

4.6. MEASURING SUCCESS

We follow an asset management approach to deliver the following benefits:

- a service that is shaped by the needs of our residents, communities, visitors, and businesses now and in the future
- a service that makes best use of the available resources, maximising efficiency to meet with our legal obligations

- a service that is resilient and able to respond to changes and financial challenges.

It is important that we record and demonstrate that these benefits are being delivered. We can do so at a number of levels and in a number of ways:

4.6.1. Monitoring Outcomes

We ensure that our approach is being implemented as planned and is delivering the intended outcomes. For example, if our maintenance strategy for roads is to ensure that 85% of our main roads are in good or very good condition, we need to carry out condition assessments to determine whether or not this is being achieved.

By routinely monitoring outcomes and reporting on their delivery we can ensure that we remain focused on the needs of our residents, businesses, visitors and communities, meeting with our legal obligations and responding to changes and financial challenges. Whilst our approach to highways asset management and our forward works programme should be considered multi-year activities, the delivery of outcomes is reviewed and reported on annually through a number of channels.

4.6.2. Performance Measures and Targets

We use a range of metrics and targets to monitor our performance against our levels of service and determine how well we are delivering the intended benefits.

Examples of these measures and targets include national indicators such as the Road Condition Indicators which measure the overall condition of our carriageway asset, the percentage of residents satisfied with the highway service, and the number of damage and personal injury claims upheld against us.

By reviewing performance, we can ensure that we are continuously improving the way we work. We routinely review the performance of the service, identify areas where performance is not where we would like it to be and understand why this is the case. Having recognised opportunities for improvement, options to address any issues are identified and implemented. Performance is reported on a regular basis to key decision makers, elected representatives and members of the public.

4.6.3. Benchmarking

By comparing our service with the services provided by others, we can identify better ways of working at all levels. For example, we might

compare the outcomes we are achieving using asset management with the outcomes other councils are achieving. Equally we might compare two of our own services, for example residents might be more satisfied with the street lighting service than they are with the drainage service. By comparing the two, lessons can be learnt, and improvements can be implemented.

We regularly participate in the National Highway and Transport (NHT) Network, a performance improvement organisation that enables members to measure, share and compare performance in order to identify areas for improvement. This is done through a number of key benchmark indicators, divided between six highway and transport themes. Currently over a hundred councils are members of the NHT network.

As well as allowing us to make a year-on-year comparison of public satisfaction with the service we provide it also enables us to compare the levels of satisfaction with our services to those achieved by other councils.

The NHT Network has also developed a consistent way of measuring and comparing efficiency within and between highway authorities. This is achieved in a balanced and objective way by providing a basis for assessment of performance by combining views of customers, from the NHT Public Satisfaction Survey, with quality and cost data provided by each individual member. We can then identify and implement service improvements.

4.7. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

SCC will discharge their maintenance activities within the following framework, aimed at safeguarding and sustaining the environment, and will:

- Work to enhance the quality of the environment by the use of appropriate materials and working practices.
- Maintain a balanced, disciplined and comprehensive approach, to judging the benefits to the community and adverse environmental impact of the maintenance work in question.
- Make systematic reviews of the impact of the County Council's maintenance activities on the environment.
- In considering the achievement of best value, maintenance managers will seek, to balance economic, environmental and social benefits.
- Seek to follow positive environmental policies in managing the County Council's maintenance operations.

- Ensure that, all concerned, are familiar with those aspects of environmental law which are relevant to their work.
- Keep up to date by seeking appropriate education and training in environmental matters.
- Encourage understanding of environmental issues, related to highway maintenance, amongst the communities of Staffordshire.

4.8. COMPETENCE AND TRAINING

The County Council recognises that competencies and training are critical to the delivery of this plan. Effective management of the highway network requires professional well-trained staff. A competency framework is used to identify the individual competency requirements. All staff will be assessed against this framework as part of the annual review process.

4.9. GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Asset management of highway infrastructure in Staffordshire will continue to develop following publication of this plan. The HIAMP document and its supporting information should evolve as learning is gathered. The delivery of this HIAMP will be overseen by the Operation Commissioning Board (OCB). A report on progress and recommendations for changes to the HIAMP will be provided to the Executive. It is anticipated that the document be formally reviewed at least every three years.

4.10. UNDERSTANDING DEMAND AND EXPECTATION

4.10.1. Asset Growth

The quantity of highway infrastructure assets, managed by the council, continues to grow on an annual basis due in the main to the development of land for housing, resulting in the adoption of the highway infrastructure assets. As these are relatively new at the adoption stage, it is anticipated that this additional infrastructure will have little impact on short term funding requirements, but the impacts will increase as the assets age.

Between 2010 to 2020 the highway network grew by 65km's (6.5km's a year) or the equivalent of 700,000m² of additional highway maintainable at public expense (HMPE). This level of growth is reflected in other asset groups, for example an additional 1,600 streetlights and 1,500 gullies' have become the responsibility of the authority.

New assets create the need for maintenance, management, and associated funding in future years as these additional assets age.

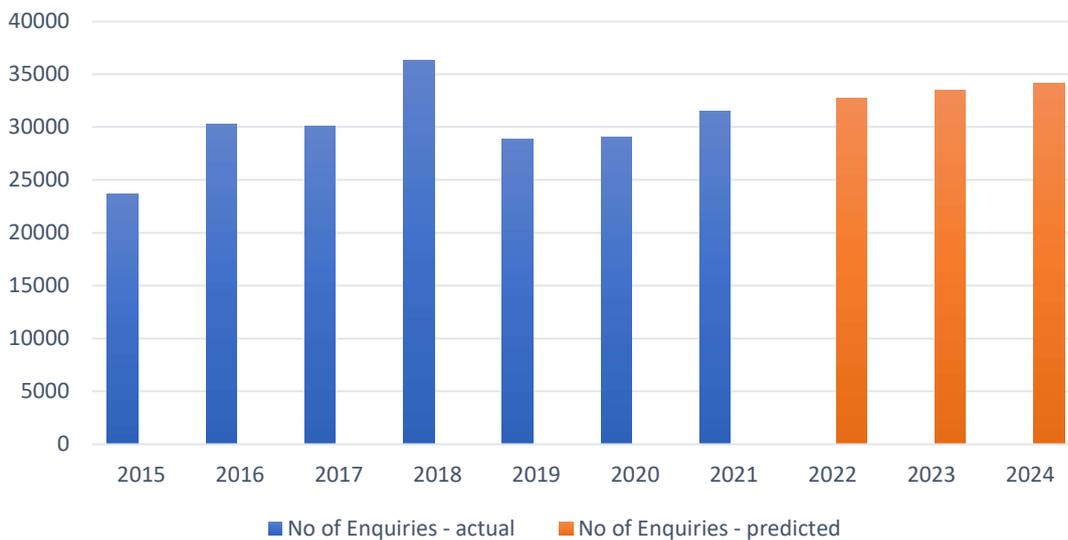
Across the course of its life for every km of road that becomes maintainable at highways expense the council will have to find £25k. With around 6.5km’s per a year becoming HMPE it means an average additional maintenance burden of £162k per year.

4.10.2. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Users expect the county’s highway network to be safe, available and fit for purpose. Customer contacts regarding the majority of enquiries about roads are recorded in the highway maintenance management . Reports and enquiries about street lighting and intelligent transport systems (signals) are separately recorded and are not included in the figures below.

Excluding lighting and signals, the Council received more than 31,500 customer enquiries in 2021 relating to highways operations and structures. Although not all enquiries relate to asset condition, the level of enquiries is indicative of the importance placed on the highway asset. This figure has generally been increasing year on year since 2015 and at the current rate of increase is likely to reach over 34,000 by 2024, an additional 2,500 enquiries compared to 2021 which will place additional demands on the inspection team to respond to what could be the equivalent of over 90 enquiries to respond to each calendar day.

Chart 1 – Highway Asset Customer Enquiries

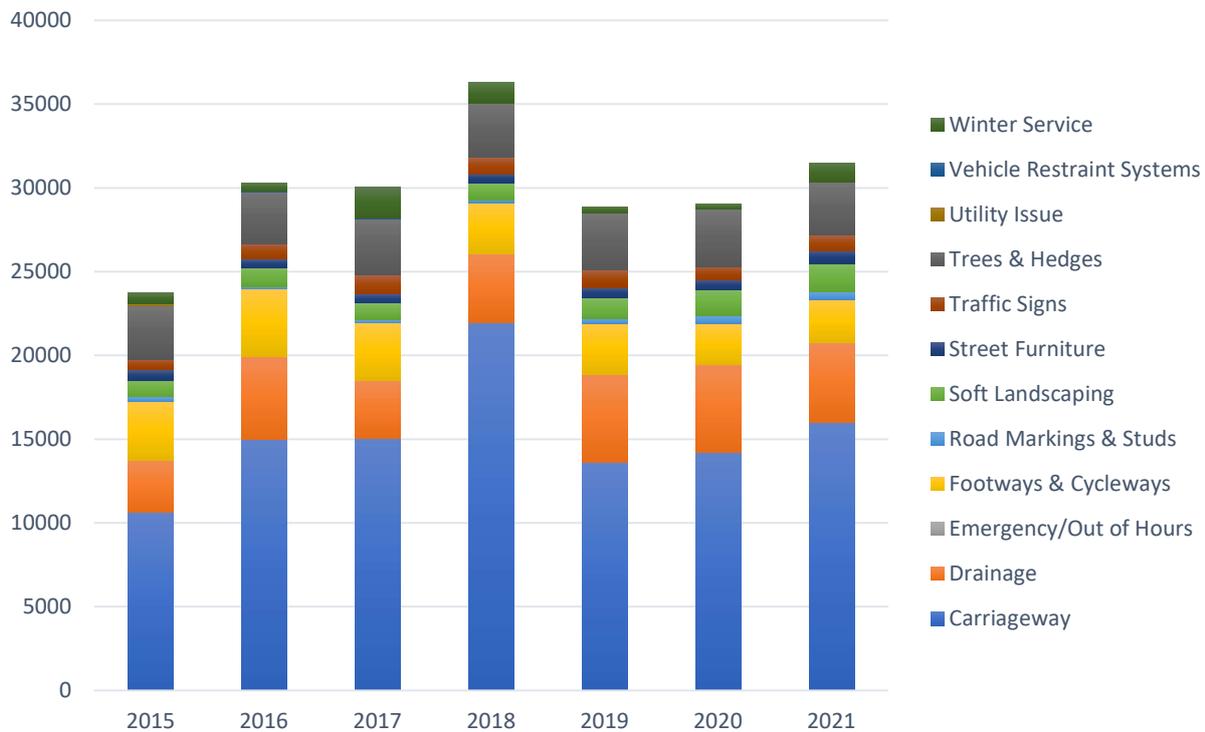


These enquiries provide an insight into the view and preferences of residents. The results of these enquiries have been reviewed as part of the preparation of this plan and a further breakdown is provided against each asset group in Volumes [1] to [13] where available. Further work will be carried out during the life of this plan to refine the reporting categories to improve the insight into each type of asset.

Analysis of results for the last three years indicate that almost eighty five percent of enquiries relate to four asset groups, 50% relate to the county’s

carriageways, 14% to with drainage, 10% to footway & cycleway 10% to trees and hedges (10%).

Chart 2 – Highway Asset Customer Enquiries by Asset Group



4.10.3. Complaints

4.10.4. Traffic Growth

Traffic growth has placed increasing pressure on the highway network. The average number of cars per household increased by 9% between 2003 and 2019 in the West Midlands²¹.

Much of the Council’s highway infrastructure was not designed to accommodate increasing levels of traffic. This has created a growing need for increased investment in the resilience and maintenance of the network.

The impact of large infrastructure projects also exacerbates the issue, for example, the vehicle movements associated with HS2 in the coming years will increase the rate of deterioration of some of the county’s more vulnerable ‘evolved’ roads.

4.10.5. Environmental Pressures

The Council considers how various climate change variables such as intense or prolonged rainfall; hotter temperatures and higher wind speed will

²¹ [Number of Cars in the UK 2022 | NimbleFins](#)

impact on the highway assets that we manage and the likelihood of these events occurring. By doing this the greatest generic risks to network closure or restriction can be identified. These are likely to be

- Flooding (pluvial, fluvial, groundwater and coastal)
- Snow
- Landslips
- Scour
- Wind damage
- Heat/water and frost damage

The latest UK Climate Projections, as developed by the Met Office and Environment Agency are used when assessing future risk and vulnerability. These projections for future changes to both average climatic conditions and also the frequency of extreme weather events, allow for an understanding of where risk levels may change, and the identification of new risks which may emerge as the climate changes. When applied alongside records of past incidents, and other information sources (such as flood maps), climate projections may also help to identify when and what action should be taken to adapt to the risks.

In order to ensure uninterrupted availability of the road network, measures need to be taken to increase the resilience of road transport infrastructure to weather extremes and climate change, which should address, in parallel, the other challenges the road maintenance industry is facing, such as challenges around the carbon-neutral strategy.

The main risks to the road surface associated with climate change are, depending on the climate zone, extreme heat and insolation, higher occurrence of heavy rain and temperature fluctuation around the freezing point.

To mitigate the effects of climate change the authority are having to improve our design specification which in turn increases costs. Some of the ways we are doing this are:

- Adjustment of bituminous mixture design which may include using binders with different characteristics to climatic conditions, including polymer modification of bitumen, and the selection of stronger aggregate matrix.
- Increased attention to all maintenance services, like cleaning and maintenance of drainage systems, removing of storm damage, sealing and dusting roads, pruning of brushes and snow and ice removal.

- Replacement of mature trees with more suitable species or with hedges and planting the vegetation at a sufficient distance from the road.

4.10.6. Risk and Insurance

2019/20 saw a 6% increase in Public Liability premium followed by a 30% increase in 2020/21, along with an increase with the excess from £250,000 to £500,000. While partially due to market conditions and insurers reviewing their entire Local Authority book, the primary driver is Highways claims.

2021/22 terms have been agreed with insurers with a further increase of 8% for the Public Liability risk. As we have not received any assurances from holding insurers regarding 2022 terms, the decision (with our brokers advice) has been made to go to tender for renewal 1/5/22.

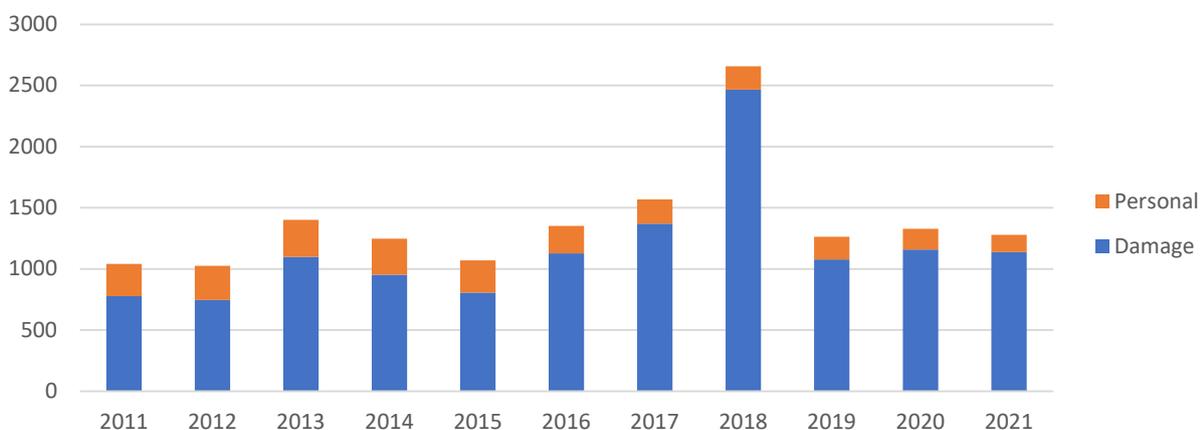
The insurance premium for all SCC public liability related risks 2021/22 is circa £925,000.

An analysis of claims over the past 5 years shows highways claims account for over 90% of all public liability claims made against the Council.

Claims for incidents on the carriageway account for the largest proportion of highway claims with nearly 90% recorded against this asset group.

Carriageway claims are generally for damage to vehicles caused by potholes. Other assets such as footways, cycleways and trees attract lower number of claims, but these are generally personal injury claims which can be significantly higher in liability value which makes the management of these assets equally as important.

Chart 3 – Highway Asset Claims – Damage vs Personal Injury



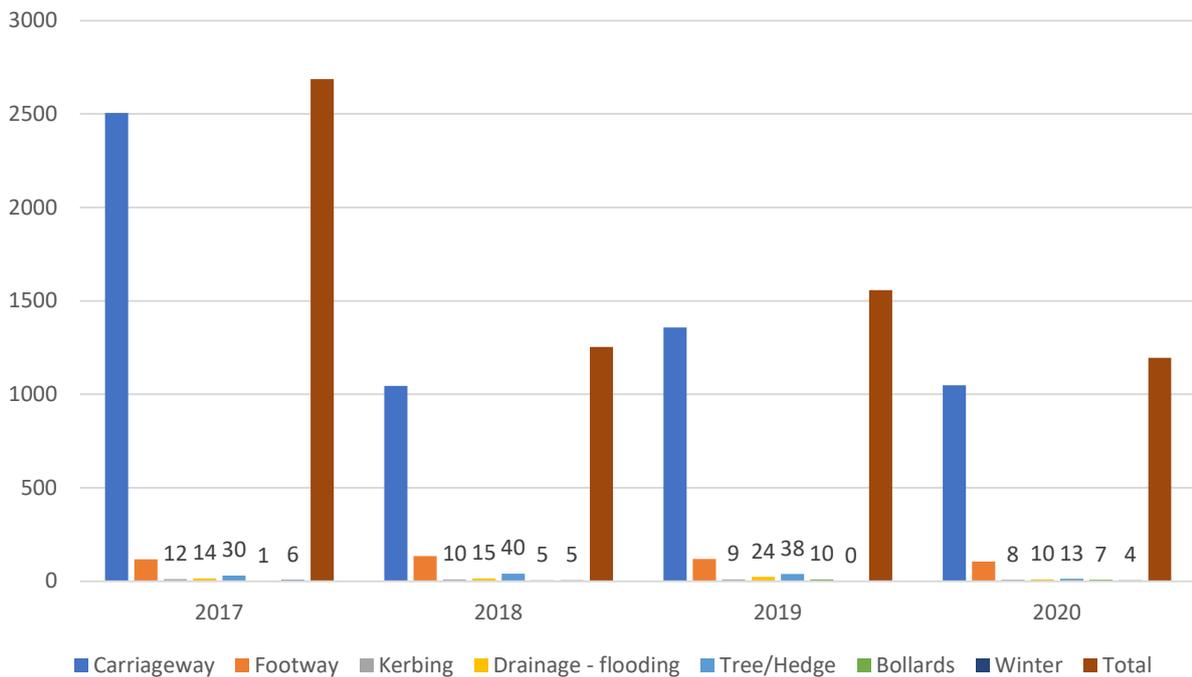
The average value of a personal injury claim is £4,945 whereas the average value of a damage claim is around £295.

Prior to the Covid related lockdown in 2021/22, claims volumes were at a record high, volumes exceeding those experienced in 2018. Levels did however drop due to the reduction in traffic volumes, an increase in volume has now occurred.

The authority is also seeing an increasing number of notices or potential notices served against it under Section 56 and 130 of the Highways Act 1980 for highways out of repair.

Chart 4 shows the number of highway claims by asset type for each of the last four year.

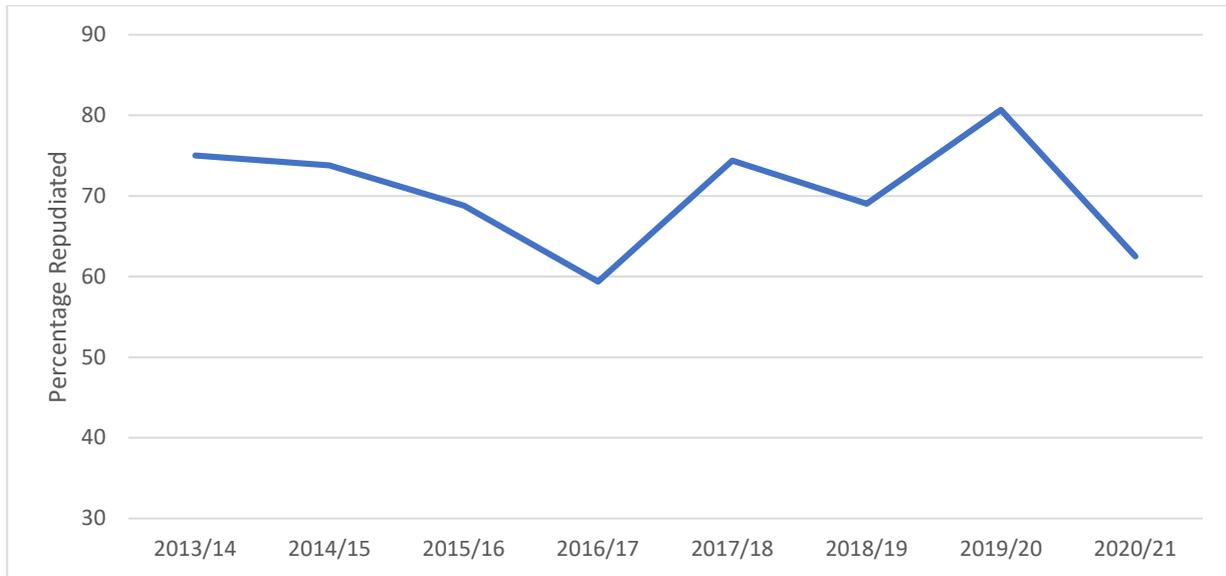
Chart 4 – Highway Asset Claims by Asset Group



The repudiation rate is a measure of the number of claims rejected by our claims team and is calculated by dividing the number of claims rejected by the total number of claims filed. This is a good measure of the success of the processes and systems the authority has in place for the inspection and repair of highway defects. The foundation of which is our special defence as per Section 58 of the Highways Act 1980.

Chart 5 shows our repudiation rate percentage across an 8-year period.

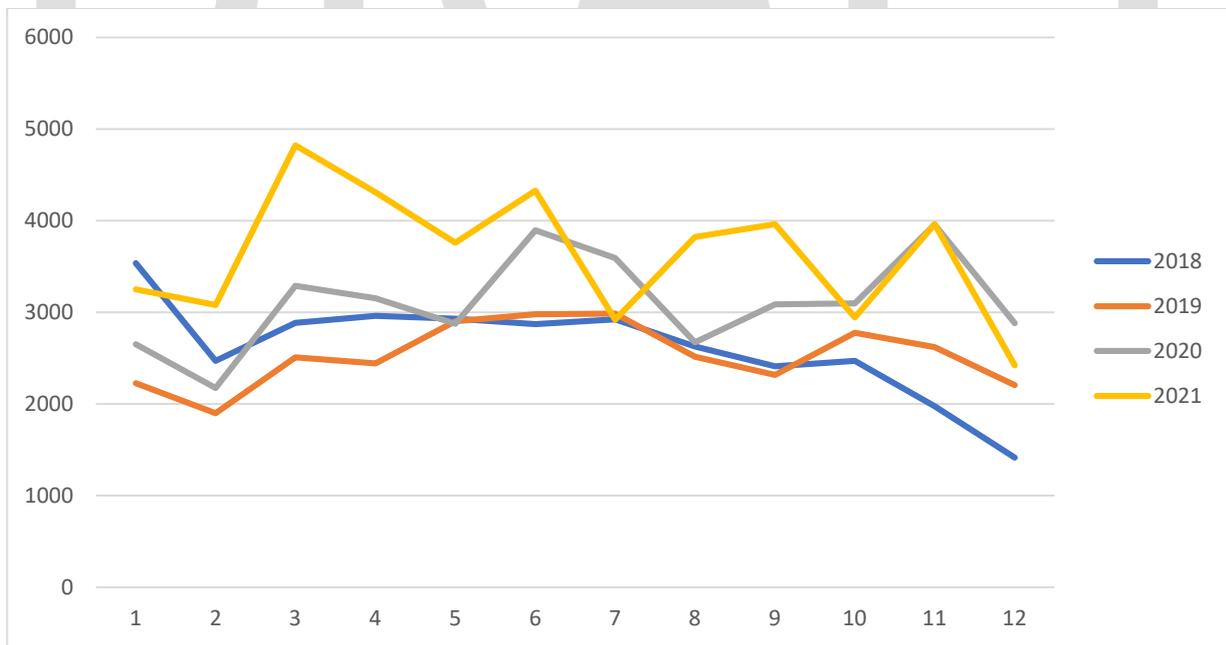
Chart 5 – Highway Asset Claims Repudiation Rate



4.10.7. Jobs

Chart 6 shows the number of jobs being raised each year since 2018 by month and year.

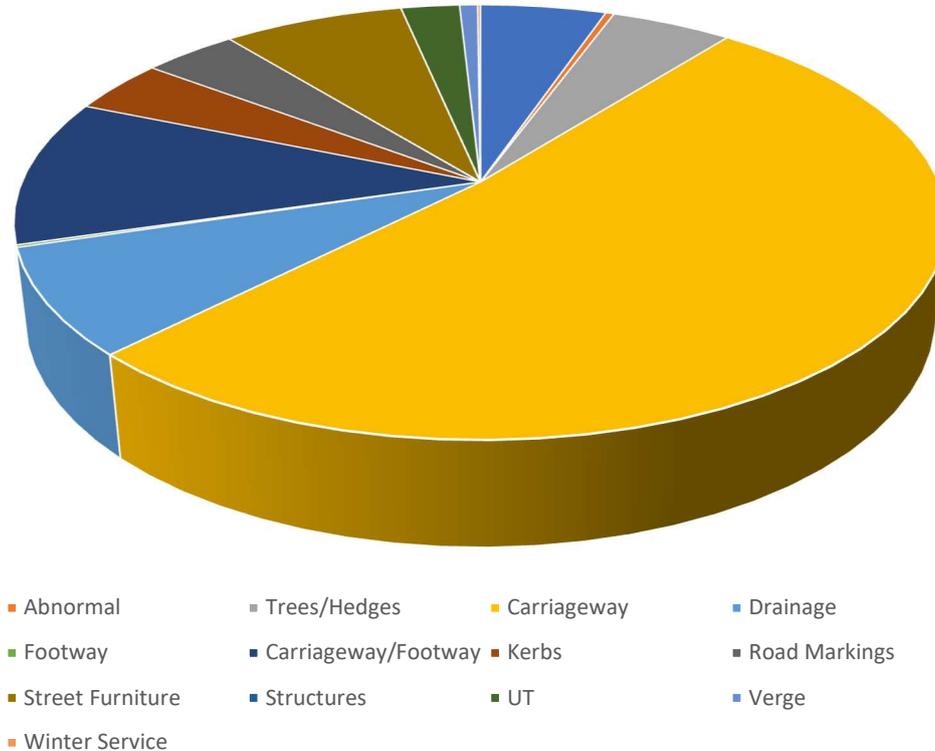
Chart 6 – Number of Highway Jobs Raised by Month and Year



The graph shows that the number of jobs being raised is increasing year on year. The increasing number of jobs is reflective of the increasing maintenance backlog and the deteriorating condition of highway infrastructure. 12,000 more jobs have been raised in 2021 than in 2019.

Chart 7 below shows that more than 60% of the jobs raised relate to carriageway works.

Chart 7 – Highway Jobs by Asset Type 2021



Many of the jobs will relate to reactive defect repairs rather than planned maintenance. In years gone by it was possible to address many of these defects from within existing highway budget, however, given the reduction in the highway maintenance funding such requests are now prioritised and where possible incorporated into the planned maintenance programme. The underfunding has resulted in a maintenance backlog of jobs work stack increasing

If the Council is to provide a service which meets the long-term needs and expectations of the county then a systematic, long-term approach to highways maintenance, needs to be adopted. Evidence suggests that investment should be focused on preventing potholes forming in the first place thereby reducing the number of reactive repairs and inefficiencies. Simply, allotting money in to reducing the 'work stack' of reactive repairs does little to arrest deterioration or improve the overall condition of the fabric of the highway network.

4.11. CROSS ASSET PRIORITISATION

The Council recognise that the current budget allocation is insufficient to manage the existing and growing level of backlog and the demands of a lifecycle planned approach to the maintenance of the Highway Assets.

The existing classified network has been reviewed and a more manageable maintenance hierarchy has been created which reflects the importance of routes and their use and takes a risk-based approach to the allocation of Levels of Service and associated performance.

However, despite taking these actions it remains impractical to rely on individual asset group prioritisation which effectively delivers a bit of everything but not necessarily what is required. For example, the highway network may be better served by prioritising carriageway maintenance by reducing maintenance to structures where the need may be greater but the individual costs higher.

As a consequence, cross-asset prioritisation will be utilised to understand the budgetary and maintenance requirements of all highway assets and how best to maintain the network in a safe, reliable and sustainable manner.

Cross-asset prioritisation relies on each asset owner understanding the maintenance needs of their asset stock and planning how this can be managed as budgets rise and fall to meet the needs of other asset groups.

For e.g., whilst carriageway and footway maintenance accounts for the largest annual expenditure requirements, the replacement of bridge decks, bearings, parapets and supports often represents a significant single asset expenditure requirement in a year.

4.12. THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT

Funding for local road maintenance provides good to very good return on investment, with much lower risk than major projects to construct new infrastructure, and the ability to quickly gear up to spend money and generate benefits via "shovel ready" schemes.

Additionally, increased capital investment into the highway network is shown to reduce the revenue burden and increase public satisfaction.

4.12.1. Historical expenditure and funding

Historically, capital maintenance grant falls somewhat short of the threshold required to achieve optimum whole-life-cost management of carriageways

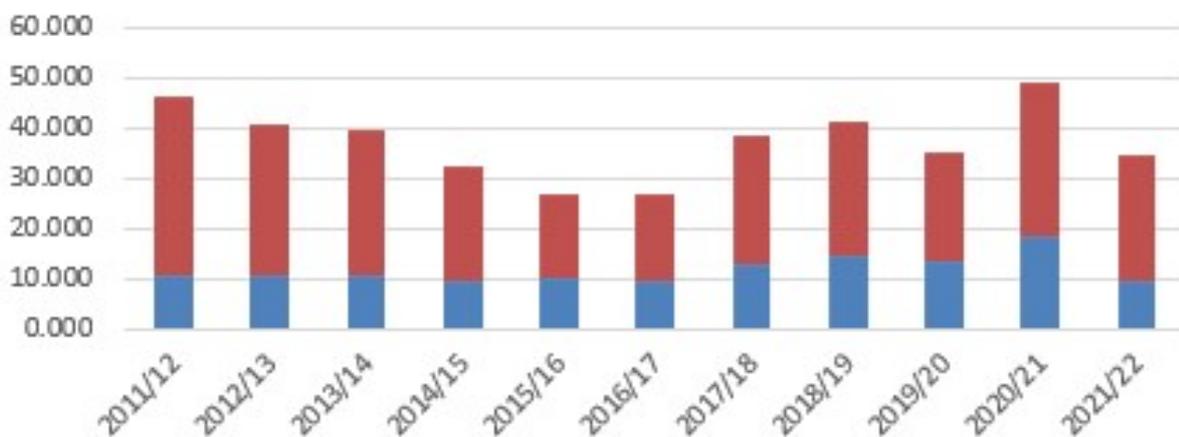
and footways. Since 2009/10 a number of actions have been taken to help address this:

- Between 2009/10 and 2013/14 an extra £50m capital was also invested from the Council's own reserves
- Between 2017/18 and 2020/21 an extra £21.9m was similarly invested from the Council's own funds.
- A limited amount of grant funding has been diverted each year from the Integrated Transport Block allocation

The impact of Staffordshire's HIAMP together with the additional funding from the Council between 2009/10 and 2013/14 was significant. The condition of Staffordshire's road network (proportion where maintenance should be considered) improved by more than 10% between 2009 and 2015, with the improved durability ensuring that the network was better able to withstand the increasing frequency of wet and cold weather that had a significant effect on road condition across the UK. Subsequent reductions in the level of funding available for asset renewal or preventative maintenance have since resulted in an increase in both the percentage of roads requiring treatment (red plus amber).

As noted above, the highway maintenance service is funded through a variety of sources including revenue, the DfT highway maintenance grant and, additional investment from the County Council. The chart below indicates the total value of the highway maintenance works programme each year (revenue and capital) from 2011/12 onwards. The variable nature of Government funding year on year impacts on the ability of the service and its supply chain to plan and invest in resources and the future workforce.

Chart 8 – Total Highways Work Programme (£)



The revenue budget for the highway service in 2021/22 is £29.7m which equates to approximately 5% of the Council's total annual revenue budget. After commitments including the streetlighting PFI, School Crossing Patrols

and a range of statutory functions approximately £11.7m (2% of the Council's total revenue budget) remains for highway maintenance operations. This provides the following functions:

- Winter Service (£3.4m)
- Routine Maintenance of Structures (£0.9m)
- Cyclical Maintenance (Grass Cutting and Weed Control) (£1.7m)
- Gully emptying (£1.4m)
- Reactive Maintenance including Tree Works (£3.3m)
- Safety and routine highway inspections (£0.7m)
- Inspection of Structures (£0.3m)

Carriageway asset modelling in 2019 carried out on behalf of the County Council by Yotta a company who specialise in highway asset modelling for local authorities, estimated that based on the carriageway condition at that time, a network the size of Staffordshire's, required a one-off investment of around £75m to bring it up to target condition followed by £42m/year ongoing to achieve 'steady-state' condition in carriageway condition alone.

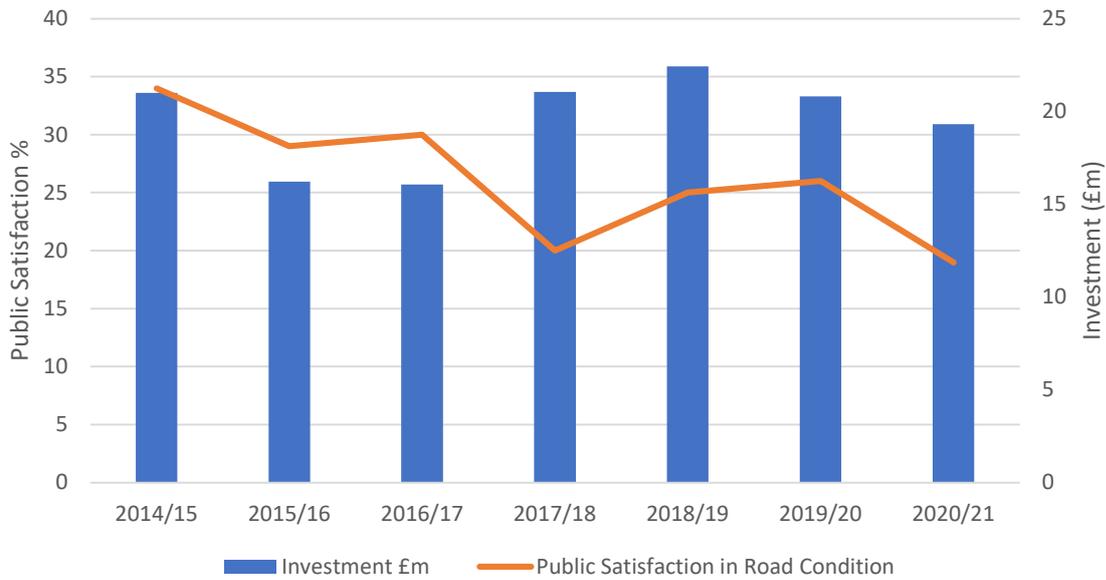
This figure rises to above £50m/year ongoing when taking account of other highway assets such as bridges and retaining walls. Similar condition modelling for structures estimates an average required annual spend on renewals of £6m per year compared to the circa. £2m per year currently allocated via the government grant. This figure excludes other key asset groups such as drainage and footways where other similar information is not currently available.

Clearly the funding provided to local authorities via Central Government grants falls below that required to maintain local roads which is why we make our own investments into Highways.

4.12.2. The Effect of Investment on Public Satisfaction

Chart 9 shows the correlation between the capital investment in the carriageway asset with the public's satisfaction with the condition of road surfaces as measured by the NHT Survey.

Chart 9 – Capital Investment vs Public Satisfaction

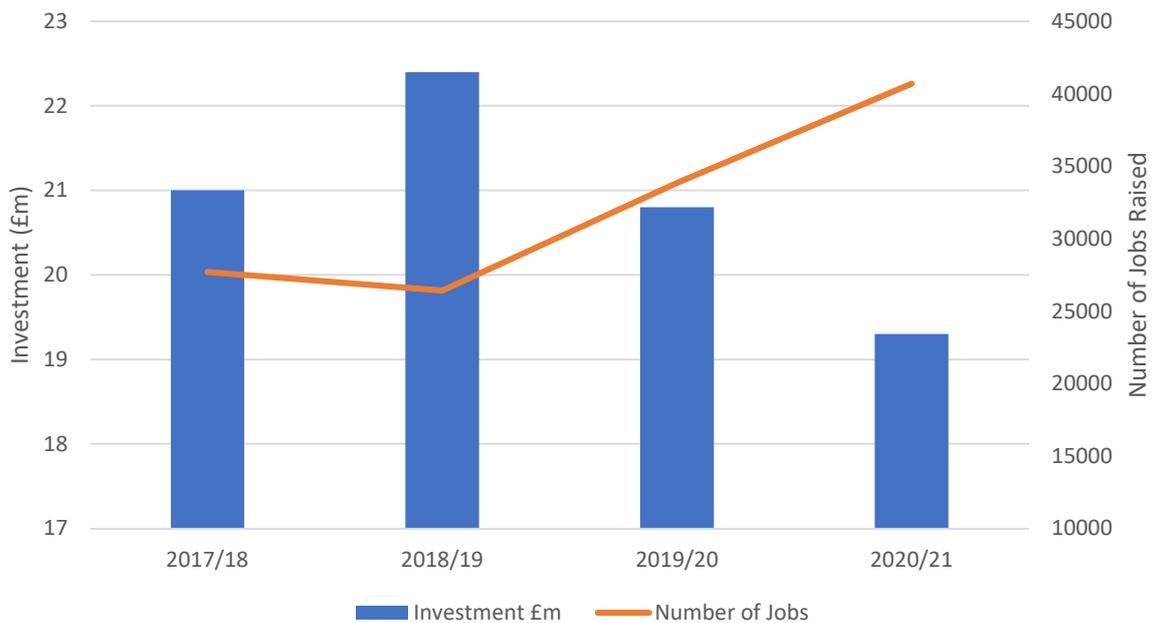


The graph shows a correlation between the level of investment and the level of public satisfaction. When investment increases public satisfaction appears to follow and similarly when investment is reduced public satisfaction decreases.

4.12.3. The Effect of Investment on Reactive Maintenance

Chart 10 shows the correlation between reducing capital investment and an increase in the number of jobs raised, many of which will be reactive maintenance repairs such as potholes.

Chart 10 – Capital Investment vs Number of Jobs Raised



The graph shows that as capital funding reduces the amount of reactive type work required to keep the network in a safe and serviceable condition increases.

There are ongoing concerns about the general state of the road network, the backlog of repairs and the cost of bringing these defects up to standard. For example, only 20% of respondents to the National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey were satisfied with how Staffordshire deals with potholes and damaged roads.

The public understandably focus on the formation of potholes (or rather what they call potholes) as these are particularly visible. There are numerous other defect types such as cracking, stone-loss, rutting, depressions, loss of texture/grip, etc. that are either indicative of approaching failure/end-of-life or present a more significant deterioration than potholes. These defects essentially make up the estimate of the road maintenance backlog.

4.12.4. National Policy Objectives

Contribution of the local road network towards national Government Policy objectives and socio-economic growth.

Figure 4 – Contribution of the Highway Network to National Policy Objectives

Build Back	Decline	Steady State	Gradual Improvement	Accelerated Improvement
Better 				
Healthier 				
Fairer 				
Safer 				
Stronger 				
Greener 				

Key:

Diminished contribution to UK Government’s ‘Build Back’ Objectives:

- Significant unplanned service impacts and low level of network resilience
- Low levels of safety and customer satisfaction, causing increased injuries and claims

- Building a large renewals debt/backlog that will take years (5, 10 or more) to address ▪ Loss of experienced people and increase in the skills gap across the industry

Maintained contribution to UK Government's 'Build Back' Objectives:

- The service risks are managed through robust and defensible practices
- Reduced service resilience and reliability, with a focus on assets that support the economy such as carriageways and structures; less funding for assets such as footways, cycleways and street lighting
- Lower levels of customer satisfaction with limited focus on customer priorities

Improved contribution to UK Government's 'Build Back' Objectives:

- Adequate and acceptable service that is focused on safety, resilience and reliability, with risks being managed through mixture of planned and reactive works
- A broadly acceptable customer experience; reducing complaints and claims
- Increased level of investment in resources, to provide greater capability and capacity

Enhanced contribution to UK Government's 'Build Back' Objectives:

- A good/high-quality service that delivers parity across the regions
- High levels of safety, network service, sustainability and customer satisfaction
- Increased level of investment in people and equipment across the sector, supporting the development and adoption of innovations for future network usage, such as mass modal shifts to active travel, electric vehicles and Connected / Autonomous Vehicles

4.12.5. Outputs and outcomes per asset of accelerated improvement

Accelerated investment in an asset can provide the following benefits outlined in table 3.

Table 3 – Benefits of Accelerated Investment

Asset	What do we get (output)		Example
Carriageway & Drainage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in Potholes ▪ Reduction in Injuries/Claims ▪ Reduction in CO2 ▪ Quieter Road Surface ▪ Improved Safety ▪ Reduce reactive maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved Drainage ▪ Improved Road Markings ▪ Improve Aesthetics ▪ Reduction in Backlog ▪ Improve network resilience ▪ Improved coordination of works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ West Midlands: £45m invested in carriageways with BCR of 6.51 [91] ▪ Norfolk: £10m invested in drainage with BCR of 6.6
Footway & Cycleway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved condition ▪ Improved Aesthetics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in Backlog ▪ Reduction in Injuries/Claims 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commons Library Briefing estimates BCR of active travel investment of 5.6
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in unexpected structural failures ▪ Reduction in Backlog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in diversions and journey times ▪ Reduction in Restrictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Portsmouth: £12m invested in bridge replacement with BCR of 114
Lighting/ITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduction in unexpected structural failures ▪ Increase EV Charging Infrastructure ▪ Increase Active Travel Infrastructure ▪ Improved safety and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in LED's / Reduction in OpEX and CO2 ▪ Connected Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lancashire: £20m invested in LED street lighting with BCR of 4.91

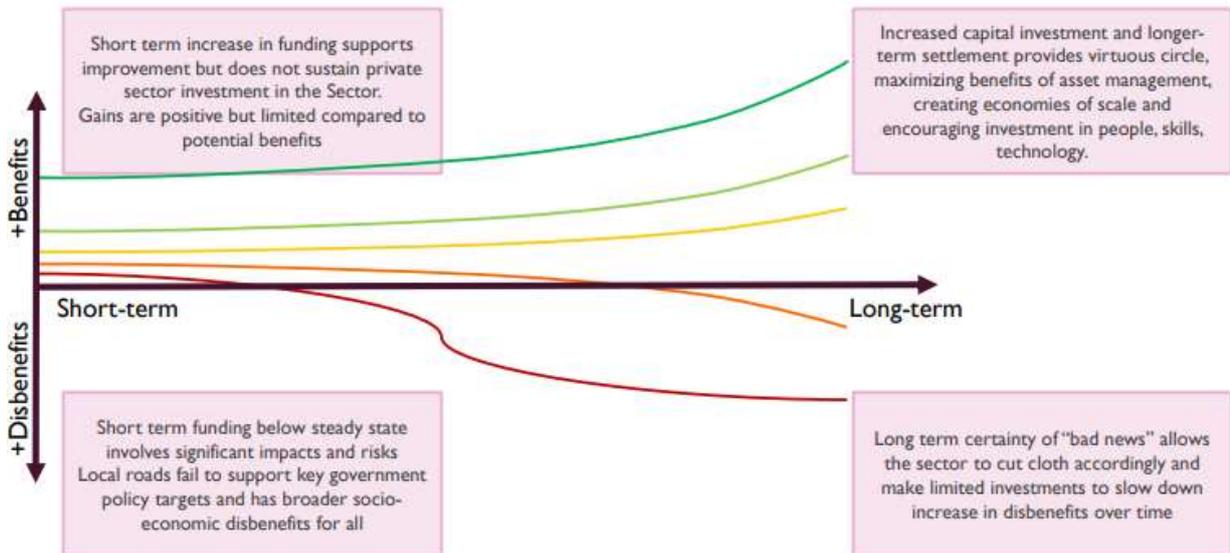
4.12.6. Investment certainty

The reduction in the highway maintenance grant and short-term settlements from Government causes short- and medium-term issues including, reductions in efficiency and effectiveness in programmes of work and the ability of the supply chain to plan and invest in both their workforce and equipment for the future.

National Highways for example receive a five-year settlement. With the amount of work for major projects such as HS2 in and around Staffordshire starting to increase, there is a risk that local suppliers seek other longer-

term arrangements which would impact on the ability of the service to scale back up following any additional investment.

Figure 5 – Effects of Long-term Funding



4.12.7. Summary

Each of the asset life cycle plans present the future budgets with a forecast of asset condition where available. The asset management approach set out in this plan requires that the demand for funding across all key assets is considered as one. Considering each of the life cycle plans the following observations can be formed:

- The condition of carriageways is forecast to decline over the period of this plan at the expected levels of funding.
- The condition of other assets such as footways, structures and traffic signals are also forecast to decline. Structures is an area of real concern with each of the top 5 individual asset risks relating to highway bridges.

The indicative future budget profile increases the amount of funding for design and replacement of structures from 2022-23 onwards to reflect the increasing risk to a number of structures including Moss Pit Footbridge, School Lane Footbridge, Chetwynd Bridge, Burndhurst Bridge and Stafford Railway Bridge.

Unless there is opportunity to secure grant funding in future years this will mean a reduction in spend on other highway assets including carriageways, footways and drainage.

Overall, the current budget is insufficient to maintain all highway assets in their current condition. If appropriate levels of investment in the asset are not available, the levels of service and other outcomes of this plan are at risk.

The asset management approach will continue to be developed to update these funding aspirations and the Council will work to identify additional sources of funding to address any deficiencies or to revise its long-term service aspirations.

DRAFT

Part 5: Managing our Assets

The Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan covers specific issues and themes regarding highways themselves, and includes the following asset types:

Volume 1 – Carriageways

Volume 2 – Footway & Cycleways

Volume 3 – Drainage

Volume 4 – Structures

Volume 5 – Vehicle Restraint Systems

Volume 6 – Street Lighting and Illuminated Signs

Volume 7 – Intelligent Transport Systems

Volume 8 – Soft Landscapes

Volume 9 – Trees and Hedges

Volume 10 – Signs and Lines

Volume 11 – Heritage Assets

Volume 12 – Street Furniture

Volume 13 – Emergencies and Adverse Weather Events

Volume 14 – Mines, Tips and Quarries

Volume 15 – Land acquired for highway purposes

Volume 16 – General Highway Management

Volume 1 – Carriageways

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of our 6,200km's of carriageway asset is to enable reasonable facility, safe and accessible for all users and provides a high degree of street-scene quality for local residents, businesses and visitors. To achieve this our road assets, need to:

- Transfer vehicle weights from the road surface through to the underlying ground without unnecessary deformation of the road surface.
- Maintain an acceptable level of skid resistance.
- Maintain their structural integrity and maximise their lifespan to provide maximum value for money from investment.
- Use materials sympathetic to the street scene and environment.

6.1.1. Stakeholder Expectations

There are many stakeholders who interact with and are impacted by the condition of carriageways.

Much of the City Council's highway network has evolved over a very long period of time and therefore much of it was not designed or constructed to the standards that would be expected of a newly constructed highway today. As a consequence, many carriageways are less resilient to changing environments and adapt poorly to severe weather events.

Potholes are one of the public's main local concerns, as they are highly visible defects. The public perceive that the quality of local roads may be at risk of deteriorating, with potholes being one of the main causes.

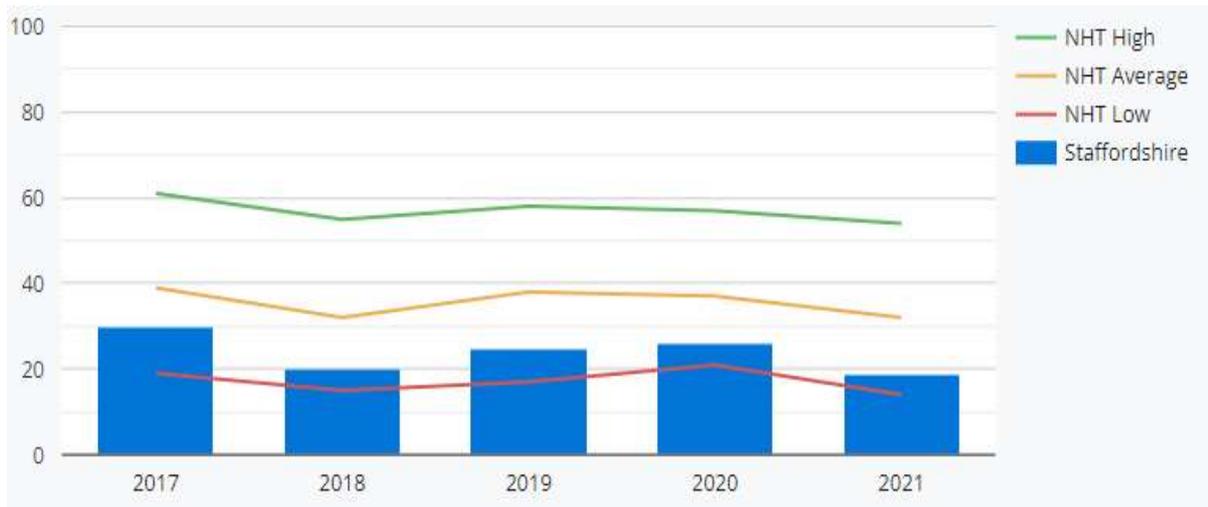
The key messages from the recommendations made in the Government's 'Pothole Review' (published by HMEP in April 2012) were:

- Prevention is better than cure – intervening at the right time will reduce the number of potholes forming and prevent bigger problems later.
- Right first time – do it once and get it right, rather than face continuous bills. Guidance, knowledge and workmanship are the enablers to this.

6.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

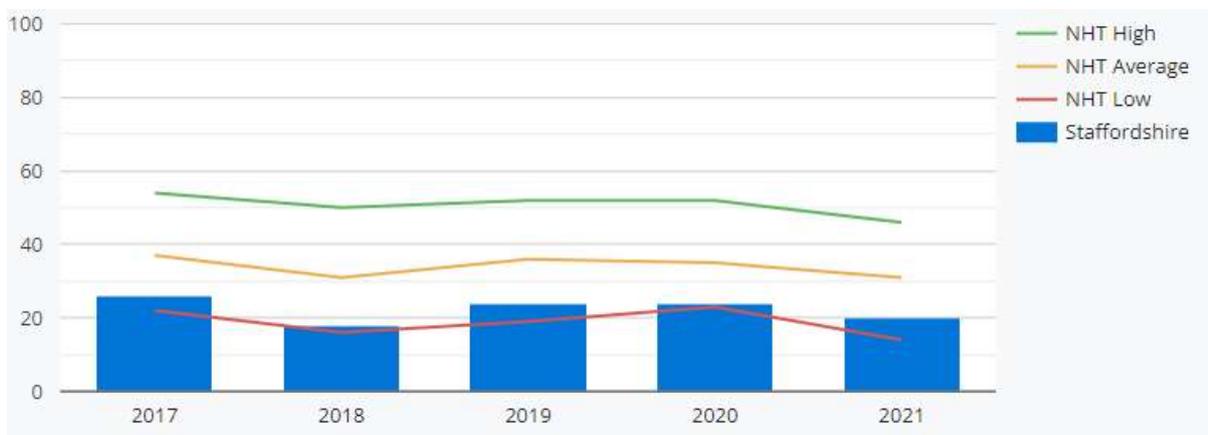
NHT public satisfaction survey data shows that satisfaction with the condition of Staffordshire’s roads is relatively low and well below the national average. The gap between SCC public satisfaction and the national average is increasing.

Chart 11 – Public Satisfaction with the Condition of Road Surfaces



As stated in 4.1.1. public perception in the condition of roads is considered to be informed by the prevalence of potholes and the response to their inspection and repair. Chart 12 shows that public satisfaction is similarly low with how the public perceive the authority deal with potholes and damaged roads.

Chart 12 – Public Satisfaction with how SCC Deals with Potholes and Damaged Roads

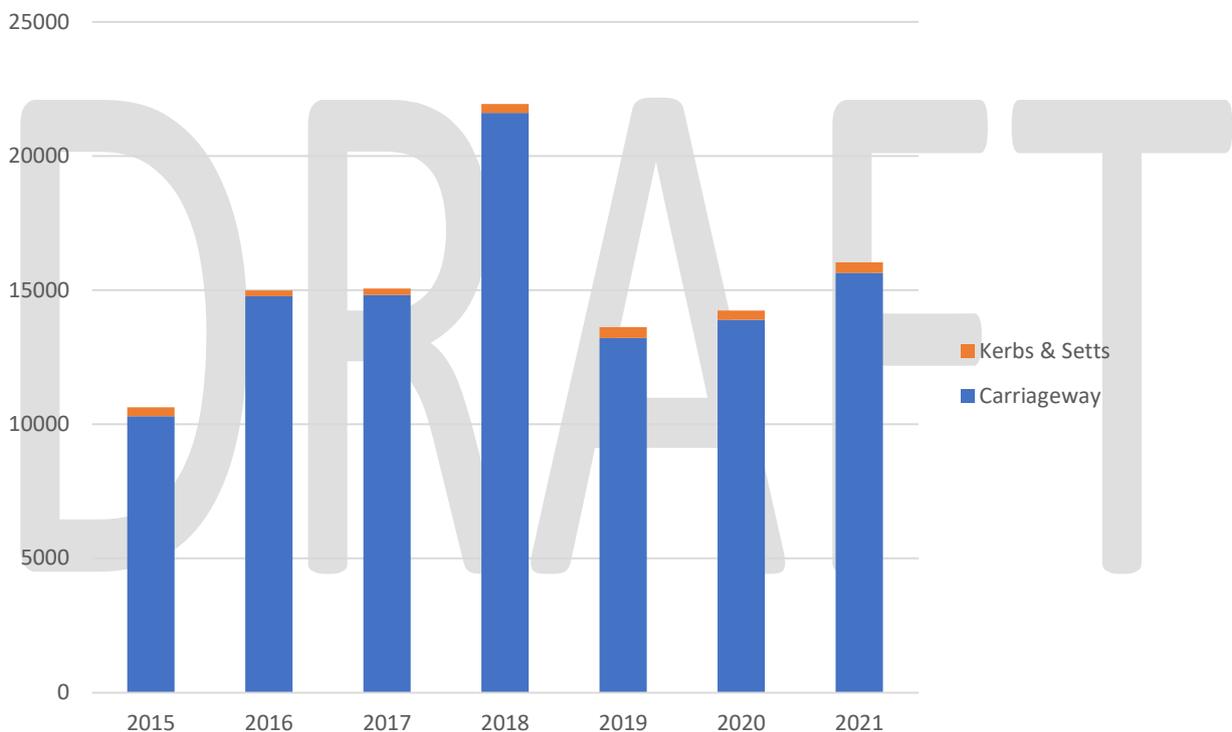


6.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Customer enquiries made via 'Report It' are recorded in the Confirm system. On average, since 2015 around 50% of the total highway enquiries made relate to the carriageway including ironwork and kerbs.

Whilst still significantly lower than the peak in 2018, carriageway enquiries are steadily growing with circa. 2,500 more enquiries in 2021 compared to 2019 placing additional demand on the reactive inspection team resulting in an increasing response time.

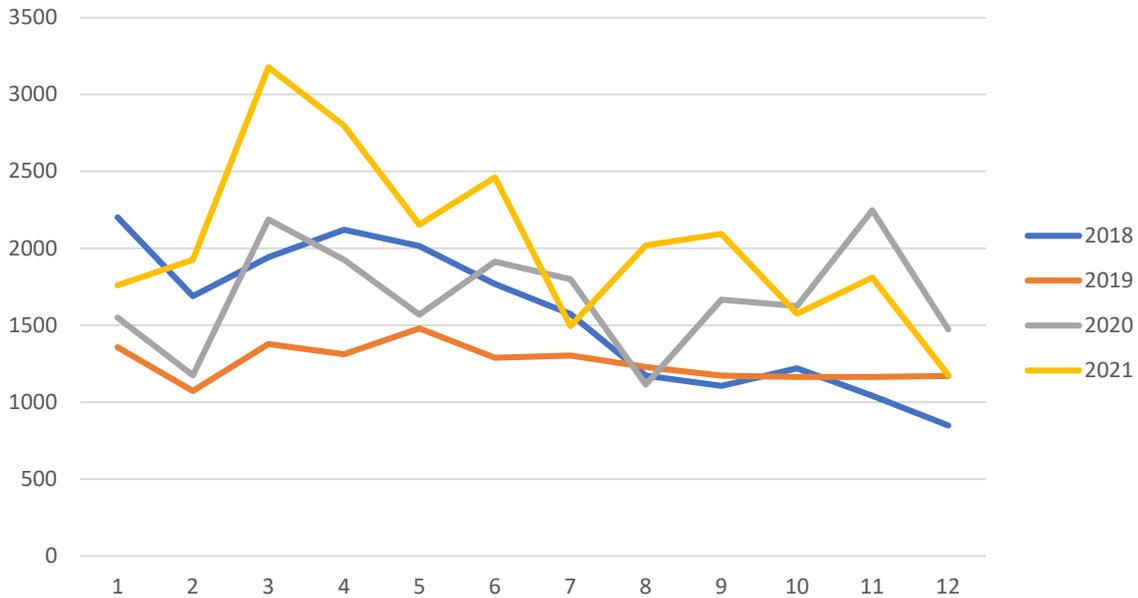
Chart 13 – Carriageway Customer Enquiries



6.1.4. Defects

Chart 14 shows that the number of jobs being raised is increasing year on year.

Chart 14 – Number of Carriageway Defect by Month and Year

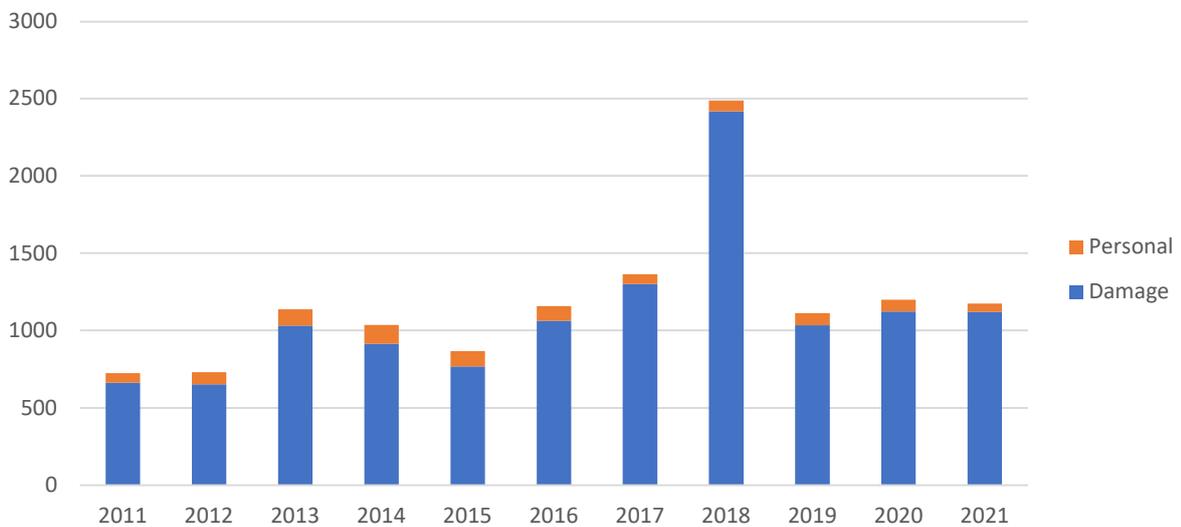


The increasing number of jobs is reflective of the increasing maintenance backlog and the deteriorating condition of the carriageway asset. 9,000 more carriageway maintenance jobs were raised in 2021 when compared to 2019 and over 4,000 more than in 2020.

6.1.5. Claims

This data illustrates the variation in the number of claims over the last 10 years. As a claim can be received up to 3 years after the date of the accident, the data will change as further claims may occur relating to previous years.

Chart 15 – Number of Highway Claims



6.2. ASSET MANAGEMENT

6.2.1. Network Hierarchy

Primarily, the carriageway asset network is categorised in terms of type or general purpose of the road as Hierarchies. The definition of the road classifications remains generally unchanged, although in practice the usage and importance of roads does change over time. In accordance with 'Well Managed Highways: A Code of Practice' (2016), SCC have developed a functional network hierarchy.

6.2.2. Inventory Data

Accurate and up to date inventory of the asset is an important element to good asset management and this will be a continued focus to enhance modelling in future years, as inventory records continue to build and used to support the decision-making process.

SCC maintain inventory data collected through various condition surveys, which has been utilised in the lifecycle modelling process.

6.2.3. Asset Condition

The carriageway asset is our most significant highway asset and consequently we invest significant resource into understanding its condition and likely future deterioration.

Each year Staffordshire County Council commissions a County wide carriageway and footway condition survey assessment which allows a transparent and accountable data driven process to underpin the selection of schemes across the County.

This year the Council have employed Gaist Solutions Ltd to undertake a high-resolution video survey and processed by their surveyors to generate digital condition data.

The survey examines all adopted public carriageway on a County wide basis. It identifies the condition of the carriageway, the nature of the damage and type of defects which determines the treatment type required.

6.2.4. Data Management

Carriageway asset data is currently held in a number of different data management systems with information kept in the Horizons, Confirm, Gaist AssetView and WDM pavement management systems.

Horizons is the analysis software aimed at preparing programmes of work based on current condition and at forecasting the future condition of a road network by making use of condition projections that are modified by planned interventions. Taken together with assessed costs of interventions,

the amount of work required is estimated firstly, to improve the network condition to the prescribed levels and secondly, to maintain the network at or below the prescribed condition threshold for next 10 years.

Confirm is where the day-to-day aspects of carriageway maintenance are recorded such as inspection routes and job details.

WDM pavement management system is the software used to manage the local street gazetteer (LSG) and process skid resistance data.

Gaist AssetView is the software that holds the imagery-based condition assessment data.

6.2.5. Applying Asset Management Principles to the Carriageway

We have excellent condition data on our roads asset, and a good understanding of how the asset deteriorates, based to a large extent on past deterioration rates. The data has been collected over many years. Originally the primary driver for this data collection was to develop evidence-based maintenance programmes; however, due to its comprehensive nature, the data can also be used for lifecycle planning and for modelling the effects of different levels of investment.

Our current strategic asset management system is Yotta's Horizons. The software presents a significant improvement in our ability to accurately understand and forecast the condition of our road network.

This software enables us to assess the current condition of our road network, to develop works programmes, and to model the effects of various investment strategies on the future condition of our network. Future forecasting and the scheme identification models are intrinsically linked. This allows the outputs from one element to be checked against the other to increase accuracy and confidence in the results.

Horizons selects optimum treatments based on a range of user defined interventions and triggers. When the deterioration of a road, as measured by our condition surveys, reaches predetermined trigger levels, Horizons identifies the most appropriate treatment, and can be used to rank maintenance schemes on either a 'worst-first' or an economic basis. This list is sense-checked on site by our pavement engineers before being used to develop our forward works programme, which also takes into account local needs through liaison with the community highway team.

6.2.6. Maintenance Treatment Options

Carriageway Patching and Minor Repairs

Patching and minor repairs will be undertaken to ensure that all highways are maintained in a safe condition, to arrest deterioration and also in readiness of a surface treatment.

Carriageway Surface Treatments

Surface treatment in the form of surface dressing with bitumen and chippings will be carried out to give an appropriate riding surface, to seal against water penetration and to reduce collisions caused by lack of adequate skidding resistance. Surface dressing is a cost-effective means by which the surface condition of the road can be maintained to a satisfactory standard whilst enabling the full structural service life of the carriageway to be utilised.

Micro surfacing (also referred to as 'micro asphalt') is a 'surface treatment' for roads. It is laid over the top of the existing surface to seal and protect it. It consists of a water-based mix of aggregate and bitumen which is spread over the existing surface. It can resolve minor surface irregularity; restores grip and texture and creates a new, waterproof surface.

Structural Micro asphalt is a stronger and more robust treatment and is usually used on busier low speed roads.

Recycling processes usually involve removing the top layers of the old road surface and remixing the material with fresh binder to be re-laid in the same location.

Resurfacing and Overlay

In areas where patching or surface treatment is not appropriate, resurfacing or overlay will be used to strengthen the carriageway, reduce surface irregularity and improve skid-resistance.

Resurfacing or overlay can be carried out as a treatment to restore carriageway condition or as a preventative measure. Intervention at the right time can avoid much more costly reconstruction work having to be carried out later. If the repairs are confined to the surface course, then resurfacing may be sufficient, otherwise reconstruction may be necessary.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction of the carriageway will be carried out where it would be uneconomic and/or unacceptably inconvenient to the road user to continually undertake repairs to the carriageway.

Maintenance engineers will scrutinise the nature and extent of the required work to determine if an appropriate recycling technique may be used. Wherever a recycling option is technically feasible and will have equivalent engineering properties; and will not cost more than conventional reconstruction techniques, then that option will be adopted.

When a carriageway has deteriorated beyond its useful life, the continued need to visit an area to patch the carriageway, is not cost effective and also leads to unnecessary inconvenience to the public. In these cases, partial or total reconstruction works will be carried out, as appropriate, subject to funds being available.

6.2.7. Preventative Maintenance

Preventative maintenance treatments such as surface dressing and micro asphalt are used to preserve and extend the life of roads that are already in a reasonable to good condition.

It is crucial that these treatments are undertaken before serious deterioration has taken place rather than repairing inevitable deterioration through routine and reactive maintenance works and eventually, structural maintenance schemes which cause increased traffic congestion and are much more expensive and time consuming.

If roads did not benefit from preventative treatments, they would require replacement three or four times as often. Most preventative treatment applications are usually completed at each site within the same day although some preparation works might be required beforehand with subsequent lining and cat's eye replacement works following after.

The carriageway preventative maintenance season is from late March or April to September. Footway preventative treatments are carried out all year round and these may take place outside of normal working hours or on restricted working days. All preventative treatments are weather dependent which can affect the length of the working day or when they commence.

6.2.8. Unsurfaced Roads

Although unsurfaced highways historically were used for transporting people and goods, it is widely accepted that they are now predominantly used for recreational purposes. They are also an important asset to the landscape, and often have a historic and wildlife interest.

The maintenance standards applied to the highway network in terms of the level of service and the frequency of cyclic operations are set out in each individual asset volume detailed in part 5 of this plan. However, the

management of unsurfaced roads are covered in a specific strategy document as an annex to the HIAMP.

6.2.9. Use of Coloured Surfacing

Coloured surfaces are useful for various traffic management purposes, but they should only be used where their need is demonstrable. Where coloured surfacing is used the future maintenance needs to be funded from the scheme costs or limited time installation agreed.

If it is necessary to provide a coloured surface there are a number of naturally occurring coloured aggregates in the UK that could be used, and these provide colours that are not bright and glaring and they could be incorporated in surfacing materials which would have long life and would maintain their colour throughout their lives.

6.3. ASSET CONDITION

6.3.1. Asset Condition

The most significant financial investments in highway maintenance will be in repairing, reconditioning and reconstructing carriageways. Condition surveys identify the current condition of the network, and from this condition both long-term and short-term maintenance funding decisions can be made. Repeatable condition surveys allow trend analysis to be used to confirm the original decisions or allow for changes as a result of the changing network condition and inform lifecycle planning.

There are a number of types of survey, each providing information from a differing perspective, and which in combination can provide a comprehensive picture of the condition of the asset. SCC undertakes a comprehensive regime of carriageway network level surveys to assist with:

- Maintenance Scheme Identification and Planning
- Performance Monitoring
- Detailed Scheme Design

The Asset Management Team are responsible for processing and analysing the results of condition surveys to assist them to target and prioritise maintenance.

6.3.2. Monitoring of Skid Resistance

The maintenance of adequate levels of skidding resistance on carriageways is an important aspect of highway maintenance, and one that contributes significantly to network safety.

The skid resistance of the highway network is monitored by SCRIM survey. The measurement, and management of the skid resistance of the highway network is detailed in the County Highways Skid Resistance strategy.

6.4. ASSET INSPECTION

6.4.1. Safety Inspections

Our team of highway inspectors carry out visual checks to make sure highway assets are in a safe condition. This includes checking for defects in the road surface that present a safety concern. We carry out this kind of check at least once every twelve months.

The frequency of inspection on each hierarchy of carriageway is detailed in the SCC Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice.

6.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

6.5.1. Prioritisation of Investment

Investment decisions are made based on a robust understanding of their effect on the future condition of the asset and the whole-life cost of maintaining it. Within the funds available for planned road maintenance, we prioritise the works we do to ensure that they will have the greatest benefit, taking a whole-county approach. To do this we consider the condition of each road, the amount and type of traffic it carries, its importance to our economy, as well as the cost of the optimum treatment identified by our pavement management system and its effect on lifespan and the whole-life cost of maintaining the asset.

Where the need for treatment is identified a long candidate list of proposed schemes for the whole of the highway network maintainable at public expense is produced.

Once a list of schemes has been produced a series of other prioritisation criteria is considered. This includes the number of, reported potholes, customer complaints and other unplanned maintenance interventions. Factors which affect the strategic importance, such as network resilience gritting routes are applied as well as potential risk factors such as footfall and to proximity schools and hospitals.

6.5.2. Accountability

Having a data driven approach allows any decisions to be made in maintenance prioritisation to be transparent. The reason schemes have been included in a programme of works can be evidenced by the prioritisation criteria used. The use of data to justify the inclusion of schemes within the capital programme removes the risk of scheme selection through subjective decisions made by officers and stakeholders.

6.5.3. A 'Whole of Network' Approach

A true data-led asset management approach allows us to gain a much wider appreciation of where works need to be done, and at what scale. Despite best efforts by officers and members it is impractical to have a thorough knowledge of the condition of every carriageway and footway in the County. The use of condition data and video imagery supplemented by stakeholder submissions allows an overview of all carriageways across the whole County.

6.5.4. Carriageway prioritisation value management scoring

Budget will be split at a ratio determined through deterioration modelling in order to achieve a cost-effective balance of preserving roads that have not yet fully deteriorated and fixing those that have. A long-term programme of work will be published giving opportunity to achieve efficiency through cross asset priority. Early contractor engagement can then seek to achieve innovative solutions for further cost savings.

Through programme coordination and visibility of future SCC schemes which may affect other key highway asset or major improvement scheme, we are able to adjust its place in the programme so that we can combine activities in order to maximise financial efficiencies.

6.5.5. Investment Scenarios

Five investment scenarios have been produced using our strategic asset management system, Horizons. The below analysis projects the condition impact on the network based on the national condition performance indicators over a ten-year analysis period. The five investment scenarios have been presented using the accredited national indicators separately for the A roads (130-01), B and C roads (130-02) and the Unclassified roads (formerly Bv224b).

Chart 16 – Investment Options – ‘A’ Class Roads

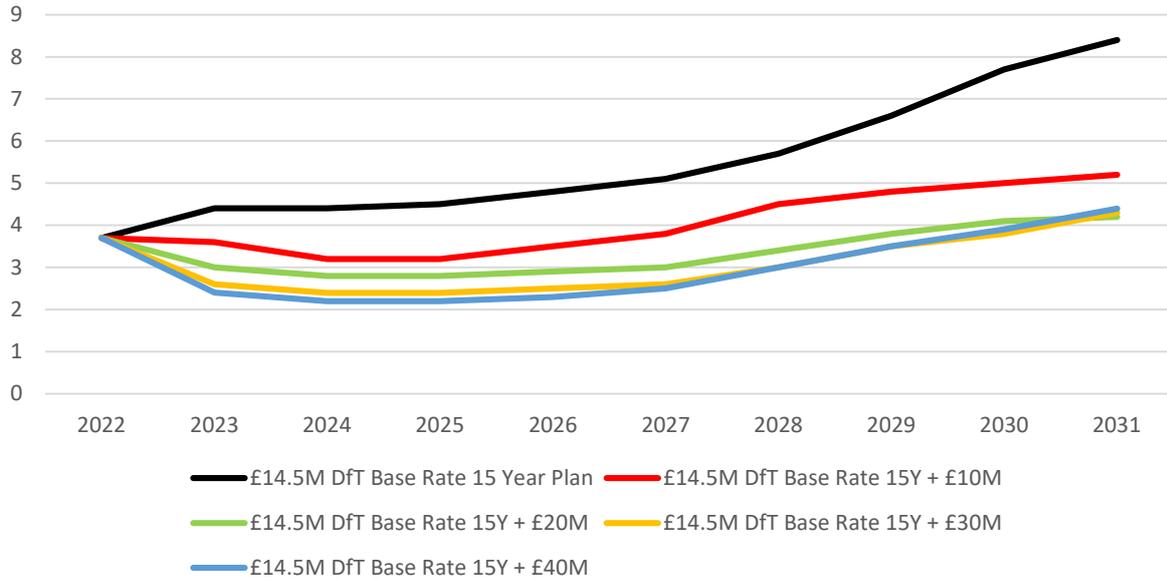


Chart 17 – Investment Options – ‘B’ Class Roads

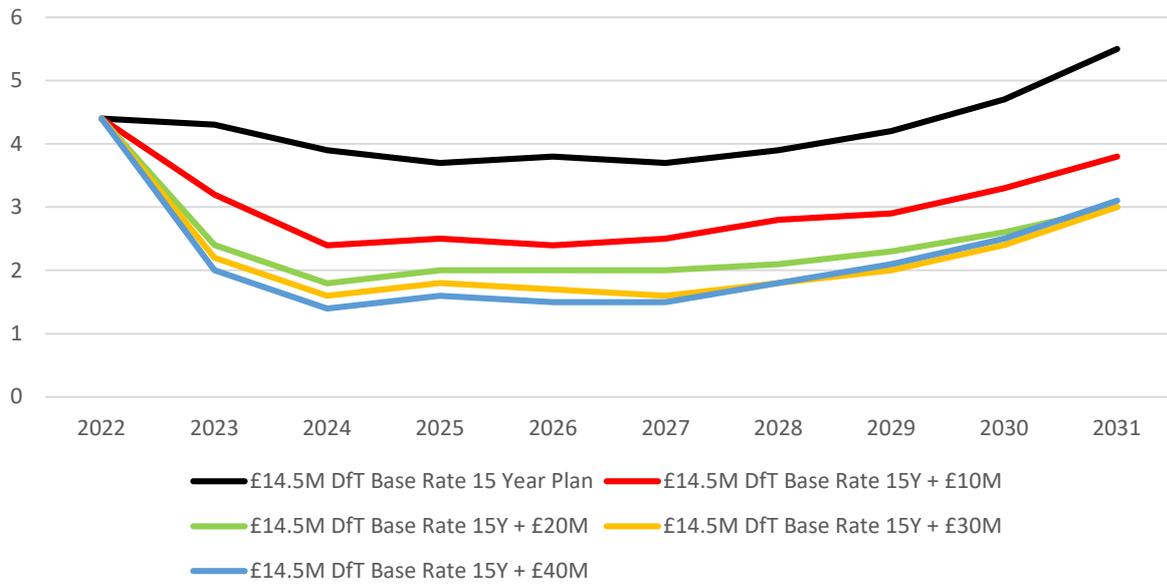


Chart 18 – Investment Options – ‘C’ Class Roads

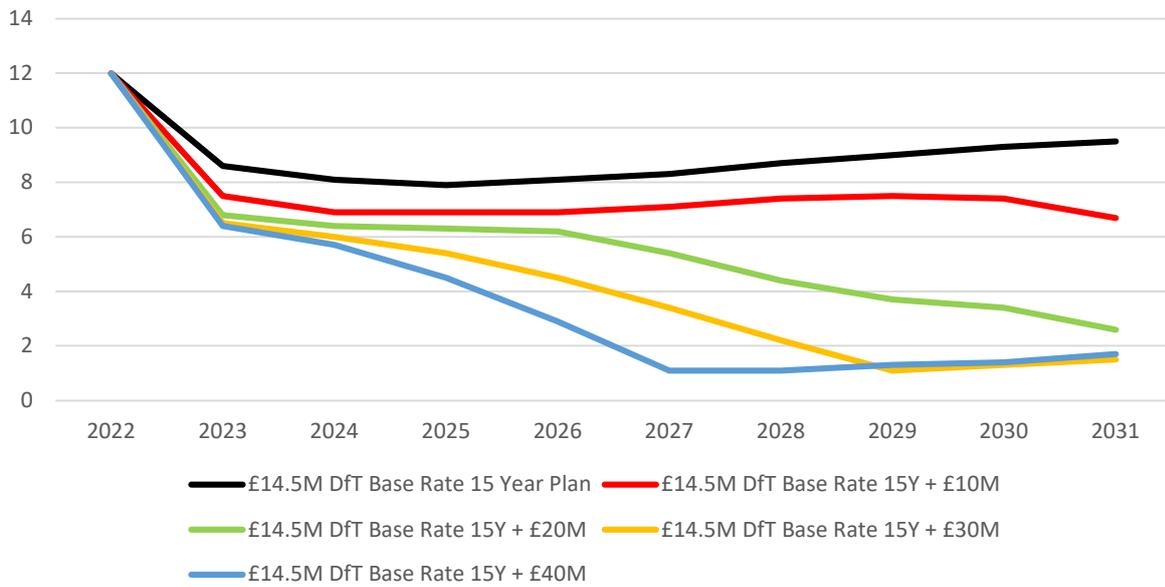
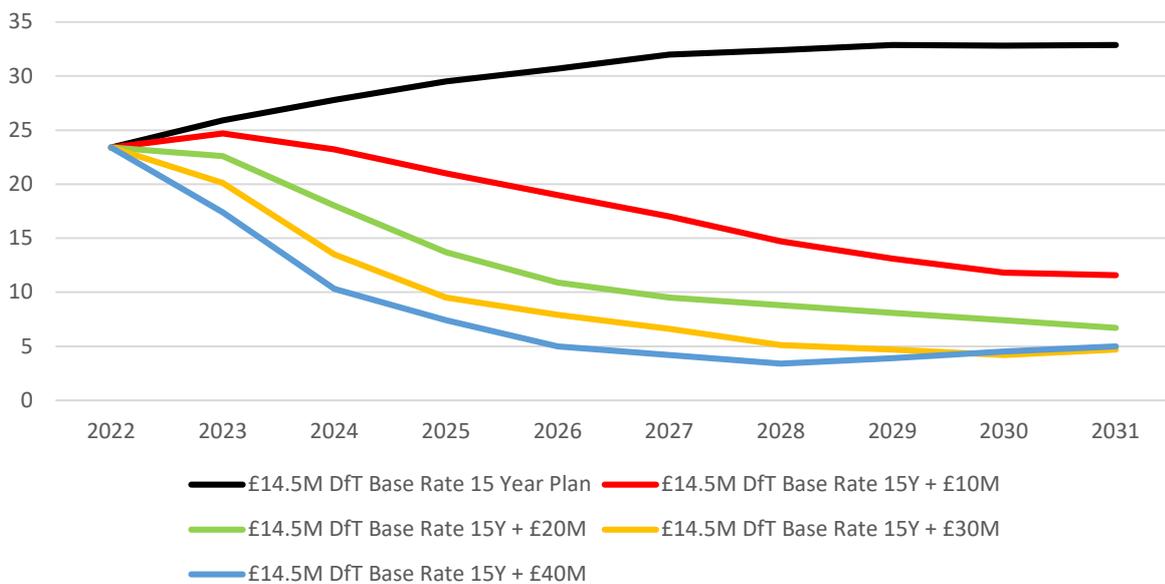
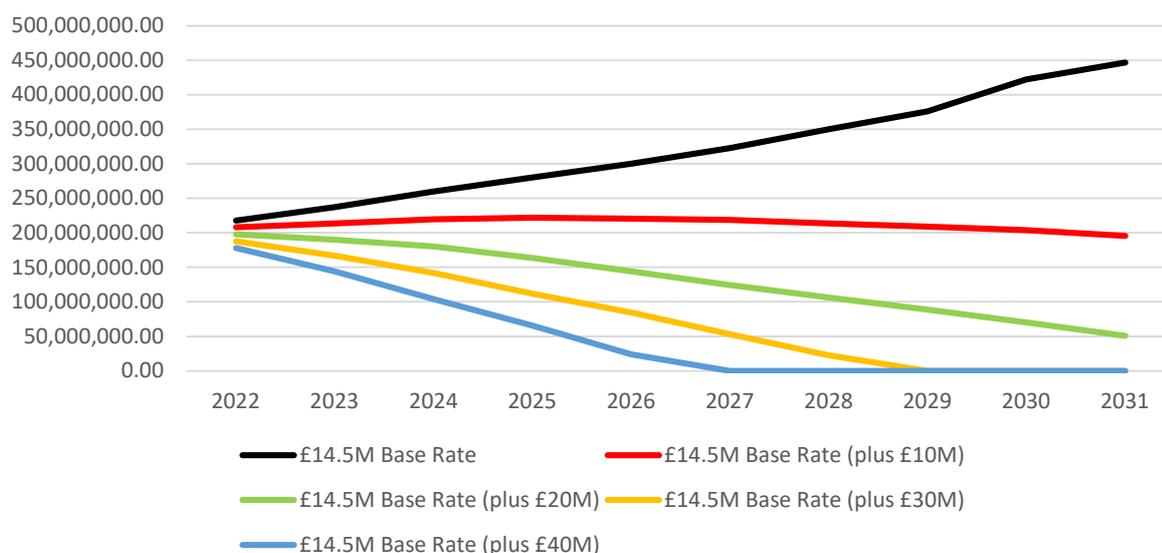


Chart 19 – Investment Options – ‘U’ Class Roads



The current estimated spending required to bring the most deteriorated road surfaces into good condition is over £200 million. The projections are based on current investment levels, inflation, deterioration and short-term funding strategies. Increase in backlog is based on ‘Annual Need’ calculations.

Chart 20 – Investment Options – Carriageway Maintenance Backlog

6.5.6. Investment Scenarios Summary of Impacts and Benefits

Table 4 provides a brief summary of the expected impacts and benefits of each investment scenario. It effectively provides an overview of what to expect in the future based on each investment approach.

Table 4 – Investment Scenarios Summary of Impacts and Benefits

Investment Scenario	Description
1. Decline - investment levels remain at 2021/22 levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog unsustainable and growing by c.£20m per annum. • Network condition will decline, will be evident through more defects, claims and a higher reactive maintenance burden.
2. Steady State – Investment required to maintain a basic highway service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog holds at current level and prevents increase. • Condition generally remains as is.
3. Gradual Improvement – start to address backlog and gradually improve network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog reduces by c.£15m per annum. • Reduces risk and starts to move to a more planned/proactive maintenance strategy.
4. Accelerated Improvement – Accelerate backlog reduction and improve condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog reduces by c.£25m per annum, removed in 8 years. • Evident improvement to asset condition and performance.
5. Rapid Acceleration – maintenance backlog addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog reduces by c.£40m per annum. • Rapid improvement in network condition, manageable reactive maintenance burden. Funding potentially available to other assets.

Based on current funding allocation the deterioration will be managed for now, however this will accelerate in future years if current levels of underinvestment are not addressed imminently.

6.5.7. Work Programme

Forward works programmes provide an effective and efficient way of delivering maintenance, repairs, and improvements. They enable prioritisation and optimisation of schemes to meet available budgets.

Developing a works programme is a seven-stage process:

Identification

Potential schemes may be identified from a range of sources including inspections, surveys, local knowledge, customer enquiries, complaints, risk and wider transport or corporate objectives. These schemes are collated into an initial works programme for each asset group.

Prioritisation

The following things are considered when prioritising schemes:

- the maintenance hierarchy of the road
- the safety of road users
- the impact on the movement of traffic if the asset fails
- value for money
- the cost of bringing forward or delaying works
- the lifecycle cost of our highway asset
- the environmental impact
- the impact on the community including damage to property or impacts on local businesses
- integrate all modes, especially active travel, and support modal shift
- local development plans
- planned and potential utility and third party works

Selection

A candidate lists of schemes is combined, costed, and listed in priority order. A notional “cut off” point is then determined by totalling up the cost to the point where each year’s expected budget is fully utilised.

Member Engagement

In order that local priorities are reflected in the planned maintenance programme the candidate list will be consulted on with Local Committees so that members have sight of current and future years work programmes and can prioritise schemes with a particular local importance.

Programming & Optimisation

Selected schemes are optimised within the works programme, based on many factors including deliverability. This is done by coordinating or combining works to minimise both cost and disruption.

Utility companies are key consultees to manage not only short term and mid-term co-ordination but to also determine where utility companies may have assets that are towards the end of their life but not programmed for replacement at that time.

Approval

Cabinet members will be asked to approve the Highways Capital Programme each year.

Delivery

Finally, a multi-year works programme is confirmed and delivered from the available budget.

We will publish our programmes of work on our website, so that members of the public can see where and when we plan to undertake works.

6.5.8. Other Significant Factors Affecting Carriageway Maintenance

Utility Works

Road failures are often also caused or exacerbated by damaged or failed utility reinstatements.

Utility companies have statutory rights to lay, maintain and improve their apparatus within our highway network in order to provide water, sewerage, gas, electricity, and telecommunications services to our residents, visitors, businesses and public services.

Our role as highway authority is to ensure that these works are coordinated and managed in a way that minimises inconvenience and disruption. The permit scheme commenced in April 2020 and in the 18-month period following its introduction the authority processed around 29,000 permit

applications. This provides an idea of the scale of the incursions on our network by third parties.

In line with national guidance, we also carry out a substantial programme of inspections each year to ensure that our roads are properly reinstated after third party works have been completed in order to minimise damage to our network.

Notwithstanding our inspection and testing regime, any works which involve cutting into an unbroken and otherwise sound road surface, even if carried out to a high standard, will affect a road's structural integrity. This will accelerate its deterioration and shorten its life, resulting in the need for premature maintenance which increases the pressure on highway budgets. It should also be recognised that many of the highway maintenance issues linked to utility works relate to reinstatements carried out many years ago.

Adverse Weather

The impact of adverse weather conditions on the highway network, particularly relating to ice, snow or flooding but also including high winds and extreme heat is causing rapid deterioration and damage to the highway network which are both costly and time consuming to repair.

The increased frequency of adverse weather events means we have experienced a rise in unforeseen expenditure in response to deterioration and damage caused.

6.5.9. Maintenance of Laybys

Laybys on the County's roads are needed and used by the public as essential rest facilities.

Encouraging motorists to use these facilities is important for safety reasons, and the laybys should, therefore, be kept in a condition which will encourage use. The County Council is responsible for verge maintenance, and District Councils for litter bins, litter clearance and cleansing.

All laybys on HMPE will be maintained to ensure a neat and tidy appearance.

6.5.10. HS2

The construction of HS2 has the potential to have a significant impact on the road network serving the county. The capacity and structural make-up of sections of the road network is not constructed to accommodate the extra heavy goods vehicular traffic associated with HS2. Work is required to understand the impact of HS2 on the County's road network and wider regional highway network.

6.5.11. Natural Environment

Our Regeneration and Highways teams continue to enhance the County's prosperity through schemes including i54 and highways improvements, such as the Western relief road in Stafford. This year as part of these schemes, thousands of native trees were planted to form woodlands and hedgerows for the enhancement of local landscape and biodiversity habitats, along with enhancing wetlands/ponds. All of which will have a positive effect on reducing our carbon impact.

6.5.12. Forecast Future Funding

To maintain the carriageway network in a steady state would require £42m per annum. This represents a 260% increase in the base level of funding. However, the expected level of funding for 2024/25 shows a 17% reduction in the level of funding available for our carriageway in comparison to 2021/22.

DRAFT

Volume 2 – Footways and Cycleways

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This asset group includes footways, footpaths and cycle routes that are highway maintainable at public expense. It does not include Public Rights of Way (PRoW), which are managed separately.

The footway, footpath and cycleway asset in roads terms is one of the most valuable highway infrastructure asset groups. The Gross Replacement Cost (GRC) is calculated at £765m.

The primary objectives of our footway and cycle track assets are to:

- enable our residents, businesses, and visitors to travel the county on foot, in wheelchairs and mobility scooters, or by cycle safely and efficiently, thereby contributing to improving outcomes and opportunities for our people and businesses.
- withstand normal usage by pedestrians and, where appropriate, cyclists and vehicles (via appropriately constructed vehicle crossings) by transferring loads through to underlying ground without deformation of the surface, maintaining safety and minimising nuisance.
- maintain their structural integrity and maximise their lifespan to provide maximum value for money from investment.

7.1.1. Stakeholder expectations

As well as our statutory duty to ensure our footways are safe, we also need to maintain the confidence and positive perceptions of the travelling public using our asset. We also need to ensure our footway network is maintained to protect against insurance claims resulting from injuries or damage caused by incidents on our network.

To ensure the most benefit to our footway network we seek, where possible, to address sites of local need, and we do so via our value management criteria along with input from community liaison officers' knowledge who liaise closely with local elected representatives and other groups.

Nearly 1 in 3 older adults (aged 65+) are discouraged from walking more due to a concern regarding the condition of footways in their local area. The provision of good quality and safe footways is a significant contributor to the health and wellbeing benefits of residents and their ability to access essential goods and services.

7.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

With the incomplete level of condition and inventory information available on footways and cycleways to date the NHT survey has been key to ensuring the Council prioritises services that local residents demand.

The Council value being part of the NHT survey and have found the resulting information extremely useful. The Council have participated in this survey for a number of years.

With regards to footway maintenance, the Staffordshire public consistently prioritise good condition pavements as one of the highest priorities, often only behind road condition and road safety.

Footways are also one of the key areas that the public would least find acceptable to reduce the level of service by spending less.

This would suggest that residents place great importance in the footway/path infrastructure and desire a higher quality provision.

Chart 21 shows that the level of satisfaction in the condition of SCC footways is below average and satisfaction is falling in line with the national trend.

Chart 21 – Public Satisfaction with the Condition of Pavements



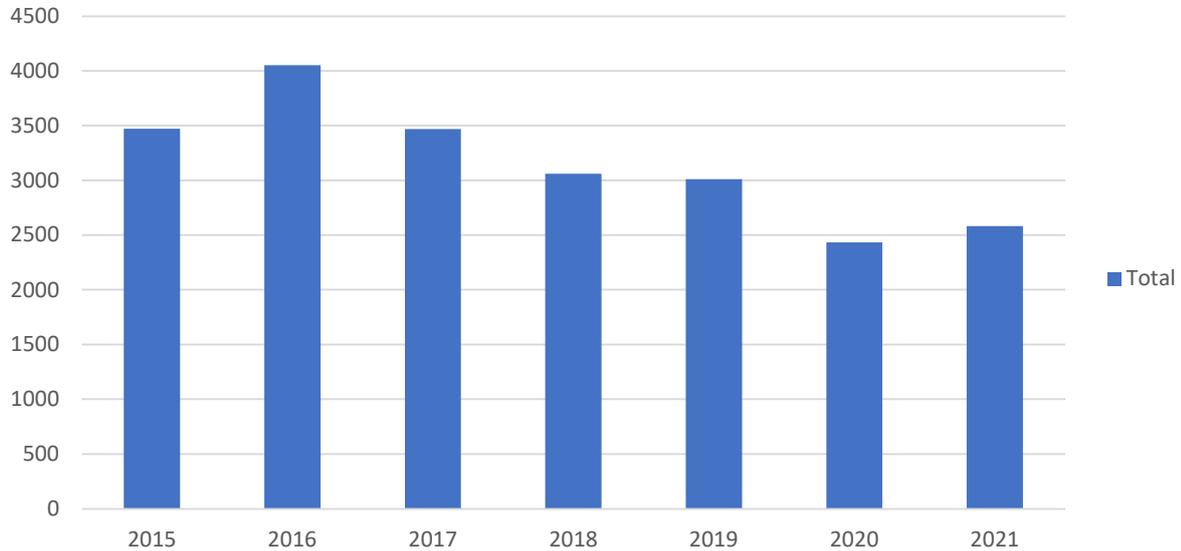
7.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Customer enquiries made via 'Report It' are recorded in CONFIRM. On average, since 2015 around 13% of the total enquiries made relate to footways and cycleways including ironwork and kerbs/setts.

After a period of seeing a reducing number of enquiries about footways and cycleways from a peak of circa four thousand in 2016, there are early signs that the number of enquiries may be starting to grow again with an

increase of around 150 in 2021 compared to 2020 albeit it is too early to see whether this trend will continue.

Chart 22 – Number of Customer Enquiries Footways and Cycleways



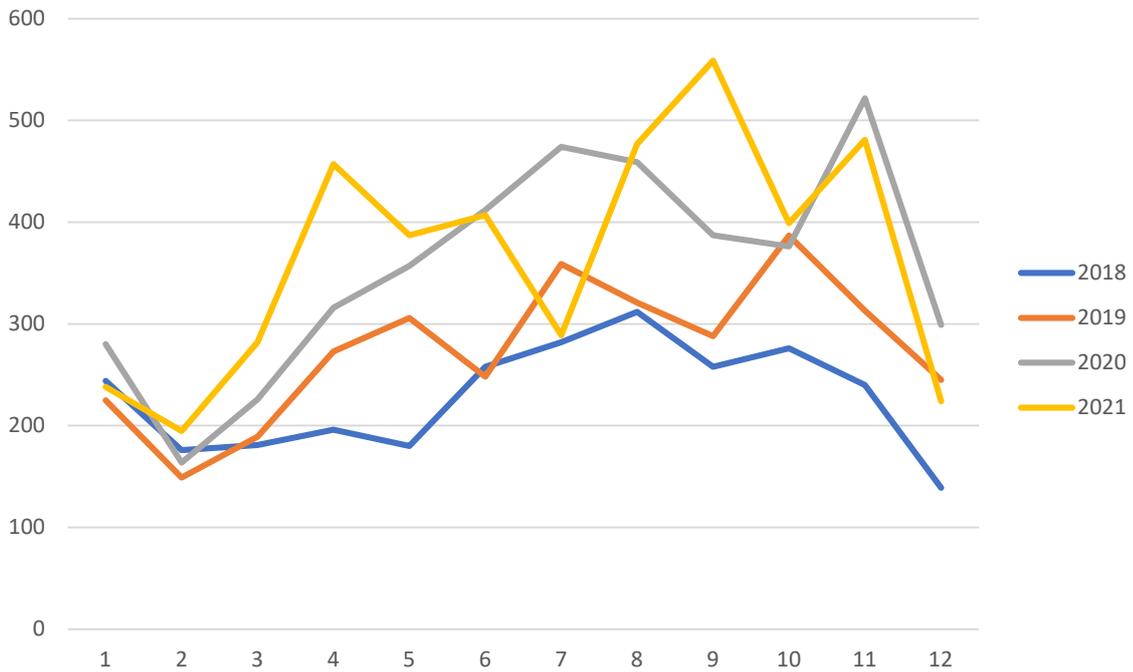
7.1.4. Defects

It is difficult to forecast accurately how much we will need to spend on reactively fixing surface defects each year; however, we know that, as footways deteriorate given lack of investment, the number of defects will increase. This will lead to an increasing amount of resource being spent on such repairs. If that resource is taken from that used for planned maintenance, the problem would be exponentially exacerbated.

As a result of this, the condition of overall footway network is likely to deteriorate over the short, medium and long term.

Chart 23 shows that the number of footway jobs is increasing year on year. This is reflective of the underinvestment in the footway asset, the increasing maintenance backlog and the deteriorating condition of the asset. 1,600 more footway maintenance jobs have been raised in 2021 than in 2018 and over 1,000 more than in 2019.

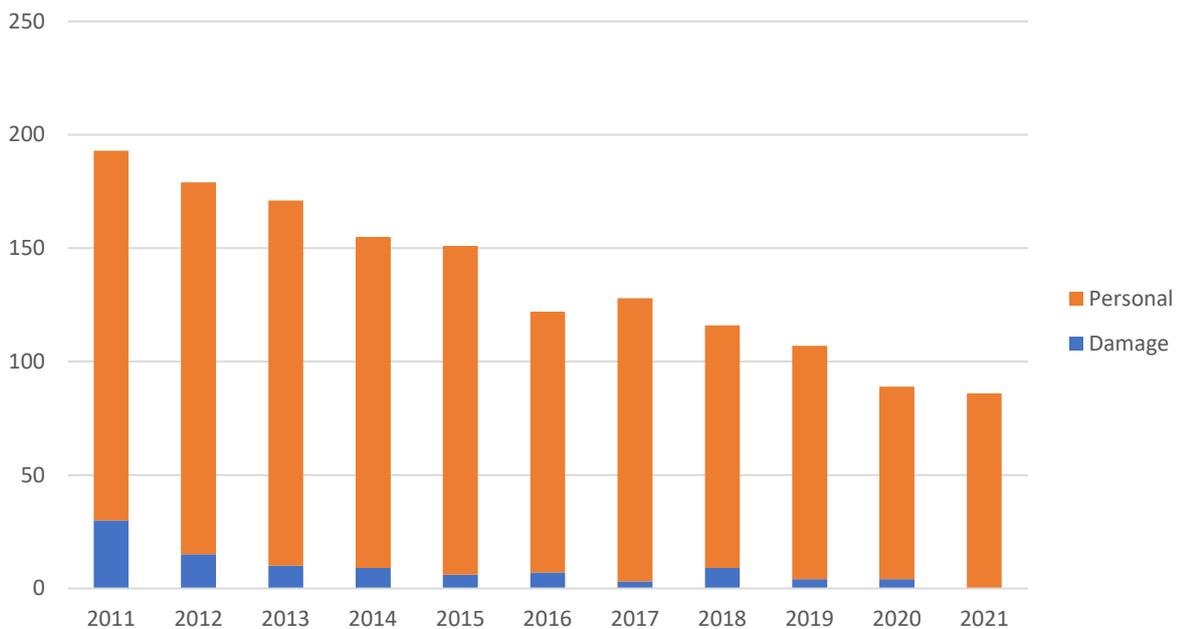
Chart 23 – Number of Footway Defects Year on Year



7.1.5. Claims

Whilst the number of defects and the maintenance backlog is increasing the number of claims is reducing. Chart 24 shows the number of claims year on year and the split between personal injury and damage claims.

Chart 24 – Footway Claims – Damage Only vs Personal Injury



7.2. ASSET MANAGEMENT

7.2.1. Asset Condition

Our footway network is a substantial highway asset and consequently we invest significant resource into understanding its condition and likely future deterioration.

Historically, footway asset information was collected via Footway Network Survey (FNS). The Footway Network Survey (FNS) was intended to provide a cost effective, efficient and consistent approach to footway surveys, based on a linear basis. The survey was carried out by a single surveyor walking along the footway, referencing the network against four defect categories:

- As new
- Aesthetically impaired
- Functionally impaired
- Structurally impaired

The FNS survey was resource intensive and took a minimum of 5 years to cover the network. This meant that we were modelling footway condition using an outdated view of the network.

Gaist Solutions Ltd have now been commissioned to perform a footway condition survey of the entire highway network. The survey includes providing the authority with HD quality 360-degree imagery of all the highway network accessible by vehicle. The survey started in November 2021.

The footway and cycle track asset group are continually extended to include segregated cycle tracks that are publicly maintainable. These segregated cycle tracks have been generally constructed for use by cyclists and are not alongside a road or footway. We do not currently have detailed knowledge of the extent of segregated cycle tracks or their condition, though we are considering commissioning work to address this during the coming year.

We are continuing to refine the quality and completeness of the condition and inventory data in order to produce reliable lifecycle plans.

7.2.2. Other Significant Factors affecting Footway Maintenance

The footway, footpath and cycleway network in Staffordshire has been developed over many years. Much of the asset has evolved over time and the increase in car ownership and the competition for car parking space means that many sections of the footway are subject to overriding. In

addition, many are affected by root penetration and disruption from adjacent landscaped areas which have matured over the years.

Parking and Tree Root Disruption

Generally, the condition of the footway deteriorates slowly and is more likely to be affected by external stresses, typically because of parking and vehicle over-run issues and tree root disruption. This particularly affects older residential urban areas that are tree lined or were not designed to accommodate the number of vehicles per household that is now typical. The narrow nature of many of these locations does lead to residents parking either wholly or partly on the footway.

These issues disproportionately affect people with visual or mobility impairments, those assisted by guide dogs, families with pushchairs and wheelchair and mobility scooter users.

The principal risk on footways is from trip hazards, particularly in high footfall locations. However, where vehicles do regularly park on or traverse our footways even small defects can escalate quickly. This both increases the replacement costs and shortens the life of the asset.

Footway Detritus

Detritus comprises of small, broken-down particles of synthetic and natural materials which arrive at the site through the same displacement effects associated with mechanical, human, animal and natural actions, most of which also determine the distribution of litter. Detritus includes dust, mud, soil, grit, gravel, stones, rotted leaf and vegetable residues, fragments of twigs, glass, plastic and other finely divided materials.

It is recommended but not a duty that detritus should be removed alongside litter and refuse by duty bodies from all other hard surfaces as well. Therefore, the district council will have a duty under s89(1) to remove detritus from metalled highways, but it is only recommended and not a duty of the district council that detritus be removed from other hard surfaces.

7.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

Bituminous footways make up the major proportion of the footway network and in general stand up well to traffic in all locations; however, regular preventative maintenance work is required to prevent long-term deterioration.

Preventative maintenance is not generally an option on our rigid footways. Rigid footways are also those most susceptible to external stresses such as tree root disruption or vehicle over riding. This makes it difficult to target

maintenance as failure is usually rapid and necessitates some form of reactive repair in the first instance.

7.3.1. Maintenance Treatment Options

Our approach to footway, footpath and cycle route asset management is a balance between asset renewal, where such assets have reached the end of their serviceable life, and asset preservation, where we apply a treatment to seal the surface and extend the life of assets that would otherwise need replacement at considerably higher cost.

7.3.2. Management strategy for minimising whole-life costs

Whole life costs include the direct costs of works, design, supervision, surveys, and the indirect costs including inconvenience to users, environmental impacts and third-party claims. The main factors which will affect the whole life cost of an individual footway are:

- Type and quality of original construction.
- Degree and type of damage and degradation caused by environmental factors, traffic, and levels of utility work.
- Speed, quality and type of response to damage and degradation.
- Timing of intervention treatments.

At present, the links between these have not been fully quantified.

7.3.3. Quality Health, Care and Support

We recognise that the quality and condition of our footway and cycleway network impacts on the ability of people to travel to health and care services, to receive support in their homes, and to engage in leisure activities which promote good mental and physical health.

In particular, we are aware that the condition of footways can have a disproportionate impact on disabled and older people, a demographic continually increasing both in size and as a proportion of Staffordshire's population, and we intend to review the way we prioritise footway maintenance to take into account areas used by a higher proportion of older or disabled people.

Securing continuous improvement in the safety and serviceability of cycle routes, in particular network integrity, is a necessary component for encouraging cycling as an alternative to the car. Cycleways are included within the Gaist asset database to be surveyed and assessed. This only applies for combined footway/cycleway assets, which signifies the majority

of the cycleway network. We are considering the use of alternative assisted technology to capture segregated cycle infrastructure.

7.3.4. Pedestrian Crossing Facilities

Dropped kerbs will be provided at all identified pedestrian crossing points where re-kerbing or new works are being carried out, and at other crossing points where a particular need has been identified.

The crossings shall be constructed in accordance with the County Council's standard detail drawings. Crossings will be provided with a corresponding crossing point on the opposite side of the road.

Coloured and tactile paving will be provided at all pelican and zebra crossings, and at all junctions with positive pedestrian control by traffic signals.

7.3.5. Vehicular Crossings

Wherever a footway or kerbing maintenance scheme is carried out, residents who currently cross the footway illegally will be offered the opportunity to contribute to the cost of providing a vehicular crossing at a cost equal to the extra cost of providing the facility over and above the normal cost of the footway works.

Where footway crossings are constructed at other times, then the full cost of the construction works will be payable by the frontage.

In cases where any crossing is required at an access to industrial works, petrol filling station, or other premises attracting heavy traffic, the specification to be employed shall be specifically designed for the site conditions.

The council has a number of formal options under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 available to it to prevent unauthorised vehicular crossing of the footway. These include considering installing physical barriers to prevent access to the driveway where a crossing is not permitted. The council can also recover the cost of any damage caused to the footway as a result of unauthorised driving over it.

Constructing a crossing without the Council's consent is illegal. Where a footway crossing has been constructed without consent the council can rebuild the footway and recover the cost of the works from the resident.

Crossings over Highway Margins and Verges

- The existing margin or verge shall be excavated to the formation level required and the whole excavation area sprayed with a total weedkiller.
- The crossing shall be constructed in accordance with SCC specifications.

Piping of a Ditch under Vehicular Access Crossing

Where the access crosses a roadside ditch, this shall be piped with (glazed stoneware/concrete) pipes on a carefully prepared bed, free of large stones, which shall conform to the gradient of the existing ditch. The pipes shall be laid to approved levels and appropriate headwalls shall be provided.

The work shall not be commenced until the levels have been determined and pipes must not be covered until they have been inspected and approved by an SCC appointed engineer. For details of size of pipe, level and gradients, Staffordshire County Council must be contacted before any work is commenced, as the work involved may include a regrading of the ditch on each side of the access. All of the above shall conform to SCC specification

7.3.6. Temporary Access Works on the Highway

Where a temporary footway is provided, its surface will be of an adequate standard for use by elderly and disabled people.

Temporary footways will always be kept clear of mud and other loose material and pedestrian access to properties will be maintained.

7.4. ASSET INSPECTION

7.4.1. Safety and Service Inspections

In addition to the condition surveys, we carry out safety inspections.

Our team of highway inspectors carry out visual checks to make sure the highway assets are in a safe condition. This includes checking for defects in the footway surface that present a safety concern. We carry out this kind of check at various frequencies dependant on the hierarchy of the section of footway concerned.

Reactive inspections are carried out in response to enquiries from the public or other stakeholders and generate ad-hoc and emergency works, for example repairing footway potholes and other surface failures.

The frequency and process for undertaking routine highway safety inspections is detailed in the SCC Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice.

7.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

7.5.1. Prioritisation of Investment

The application of asset management principles and the development of lifecycle planning provide the ideal opportunity for greater co-ordination of programmes over a longer period.

Prioritisation of the footway programme is a seven-stage process that mirrors that of the carriageway.

7.5.2. Forecast Future Funding

As the indicative future budget profile increases for design and replacement of failing critical structures the amount of available funding available for the footway and cycleway network reduces.

The real term reduction in the base level of funding provided by the DfT and the necessity to support the management of high-risk structures means that the forecast budget available for planned cycleway and footway works in 2024/25 is a minimum of 14% less than in 2021/22.

Volume 3 – Drainage

8.1. INTRODUCTION

Drainage is provided to ensure that surface water is removed from carriageways, footways and cycleways as quickly as possible to avoid ponding and flooding which can be a danger to the public. This is achieved through a combination of preventative maintenance and action to deal with reported flooding where this occurs. Known problem sites will be the subject of regular inspections and preventative maintenance to minimise flooding problems. The highway drainage system in Staffordshire is designed to take water away from the road surface, but even with a well-maintained system, problems can arise during periods of heavy or prolonged rainfall.

This asset comprises all highway drainage features including gullies, kerb offlets, grips, backdrains, soakaways, catchpits, associated pipework and outfalls.

The drainage asset's primary objectives are:

- removal of highway surface water (from our roads) to maintain road safety and minimise nuisance
- effective sub-surface drainage to prevent damage to the structural integrity of the highway and maximise its lifespan, and
- minimise the impact of highway surface water on the adjacent environment, including properties.

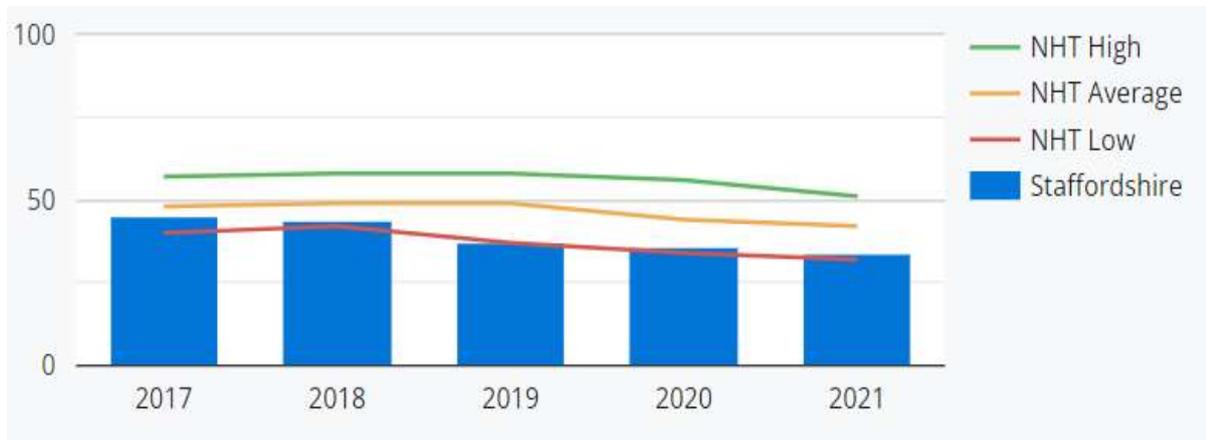
8.1.1. Stakeholder expectations

Stakeholders expect a provision that ensures where practicable unobstructed and safe passage of the highway and that the authority implement measures to reduce the risk of highway related flooding.

8.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

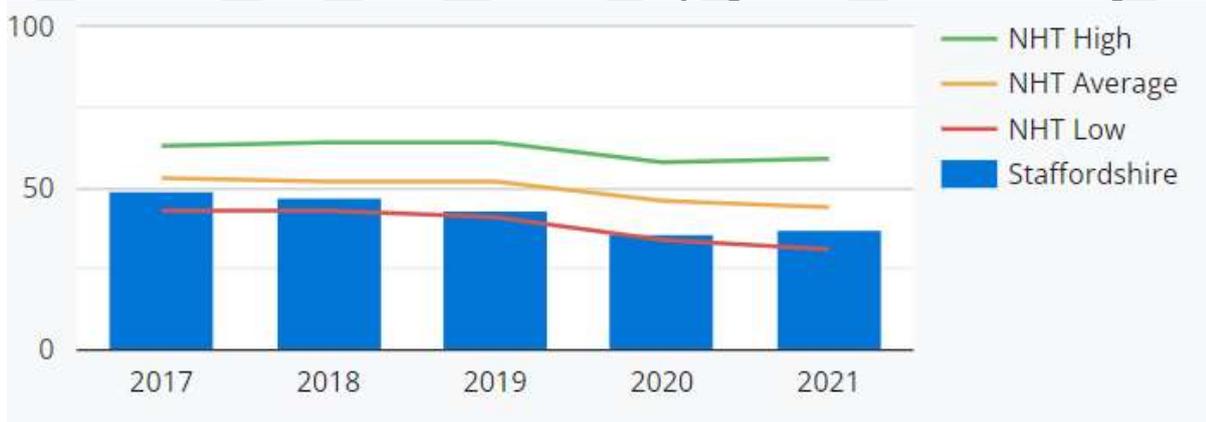
The headline conclusion for our drainage asset is that in terms of public satisfaction, the authority has generally followed national trends but is still currently well below the National Average. Chart 25 shows that the level of public satisfaction with how the authority deals with flooded roads is one of the lowest amongst participating authorities.

Chart 25 – Public Satisfaction HMBI 12 – Deals with flooding on roads and pavements



Similarly, chart 26 shows satisfaction well below the national average in keeping drains clear and working. However, the downward trend in satisfaction was arrested in 2021 with satisfaction improving marginally.

Chart 26 – Public Satisfaction HMBI 12 - Keeping drains clear and working



8.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

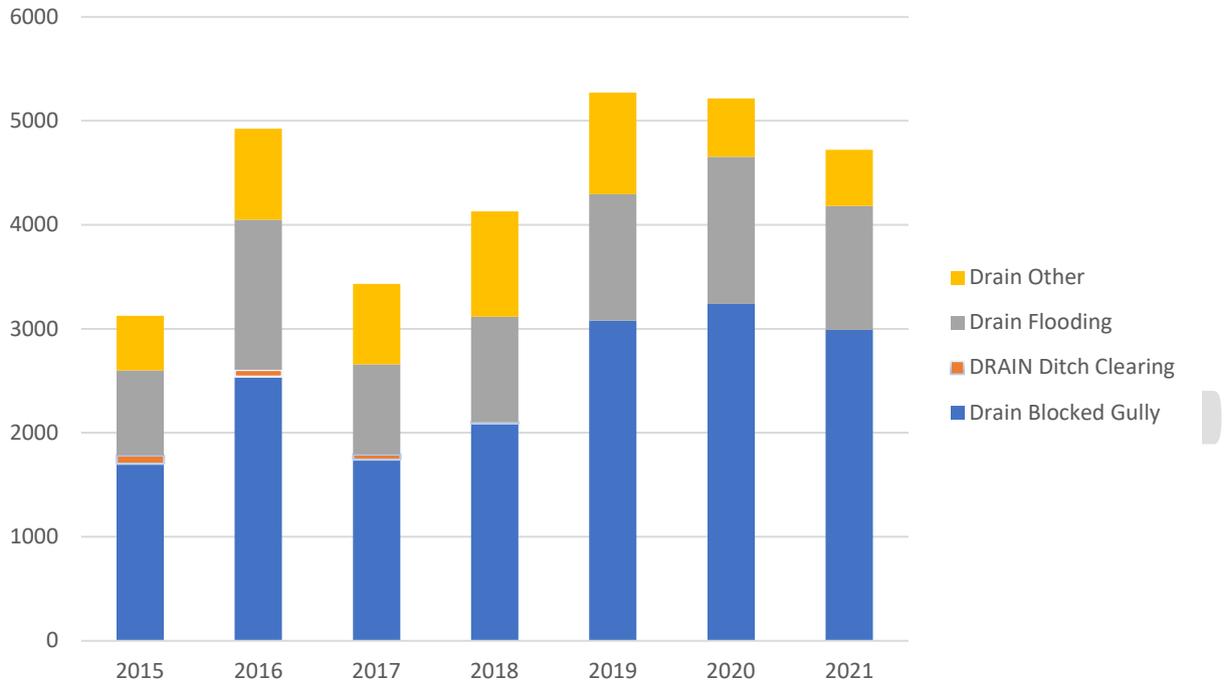
Customer reports and enquiries about drainage issues are second only to those about the carriageway with around 14% of the total volume. The majority of customer reports made relate to blocked gullies and the percentage has increased from around 50% before 2018 to over 60% in 2021. This could be due to improvements in reporting with 'drainage other' reducing as a percentage rather than an actual increase in issues with blocked gullies but does suggest an increasing issue with blocked gullies.

An additional one-off targeted investment of £1.9M²² on local highway priorities of which £0.95M was focussed on known gully hotspots affecting communities appears to have supported a reversal of the upward trend

²² [Cabinet Meeting 16th September 2020 - Additional Investment in Community Highway Issues](#)

seen prior to 2019. Drain ditch clearing was removed as a category for collection of data in 2018 and its use will be reviewed during the period of this plan.

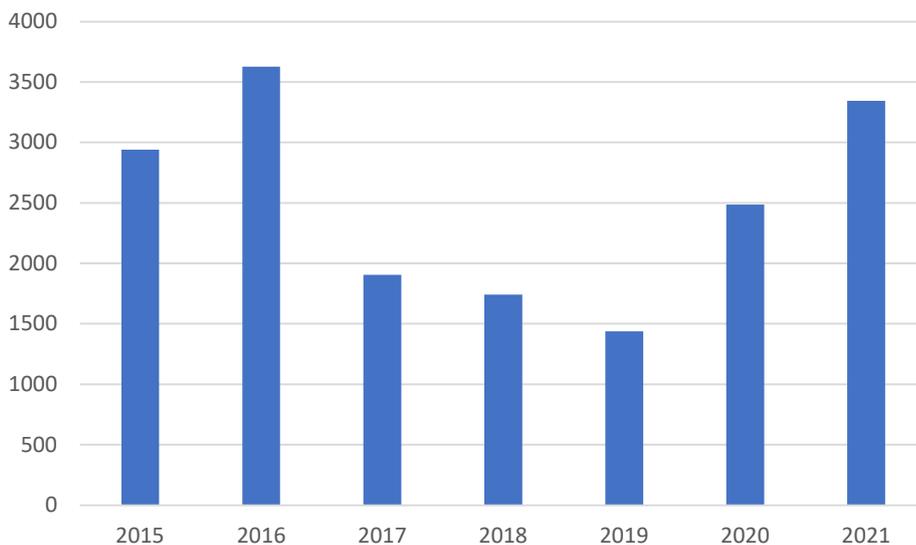
Chart 27 – Drainage Related Customer Enquiries



8.1.4. Defects

Drainage related jobs have more than doubled in the last three years and the upward trend is expected to continue in 2022 with frequent storm events occurring in February meaning a particularly wet start to the year.

Chart 28 – Drainage Related Jobs Raised



8.2. ASSET CONDITION

8.2.1. Asset Inventory

Currently we only have a limited number of inventory items complete in extent and with enough reliability to give a high or medium confidence. Our records of our underground systems such as soakaways, catchpits and pipes are limited or incomplete. As a result, we are still largely using historical data to justify routine budget profile.

We do not hold condition data on the individual elements of the asset. They are inspected upon safety inspections and those requiring treatment prioritised for replacement depending upon the severity of the defect of the location.

8.2.2. Other Significant Factors affecting Drainage Maintenance

Damaged and Ageing Infrastructure

Much of the County's drainage infrastructure was installed when the roads were originally constructed, some of which date back to late 1800s/early 1900s. Over time settlement, ingress of tree roots and roadworks by third parties has caused widespread deterioration and damage. Years of under-investment have exacerbated this problem.

Limited Capacity

In recent years prolonged and heavy rainfall events appear to have become a more frequent occurrence. Development and changes in land use have also resulted in increased volumes of surface water being discharged into the drainage system which is designed to cope with moderate to heavy rainfall. In many places drainage systems are now running at capacity.

Where capacity is insufficient the only options are to divert the highway drainage elsewhere or install an entirely new, larger system. This requires significant investment and in the past cost had tended to make this kind of scheme unaffordable for providers.

In future years we expect that even drains that are fully functional may have some capacity issues due to the unprecedented but now regular high rainfall events where current drainage and sewer capacity cannot cope with the amount of surface water run-off.

Reliance on Third Party Infrastructure

In many places the highway is drained into public sewers, which are owned and maintained by the waste water authority, or privately-owned third-

party assets such as ditches or ponds. In these instances, our influence over maintenance regimes and improvements is limited.

Land Drainage

Water being discharged from adjacent land onto the road is also becoming an increasingly common cause of highway flooding. A more stringent enforcement process utilising our Highways Act powers needs to be implemented. However, to date the vast majority of cases have been resolved via constructive discussion with the landowner.

Reductions in other services

A frequent cause of highway flooding is debris obstructing drain covers, particularly during autumn and winter. The need for financial savings has necessitated reductions in services such as street sweeping, delivered by district and borough councils, and soft landscaping services. These have resulted in increased debris collecting on the highway and finding its way to the roadside drains.

8.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

Effective drainage management includes the periodic removal of silt and debris from drainage systems including grips and ditches. This includes the removal of any vegetation obstructing the flow of drainage. Also included is the testing of short lengths of piped drainage systems, and any rodding or jetting necessary to keep the system clear.

Drains are defined as pipes or culverts less than 1.5m. span or diameter, specifically provided for the drainage of the highway, or for watercourses crossing the highway. Generally, the Highway Authority is not responsible for the cleansing of ditches, unless they are on land which has been specifically acquired for highway purposes. However, grips (drainage channels cut through the verge to lead water off the carriageway) will usually be the Highway Authority's responsibility.

Drains which carry other water including foul water may be sewers or combined drains and are the responsibility of the water authority or the local District Council. Roadside gullies are maintained by Staffordshire County Council and are usually cleaned a minimum of one every three years on a targeted approach.

It is evident that an increasing frequency of severe flooding events due to climate change is impacting upon our infrastructure. Highway drainage is a key factor to providing network resilience, and the safe movement of goods, people and services around the county.

Our major challenge is asset deterioration due to historical under-investment. In addition, the location and condition of this asset in roads, footways or third-party land has been poorly recorded.

As a result, we have a system which is outdated and that we hold very little information on sub surface assets. This has resulted in a lack of prioritised capital investment and has reduced our ability to target maintenance effectively. Our existing practice to maintaining this asset is mainly reactive, which is costly and does not address the issue of understanding where to invest to halt deterioration of the asset or reduce the risk of flooding from surface water.

A good understanding of the inventory and lifecycle of drainage assets informs risk based routine maintenance works. This will also aid us in complying with Recommendation 22 of Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice:

"Drainage assets should be maintained in good working order to reduce the threat and scale of flooding. Particular attention should be paid to locations known to be prone to problems, so that drainage systems operate close to their designed efficiency".

Water soaking into the road foundation can cause structural damage. Water standing on carriageways, footways or cycleways can freeze and be slippery and also causes considerable inconvenience to the public, because of damage to clothing and property, by splashing.

The number of drainage assets is currently increasing by roughly 150 each year due to new housing and business developments.

Material arising from all road drainage emptying and cleansing operations has potential implications for pollution and shall be disposed of correctly in accordance with Environment Agency, or equivalent authority, requirements.

Where despite effective maintenance operations, flooding of the highway occurs, with implications for safety or serviceability, relevant warning signs will be placed in position as quickly as possible, and users advised as per the highway asset communications strategy. The cause of the flooding shall be determined and addressed as appropriate.

The highway may flood if the surrounding land is in flood and there are limitations to the action that can be reasonably taken. If it is subsequently determined that the flooding is attributable to deficiencies in infrastructure or the maintenance regime, given the nature of the weather conditions under which it occurred, then action to permanently relieve the problem shall be considered which may involve consultation with other public bodies

and/or third parties. If the event is attributable to the actions of a third party, the matter shall be taken up with them at the earliest opportunity.

Ironware comprising covers, gratings, frames and boxes set in carriageways, footways and cycle routes has the potential to compromise safety and serviceability, and in certain cases cause noise and disturbance to local residents. Responsibility for defective ironwork will usually lie with utility companies.

8.3.1. Gully Cleansing

Gullies are cleaned on a frequency of at least once every three years on a targeted approach. Some gullies, which due to their location, are prone to silt up are cleansed on a more frequent basis, usually twice or three times a year. Such gullies should be included on a schedule which details the road number and the brief justification for the need for a second emptying. Typical justifications would include those gullies at the bottom of gradients, or at low spots, and gullies near quarry entrances.

We operate a cleaning schedule to routinely clean the gullies throughout Staffordshire, using data collated in recent years the frequency of the cleansing is determined by the silt levels readings and road classification.

Urban class A and B roads

- Generally, have higher silt levels and because of traffic speeds and volumes
- Require more frequent (annual) cleanses

Rural class A and B roads

- Feature high traffic volumes and accommodate higher speeds
- These will be cleansed on an annual basis

Rural class C class and unclassified routes (D and U)

- Typically have lower silt levels than Urban A and B class routes but higher silt levels than Urban C, D and U class routes
- These gullies will be cleansed once every two years

Urban class C and unclassified roads (D and U roads)

- Typically have lower silt levels due to lower traffic speeds and volumes
- These routes will be cleansed once every three years

In addition to a routine cleaning schedule, ad hoc cleansing operations take place 1 to 2 days a week in targeted locations based on risk assessed priority.

Trials are currently being undertaken to recycle gully waste into commercial grade topsoil.

8.3.2. Flooding

Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, County Councils and Unitary Authorities are designated as Lead Local Flood Authorities. The County Council is the strategic leader for flood risk management within Staffordshire and our responsibilities include:

- Developing a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- Ensuring that all organisations involved in flood risk management are aware of their responsibilities.
- Monitoring progress and activity by all parties involved in flood risk management.
- Coordinating communication, both with the public and between organisations.
- Preparing reports and plans to meet the requirements of the Flood Risk Regulations 2009.
- Carrying out flood investigations where appropriate and publishing reports.
- Keeping an asset register of structures and features which may have a significant effect on local flood risk.
- Designation of third-party assets where appropriate.
- Regulation of ordinary watercourses, including permissive powers to require landowners to maintain ordinary watercourses on their land/property.
- Providing technical advice to Local Planning Authorities on surface water drainage strategies for major developments.

We also have permissive powers which allow us to carry out works to manage flood risk from surface water and groundwater.

More information on our approach to managing flood risk can be found in our Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.

In cases of severe and widespread flooding, problems will be dealt where possible in accordance with the hierarchy of roads with a focus on the resilient network. The cause of the flooding will be investigated, and preventative action taken where practicable, to prevent a recurrence of the problem.

Officers will maintain a register of known problem sites which are liable to flooding. This will enable maintenance resources to be directed in an effective manner.

8.3.3. Other parts of our drainage system

We also look after ponds, lagoons, pumping stations, catchpits and soakaways which drain water from the road.

Ditches and grips

Ditches or watercourses are the responsibility of landowners (often called riparian owners). Roadside ditches normally belong to the adjoining landowner and not the highway authority, except where land has been acquired for new road building. The highway authority can discharge highway water to a roadside ditch and may maintain it but is under no obligation to do so.

Landowners may drain their land to any ditch or watercourse on the property. They have a duty to maintain their ditches or watercourses in such a way that nuisance is not caused to neighbours. The County Council's Flood Risk Management Team and the Environment Agency will be able to provide further advice on land drainage issues.

Grips cut in verges are the responsibility of the highway authority, they are cut to assist with road drainage. Drainage grips are used to channel water away from the carriageway and into ditches, where there is an absence of or limited number of gullies or other positive systems that can drain the highway water away.

Grips are essentially dug or cut out of verges adjacent to the road and they can therefore be easily damaged if driven over at tight passing points on rural lanes. Improper grass cutting maintenance can also reduce their effectiveness as vegetation dies back and adds to the presence of earth.

The digging out or renewal of drainage grips does not generally form part of our routine drainage maintenance operations, since that usually involves jetting/gulley emptying machinery which is not required to resolve a problem with grips. Where locations require the attendance of a crew and manual equipment to dig out drainage grips, this has to be scheduled in accordance with a risk assessed category of priority. Unless the problem is

posing an imminent risk to safety, this type of work will be carried out as resources permit.

Ditches and the law

The common law imposes a duty on the occupier of the land adjoining the highway to clean ditches, drains etc which are necessary for draining the highway.

There are two categories of ditches that run alongside the highway:

- Those provided and maintained by the Highway Authority for the sole purpose of draining the highway.
- Those existing for the purposes of land drainage, and which are privately maintained.

Where a ditch is used jointly for highway water and land drainage then the law presumes that the adjoining landowner is responsible for the maintenance unless there is conclusive proof to the contrary.

Work on ditches

Ditches should be cleared, and the depth maintained as necessary to ensure that the efficiency of the system is not impaired. Any excavated material must be removed from the vicinity of the ditch so that it is not washed, or pushed back in.

Piping ditches

No ditch adjacent to the highway should be piped until the local highway authority and adjacent / riparian landowner have been consulted.

Protection of the public and operatives

Works on ditches or other features adjacent to the public highway should be carried out in such a way that no operative or item of plant encroaches onto the carriageway unless appropriate and advance signage is used.

Ponds and lagoons

Some highway drainage systems drain to roadside ponds and lagoons. These are inspected and maintained in response to reports of flooding.

Pumping stations

We own 16 highway pumping stations. These are serviced every 6 months with additional maintenance done if needed.

Soakaways

Soakaways are large underground tanks. Water drains from roadside drains, through pipes and into these chambers where it gradually soaks into the ground. If cleaning roadside drains doesn't clear the flooding, we investigate if nearby soakaways may also need cleansing.

Trash Screens

A trash screen is a type of fencing used to filter out debris in the path of a waterway. Known trash screens are inspected and cleared on a monthly cycle.

Catchpits

Catchpits are installed to collect silt before it discharges into more vulnerable parts of the drainage system

Swales

A Swale is a shallow channel lined with vegetation, usually grass, used to convey stormwater. The objective of a swale is to minimise the use of piped stormwater drainage system. It also functions to slow down stormwater flows and remove coarse to medium sediments.

8.4. Asset Inspection

There are two types of checks carried out on the drainage system: planned inspections and reactive inspections.

8.4.1. Planned Inspections

Planned inspections include highway safety inspections and condition checks carried out as part of our cyclical maintenance regime:

- Our team of highway inspectors carry out visual checks to make sure that highway assets are in a safe condition. This includes checking that drain covers are not blocked, broken or missing. We carry out this kind of check at least once every twelve months.
- Our drainage cleansing crews look at the condition of the drains on main roads and ensure they are flowing.

- Our pumping stations are serviced every 6 months to check they are working properly and ensure that any faults or damage are repaired quickly.
- Trash screens are inspected a minimum of once per month or at a greater frequency dependent on the likelihood of severe adverse weather conditions.

We do not undertake planned inspections on our other drainage assets (underground pipes, culverts, soakaways, ponds, lagoon and ditches). These are all checked on a reactive basis.

8.4.2. Reactive Inspections

Reactive inspections are carried out in response to enquiries and generate ad-hoc and emergency works, for example, cleaning blocked drains that are causing the road to flood and repairing collapsed road drains. They may also result in us serving notice under the Highways Act 1980 requesting the landowner maintain their ditch or prevent water flowing from their land onto the highway. Where this is not completed in the required time, we may undertake the work and seek to recover the costs from the landowner.

Although responsibility for defective ironwork may lie with Utilities, defects identified during inspection or from users will therefore be formally notified to the Utility with a follow up procedure to ensure that dangerous defects are remedied within the prescribed timescale.

The standards outlined can be varied where necessary to deal with problem locations where more frequent treatment may be required.

8.5. Asset Programming

8.5.1. Prioritisation of Investment

As with all our assets, we take a risk-based approach to deciding where to invest our funding and some of the things we consider for this asset group include:

What is the risk to road users if the road floods?

- Is the road a high-speed road or on the Resilient Network, a main road, an estate road or a country lane?
- Is the road used by high volumes of traffic?
- Does the road layout increase risk, for example, is the flooding on a blind bend?
- Does the speed of traffic increase risk?

How much disruption is caused if the road floods?

- Is the road a high-speed or on the Resilient Network, a main road, an estate road or a country lane?
- Is the road used by high volumes of traffic?
- Are there suitable alternative routes available to road users?
- Is access to critical infrastructure such as power stations or hospitals affected?

How are homes and businesses affected by the flooding?

- Are buildings being internally flooded?
- Are businesses prevented from operating?

Investment is prioritised where the risk is highest. We then consider how to invest our budget.

Having assessed each site, we collate a prioritised list of works which are included in forward works programmes.

We do not undertake works to mitigate minor nuisance factors. We prioritise works at locations where highway surface water presents a risk to highway safety or a risk of internal flooding to inhabited areas of property.

Through programme coordination and visibility of future SCC schemes which may affect other key highway asset or major improvement scheme, we adjust its place in the programme so that we can combine activities in order to maximise financial efficiencies.

8.5.2. Forecast Future Funding

Public satisfaction is low in the delivery of our highway drainage service. This is in part due to the historic underinvestment in managing this asset. The effects of climate change means that road flooding is likely to become more common and this will bring further pressures on an already inadequate budget.

The reduction in the base level of funding provided by the DfT and the necessity to support the management of high-risk structures means that the forecast budget available for structural drainage schemes in 2024/25 is at least 77% less than in 2021/22.

Volume 4 – Structures

9.1. INTRODUCTION

Highway Structures comprise critical infrastructure that supports the safe passage of highway over rail, river and other features. The structures asset is widely varied in form and age, many of which go un-noticed by the travelling public. Structures asset also support essential utilities apparatus and the resilient network.

There are approximately 5000 assets identified on the structures database, with sub-asset types including bridges, tunnels, culverts, retaining walls, and Sign Gantries. The Highway Structures team also manage the County dam asset and support the maintenance of structures on the Public Right of Way Network.

In the context of this HIAMP, the structures asset includes larger bridges over 1.5m clear span, retaining walls with a retained height over 1.5m and some PRoW structures with a clear span over 6.5m. Smaller culvert assets are maintained by Amey Highway Operations as part of the drainage asset.

Given limited funding available the asset strategy is to slow the rate of structural deterioration to prevent the closure of structures and their associated routes. Unfortunately, we now have structures that have reached the end of their serviceable life and require replacement, or removal.

9.1.1. Stakeholder expectations

As Highway Authority the County Council has a duty of care to all road users who expect the network to be:

- Fit for purpose, good condition, well maintained and safe to use
- Accessible for reliable journey times with minimal disruption due to maintenance
- Maintained efficiently with minimum whole life costs

Structures are provided to support highway and travelling public over a wide range of scenarios and in differing environments which interface with many external stakeholders. For example:

- Canal and River Trust
- Network Rail
- Railway Trusts
- National Coal Board
- Utility Companies
- Abnormal load hauliers

- Environment Agency
- Lead Local Drainage Authority
- Historic England
- Natural England
- Planning Authorities
- Housing developers

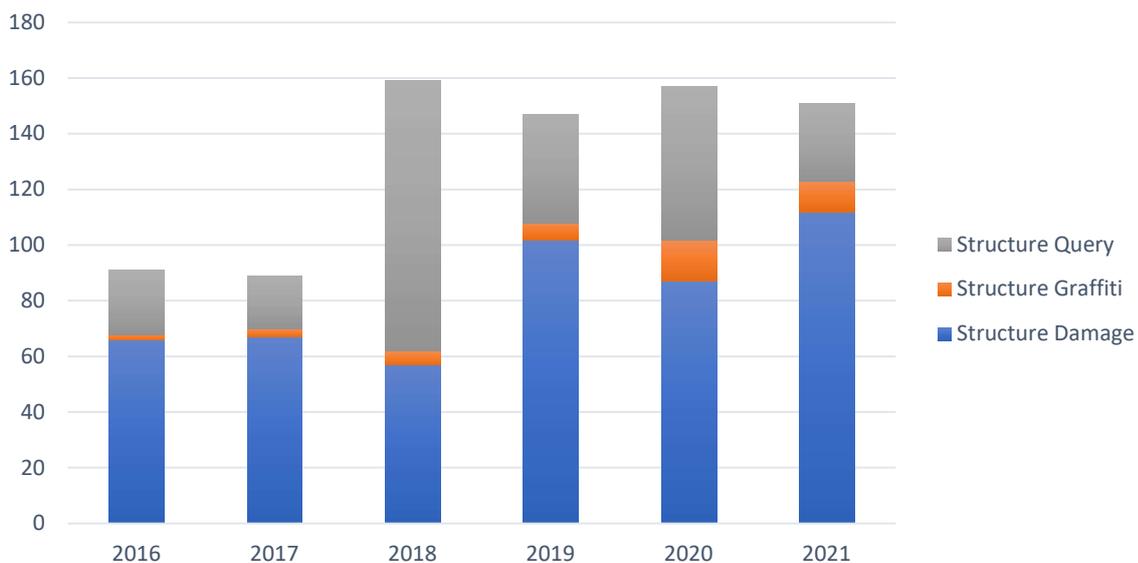
9.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

There are no customer satisfaction measures in the NHT public satisfaction survey that directly relate to the management of highway structures.

9.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

The number of customer enquiries relating to highway structures have been relatively static in the last 4 years. However, the number relating to structural damage has increased by 90% in the last 3 years.

Chart 29 – Public Satisfaction HMBI 12 – Deals with flooding on roads and pavements



9.1.4. Claims

Claims relating to highway structures are generally recharges for damage to our asset rather than claims for personal injury or damage as a result of a fault of the asset.

9.2. ASSET PERFORMANCE

Structures asset systems are tailored to managing risk of structural failure, network disruption and optimisation of investment.

The 2007 Guidance Document for Performance Measurement ranks the Staffordshire road bridge assets as in FAIR condition for critical load bearing elements with the commentary '*A number of critical load bearing elements may be in a severe condition. Some structures may represent a significant risk to public safety unless mitigation*'. This statement is supported by individual high-risk assets requiring urgent repairs as detailed in the recommended maintenance programme. See section 9.5.2 Investment Aspirations.

Visual condition is one of a range of tools to compare performance and is based on the ADEPT Bridge Condition Indicators for each asset type, where:

BSCIave: measure of average condition of all structural components

BSCICrit: measure of critical condition of high importance load bearing components

The trend of bridge condition score is shown below in Table XX

Table 5 – Bridge Condition

Condition Score/Year	2004		2022		Trend
	Score	Condition	Score	Condition	
Road Bridge Average	86.7	Good	83.5	Good	↓
Road Bridge Critical	76.5	Fair	70.2	Fair	↓
Footbridge Average	86.2	Good	79.9	Fair	↓
Footbridge Critical	80.5	Good	70.1	Fair	↓
Retaining Wall Average	x	x	x	x	x
Retaining Wall Critical	x	x	x	x	x

Notes:

- x – condition data not available due to lack of inventory
- Average condition indicator includes all structural features
- Critical condition indicator limited to high importance load bearing components

All condition indicators have fallen over the recorded period. It is important to note the condition of critical load bearing elements is deteriorating at an increased rate when compared to other more visible items, for example painting. The replacement of critical components requires increased investment and advanced programming.

Highway structures are currently required to support the EC 40/44 tonne vehicle. There are currently over 50 sub-standard structures that do not meet this performance level and have interim protection measures.

Approximately 45% of the road bridge stock comprises masonry arches. This older form of construction includes some assets over 200 years old that do not meet current design specifications for vehicle containment.

9.2.1. Maintenance Backlog

Based on the condition information collected at each inspection, continual structural reassessment, and performance review a work bank of repairs and maintenance works is held for each structure.

The total value of the work bank currently stands at approximately £90 million although this is considered to be a significant underestimate. An enhanced programme of reassessment, structural investigation and feasibility work is required to improve this assessment.

9.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The structures asset is currently valued at £1.4 billion with annual depreciation of £15.5m, which supports the strategy of managed deterioration with an annual internal investment of approximately £3m. Opportunities for additional external funding are progressed where available.

This asset group is particularly complex and varied in composition when compared with other asset groups, and this makes accurate modelling challenging. Unlike other asset groups the age range of the assets is vast, ranging from medieval bridges to modern day structures. Structures comprise numerous types and construction forms, from simple timber and masonry structures to complex steel and post-tensioned concrete multi-span structures.

There is an extensive inventory database and well established, nationally recognised inspection regimes for structures. This has resulted in a wealth of information on this asset group held on the Confirm database, which is integrated with other highway assets to optimise cross-asset programming.

9.3.1. Applying Asset Management Principles to the Structures Asset

The structures asset is managed in accordance with the principles set out in ISO55000, the recognised standard for asset management, to manage risk and cost, whilst complying with legislation. An asset management framework is established to manage the inventory of structures through their serviceable life from construction, through maintenance to disposal. Health and safety files are held for each asset which contain a specific identification reference, ownership, capacity, condition and construction details. An electronic register of assets is held in the Confirm database, with other supporting electronic files and paper archive.

The Highway Structures Asset Project Quality Plan further describes the asset management processes and scheme delivery requirements in further detail, defining project gateways best practice scheme management and design guides.

9.4. ASSET INSPECTION

In line with the national guidance document Inspection Manual for Highway Structures published in May 2007, a pragmatic approach to structural inspections has been adopted.

9.4.1. Structural Inspections

Structural inspections are a key source of information that feed into the asset management process such that up-to-date condition data can be obtained to evaluate maintenance needs. The frequency of structural inspections is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 – Structural inspection frequency

Structural Inspections	
Type of Inspection	Inspection Frequency
Routine safety surveillance	Dependent on classification of route
General inspection	2 years
Underwater inspection	2/4 years
Principal inspection	Risk based programme
Special inspection	As required
Inspection for assessment	As required
Acceptance inspection	As required

9.4.2. Routine Surveillance

Undertaken by County Highway Inspectors who report any defects observed to the Structures Asset Team. This is a programmed inspection generally undertaken from a slow-moving vehicle, therefore only a limited range of defects on structures are generally visible.

9.4.3. General Inspections

General Inspections are undertaken by inspectors who are supervised by a Chartered Engineer. This is a remote visual inspection that reports on the condition of all visible structural elements, notes obvious defects and suggests maintenance requirements. These inspections also report the Bridge Condition Indicator as developed by ADEPT, The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport.

9.4.4. Underwater Inspections

Underwater inspections (including access to confined spaces) are undertaken by specialist access contractors who employ qualified divers.

9.4.5. Principal Inspections

Principal Inspections require close detailed examination of all structural components, often requiring specialist access to remote elements. Principal Inspections provide a detailed report of structural condition, recommend maintenance works and also report the Bridge Condition Indicator. Principal inspections are undertaken on structures which have an individual span of length 9.0m or over.

The programme of inspections is risk based to consider known structural defects and element composition. These inspections are undertaken by experienced bridge engineers.

9.4.6. Special Inspections

Scheduled where a defect requires inspection at shorter intervals than facilitated by General or Principal Inspection, or in response to the report of a defect which may affect the safety or stability of a structure. Substandard structures are recorded and monitored on the BD79 schedule.

9.4.7. Inspection for Assessment

Comprising a thorough examination of a structure to determine structural condition and also confirm dimensions of elements such that quantitative structural calculations can be undertaken to determine loading capacity. It may also involve sampling and non-destructive testing of materials and components to determine material properties and condition.

9.4.8. Acceptance Inspection

Undertaken upon acquisition of an asset, either when a new structure is built and received from the constructor, or when an existing asset is transferred from a third party to the County Council for future maintenance. The Acceptance Inspection will review structural condition and quantify any maintenance liabilities and associated costs.

9.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

9.5.1. Prioritisation of Investment

SCC use the London Bridges Engineering Group prioritisation of bridge maintenance guidance as the principal prioritisation tool. The outputs are then viewed against strength/capacity factors, then finally against deliverable programme.

The Confirm asset management software allows interaction of data and maintenance needs with other highway assets and network management functions. This allows efficiency in programming and reduction in collective scheme costs. Confirm allows cross functional integration between highways, network, inspection and structures disciplines to maximise utilisation of scheme programming and customer contacts.

Top 5 Asset Risks

Summary

The top five highway risks currently identified in the Highway Asset Risk Register are bridge structures in poor condition. These are summarised below:

Table 7 – Top 5 High Risk Structures

Route and crossing	Structure	Risk	Funding
A449 over West Coast Mainline (Railway)	Moss Pit Footbridge	Failed parapets connections and structural capacity	£2m
School Lane over railway	School Lane Footbridge	Fail structural capacity assessment and rapid deterioration of concrete deck	£1.5m
A513 over River Tame	Chetwynd Bridge, Alrewas	Unstable of Grade 2 listed structure	£3m
		Bypass Structure	£13m
A518 Stafford to Uttoxeter Road	Burndhurst Bridge	Sub-standard parapets	£20m
A449 Wolverhampton Road	Stafford Railway Bridge	Original construction issues – reduced capacity and poor condition of service bay	To be determined

It is important to note that rapidly deteriorating structural assets cannot simply be closed to highway trafficking to remove risk and liability. Without highway loading structures are subjected to ongoing deterioration and climatic effects whereby failure can still occur.

1 Moss Pit Footbridge, Stafford (F2400)

Location

The footbridge was installed to carry pedestrians over the West Coast Railway line, given there is no footpath available on the adjacent road bridge due to limited carriageway width. This route supports the A449 Wolverhampton Road, south of Stafford, with connectivity to junction 13 of the M6. Network availability for maintenance is severely restricted due to commuter demand. This route also forms part of the M6 emergency diversion and is of strategic importance for the movement of heavy abnormal load vehicles.

Figure 6 – Moss Pit Footbridge Images



Asset Risk

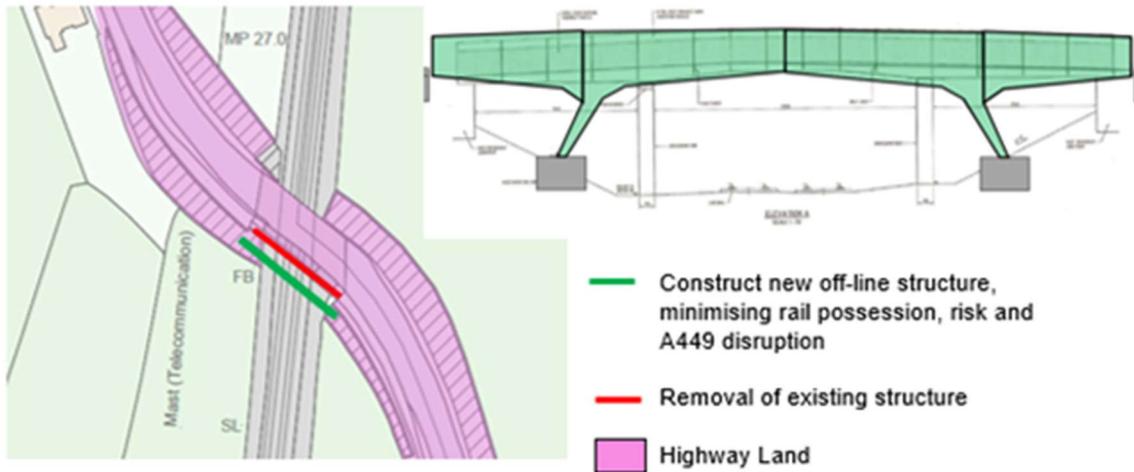
The footbridge has now reached the end of its serviceable life and requires removal.

A recent structural assessment concluded the structure should not be accessed by pedestrians in conjunction with wind speeds greater than a 50mph gust due to exceeding its safe loading capacity.

The parapets have deteriorated rapidly over recent years and poses a high risk to highway and rail safety. Parapet replacement is further complicated due to the extensive presence of asbestos.

Required Intervention

The structure requires replacement. Site access is severely limited given the combined restricted access to railway and A449.

Figure 7 – Moss Pit Bridge Construction Drawing

Constructing a replacement in highway land to the southwestern embankment will allow works advanced works to be programmed efficiently for the installation of foundations. A replacement superstructure can be installed overnight in a single rail possession. Following the diversion of utility equipment, the redundant structure can then be removed in a further railway possession.

Proposed Solution

It is recommended that the scheme is completed with five years with an estimated total value of £2m. Advanced design work is currently progressing and estimated at £200k.

Network Rail have expressed their concern regarding the rapidly deteriorating condition of the parapets, and we have worked with them to installed emergency bracing.

2 School Lane Footbridge, Stafford (F0163)

Location

The footbridge was constructed in 1964 to provide a pedestrian route along School Lane where it passes over West Coast Mainline railway. There is limited carriageway width for pedestrians on the adjacent road bridge, owned by Network Rail.

Asset Risk

Components of the metallic superstructure have failed a structural assessment which concluded it is not capable of supporting its self-weight, therefore required factors of safety are not met and whilst the structure remains in place it is a substantial risk to both highway and rail.

Figure 8 – School Lane Footbridge Deterioration

As shown in Figure 8 there has been extensive deterioration of the concrete deck panels such that loss of support is likely. This represents an additional risk to highway and rail.

Highway alignment is poor given the close proximity to the junction of School Lane and Gravel Lane, with a lack of forward visibility. There has been repeated damage to the adjacent road bridge resulting from vehicle collisions. The steps arrangement at the western approach are not DDA compliant and required vulnerable members of the public to avoid the footbridge and walk in the path of vehicles.

Required Solution

In the interests of public safety, it is recommended to remove the bridge deck from service within 12 months. Required funding is estimated at £500k.

Temporary works are currently being progressed, through discussion with Network Rail, to consider the stability of the bridge abutments once the deck has been removed. Whilst the bridge is out of service it is envisaged pedestrians will be diverted on the road bridge, with the protection of temporary traffic management.

Greater efficiency can be achieved by implementing a permanent solution including the installation of a new steel bridge deck, strengthening to the existing abutments and footpath connectivity to the adjacent network. Both temporary and permanent solutions are estimated at £1.5m and recommended for completion within two years.

3 Chetwynd Bridge, Alrewas (B0153)

Location

The Grade 2* Chetwynd Bridge was built in 1824 carrying the A513 Croxall Road over the River Tame. This route is a strategic link from the A38 to National Memorial Arboretum and Catton Park which host many significant public events. Access over Chetwynd bridge is essential during storms of high-water levels given other routes are impassable.

Figure 9 – Chetwynd Bridge, Alrewas



Asset Risk

As a Grade 2 listed structure Historic England impose significant limitations on any modifications or maintenance interventions that may affect the original fabric or appearance. Further environmental restrictions are imposed on the site and surrounding area given the designation of Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The ornate cast iron parapet is primarily a decorative pedestrian handrail and does not provide the required level of containment for unrestricted highway traffic. There have been multiple occurrences of vehicle passing through the parapet with a repetitive maintenance cost and the potential for fatalities.

Figure 10 – Chetwynd Bridge Vehicle Strike



Loading due to increase vehicle weights have increased since construction such that the deck has been replaced twice. Following the introduction of the 40-tonne vehicle a concrete strengthening slab was also installed in 1997. Conservation limitations prevented any strengthening to the cast iron parapet and the impeded the effectiveness of the strengthening slab.

Figure 11 – Chetwynd Bridge Iron Parapet Deterioration

The cast iron parapet has continued deteriorate through repeated collision damage. The cast iron arch work has become severely cracked and now considered unstable. It is not possible to further strengthen the existing bridge deck.

Emergency concrete barriers were installed in December 2019 in conjunction with the carriageway being reduced from two lanes to one under traffic light control, with speed restrictions reduced from 60 mph to 40 mph.

Historic England have placed Chetwynd Bridge on their Heritage at Risk Register, reference 1038893.

Required Solution

A two-phase strategic plan has been developed for both immediate and medium-term implementation:

Year 1

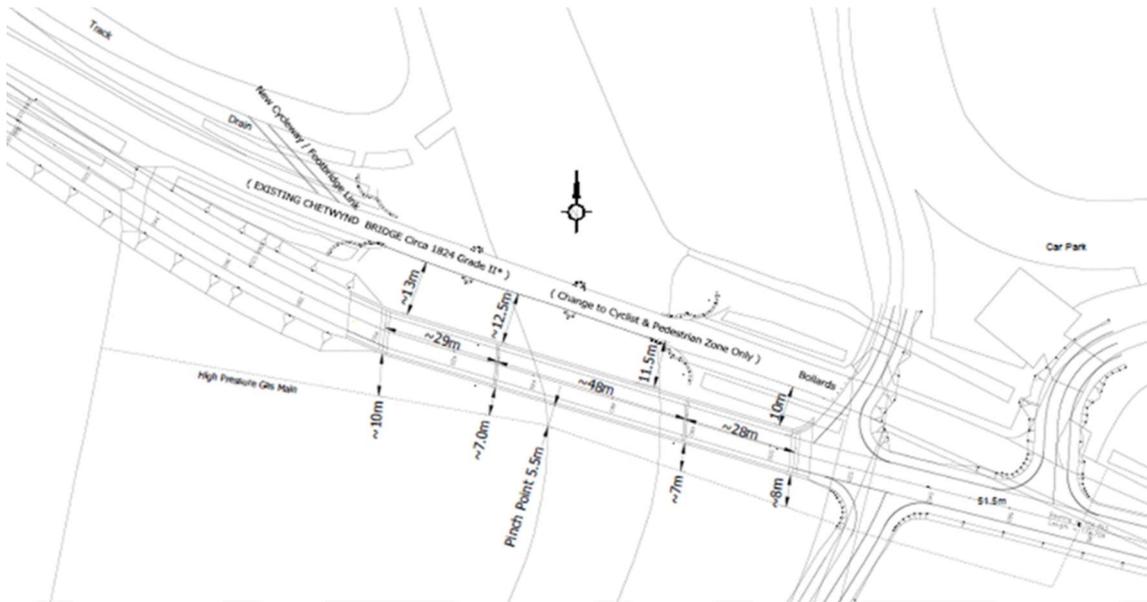
Listed Building consent has been obtained to undertake urgent stabilisation and structural refurbishment of the existing Grade 2 Listed structure, estimated at £3m. SCC has secured a contribution on £2.35m towards this scheme as part of a DfT Challenge Fund bid. These works will stabilise the ornamental parapet suitable for pedestrian restraint, also bearing replacement, essential cast iron and masonry repairs. The metalwork will be repainted.

This is a temporary solution and will continue to be managed as a sub-standard structure, requiring extensive regular inspections and stability checks. The original cast iron elements will continue to be over-stressed requiring the implementation of an 18-tonne restriction. The diversion route for heavier traffic is via Tamworth and incurs a considerable time delay and increased carbon emissions, severely disrupting access to local communities, farming, Catton Park and National Memorial Arboretum. Access for emergency services will be maintained.

Year 2 to 4

An outline scheme proposal has been agreed with Historic England and Lichfield District Council as Planning Authority for the construction of bypass structure to restore the network to full availability, with conversation of the Grade 2* Listed structure to a pedestrian and cycle route.

Figure 12 – Chetwynd Bridge – New Design



The design phase can be progressed throughout 2022-23 in parallel to the immediate stabilisation works. The 18-tonne route restriction will remain with increase monitoring until completion of the pass structure, with a cost estimate of £11m, not including optimism bias.

4. Burndhurst Bridge, Loxley

Location

Grade 2 Listed structure supporting the A518 Stafford to Uttoxeter road and key utility equipment over the River Blithe. This route is part of the resilient network with a diversionary route of 35 miles.

Figure 13 – Burndhurst Bridge, Loxley



Asset Risk

Poor horizontal and vertical profiling of the carriageway, combined with restricted carriageway width appear to have contributed to 12 accidents since 2004, resulting in repeated demolition of the heritage parapets. The parapet has sub-standard parapet containment and width restrictions prevent the installation of safety barriers.

Fortunately impact damage has been confined to the parapets, however the frequency of significant damage to this vulnerable aged arch structure may worsen such that the structure and network is taken out of commission without notice for an extended period. This would severely impact the economy and access for emergency services.

Required Solution

Land was acquired by Staffordshire County Council in December 1996 to construct a bypass structure as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14 – Burndhurst Bridge, Land Acquired for Bypass Construction



Further to the draft alignment and land purchase the scheme requires progression through detailed design and consultation. It is recommended to deliver this scheme reasonable within a 10-year period with a current estimated value of £20m.

5. Stafford Railway Bridge, Stafford

Location

Supporting the de-trunked A449 Wolverhampton Road over West Coast Mainline railway near Stafford Station, this structure forms part of the M6 diversion, plus abnormal load and resilient networks.

Asset Risk

Prior to the transfer of this structure from National Highways to Staffordshire County Council as part of the de-trunking programme, the present defects were identified. It appears original construction issues have resulted in the reduced capacity and poor condition of the service bay located beneath the verge. High containment kerbs have been installed to restrict access; however, the condition of the concrete soffit continues to deteriorate with the risk of material falling onto the railway.

Figure 15 – Stafford Railway Bridge Failure



Reinforcement bars have been removed from vulnerable areas of the soffit to prevent contact with overhead electrification. Catenary supports now further complicate access for maintenance.

Required solution

An effective repair is currently difficult to accurately define given restricted access to the rail environment and variable condition of defects. Working time is limited to only several hours within a possession, which may be suspended by Network Rail without notice. Multiple possessions are required to undertake reinforcement and concrete repairs to the soffit. Further reinforcement within the highway verge is required to stabilise the parapet, protect utility equipment and increase loading capacity.

Throughout 2022-23 track possessions will be utilised for restoration of supporting steel trestles, also taking this availability to further plan soffit repairs for completion within five years. A scheme costs estimate is not currently available.

9.5.2. Medium to Long Term Forecasting

The authority is also looking to use the Structures Asset Valuation Investment Toolkit (SAVI). SAVI is a multi-functional, condition-based decision support tool. It can be used for:

It was developed for the UK Bridges Board through the /DfT/UKRLG research funding to assist local authorities and asset operators. It can be used to:

- carry out valuation of structures stock,
- develop prioritised short-term programmes of work, and
- develop long-term asset management plans

We take a risk-based approach to decide where to invest our money and use the asset information we have about the bridges and highway structures to do this. Some of the things we consider include the following:

- Where is the defect? Is a "critical element" (a part of the asset that is vital to its structural integrity) affected?
- What is the risk to highway users?
- Does the structure carry/support a road on the Resilient Highway Network, high-speed road, main road, minor road or footway?
- Does the structure span a high-speed road, main road, minor road or footway?
- Does the structure carry high volumes of traffic?
- Are there suitable alternative routes if the structure fails?
- What is the risk to third party assets? Does the structure support or span a railway, river, watercourse or other third-party asset? Is access to critical infrastructure such as powers stations or hospitals affected?

Investment is prioritised where the risk is highest.

We also consider how to invest our budget based on the condition of our assets. This enables us to determine how much work is needed to restore them and whether it is more cost effective to replace them completely. In many cases we can protect our bridges and highway structures and maximise their lifespan by undertaking minor maintenance, cleaning, painting and waterproofing them. This work requires a commitment to repeat investment but can significantly reduce costs in the longer term. Nevertheless, in some instances the asset has been damaged beyond repair or simply reached the end of its useful life. In these instances, renewal is the only option.

Investment is also directed by network availability. For example, where maintenance is necessary in the vicinity of a rail line we are required to apply for permission for occupation.

Finally, we need to consider our investment in the wider context of the highways service.

Having assessed each site, we are able to collate a prioritised list of works.

9.5.3. Investment aspirations

The delivery of bridge and other structural maintenance schemes can take several years to plan, given the extensive investigation, testing, design and consenting processes. Confidence in funding is required to delivery schemes, with greater certainty in network utilisation and to meet environmental requirements. It is often not possible to delivery quickly.

Table 8 – Short Term Capital Funding Need

Capital Funding	22/23 £,000's	23/24 £,000's	24/25 £,000's
Asset Management	300	300	300
Capacity Assessment	65	65	65
Scour Assessment			
Forward Design Programme	250	250	250
Abnormal Load Management	95	95	95
Laboratory Testing	38	38	38
Low Headroom Signage	15	50	50
Essential Minor Maintenance	200	200	200
Principal Inspection	65	65	65
Coley Lane Parapet Strengthening			
Yoxall Trent Stabilisation			
Chetwynd Bridge 18T Limit / Stabilisation	3,000		
Chetwynd Bridge Bypass Structures	100	100	13,000
School Lane Footbridge Strengthening	300	1,200	
Moss Pit Footbridge Replacement	100	1,900	
Dunston Bridge Replacement	100	300	
Greensforge Bridge Strengthening	100	250	500
Swythamley Landslip Stabilisation	100	400	
Total	4,828	5,213	14,563

Excludes external contribution from DFT

Table 9 – Short Term Revenue Funding Need

Revenue Funding	22/23 £,000's	23/24 £,000's	24/25 £,000's
Routine Maintenance	60	60	60
Preventative Maintenance	350	350	350
Reactive Maintenance	350	350	350
Subway Maintenance	20	20	20
Dam Management and Maintenance	110	110	110
Van Running Costs	32	32	32
Highway Bridge General Inspection	185	185	185
Underwater Inspection	100	100	100
Total	1,207	1,207	1,207

Not included for inflation

Volume 5 – Vehicle Restraint Systems

10.1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of Vehicle Restraint Systems (VRS) is to prevent vehicles impacting hazards or leaving the highway on to critical third-party infrastructure. A high percentage of VRS is located within the central reserve and ensures segregation between traffic travelling in opposite directions, preventing high-speed head-on crashes.

Additionally, objects next to the road can present a significant hazard to the road user and there is a clear need to ensure that they are reasonably protected. Examples of such objects would be structures, large signs, lamp posts, or where there is a large difference in level near to the road edge.

Vehicle restraint systems do not stop accidents from occurring and they should only be used when other measures are considered inappropriate or ineffective.

10.1.1. Stakeholder Expectations

VRS is an asset that generally goes unnoticed by most road users until it is required in event of a vehicle leaving the carriageway.

10.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

There are no customer satisfaction measures in the NHT public satisfaction survey that directly relate to the management of highway vehicle restraint systems.

10.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Requires further development and subject to data verification.

10.1.4. Defects

Requires further interrogation of job coding and data verification.

10.1.5. Claims

Claims relating to highway structures are generally recharges for damage to the asset rather than claims for personal injury or damage as a result of a fault of the asset.

10.2. ASSET CONDITION

There is currently no recorded inventory of the location, extent, type and condition of VRS. However, Gaist Solutions Ltd have been appointed to carry out a full inventory collection in 2022.

The collection of a full inventory will provide the foundation for a risk-based approach to the management and maintenance of existing VRS to ensure a consistent and optimum performance across Staffordshire. This will ensure:

- new vehicle restraint systems are only installed after all other measures have been considered.
- vehicle restraint systems are recorded on the Highway Asset Management System.
- maintenance of vehicle restraint systems will be prioritised following a risk-based approach.
- where we propose a departure from national standards or guidance this decision is fully risk assessed and signed off by appropriate personnel.

10.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

VRS will be maintained in a sound structural condition and to the correct height, so that they fulfil their purpose and do not, in themselves, constitute a danger to road users or pedestrians.

VRS are provided for the protection of the travelling public both vehicular and pedestrian. Effective maintenance is essential to meet these requirements.

10.3.1. Future Management of the VRS Asset

We recognise that there has been limited asset management, including condition assessment of VRS. Funding Has been provided to survey the entire VRS asset in 2022 which will enable us to determine the condition, extent and maintenance backlog of the asset.

When we have the data and tools in place, we will be carrying out similar analysis as we have with other asset groups. This will enable us to determine more robustly the effect on asset condition of various funding scenarios and enable us to produce an evidence-based forward works programme.

10.4. ASSET INSPECTION

There are two types of checks, planned inspections and reactive inspections.

10.4.1. Planned Inspections

Planned inspections include general highway safety inspections and are carried out as part of our cyclical maintenance regime:

- Our team of highway inspectors carry out visual safety checks to make sure the highway assets are in a safe condition. This includes visually checking that the VRS is not damaged or missing. We carry out this kind of check at least once every twelve months.
- Our Highway Structures Team carry out cyclic inspections of highway structures and inspect VRS which are adjacent to the structure, for the purpose of the protection of that structure.

10.4.2. Reactive Inspections

Reactive inspections are carried out in response to enquiries and generate ad-hoc and emergency works orders for repair. These enquiries may be initiated by colleagues within partner organisations such as the Police or National Highways and from members of the general public.

10.4.3. Condition Assessment

Assessment of defect and historic spend does not reflect the true demand placed on the asset as there has been no defined cyclical condition survey regime.

10.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

10.5.1. Prioritisation of Investment

When deciding where to spend our money we think about the risks posed to the road users, including:

- If the VRS fails, does it create a hazard to road users?
- If the VRS is breached, is there likely to be a secondary event, i.e., a structure, another road or railway?
- Serviceability of the VRS system.
- Compliance of the VRS system.

We also consider:

- The type of road, for example, the maintenance hierarchy, whether it is a high-speed or on the resilient network.
- The volume of traffic that uses the road, for example is it a main route in and out of a town or is it a minor road only used by a handful of drivers each day?
- The accident history of the road.

10.5.2. Value for Money

A long-term programme of work will be developed giving opportunity to achieve efficiency through cross asset priority. Early contractor engagement can then seek to achieve innovative solutions for further cost savings.

Through programme coordination and visibility of future SCC schemes which may affect other key highway asset or major improvement scheme, we adjust its place in the programme so that we can combine activities in order to maximise financial efficiencies.

Whilst it is recognised that the vehicle restraint systems provide an additional protection historically a few vehicle restraint systems have been erected that under current assessment would not meet with the criteria for new infrastructure. At these sites the works scheme may not replace a VRS as it may not be assessed to be required, or it may not be possible to install a new VRS compliant with standards at the location. Instead, the approach referred to in the UK Roads Boards Liaison Groups "Provision of Road Restraint Systems for Local Authorities" will be used and alternative measures may be installed if the level of risk justifies it. These alternative measures could include installing containment kerbing, bollards or additional signing/lining.

10.5.3. Other Significant Factors affecting VRS Maintenance

Proportion of asset at end of life

VRS, like many assets, have not historically been asset managed and as a result, a significant proportion could be considered life-expired or not meeting current standards. There will be VRS assets on the network that could be in excess of 40 years of age, especially on the lower classification of roads. Work will be prioritised on a priority basis which considers the risk of failure.

All vehicle restraint systems were installed to comply with the standard specification of the time, we will not automatically replace VRS that no longer conforms.

RTC damage and non-recoverable costs

Damage by third parties accounts for the majority of reactive repairs. Significant efforts are made to recover costs from third parties where driver details are available. There are, however, collisions where the VRS keeps vehicles on the road and drivers are able to leave the site without police or our involvement.

High Speed Roads

The most critical VRS are on the high-speed strategic road network. This network is difficult to access without creating local congestion and therefore the majority of repair and upgrade works are undertaken at night, which has a cost implication.

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Volume 6 – Street Lighting and Illuminated Signs

11.1. INTRODUCTION

In 2003 Lighting for Staffordshire were awarded a 25-year PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract to carry out the renewal of life-expired road lighting and illuminated traffic sign equipment on the road and streets of Staffordshire (excluding unitary authority of Stoke on Trent and trunk roads passing through the county), together with the ongoing maintenance activities including routine and emergency fault attendance and rectification. Operational delivery is provided by E.ON Energy Solutions Limited. The contract currently covers 108,000 pieces of apparatus.

The types of illuminated apparatus maintained are:

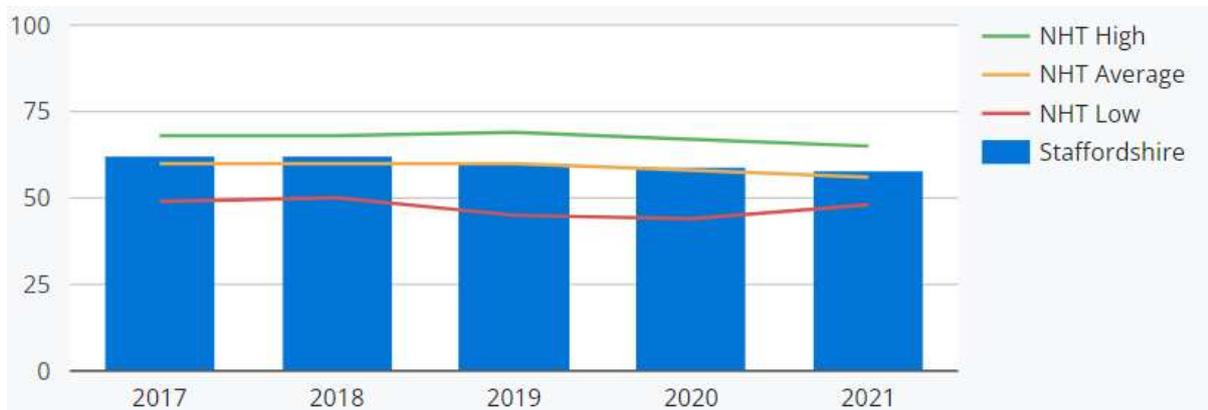
- Street lights
- Lit road bollards
- Belisha beacons
- School Amber Flashing Units
- Lit traffic signs
- Subway lights

11.1.1. Stakeholder Expectations

Street lighting provides a number of important benefits. It can be used to promote security in urban areas and to increase the quality of life by artificially extending the hours in which it is light so that activity can take place. Street lighting also improves safety for drivers, riders, and pedestrians.

11.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

The key street lighting measure within the NHT survey relates to how satisfied people are with the speed of repair of street lights. This isn't always in the authority's hands as sometimes we require assistance from electricity providers. Customer satisfaction with the response to street lighting repairs is above national average and has been relatively consistent across the 5-year period shown in chart 30.

Chart 30 – Public Satisfaction with Speed of Repair to Street Lights

11.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Not available at time of writing.

11.1.4. Claims

Claims relating to street lighting are generally recharges for damage to our asset rather than claims for personal injury or damage as a result of a fault with our asset.

11.2. Asset Condition

11.2.1. Lighting Standards

When considering the provision of street lighting regard shall be given to the following aims:

- Increased safety for all users of the highway with special consideration being given to vulnerable groups such as pedestrians, cyclists, elderly, disabled and children. The reduction of night-time accidents is a principal aim.
- The convenience of all highway users and the enhancement of the night-time environment with special reference to lighting in sensitive areas.
- Increased personal security and the reduction of the fear of crime.
- Increased security to property including the deterrence of vandalism.
- The reduction of both night-time and day-time environmental intrusion.

- The provision of cost-effective lighting, which is energy efficient and takes account of whole-life costs.
- Choosing a design that is suitable for the context in question.
- Access, maintainability and longevity of the completed Lighting Scheme for the entire design life of the assets.
- New or replacement lighting shall be LED.

11.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

All illuminated assets are recorded in a dedicated Asset Management System.

11.3.1. Apparatus Renewal and programming

All items of apparatus; street lights, illuminated signs and bollards, which exceed their anticipated lifespan or fail to meet structural standards, will be replaced.

The Asset Replacement programme is ongoing throughout the contract term.

For Conservation or special interest areas, consultation will be held with appropriate local authority conservation offices, where appropriate, before renewal is undertaken.

Residents will be notified a minimum of one month before planned renewal work commences under normal circumstances, and details will also be published on the internet and updated as required.

11.3.2. Routine Maintenance

All apparatus will be inspected at least once every three years to ensure its' electrical safety, optical performance, structural condition and decorative condition are acceptable.

Any apparatus not meeting acceptable standards will be repaired or replaced.

Lamps will be renewed on a planned basis to maintain lighting standards.

Inspectors carry out night-time checks on all units once a month to check that they are correctly lit. Any faults will be logged for repair.

11.3.3. Faults and Emergencies

We will endeavour to repair most faults within 5 working days of receiving notification.

Emergency faults, where there is a significant risk to the public or property will be attended with 2 hours of notification.

The site of any emergency will then be attended until the apparatus has been made safe. A full repair will normally be made within 25 working days.

Power failure faults relating to the electrical network will be referred to the relevant electricity supply company for repair within their respective standards of service.

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Volume 7 – Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

12.1. INTRODUCTION

The term Intelligent Transport System (ITS) refers to the application of information and communications technology to transport infrastructure, enabling data to be collected and shared to maximise the efficiency of the highway network.

ITS comprises a variety of technologies, ranging in their complexity and functionality. They include technologies designed to; monitor and capture data, manage and control systems.

Traffic signal installations form an important part of the highway network, and the effective operation and maintenance of these installations are pivotal for the safe movement of traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. Road networks are becoming more and more congested and therefore the need for maintaining the traffic signal installations and indeed other highway infrastructure is becoming increasingly important. Congestion causes increased delays to journey times and this impacts on the economy and the environment (raised levels of carbon dioxide).

12.1.1. Stakeholder Expectation

Traffic lights, pedestrian crossings and traffic signs are designed to control the flow of traffic on the roads and help keep motorists, pedestrians and cyclists safe when moving around our city.

12.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

There are no customer satisfaction measures in the NHT public satisfaction survey that directly relate to the management of ITS although there are measures indirectly related such as congestion.

12.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Not available at time of writing.

12.1.4. Claims

Claims relating to ITS are generally recharges for damage to our asset rather than claims for personal injury or damage as a result of a fault of our asset.

12.2. ASSET CONDITION

SCC have an in-depth inventory of our ITS assets. Assets are managed through a product called IMTRAC. IMTRAC is a sophisticated system that can calculate asset power draw, determine current site value and replacement cost and support development of replacement/upgrade strategies.

An all-in Contract for maintenance to traffic Signals and pelican crossings is in operation. Dynniq UK are responsible for the fault attendance, planned maintenance and traffic signals upgrades and refurbishments.

The traffic signals lifecycle planning considers the whole asset including the tactile paving, zig zag lines and the loop and the signal head.

Dynniq has worked alongside Staffordshire County Council and Ian Routledge Consultancy Ltd to complete an in-depth asset data collection of Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) assets.

12.2.1. Emergency Service

A resourced answering service to receive and record faults notified in respect of the equipment is in operation. Cover is for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including all Public and Bank Holidays.

12.2.2. Response and Repair Times

In respect of urgent faults, attendance on site is to be within 3 hours of receipt of the fault notification. Where necessary "first-aid" remedial repairs, to facilitate safe signal operation, are to be carried out within 8 hours of receipt of the fault notification.

In respect of the non-Urgent faults, attendance on site is to be within 24 hours of receipt of the fault notification. Full repair of these faults shall be affected within 24 hours of the receipt of the fault notification except for detector loops/feeders, for which an order has been placed.

12.2.3. Urgent Faults

Urgent faults are attended to within 3 hours. The following shall comprise Urgent Faults:

- All signals unlit.
- Signals failing to change.
- Defective signals which, although not in accordance with the first two points, are likely to cause excessive queues and have caused abnormal traffic conditions which County Council/Agent Authority considers urgent.

- Signals damaged and in a dangerous condition.
- Any Red Lamp failure.
- Signals giving conflicting indications.
- Lanterns turned to give conflicting indication.
- Any fault in the control centre computers, or its peripherals, which can cause loss of control of the system, or cause excessive traffic congestion.
- Any data transmission fault involving loss of communication with one or more Outside Transmission Unit (OTUs).
- Remote monitoring installation defects.
- More than one lamp out on any approach.

12.2.4. Non-Urgent Faults

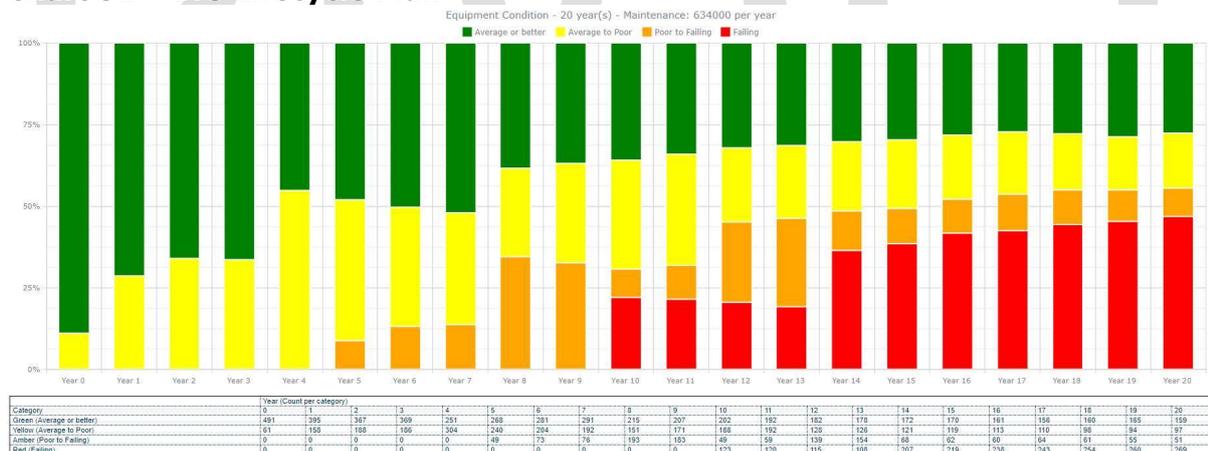
Non-urgent faults consist of all other faults not classed as urgent.

12.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

Using the IMTRAC asset management system we have been able to predict the effect on asset condition of a range of maintenance strategies and budgets.

The current annual capital budget for ITS is £634k per annum. Chart 31 shows the projected condition of the asset when constrained by this budget and optimising our maintenance strategy.

Chart 31 – ITS Lifecycle Plan



Based on the current budget the asset will continue to deteriorate.

Using IMTRAC we have been able to determine that to keep the network in its current condition will require a base budget of £1.2m per year.

12.4. ASSET INSPECTION

Inspections are carried out annually on all traffic signal assets.

12.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

Traffic signals typically deteriorate on a linear basis and have an expected useful life of between 15 and 20 years. However, newer technology is making parts last longer, for example LED.

IMTRAC considers this lifecycle when prioritising sites for maintenance or upgrade. We also take into account customer contacts and the local knowledge of maintenance engineers when developing our prioritised candidate list of schemes.

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Volume 8 – Soft Landscapes

13.1. INTRODUCTION

The County's soft landscape assets include more than 2.2 million square metres of urban grass and 5,800km of rural grass verges along with bushes, shrubbery and wildlife and habitat sites. We also maintain some seasonal floral displays including hanging baskets and shrub and flower beds county wide.

The Council recognise that highway verges are a valuable resource for wildlife and biodiversity and, as such, they need to be managed with care and attention. As well as being a wildlife refuge, they also contribute greatly to the visual appeal of the street scene and are easily accessible to all.

If managed appropriately Staffordshire's soft landscape can provide interconnected wildlife corridors supporting a wealth of wildlife including plants, bees, butterflies and reptiles.

13.1.1. Stakeholder expectations

These are viewed as important assets that contribute both to the quality of life in Staffordshire, its sustainability and its biodiversity and also helps define the nature of local communities.

13.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

Public satisfaction in the management of the SCC green estate is below the national average and is decreasing in line with the overall national trend.

Chart 32 – Public Satisfaction in maintenance of highway verges/trees/shrub

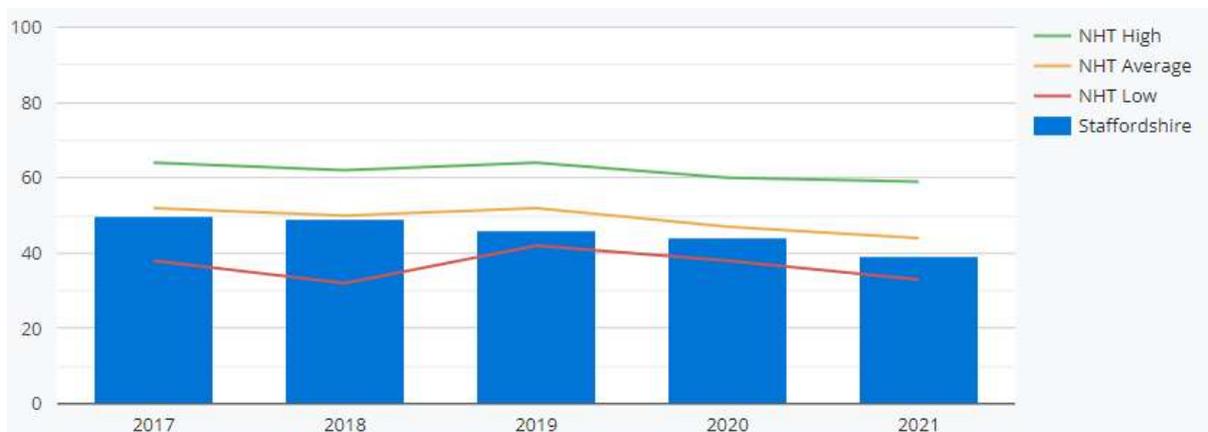
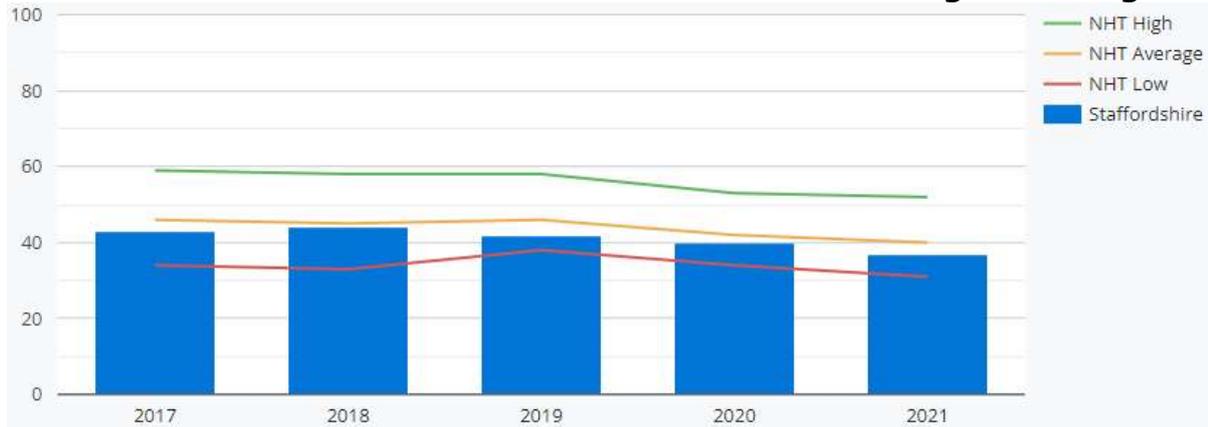


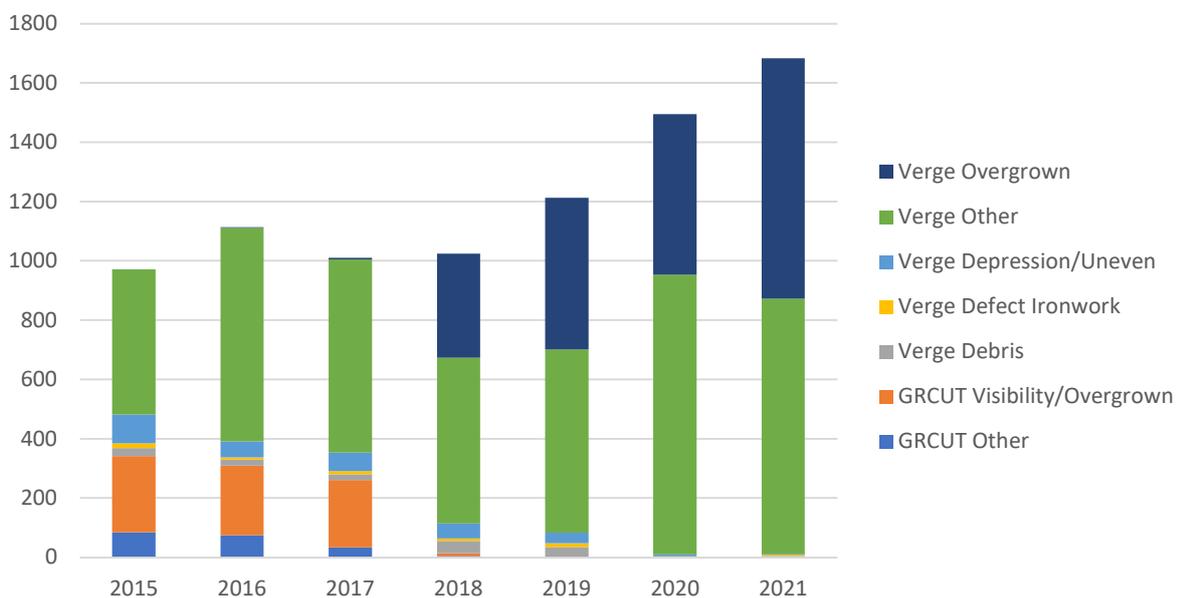
Chart 33 – Public Satisfaction in how SCC cuts back overgrown hedges



13.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

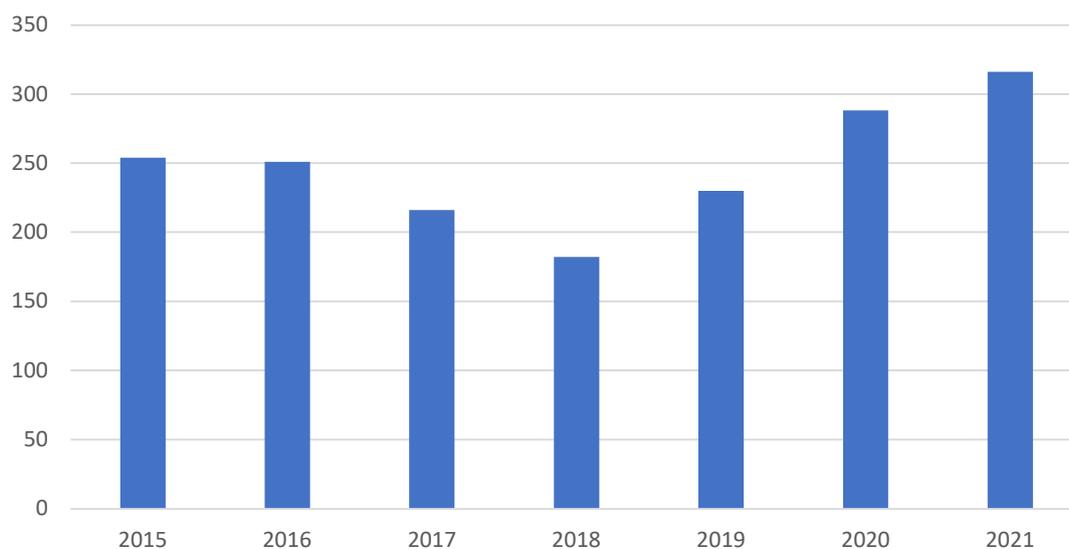
Customer Enquiries and reports about soft landscaping have increased by over 50% from 2018. Before 2018 the number was averaging around one thousand per year but in 2021 this has grown to almost 1700. Changes to reporting have reduced the options available but the majority of the increase appears to be due to reports about overgrown verges.

Chart 34 – Soft Landscaping Customer Enquiries



13.1.4. Defects

The number of jobs raised for highway verges has been increasing since 2018. A further 140 jobs have been raised in 2021 compared to 2018, this represents a 75% increase.

Chart 35 – Verges Defects Raised

13.1.5. Complaints

We often receive enquiries and reports about parking on grass verges.

Parking on grass verges is a widespread issue nationally across all local authorities and can have a big impact on people. It causes conflict between those residents who wish to park on verges and those who would like to see verges protected in order to care for and enhance the appearance of the area. Uncontrolled verge parking can reduce verges to an unsightly state, present a hazard to pedestrians and other road users, make it difficult to maintain and cause damage to street trees.

It is not against the law to park on a grass verge. Exceptions to this are:

- heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) that weigh more than 7.5 tonnes (section 9 of the Road Traffic Act 1988)
- when there is a bylaw to stop parking on a grass verge
- when parking on a grass verge breaks a traffic regulation order (TRO)

Where there are no waiting restrictions on the road, enforcement can only be carried out by Staffordshire Police, but they are only likely to take action if the parking is causing an obstruction, such as a situation where pedestrians, pram or wheelchair users are being forced into a busy road as a result of parking blocking the verge or pavement. Such cases should be reported to the police on the non-emergency phone number 101.

What action can SCC take?

Where stones or similar objects are placed on the highway, in such a way as to prevent or obstruct public use of the highway, then the Highway Authority may serve notice that the objects should be removed.

Where boulders or similar objects are placed on the highway verge, in such a way as to prevent or obstruct safe public use of the highway, then the County Council, may serve notice on the offenders that the obstructions be removed. If this course of action has no effect, then the County Council would seek assistance to obtain a Magistrate's Removal and Disposal Order, in respect of such obstructions. However, if they constitute an immediate safety hazard, the Council will arrange for their removal.

A boulder or similar object more than 100mm diameter is considered to be a potentially hazardous obstruction and any such item that has been placed on the highway verge to deter vehicles, or beautify a frontage, must be considered a hazard.

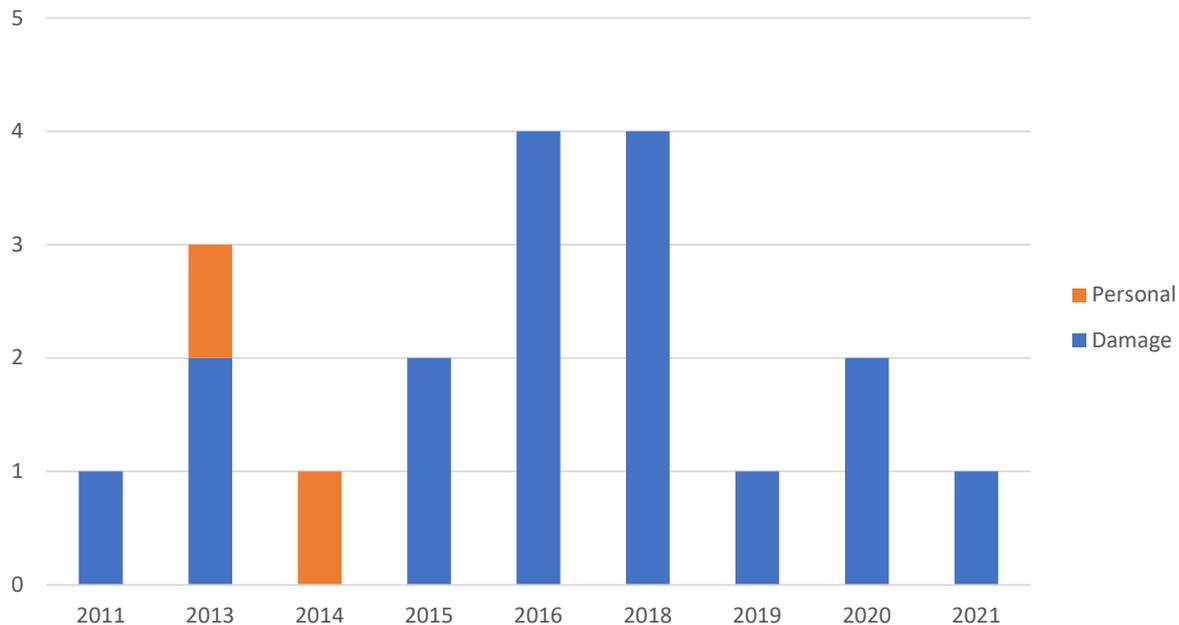
Where boulders or similar objects are placed to preserve the appearance of a well-maintained verge or grassed area and where they are clearly visible, well set back from the edge of carriageway and do not constitute obstructions of a hazardous nature (e.g., village green features etc.), the policy will be one of "non-disapproval". This still means that the County Council cannot authorise their presence, as technically, they are still classed as obstructions, but no action will be taken to remove them. Sites where obstructions can be ignored must be at the discretion of the County Council.

As a more sustainable and resilient alternative, we may accept the planting of trees in the verge to deter parking. Small, young trees (suitable for the public highway) can be planted at the required spacing for the type of tree. However, overhead cables, nearby street lighting columns and other street furniture often prevent this.

Section 96 of the Highways Act 1980 empowers a District or Parish Council to plant and maintain trees in a highway maintainable at public expense, subject to the consent of the County Council. The District or Parish Council will be required to indemnify the highway authority against third party claims arising as a result of the tree being planted in the highway. The highway authority will not maintain such trees.

13.1.6. Claims

There are very few claims received each year which relate to highway grass verges and not enough to recognise any defined trend. Most of the claims received relate to the actual operation of cutting the verge rather than the use thereafter.

Chart 36 – Grass Cutting Claims by Type

13.2. ASSET CONDITION

There is no defined condition collection regime for verge assets. Records on soft landscape assets are currently maintained in plans mapped by district area but are not necessarily complete. Further information on assets will generally only be considered where this is required, for example to enable the implementation of a different maintenance regime or delivery arrangement.

13.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT & LIFECYCLE PLANNING

The authority commits a significant amount of resources each year to maintaining our soft landscape green infrastructure. The main focus of the maintenance regime is to ensure road safety, so for example we cut grass verges to ensure that vegetation does not restrict visibility for highway users and to provide a safe refuge for pedestrians.

We do not envisage developing lifecycle plans for soft landscaping at the current time although risk-based maintenance and environmental benefit is a consideration.

13.4. ASSET INSPECTION

Our team of highway inspectors carry out driven and walked highway inspections. As part of their inspection, they inspect grass, shrubs and vegetation for encroachment and obstruction which may affect visibility and safe use of the highway network. The frequency of inspections is dictated by road hierarchy.

We do not undertake planned detailed or condition inspections on our soft landscape assets as they are subject to cyclical maintenance activity which is then subject to a sample quality control inspection.

13.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

Various routine operations are required to keep the highway verge, central reserves, cuttings and embankment slopes in a safe condition. These include inspecting and removing obstructions and cutting grass and vegetation to maintain visibility.

13.5.1. Siding of Verges

Siding of verges should only be considered where the encroachment of the verge onto the footway is likely to cause damage to a footway, or where encroachment is sufficient to cause a marked reduction in width. This work is usually only undertaken when there is planned footway works such as footway slurry or resurfacing.

Siding of kerbed roads should only be considered when the encroachment of vegetation obscures the kerb. It is anticipated that, in most cases, this will be achieved by chemical treatments. On un-kerbed roads, siding should only be carried out in advance of surface dressing, and only where absolutely necessary.

13.5.2. Grass Cutting

We carry out grass cutting on public highway verges predominantly to maintain visibility and enhance the safety of highway users. We are not responsible for grass cutting on public open spaces, village greens, verges which are not highway maintainable at public expense, or verges next to roads in Staffordshire which are maintained by other authorities - such as trunk roads.

Some housing associations also carry out this maintenance on areas of grass that form part of their land.

We separate our highway verge maintenance into two programmes; rural grass cutting and urban grass cutting and there are several delivery partners engaged in this work on our behalf.

Verges will be maintained in a safe condition with particular care being applied to ensuring that visibility is not impaired. Grass will be cut to standards designed to ensure that, in normal weather conditions, growth does not present a road safety hazard to any class of road user.

Urban Grass cutting

Urban grass cutting is a routine maintenance operation, broadly carried out on roads with a speed limit of 30 mph or less and is sometimes undertaken on our behalf by the district, borough or parish council in whose area the road is located.

Since April 2020 urban grass is cut a minimum of six times throughout the growing season. Our duty is about maintaining safety and visibility and not about aesthetics or tidiness. We do not have the resources available to collect grass cuttings following this activity; instead, this is left to mulch down into the verge areas.

Whilst this grass will be cut to a minimum standard of six cuts per year, some local district councils may choose to deliver additional cuts to improve the general aesthetic feel of an area. Advice and guidance are available to local councils on how to undertake grass cutting and other forms of roadside maintenance should they wish to do so.

Rural Grass Cutting

Our main priority for rural grass cutting is to maintain visibility and safety for road users. We do not have the resources available to collect grass cuttings afterwards, so these are left to mulch down into the verge areas.

The rural programme is generally undertaken on roads with a speed limit of 40mph and above and there are two regimes in operation depending on whether they are classed as Priority 1 or Priority 2 in the grass cutting programme.

The rural grass cutting programme involves a 1m wide single swathe cut three times per year for Priority 1 routes and a 1m wide single swathe cut twice a year for Priority 2 routes. Generally, the swathe will be adjacent to the carriageway but, in some locations it may be set back due to the presence of a footway or cycleway.

In some parts of the county, due to arrangements to protect local wildlife, some locations are only cut once per year.

Areas that need to be cut back at junctions and bends for good visibility are generally cut to full width.

All grass is to be cleared around columns, safety fences, signposts and walls, and grass which cannot be cut by machine, is to be trimmed by other means.

No grass is collected for removal. However, grass which is deposited on footways will be swept up and deposited on the adjacent verges.

Verge Maintenance

This item is to include the repair of verges in urban areas, only where the verge is a significant environmental feature, or to prevent damage to grass cutting machinery.

Roadside nature reserves

Designated roadside nature reserves will have bespoke cutting regimes as agreed by Staffordshire County Council. These will usually be Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is a formal conservation designation.

13.5.3. Weed Spraying

Weed spraying is a routine maintenance operation undertaken to mitigate structural damage to highway infrastructure and/or for safety/visibility reasons. It is not necessarily carried out to improve the aesthetics of an area.

A single weed spraying treatment takes place between June and August. In rural areas, for roads with a speed limit of 40 mph and above, existing weeds along the kerb and channel will be treated. In urban areas for roads with a speed limit of 30 mph and below, we will spray the kerb, channel and the back of the footway (pavement) where a hard edge such as a fence or wall exists, if weeds are present. No provision is made in the budgetary allocations for the treatment of weeds growing in flagged footways.

Due to regulations associated with the toxicity of weed spraying chemicals, the solution used by our contractors is very mild and is only effective on growing plants. Spraying is therefore only undertaken where weeds are present, and the solution's effectiveness can be drastically reduced if rainfall occurs after treatment. We do not have the resources to carry out additional weed spray visits.

Some district/borough councils undertake weed spraying operations in advance of their urban grass cutting programmes particularly around street furniture, to avoid the need for strimming operations.

In recent years the frequency of weed spraying has reduced from 3 times per year to once.

The growth of weeds in footways and cycleways, central reserves and along kerb lines, may cause structural damage, and the general perception of such growth is that it is untidy.

Weed treatment typically costs £75k per year. To increase this service to two treatments would require an additional £75k per year investment.

Weed growth attracts 1,086 customer enquiries per year.

13.5.4. Injurious Weed Control

The Noxious Weeds Act 1959 places a responsibility on the Highway Authority to take action to inhibit the growth and spread of injurious weeds growing within the highway.

In Staffordshire, injurious weeds are treated in accordance with a programme. Our control methods for injurious weeds are used to address known locations where there are accumulations of Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam or Giant Hogweed.

Japanese Knotweed will receive one treatment a year. Common Ragwort is very important for wildlife in the UK. It is a major source of nectar for many insects. However, all parts of the plant are poisonous and are a hazard to grazing livestock. SCC will only treat Common Ragwort where there is a clear hazard to grazing livestock.

Concerns about significant accumulations of injurious weeds on Staffordshire's highway network can be reported directly using the myStaffs app or Report It. In most cases however it is likely that we are already aware of the site and already have a regime in place to treat the location.

A specific injurious weed control strategy is under development.

13.5.5. Service Strips

A 'service strip' is an area of public highway grass verge, typically but not always the same width as a pavement, between the road and the private boundary. This is usually demarcated by a row of edging kerb or blocks.

The service strip can be used by the public utility companies (such as gas and water companies) to install and access their equipment. It also acts as a pedestrian refuge and, if necessary, vision splay (allowing a clear view of the road).

It is unlawful to alter the existing surface or erect any structure on it and this includes hedges or shrubs.

13.5.6. Other Significant Factors affecting the Soft Landscape Asset

Pest and Disease

Soft Landscape assets are natural living organisms in their own right. As such, they grow and are subject to disease or even death. Where this occurs on a large scale there can be unforeseen impacts on maintenance budgets.

13.5.7. Environmental matters

Climate change has meant that more flooding is seen through Autumn to Spring with hotter dryer summers. This impacts the ability of native species to grow and thrive in the local environment as well as increasing growth rates for grass and other vegetation.

Imbalance in this regard has the potential to impact on landscape safe useful life expectancy and lifecycle planning when installing new landscape assets such as wildflower verges and shrubs. The above factors all need to be balanced with available funding when planning future schemes, services and frequency of maintenance.

13.5.8. Conservation

When undertaking any works to the highway, the likely effects on landscape and nature conservation will be taken into account. In particular, works in the vicinity of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) be carried out in a manner that is not detrimental to the site. In all cases of doubt, the advice of an Ecologist will be sought.

13.5.9. Environmental Focus

With the recognition of climate change there has been an increased focus on the highway soft landscape asset and how this can deliver the environmental benefits necessary to reach both the council's and government's targets regarding biodiversity.

As part of our approach to managing this asset we will do the following:

- Provide verge management regimes that actively encourage and enhance biodiversity for pollinators and wildlife.

Volume 9 – Trees and Hedges

14.1. INTRODUCTION

There are over 3,800 miles of road which are the responsibility of Staffordshire Council, and many of these roads have trees or woodlands close to the carriageway. There are estimated to be 475,000 trees on the highway with a further 128,000 on adjoining land but which could affect the highway, for example either due to the canopy overhanging or, the tree being within falling distance of the highway.

Trees in Staffordshire are an important asset that provides amenity value, carbon storage and sequestration, natural flood risk management and removal of pollution.

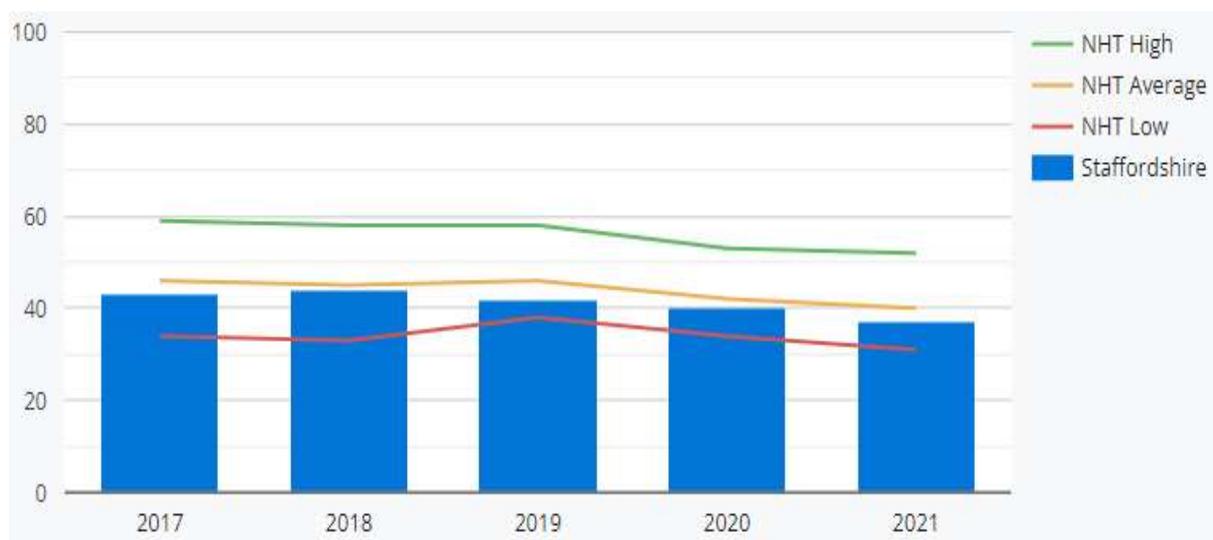
14.1.1. Stakeholder expectations

Stakeholders expect an amenity that is safe as far as reasonably practicable that also delivers the environmental and conservation benefits that are associated with trees.

14.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

Public satisfaction in the maintenance of trees, verges and hedges is below national average and decreasing in line with the national trend.

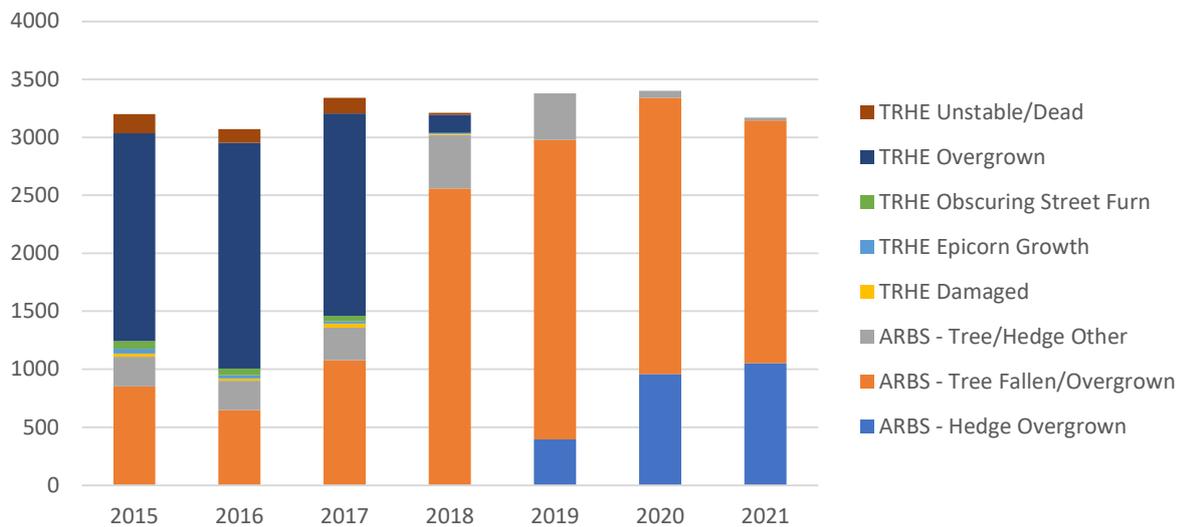
Chart 37 – Public Satisfaction in maintenance of highway verges/trees/shrub



14.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

The overall number of enquires relating to highway trees and hedges remains relatively static over the last 6 years. In recent years the most common area of enquiry is fallen/overgrown trees.

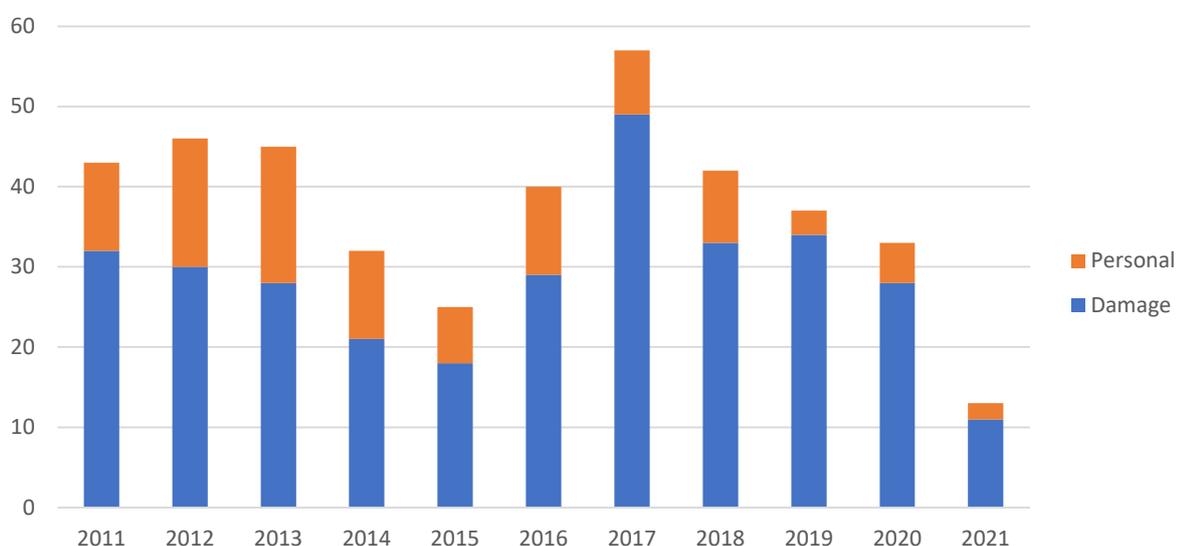
Chart 38 – Trees and Hedges Customer Enquiries



14.1.4. Claims

Claims against the authority relating to highway trees appear to be decreasing although we do not necessarily recognise a cause and consequence for this trend. The vast majority of claims received relate to damage to property. This is typically for damage caused by tree roots or falling branches rather than a structural failure of a tree.

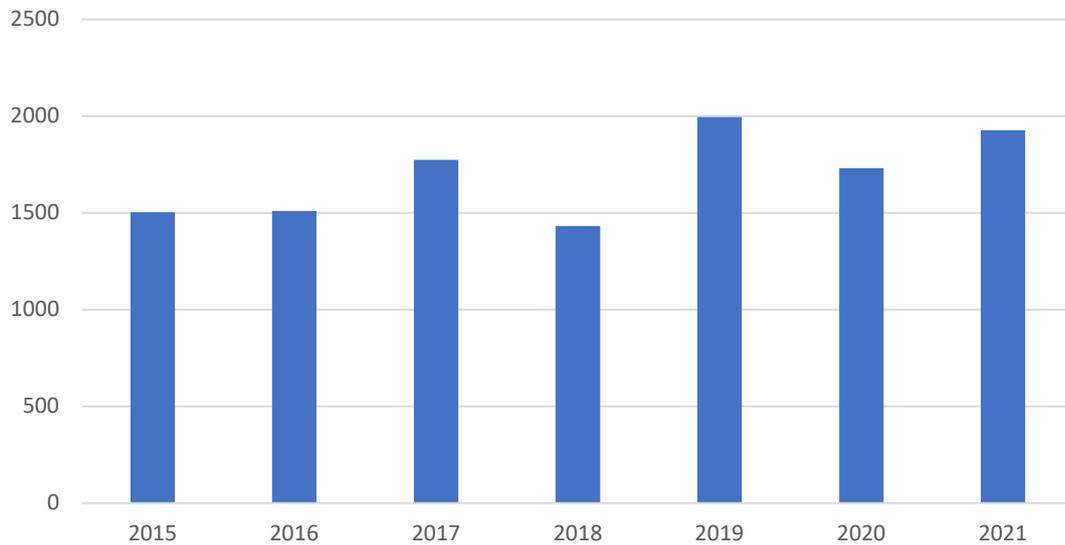
Chart 39 – Tree Claims Damage Only vs Personal Injury



14.1.5. Defects

Since 2015 there has been a very slight but steady increase in the number of defects raised for trees and hedges. There was a 30% increase in defects in 2021 when compared to 2015.

Chart 40 – Trees and Hedges Defects Raised



14.2. ASSET MANAGEMENT

14.2.1. Asset Identification

Trees situated within the boundaries of the Highway Maintainable at Public Expense (HMPE) are generally the responsibility of the highway authority unless they were planted under licence or by another authority such as a District or Parish Council.

Highway boundary trees and hedges will normally have been planted by, or on behalf of, the adjoining landowner, to define the boundary of his land with the public highway, and to contain his property. It is accepted by SCC that, unless there are specific agreements to the contrary, the maintenance of highway boundary hedges is the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, if a tree lies within the hedge line, then it is a non-highway tree that is considered to be an integral part of the hedge line and is therefore the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. For a tree to be deemed to be a highway tree, the tree trunk must lie, in its entirety, within the highway boundary (which is taken as the centre line of the hedge), or, in cases where part of the trunk has grown onto the adjacent landowner's side of the highway boundary, it must clearly be seen that the tree had originally grown/been planted inside the highway boundary.

14.2.2. Managing Risk

Tree risk management involves the process of inspecting and assessing trees for their potential to cause personal injury or damage to property.

HSE guidance on the management of risk from falling trees and branches refers to guidance produced by the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) entitled Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (CSRMT).

The guidance in CSRMT advises a reasonable and balanced approach forms the basis for sensible tree safety management and should cover three essential aspects:

- Zoning: appreciating trees in relation to people or property.
- Tree inspection; assessing obvious tree defects.
- Managing risk at an acceptable level: identifying, prioritising and undertaking safety work according to level of risk.

Details of this approach are included in the Management of Trees Policy which is included as an annex to this HIAMP.

14.3. ASSET INSPECTION

All trees within the highway should be inspected annually for potentially dangerous conditions, or the likelihood of causing disruption or damage to adjacent property, during routine safety inspections. More frequent inspections may be necessary where individual trees give rise to concern regarding their structural integrity. If any necessary corrective measures need be carried out on trees, on highway land, they should be affected as soon as reasonably practicable.

SCC prioritise detailed inspections based on risk in an approach known as zoning. This methodology prioritises the most used areas, and by doing so contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection, focussing resources where most effective. It is about appreciating tree stock in relation to proximity of people or property. Zoning contributes to sensible risk management.

14.4. ASSET CONDITION

The condition of the tree asset is determined by detailed inspections undertaken by an arboriculturist appointed by or acting on behalf of the authority. The detailed inspections will consider the overall condition of the tree and not just defects in relation to the likelihood of failure.

14.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

14.5.1. Trees

The priority programme of future tree works is based on the outcomes of inspections and the assessment of condition and risk of those defects identified.

If a tree is situated on private land, then landowners or occupiers will be warned of dangerous trees and given notice to take the appropriate action, when these are brought to the attention of, or observed by, the County Council. Where it becomes necessary for work to be carried out on behalf of a landowner or occupier, costs will be recharged to owners, where practicable.

Trees on private property adjoining the public highway are the responsibility of the owner/occupier BUT the Highway Authority has a duty, and powers of enforcement, to ensure that such trees do not endanger the Highway or its users under Section 154 of the Highways Act.

14.5.2. Hedges

We are not responsible for the maintenance of the majority of hedges alongside the highway. Unless there are specific agreements to the contrary, the maintenance of highway boundary hedges will be assumed to be the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. Any work carried out on such hedges to maintain visibility, or to remove obstructions to footways, will, wherever practicable, be recharged to the adjoining landowner. A small number of hedges are cut for amenity value.

Where hedges are the responsibility of the Highway Authority, trimming of seasonal growth for visibility purposes should be carried out annually (or more frequently, if required) on rural and urban roads. Trimming of other lengths of hedges are not cyclical and will be identified through the routine safety inspection process or customer enquiries (always providing that visibility sight lines, and road signs are not obscured). Significant nature conservation benefits will result from this practice. Such trimming should, as far as possible, be done in late winter, to avoid the bird-nesting season and to allow birds and mammals the maximum opportunity to take advantage of any fruits or seed present.

Where a hedge requires cutting between 1st April and 31st August, this will generally only be for safety reasons and following an ecological survey.

Shrubberies which are the responsibility of the Highway Authority should be pruned and trimmed for visibility purposes when the safety of road users is at risk. Work over and above this is deemed to be amenity work and is, therefore, the responsibility of the District Council.

The RSBP provides advice on the best time of year to carry out any trimming to avoid the nesting season. Any hedge cuttings that fall into ditches or grips should be removed as soon as possible. Cuttings that fall onto the carriageway should be removed immediately since they cause a nuisance to highway users.

The Highways Act 1980 Section 161 states:

"...If a person without lawful authority or excuse, deposits anything whatsoever on a highway in consequence of which a user of the highway is injured or endangered, that person is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine..."

"...If a person, without lawful authority or excuse, allows any filth, dirt, lime or other offensive matter or thing to run or flow on to a highway from any adjoining premises, he is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine..."

If the hedge is to be cut from the field side and there is little to no verge, then signs advising the highway user that work is in progress should be used even if the carriageway is not going to be obstructed.

If the hedge is to be cut from the highway side and the tractor must run wholly or partly on the carriageway then relevant signs should be used to advise the motorist that the carriageway may be restricted.

Any warning signs used should be placed at either end of the length to be cut but they must not be more than 1 mile apart. If the working length exceeds this then the signs must be moved as the work proceeds.

For further detail regarding the management of highway trees please refer to the Highway Tree Management Strategy included as an annex to the HIAMP.

Volume 10 – Signs and Lines

15.1. INTRODUCTION

This asset group comprises unlit traffic signs (lit signs are managed as part of the street lighting asset group), road markings and road studs.

Traffic Signs are categorised into four types; warning, regulatory, direction and information, and are provided to convey messages to highway users including equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians. The message must be clear and at the right time for users travelling at the normal speed for the road, footway or cycle facility. They are therefore sited at appropriate distances for the speed of the road and the message they convey and should be reflective or lit as required.

Road markings are used to define boundaries for pedestrians and vehicles and guide them when using our public highway.

The implementation of all traffic orders, including the positing of notices, the provision and erection of new signs any carriageway markings, services, unmasking of new signs and removal of obsolete signs together with major resigning schemes is not to be included under this heading.

Partner agencies are also responsible for some signing on our highway network, and we liaise closely with National Highways and District councils to influence a consistent approach within the county.

15.1.1. Stakeholder expectations

Road markings and signs on our roads are an essential aid to assist in road safety, providing directions and other information. Stakeholders expect this to be clear, concise and informative.

15.1.2. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

Public satisfaction in the condition of road markings and the condition and cleanliness of road signs is around the national average.

Chart 41 – Public Satisfaction Condition of road markings

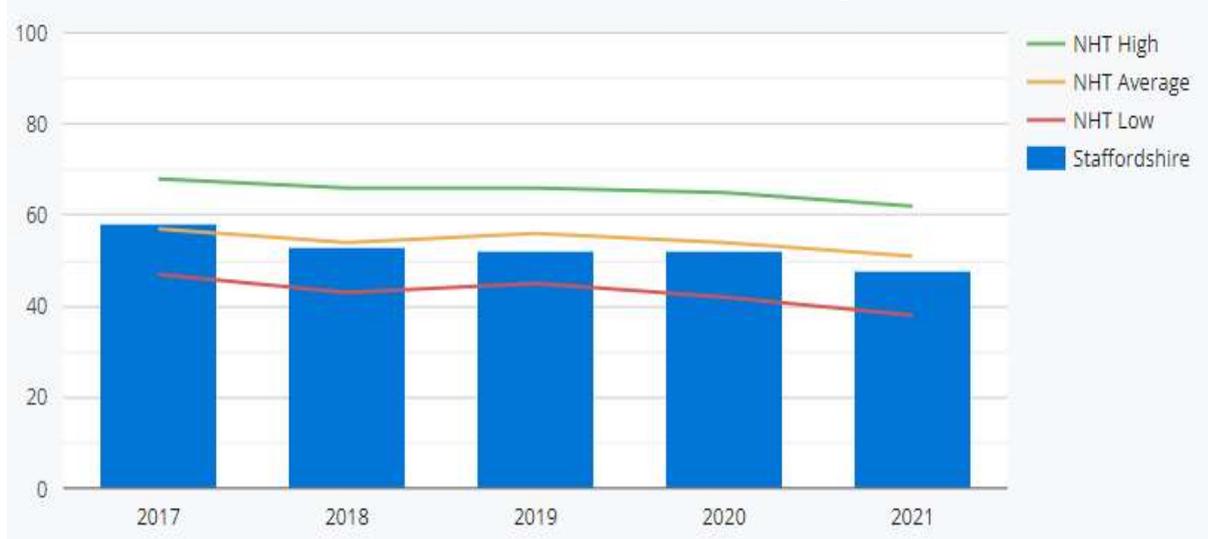


Chart 42 – Public Satisfaction Condition of road signs

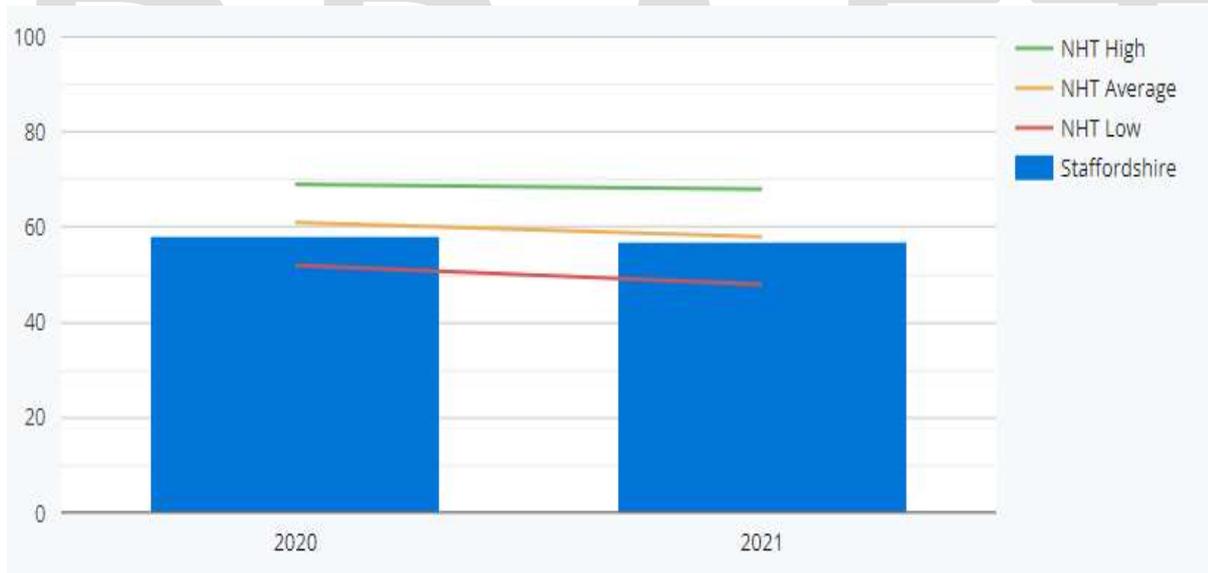
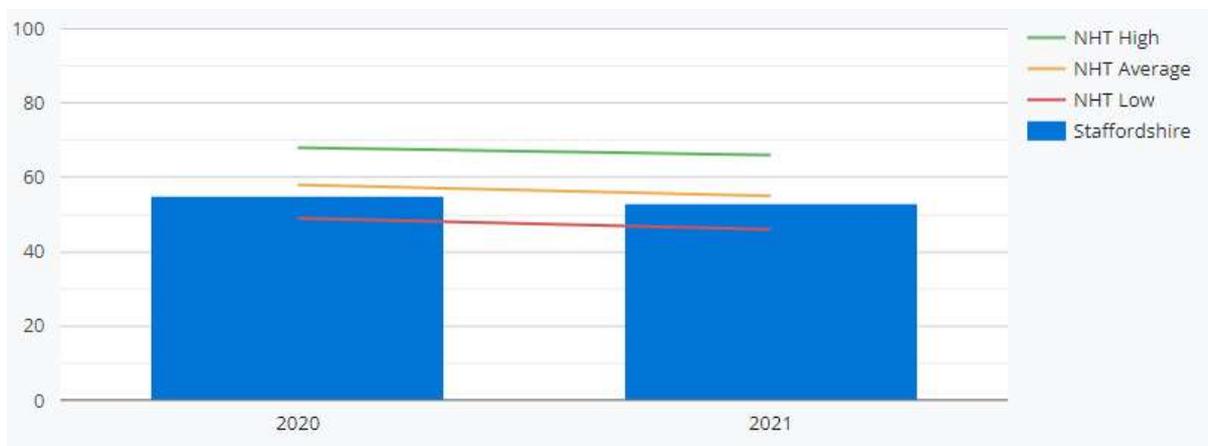


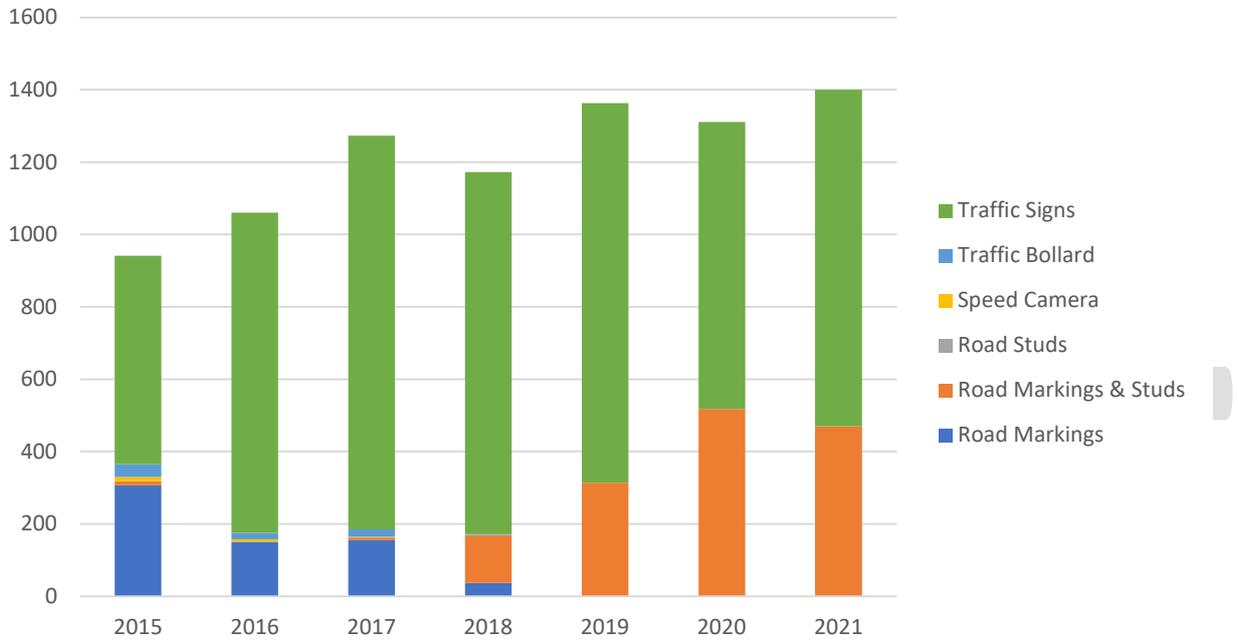
Chart 43 – Public Satisfaction Cleanliness of road signs



15.1.3. Customer Reports and Enquiries

Customer Enquiries are increasing with a further 450 enquires received in 2021 when compared to 2015.

Chart 44 – Customer Enquiries Signs and Lines



15.1.4. Defects

The number of defects raised for both signs and lines are increasing and in 2021 is more than double the number raised in 2018.

Chart 45 – Road Sign Number of Defects

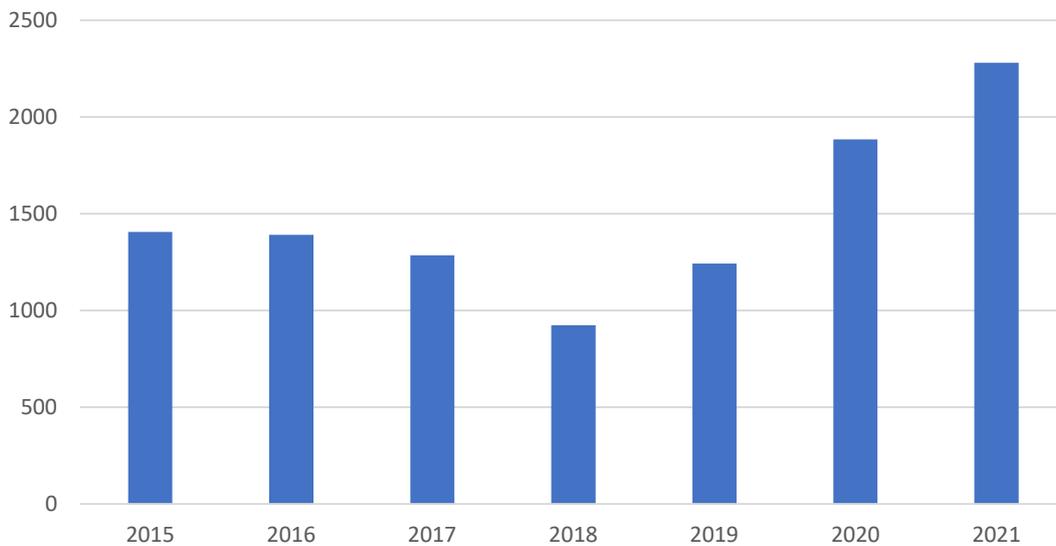
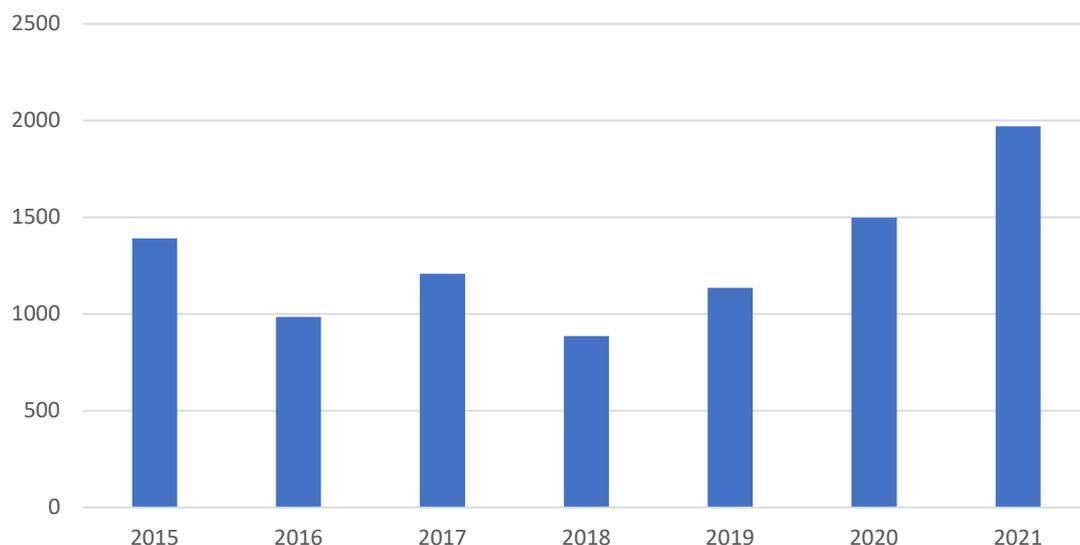


Chart 46 – Road Markings Number of Defects

15.2. ASSET CONDITION

Road signs and critical carriageway markings and studs will be provided and maintained in such a condition as to ensure that they provide clearly visible guidance to motorists at all times.

It is important to maintain carriageway markings and road studs in good condition, so that road users can be encouraged and helped to use the carriageway safely by day and night. They have a very important function in conveying information and requirements to road users, which might not otherwise be possible by roadside signs.

Road markings and signs are a very visible asset and contribute significantly to customer perception of the condition of the whole highway network and not just that of this asset group. The authority typically receives around 500 enquiries each year regarding missing or worn road markings or road studs. Non-illuminated signs that are worn, missing, dirty or damaged receive around 900 enquiries each year.

15.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

Like many councils, we do not hold any inventory or condition data for road markings, with repairs undertaken using general reactive revenue funds unless included as part of planned carriageway schemes.

The collection of road sign inventory is a key dataset that can provide information around the co-ordination and management of the entire highway network. For example, the road sign inventory provides detail of where weight limits, height restrictions and one-way orders are. Collecting

the road sign asset inventory is currently being undertaken by Gaist Solutions and will be available in 2022/23.

15.4. ASSET INSPECTION

Defects associated with road markings, road studs and non-illuminated signage are identified through the routine highway safety inspections. There is no designated condition survey for this asset group. This includes there not being any assessment for reflectivity of signs. There is also no programmed sign cleansing regime.

This is contrary to the recommendations in the Well Managed Highway Code of Practice which states 'The condition of non-illuminated road signs should be inspected in daylight, and also at night for degradation of colour, retro-reflectivity, deteriorating fittings, legibility distance, and average surface luminance, after cleaning. The frequency of cleaning required will be influenced by the risk of soiling in local areas'.

15.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

On roads in Traffic Groups 1-4, and at known accident sites, markings will be renewed when more than 30% of their area becomes defective or is worn away. Where markings or studs have become obscured by mud or detritus, and this constitutes an immediate safety hazard, then it should be cleared off the carriageway. In other cases, the matter should be referred to the District Council.

Carriageway studs which are missing or defective should be replaced, individually, or by bulk change, depending on the individual highway circumstances. The aim is for 90% of the studs to be effectively reflective. A reflecting road stud is considered to be reflective up to a point where there is a loss of 25% of reflectivity.

15.5.1. Access Protection Marking

An access protection marking (APM) also known as an 'H bar' is an advisory road marking. APMs are marked out with white lines and are used to identify a vehicle access and make motorists aware that the access is required at all times of day.

Although they have no legal status it is an offence on the grounds of obstruction to park across a vehicle access. Vehicles causing an obstruction to access/driveways with a dropped kerb can be reported to our clear streets team or the police.

A fee is charged for application for an access protection marking which applies for new and the repainting of existing.

Eligibility criteria

You can only apply for an APM if you meet the following eligibility criteria:

- You must live in Staffordshire on a public highway. We cannot install APM on private roads.
- You must have a dropped kerb to either a garage or driveway.
- APMs can only be considered where the vehicle access kerbing is noticeably lower than the surrounding kerb line and where the upstand on the kerb face is 50mm or less, otherwise it is difficult to differentiate between the raised and dropped kerbs.
- We will not approve an individual APM where the vehicle access extends over a number of properties. This could look as if we were condoning parking over the adjacent vehicle accesses.
- Where a vehicle access is shared by two properties both properties will need to give consent, but this can be submitted on one application.
- APMs will only be considered if there is sufficient space to park a vehicle off the public highway in line with our vehicle access crossing guidance. An absolute minimum of 4.8m from the boundary of the property is required although 6m is preferred. This is to ensure that any vehicles do not obstruct the footway.
- The applicant must clearly demonstrate that the location is in close proximity to an establishment that generates a sufficient amount of on street parking such as a shop, church or place of worship or a school etc. APMs will not be considered where parking issues are a result of neighbours or local residents parking.
- If there are waiting restrictions already in place these are already enforceable by civil enforcement officers and so APMs would generally be deemed unnecessary in these locations.
- APMs will only cover the extent of the dropped crossing from the start of one dropped kerb to the end of the other; they will not deter vehicles from parking adjacent to your vehicle access and cannot be extended to incorporate this.
- APMs will not be supplied to prevent parking on the opposite side of the road from your vehicle access.
- APMs cannot be used to reserve on street parking.

- APMs will not be considered for newly constructed or extended vehicle access crossings (under 3 months) as the applicant is unable to predetermine if issues will arise.

15.5.2. Disabled persons parking bay

Disabled persons parking bays are markings to try and stop vehicles parking without displaying a blue badge.

Application criteria

To apply for a disabled persons parking bay, you need to meet the following criteria:

- No off-street parking is available on the property, and it would not be possible for this to exist.
- You should be unlikely to be able to park in a suitable location, close to your property, for most of the day.
- You should usually be the driver of the vehicle. Sometimes this may be widened to include others if you have a permanent disability that places you at risk if left unattended for any length of time. In this case, the driver of the vehicle must also live at the address where the parking bay is to be provided.
- Walking any distance, from your car to your property is unacceptable. This will need to be assessed.
- You must provide a copy of a notice of entitlement/letter of confirmation of the required level of allowance. This is to ensure the marking is necessary and that you have a severe mobility problem.
- There should be no existing waiting restrictions near your home.
- A marking in the 'turning head' of a cul-de-sac is not appropriate.

15.5.3. Specification for Thermoplastic Road Markings

All marking shall conform with the requirements of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 and any subsequent amendments thereto.

MMA (Methyl Methacrylate) Cold Plastic is to be considered for application in high volume/stress locations like roundabouts, junctions, and roads that receive heavy traffic. While the initial cost for MMA may be higher than conventional marking materials, MMA Cold Plastic is likely to provide better whole life costs if applied in the correct locations.

15.5.4. Specification for Reflecting Road Studs

Studs shall comply with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016. All reflecting road studs shall comply with BS 873 Part 4 and shall have received statutory type approval. Non-reflecting road studs shall be stainless steel, manufactured in accordance with BS 873 Part 4.

15.5.5. Programming and Priorities

The maintenance of signs and lines is not undertaken on a cyclical basis, instead any issues with these assets are identified through the routine highway safety inspection process, via customer enquiries or they are refreshed as part of planned works such as preventative maintenance programme.

Lining work is weather-dependent and both this and resource levels can affect our ability to reinstall road markings as quickly as we may prefer.

All road markings on the public highway in Staffordshire are installed in accordance with the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions TSRGD 2016.

DRAFT

Volume 11 – Heritage Assets

16.1. INTRODUCTION

To date SCC have not compiled a list of local heritage assets on Highway Maintainable at Public Expense which the authority is responsible for maintaining. A register is being developed with a view to mapping these assets on the corporate GIS platform.

16.2. ASSET CONDITION

The County Council will maintain all monuments and historic structures within the highway where the ownership or maintenance responsibility has been established as being the County Council's.

16.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The choice of treatment and materials within this broad area takes the character of the asset into account whilst also considering the robustness of proposed materials and the whole life cost of potential options.

16.4. ASSET INSPECTION

These assets are generally inspected as part of the routine highway safety inspection process. However, there are some heritage assets that are incorporated into other asset specific inspection programmes.

16.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

As with all our assets, we take a risk-based approach to deciding where to invest our funding. Asset prioritisation criteria will develop as our inventory improves.

Volume 12 – Street Furniture

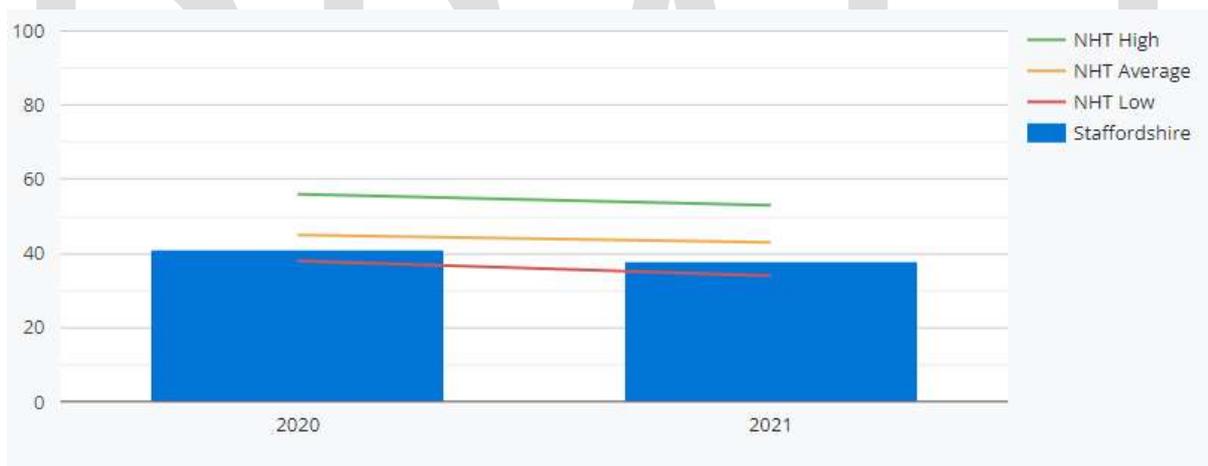
17.1. INTRODUCTION

This asset group represents the highway street furniture which covers a wide variety of assets such as pedestrian guard rail, non-illuminated bollards, cycle stands and weather stations.

10.1.1. National Highways and Transportation Public Satisfaction Survey

The proliferation of street furniture is the key public satisfaction measure relating to street furniture in the NHT Survey. The measure has only been a recent addition to the survey but provides an indication of the success of our approach to decluttering.

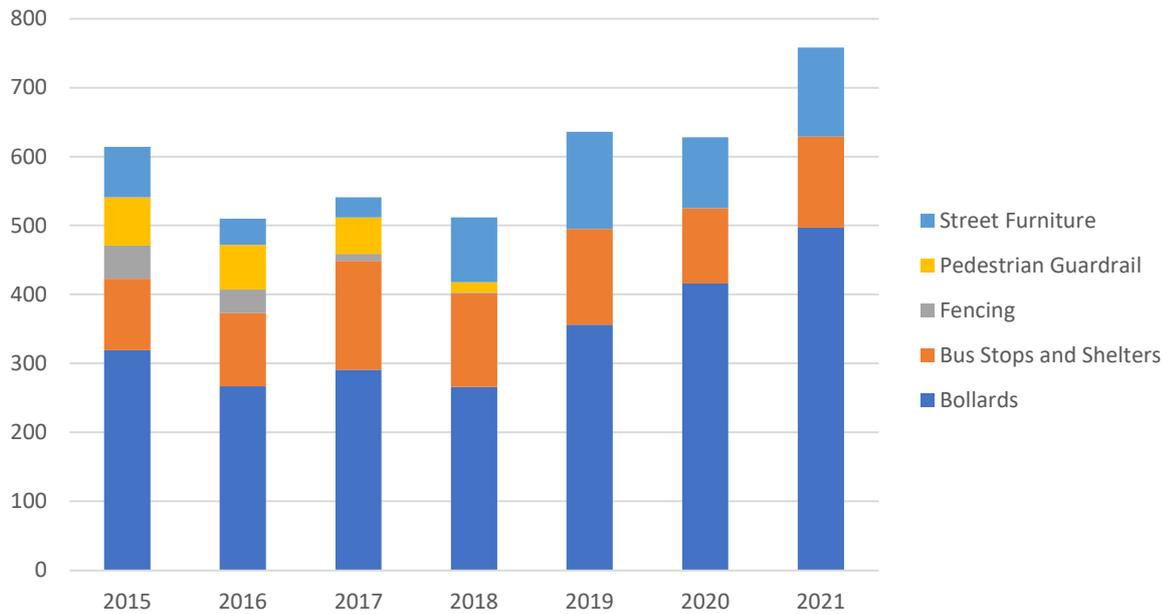
Chart 47 – Public Satisfaction Highway enforcement/obstructions



10.1.2. Customer Reports and Enquiries

The number of customer enquiries is increasing with the majority of the reports made relating to issues with bollards. Enquiries have increased by 50% in the last 3 years and is on an upwards trajectory.

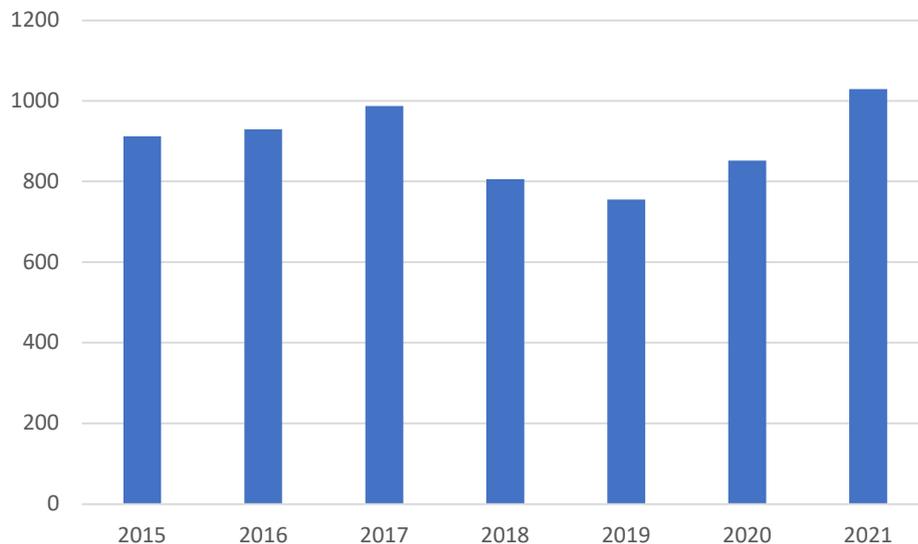
Chart 48 – Customer Enquiries Street Furniture



10.1.3. Defects

Jobs raised for street furniture have increased each year since 2019 mirroring the trend of jobs raised for many other assets.

Chart 49 – Street Furniture Jobs



10.2. ASSET CONDITION

Currently the Council do not have adequate asset registers for a number of these component groups.

Defects in street furniture that cause an accident or third-party claim against the Council are rare. However, damage to street furniture by a third party is common and the costs reclaimed where possible. Those that cannot be recovered reduce the available budget for routine maintenance.

10.3. ASSET MANAGEMENT

The current asset management strategy for these components tends to rely on allocated revenue budgets. There are, however, elements of the capital programme associated with road safety and the provision of new street furniture assets.

Clearly the variety of elements within this asset group results in their use being equally varied. Most of the elements will be used indirectly by road users however weather stations, for instance, are used solely by highway officers.

A number of elements within this asset group are vitally important in providing a safe road network. The location and design of bollards and pedestrian barriers for instance, are governed by national design standards and codes of practice. A number of these elements are often subject to technical innovation and change.

The responsibility for the various categories of street furniture is generally as follows:-

Table 11 – Street Furniture Asset Maintenance Responsibility

Street furniture	Who is responsible?
Bollards, pedestrian guard rails, cycle stands, grit bins, weather stations	Staffordshire County Council
Street name plates, litter and dog waste bins, benches, information boards and flowerbeds.	District and borough councils
Seats and benches, planters and baskets, noticeboards, monuments, and village signs.	Parish councils
Telephone poles, phone boxes, mobile phone masts, manholes and fire hydrants.	Utility companies are usually responsible for their apparatus on the highway but if ownership is unclear or the problem poses an imminent risk to safety then the

Street furniture	Who is responsible?
	matter can be reported to Staffordshire County Council.
Bus stops and shelters	These might be maintained by Staffordshire County Council or the local district/borough or parish council, reports can be made online, and we will establish who is responsible.

10.3.1. Boundary Fences and Walls

Highway boundary fences are normally the responsibility of the fronting owner. Exceptionally, where they are the responsibility of the highway authority, maintenance will be limited to maintaining them in a sound structural condition to serve their function, and not be dangerous to road users or pedestrians.

Walls in the ownership of the County Council which are above 1.2m in height are regarded as highway structures and shall be referred to the Structures Team.

10.3.2. Visibility Fences

Visibility fencing which has been placed at a road junction to improve visibility for pedestrians and motorists passing through the junction, will be maintained in a sound condition and clear of vegetation which will impede the intended sight lines.

Visibility fencing, which has been placed at a road junction for visibility purposes, will normally be the subject of an agreement between the County Council and the adjoining landowner, such that the County Council agrees to maintain the fence in perpetuity. Maintenance works will normally consist of clearance of vegetation and re-painting.

Where the layout or road marking system at a junction is altered, the need for visibility fencing may be rendered obsolete, in which case, consideration should be given to replacing the fencing with conventional hedging etc., which would revert to the ownership of the adjoining landowner, thereby obviating the County Council's maintenance liability.

10.3.3. Speed Indicator Devices (SID's) and Vehicular Activated Signs (VAS)

In an area where speeding can be a problem, Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) remind drivers of the speed limit and stand out from permanent roadside signs. They could help to break the habit of motorists who consistently drive too fast. SID's are usually installed by the County on the Parish Council's behalf.

10.3.4. Speed Enforcement Cameras

Installed by SCC, operated and maintained by Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership. There are approximately 260 camera housings across the county and many of them are life expired and no longer used (due to technological advances and the age of some of the apparatus).

10.3.5. Rising Bollards

Rising bollards are installed to protect the pedestrian area and ensure the town centres which they are deployed are attractive and safe places to visit. Rising bollards are currently located in Tamworth, Stafford and Uttoxeter.

10.4. ASSET INSPECTION

Most elements of this asset group are inspected as part of the general highway safety inspection of the road network. Obvious defects are reported back to the relevant section for action. Ad-hoc inspections are carried as necessary following any reports of defects or damage.

10.5. ASSET PROGRAMMING

10.5.1. Planned Maintenance

There is limited planned maintenance carried out on street furniture.

10.5.2. Environmental Considerations

A conscious effort is made to avoid overuse of street furniture particularly in environmentally sensitive areas. Most bollards are stainless steel or recycled plastic. Where cast iron bollards are in use they are restored and re-erected where possible. This usually involves cleaning and hand painting to retain the local character. The installation of concrete bollards is avoided where possible.

10.5.3. Historical Investment

Historically a number of the minor street furniture components have had no dedicated budget and consequently the historical investment in these is often on a 'care and maintenance only' basis.

10.5.4. Existing Programmes

The maintenance and renewal of elements within this asset group is covered by the revenue programme.

10.5.5. Future Strategies

Future strategies can only be developed when better asset inventory and condition is gathered. However, for many items within the street furniture asset group there is little benefit gained when compared to the cost of collection.

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Volume 13 – Emergencies and Adverse Weather Events

11.1. INTRODUCTION

Many emergencies that the UK has faced have been related to severe weather conditions. This has included:

- flooding
- gales
- snow
- freezing conditions
- heat waves

These incidents have resulted in people being evacuated from their homes, being stranded in freezing conditions and more deaths due to heat waves. All the aforementioned weather events have an adverse effect on the highway network and can significantly reduce the useful life of highway assets.

11.2. SEVERE WEATHER WARNINGS

When severe weather warnings are received, appropriate resources will be mobilised in readiness to ensure a prompt and efficient response is achieved when required.

11.3. WINTER MAINTENANCE

The purpose of winter maintenance is to ensure the safety of road users and maintain traffic movements in a cost-effective and efficient manner, whilst minimising the impact of the maintenance operations on the environment.

Winter maintenance activities are governed by a separate Winter Maintenance Operational Plan which is updated annually. The general principles contained in the Code are set out below.

11.3.1. Precautionary Salting

Where forecast weather conditions dictate, precautionary salting will be carried out to prevent ice forming or light falls of snow settling.

A hierarchy of salting routes will be maintained and reviewed annually.

The reasons for any exception to the Winter Maintenance Operational Plan shall be recorded on file.

11.3.2. Treatment of Persistent Ice and Hard Packed Snow

Treatment of ice and hard packed snow on carriageways will be carried out where conditions require. Priority will be given in accordance with the road hierarchy.

Treatment to footways and cycleways will be undertaken in periods of persistent ice or snow and carried out in priority order according to the Footway Hierarchy. Treatment of footways will only occur when resources allow.

Salt bins and salt piles will be provided at appropriate locations. This latter facility will be placed well away from trees so that leached salt will not contaminate the roots.

11.3.3. Salt

In order to minimise adverse effects on the environment, the amount of salt used will be the minimum possible consistent with achieving adequate treatment. Salt use for winter service purposes is not seriously restricted; it is far too essential in snow and ice control, and there are no readily available substitutes. Alternative materials generally are prohibitive in cost and may have much worse environmental effects than salt.

11.3.4. Winter Related Assets

SCC have 9 weather stations in key areas that provide real-time information and assist in producing accurate forecasts to ensure gritters are sent out at the right time. The stations are maintained annually by Vaisala.

The authority stocks 20,000 tonnes of salt at the start of a winter season and manages stocks according to the forecast weather conditions and the point of time of the winter season.

The authority services around 3,500 grit bins and strategic salt piles located right across the county. Bins can be provided on routes that do not form part of the treated network. Locations which qualify have been risk assessed against a set of criteria that includes but is not limited to:

- steep gradients
- severe bends
- junctions onto major routes

The preference where possible is to store self-help salt supplies in grit bins. There are many potential issues with storing salt in uncovered stockpiles. These include salt quality, usability, effectiveness of treatments and environmental impacts. If exposed to rain, rock salt can leach and can cause environmental problems for flora, fauna and nearby water courses.

It typically takes between 3 to 4 weeks to replenish the grit bins and salt piles when resource is available. Quite often in periods of extended adverse weather resource is deployed undertaking tasks such as snow clearance, gritting or on repairing consequential damage such as potholes so resource is not always available for the task of grit bin refills.

11.3.5. Emergency Planning

Staffordshire County Council are members of the West Midlands Local Resilience Forum (LRF).

Local resilience forums (LRFs) are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. These agencies are known as Category 1 Responders, as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act.

LRFs are supported by organisations, known as Category 2 responders, such as the Highways Agency and public utility companies. They have a responsibility to co-operate with Category 1 organisations and to share relevant information with the LRF. The geographical area the forums cover is based on police areas.

LRFs also work with other partners in the military and voluntary sectors who provide a valuable contribution to LRF work in emergency preparedness.

The LRFs aim to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.

Volume 14 – Mines, Tips and Quarries

12.1. SEVERE WEATHER WARNINGS

Each local authority has a duty under the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969 to ensure that disused tips do not, by reason of instability, constitute a danger to members of the public. SCC's approach to understanding and managing this risk has been to engage Amey Consulting as part of SCCs partnership with AMEY (Infrastructure+) to review all known sites in the county as a desktop review, assigning a level of risk.

There is now a rolling programme of inspection whereby sites are inspected by qualified engineers at a frequency determined by their assigned risk status. Any sites where it is believed that the risk status needs to be amended following an inspection are highlighted immediately to SCC, and there is a monthly update report, followed by an annual summary.

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Volume 15 – Land Acquired for Highway Purposes

13.1. INTRODUCTION

The highway authority can acquire land by agreement or compulsory acquisition for highway purposes.

The approach to managing and acquired for highway use requires development.

DRAFT

Volume 16 – General Highway Management

14.1. INTRODUCTION

Alongside the management of key highway assets there are also a large number of other services and functions that we provide as the local highway authority.

14.2. PERMITS AND LICENCES

Under the Highways Act 1980 it is necessary for anyone wishing to carry out certain functions on the highway to first get written permission to do so.

The area of the Highway is as defined on the plans held by us but usually includes the road, the adjacent footway and verges and sometimes other grassed areas nearby.

In order to get permission to carry out activities on the Highway, it is usually necessary to obtain some form of licence, permit or consent form and in some cases pay a fee. Written permission must be obtained before any work can be carried out.

The following are the various types of licences and permits available:

14.2.1. Vehicle Access Crossings

A vehicle access crossing (or a dropped kerb) allows vehicles to safely cross the pavement and enter a driveway from the road.

Type of road

If the proposed crossing is to be situated on a classified road (A road, B road or C road) then planning permission will be required from the local district council. The application will not be processed until permission has been granted.

The classification of the road can be found on the road status map.

Accredited contractor

An accredited contractor that meets the requirements to carry out works on the highway must be appointed. The contractor must obtain a permit to dig before works on the highway can commence.

Property owner

An application for a vehicle access crossing will only normally be considered when applied by the landowner. A tenant will require the permission from the relevant landlord.

Room required within the property

Sufficient room on the property for a vehicle to be parked without overhanging the highway must be available. Desirable distance from the highway is 6 metres and the absolute minimum is 4.8 metres. The above distances must be achieved in a transverse direction, i.e., perpendicular to the line of the road. Lateral parking (e.g., in line with the road) is not acceptable.

Width

A crossing will not be approved, or an existing access widened, so that it will cover the width of the property. Standard width of a dropped kerb is 2.75 metres. A request for an access to be widened may be considered but must state on application the reason.

Visibility

When applying for a vehicle access crossing consideration of adequate visibility must be considered. Depending on the speed limit the driver leaving the access must be able to see approaching vehicles travelling along the roadway from both directions at a minimum distance of 2 metres back from the edge of the carriageway.

A driver's view of the roadway must be unobstructed and not restricted by objects such as hedges or walls. The distance that the driver is required to see along the roadway will depend on the speed limit of the road.

Table 12 – Visibility Requirements for Vehicle Access Crossings

Speed limit of a road and length of visibility that is required	
Speed limit of road (mph)	Length of visibility (metres)
20	33
30	70
40	120

Speed limit of a road and length of visibility that is required	
Speed limit of road (mph)	Length of visibility (metres)
50	160
60	215

Pedestrian visibility

Pedestrian visibility is also another factor that needs to be considered when applying for a dropped kerb. Visibility for pedestrians is required to allow drivers to see pedestrians as they emerge from their access road, driveways or parking area and to allow pedestrians to see the vehicle.

Multiple access crossings

Only one crossing into a property will be approved. Separate 'in and out' crossings are not normally permitted.

If a second access is required and there is specific justification, these details will be recorded in the relevant section of the application form.

If a property has a vehicle access to the front and rear of the property, crossings at each frontage may also be allowed, provided it is not possible to drive from one to the other through the property.

Reasons for refusal

A dropped kerb will generally not be approved if it's:

- Within 15 metres of a road junction, or traffic signals crossing.
- Where an existing bus stop could be in the way of the proposed dropped kerb. The highway authority may consider relocating the stop as long as there is a suitable alternative available. The alternative location must be within 50 metres, in either direction of the existing stop.
- From a layby or other designated parking areas.

A non-refundable fee is required upon application for an inspector to give an assessment of the site. A charge for a permit to dig will be required which the contractor will apply for.

14.2.2. Placing items and skips on the highway

For skips and building materials on the highway, an application for a permit to place items on the highway is required.

Permission to place a skip on the public highway must be obtained from Staffordshire County Council in each instance. Permission will only be granted to the skip owner and although a licence to operate as a skip company is not required from us, the owner must be registered with the authority before an application can be processed.

Registration is required for any organisation that wishes to obtain a permit from the highway authority and a completed registration form is returned with:

- Copy of Public Liability Insurance valid for the full duration of the proposed permit with a minimum cover of £5,000,000

And where applicable for each type of organisation, one or more of the following:

- Copy of NRSWA 1991 (Street Works) accreditation
- Copy of Waste Management/Transfer Licence
- Any others relevant to the type of application

There are legal requirements that a skip operator must adhere to when transferring and managing waste.

If a permit application is approved it will allow large or bulky items to be placed on the public highway, such as:

- skips used for non-hazardous waste
- 'hippo' bags or other bags for non-hazardous waste
- builders' materials if appropriately secured in bags or wrapped materials on pallets
- unfixed temporary items specifically agreed by the authority

If bricks or other materials are just being unloaded and then moved off the highway onto private land a permit will not be required.

Permits are capped to 7 calendar days maximum on a classified (A, B, C) road and capped to 14 calendar days maximum elsewhere (or part thereof). We will aim to get your permit to you within 5 working days.

A fee is payable for a permit or an extension thereof, details of which can be found on the Council's website.

Specific requirements can be found in the SCC Agreements, Licensing and Permissions Policy.

14.2.3. Parking bay suspensions

When working in the highway, it may be necessary for parking bays to be suspended.

Parking bay suspension signs must be erected in line with the specifications set out by the Department for Transport in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 - Section 64 and Section 65.

Parking bay suspension signs should be in line with the specifications set out by the DfT.

14.2.4. Projections over the Highway

A projection licence covers temporary projections over a highway, such as the boom of a crane and permanent projections, such as overhanging buildings or structures.

The owner of the proposed projection and/or the land on which the projection will be must apply for a licence. These licences are valid for as long as the projections remains in place.

Oversail licences relate to any temporary projection over the highway. This includes windows, advertising boards, shop signs or banners as well as cranes whose jib extends across the highway, seasonal decorations, bunting etc. Permanent licence price on application.

For a licence to permanently oversail the highway, a written application detailing the nature of the oversail along with a drawing of the oversail and location plan must be provided. A price will be given on application.

14.2.5. Scaffold or Hoarding

A permit is needed for any scaffolding or hoarding that needs to be placed on the highway, it does not control the standard in which the scaffold or hoarding is put up, this remains the responsibility of the applicant.

Wherever possible, a scaffold or hoarding must be placed on private property. Where applications are received and it is clear on inspection that sufficient room is available on private land, the application will be refused but is still chargeable. Sufficient room on private land is determined by the authority and is not negotiable.

Applications must be made by the company who is placing scaffolding or hoarding. The company must be registered with the council to apply for a scaffolding or hoarding permit.

In the case of scaffolds, the company working on the scaffold must also be insured in the same way as the applicant. If approved, the item owner carries all of the responsibilities in adhering with regulations, standard conditions and any special conditions that may be applied to the permission.

General conditions for application and fees can be found on the Council's website

14.2.6. Seasonal Decorations

This process covers the installation, maintenance and removal of seasonal decorations on or above the highway which requires notification to the highway authority under S178 of the Highways Act 1980. This process provides the mechanism and framework that allows organisations to provide the required notification.

Seasonal decorations give great pleasure and enjoyment to the public and this plan does not intend to prevent seasonal decorations from being used, but to ensure they are installed, operated and removed safely. There is an obligation on everyone for their own safety and the safety of others.

Applications are available on the Council's website by completing the on-line form. Notifications can only be made to the authority by completing this online application.

14.2.7. Sign Applications

There are two different types of signs that can be applied for, tourism and amenity signs.

A tourist attraction must be a permanent area or building which is open to the public without needing to book during its normal opening hours. Tourism signs (white on brown) are for directions only and not for advertising purposes.

Amenities must have:

- a minimum visitor level of 5,000 visitors every year
- be open at least 50 days per year
- only be signposted from the nearest A or B road or town or village

The following amenities can apply for a sign:

- retail facilities
- recreational and sport facilities
- schools and children's nurseries
- churches and places of worship

Tourism and Amenity Sign policies are available on the Council's website.

A non-returnable fee is required which is payable upon application.

14.2.8. Guidelines for the use of 'A' Boards and Merchandising Displays on the Highways

The Local Highway Authority also has a legal duty to keep the streets free of dangers and potential risks. This needs to be balanced against protecting the commercial dynamic of the street environment. It is all about helping make the town centre both attractive and safe for retailers, shoppers and visitors alike.

It is also about protecting vulnerable sections of the community. The disabled and visually impaired, the elderly and parents with young children, all have a real problem negotiating their way around obstructions and this can be a real danger. Under the Equality Act 2010 we have to consider the disabled community when organising the street scene, and so do local shops and businesses. It's not just the law, it is a matter of common sense and respect for others.

To place an advertising display on public land, consultation with the highway or local planning authority must be carried out. A fee may be payable, or a formal application made under local planning regulations.

A copy of the SCC Policy on the Management of Commercial Obstructions and Guidance for use of 'A' Boards and merchandising Displays on the Highway in Staffordshire is available on the Council's website.

14.3. OBSTRUCTIONS ON THE HIGHWAY

The highway will be made safe, either by immediate removal of the obstruction or by signing, barriers and lighting.

Where significant expenditure is incurred in the removal of the obstruction from the highway, and where it is practical to obtain reimbursement, then the originator of the obstruction will be recharged for the cost of effecting the removal.

14.3.1. Spillages

All hazardous spillages will be made safe, either by immediate clearing or by signing and barriers.

Hazardous spillages sometimes require specialist equipment and expertise to affect their removal and therefore the initial response will consist of arranging for the County Council's Highways Contractor to assist the Police and Fire and Rescue Service to prevent immediate danger to road users and pedestrians, following which, the services of a specialist waste disposal company may need to be sought.

Where the identity of the cause of the spillage can be discerned every effort should be made to recover the cost of the clear up.

14.3.2. Removal of Mud

If there is mud on the road which constitutes a danger to users of the highway, action will be taken as follows:

- Immediate danger: if the amount of mud and the speed of the traffic indicate that there may be an accident, the operation will be stopped forthwith. If the operator refuses, the Police will be contacted and asked for immediate assistance. The operator will be instructed to put out appropriate signs and to remove the mud. If the operator is unable or unwilling to do this, the County Council's Term Maintenance Contractor will be asked to do so on a rechargeable basis.
- Potential danger: County Council staff will point out to the operator that they are creating a potential danger and instruct them to put out proper signs. If they are unable or unwilling to do this, the County Council's maintenance contractor will be asked to do so on a rechargeable basis. If appropriate, the operator will be instructed to remove the mud at the end of their operation or at the end of the day, whichever is sooner.
- Nuisance: the problem will be reported to the District Council with a request for them to deal with the problem. In this context, nuisance would apply to situations such as long-term or repeated deposition of mud on the highway which whilst not constituting a danger or hazard, makes the road unsightly and leads to an increased maintenance liability in respect of additional sweeping and gully cleansing.

14.3.3. Portable Signs on Footways

SCC have developed a Management of Commercial Obstructions Policy that is designed as a high-level framework document, setting out the conditions under which SCC will accept the placement of commercial displays on the highway.

These signs, normally associated with advertising goods and services, will be removed without notice if there is no person responsible for the sign at the sign's location. Otherwise, the responsible person will be requested to remove the sign. Where the person responsible for the sign fails to remove it, they will be notified that the sign will be removed to the nearest area depot. The signs will be retained in the area depot for a period of 28 days and thereafter disposed of.

Signs indicating 'Traffic Signals Not Working', signs associated with roadworks, or signs needed for other reasons, will be sited carefully where they need to be displayed and will be removed as soon as possible, in order to reduce the danger or inconvenience to pedestrians.

Signs of this type can cause a potentially dangerous obstruction to the footway, particularly for visually handicapped or disabled people. Signs left in place after serving their purpose also detract from their future effectiveness, since road users may be led to assume that roadworks are not always in progress.

14.3.4. Road Traffic Collisions

After a road traffic collision, the highway will be made safe for traffic to pass freely as soon as practicable.

14.4. PARKING ON THE HIGHWAY

14.4.1. Where can vehicles park/wait on the public highway?

The county council cannot legally prevent anyone from parking their vehicle on the public highway if there are no existing parking restrictions.

The Highway Code provides extensive detail on where vehicles can and cannot park on the public highway and advises:

'You must not wait or park on yellow lines during the times of operation shown on nearby time plates. Double yellow lines indicate a prohibition of waiting at any time even if there are no upright signs. You must not wait or park, or stop to set down and pick up passengers, on school entrance markings when upright signs indicate a prohibition of stopping.'

Vehicles must not stop or park on:

- a pedestrian crossing, including the area marked by the zig-zag lines
- a clearway
- taxi bays as indicated by upright signs and markings
- an urban clearway within its hours of operation, except to pick up or set down passengers
- a road marked with double white lines, even when a broken white line is on your side of the road, except to pick up or set down passengers, or to load or unload goods
- a tram or cycle lane during its period of operation

Do not stop or park:

- near a school entrance
- anywhere you would prevent access for emergency services
- at or near a bus stop or taxi rank
- on the approach to a level crossing
- opposite or within 10 metres of a junction, except in an authorised parking space
- near the brow of a hill or hump bridge
- opposite a traffic island or (if this would cause an obstruction) another parked vehicle
- where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles
- in front of an entrance to a property
- on a bend
- where you would obstruct cyclists' use of cycle facilities.

Except when forced to do so by stationary traffic.

If you do have to park/stop on the roadside:

- do not park facing against the traffic flow
- stop as close as you can to the side

- do not stop too close to a vehicle displaying a Blue Badge - remember, the occupant may need more room to get in or out
- you must switch off the engine, headlights and fog lights
- you must ensure you do not hit anyone when you open your door. Check for cyclists or other traffic
- it is safer for passengers (especially children) to get out of the vehicle on the side next to the kerb

14.4.2. Footway (pavement) parking

Parking on the pavement can obstruct and seriously inconvenience pedestrians, people in wheelchairs or with visual impairments and people with prams or pushchairs.

If there are no parking restrictions and vehicles are parked in contravention of the rules of the Highway Code, the matter can be reported to the police who have access to powers enabling them to identify vehicle owners and issue on the spot fines if necessary.

14.4.3. Parking outside your house

Homeowners or residents living next to public highways have no legal right to the road and/or footway fronting their property boundaries. If there are no parking restrictions and vehicles are parked in contravention of the rules of the Highway Code, the matter can be reported to the police who have access to powers enabling them to identify vehicle owners and issue on the spot fines if necessary.

14.4.4. Grass verge parking

Grass verges can often become damaged because of parked vehicles, delivery vehicles or other similar reasons. We will where possible seek to put right damaged verges, but generally remedial works are prioritised in accordance with the risk the problem poses to the public.

14.4.5. Blocking access / driveway

Vehicles causing an obstruction to access/driveways with a dropped kerb can be reported to the police.

14.4.6. Parking on Yellow Lines

Double yellow lines are used to define the start and end of an area where parking is prohibited at all times.

Single yellow lines are used to define the start and end of an area where parking is prohibited during certain times. These markings are accompanied by non-illuminated traffic signs which indicate what times parking is prohibited.

If vehicles are parked on double yellow lines, they may be doing so in contravention of the traffic regulation order, and they could receive a penalty charge notice.

Blue badge holders are permitted to park on double yellow lines for a period of no more than 3 hours provided it is safe to do so.

14.4.7. Parking that Obstructs Visibility

If there are no existing parking restrictions, then there is very little we can do to respond positively to this problem. We would suggest that neighbour disputes associated with parking should be resolved through amicable or mediated discussions, but we do not have resources available to facilitate or accommodate these discussions.

If it is not possible to resolve the problem in this way, you could consider requesting that we implement a traffic regulation order (TRO) such as double yellow lines, but these schemes have to be firstly prioritised over other similar community requests, they take a long time to introduce, they have a significant cost attached to them and they must have the full support of the potentially affected community.

If you live near a retail outlet, school, church or other local amenity which generates a lot of on-street non-resident parking, you may be eligible to apply for an access protection marking.

14.4.8. Lorry parking

The government conducted a comprehensive study undertaken in 2017 of the capacity and utilisation rates of overnight lorry parking facilities in England. Their report includes analysis of the welfare standards of formal facilities and of the extent of overnight parking in informal locations.

There are a number of locations in and around Staffordshire that provide dedicated parking areas for lorries (heavy commercial vehicles).

It is good practice for a local authority to ensure that suitable off-street HGV parking facilities are available in or near areas covered by an overnight ban - but it is not a legal requirement, and it is often not provided.

It is illegal for lorries to park partially or wholly on the footway (pavement) and instances of this should be reported to the local police.

Lorries parked on yellow lines are potentially doing so in breach of the relevant traffic regulation order and risk receiving a fine.

14.5. IRONWORKS

Utilities who supply services such as gas, electricity, water, drainage and telecommunications understandably have a legal right to place equipment under, on, or over the public highway in order to serve commercial, social and residential properties.

Utilities use various types of apparatus on the highway such as poles, cabinets, footway covers and road covers (manhole covers).

14.5.1. Who owns the equipment?

Most of the equipment placed on the highway will be marked with the initials of the utility, which is responsible for the maintenance, e.g., BT, STW, however this is not always the case and it is not always safe to try to identify this information.

14.5.2. How to report issues with ironwork and apparatus?

In the first instance you should always contact the responsible utility company to make them aware of an issue with their equipment if this is identifiable. Utility providers receive government scores on how well they deal with public complaints, therefore, complaints about noisy/rocking manhole covers and roadworks should also be directed to the owner.

Unless the equipment is posing an imminent risk to safety, utility companies do not have to repair the equipment within a set timescale. For example, noisy/rocking manhole covers can cause a nuisance, but they can be completely safe to road users.

If you are unsure who the owner of the equipment is, or it is posing an imminent risk to highway users, please report this online.

14.5.3. What can Staffordshire County Council do about faulty third-party equipment on the public highway?

Our role is to investigate reports and notify the correct utility company as soon as possible, providing them with as much evidence as we can. If necessary, we can make a temporary repair to make the location safe, but the owner is responsible for permanent repairs.

Under Section 81 of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 legislation, we can take no further action and you should contact the utility company with any other enquiries, such as chasing up the permanent repair.

Whilst the onus to repair this problem rests with apparatus owner, we will continue to monitor the problem during our routine safety inspections which take place either monthly, quarterly or annually depending on the road classification.

14.6. NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) as Highway Authority is responsible for ensuring the safe passage of all highway users on adopted highways and rights of way within Staffordshire. It is accepted that at times works and activities will be required upon, or affect, the highway such as alterations to its structure/layout, installation and maintenance of underground apparatus or occupation of the highway required in connection with works and activities where no alternative is available. There are various licences and permissions available that govern these works and activities ensuring that the highway authority can fulfil its statutory duties.

More detail is provided in the Network Management Plan which is available on the Council's website.

The following are examples of the various types of licences and permits available:

14.6.1. Agreements

- Major Works Agreement (Section 278 and Section 111 of the Highways Act 1980)
- Minor Works Agreement (Section 111 Local Government Act 1972 and Section 130 of the Highways Act 1980)
- New Roads Agreement - Construction of Adoptable Highway (Section 38 Highways Act 1980)

14.6.2. Licences

- Installation of private apparatus (Section 50 New Roads and Street Works Act 1991)
- Vehicle Access Crossing (dropped kerbs)(Section 184 Highways Act 1980)
- Licence to plant or cultivate in the highway (Section 142 Highways Act 1980)

14.6.3. Activity Permits

- Placement of a builder's skip (Section 139 Highways Act 1980) or placement of builders' materials or other items on the highway (Section 171 Highways Act 1980).
- Erection of scaffolding (Section 169 Highways Act 1980) and erection of hoarding (Section 172 Highways Act 1980).
- Temporary excavations in the highway (Section 171 Highways Act 1980)

14.6.4. Traffic Management Permits

- Application to Place Temporary Signals on the Highway (Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, and Traffic Signs Manual: Chapter 8).
- Application for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (road closures, etc.) (Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984),
- Notification of Other Traffic Management (e.g., lane closures)

14.6.5. Other Permissions NOT Managed by the Network Management Unit

The following permissions affecting the highway are operated by District Authorities:

- On street trading / street cafes
- Advertising boards

14.7. ROAD CLOSURES

14.7.1. Emergency Road Closures and Diversions

Where roads have to be closed as a result of an emergency, diversionary routes will be established as soon as possible, taking the needs of both through traffic, and local communities into account.

Where the police are not already involved in the incident, they should be informed of the nature and likely duration of the diversion.

Wherever possible, details of the person or company giving rise to the need for the closure or diversion should be obtained, and the cost to the Highway Authority, of attending to the incident and organising the closure or diversion, should be recharged.

14.7.2. Temporary Road Closures

Temporary road closures are implemented via the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991. For public events such as processions or street parties the district authority may use their own powers contained in the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847. The use of the Town and Police Clauses Act 1847 is considered the most effective manner to formalise temporary road closures in connection with public parades and other civic events such as Remembrance Day, St Georges Day parades.

There are two procedures: depending on the urgency of the works.

- Emergency Road Closures

Where the Highway Authority is satisfied that urgent action is needed, no prior notice need be given, but only a short-term closure or restriction is possible. If there is a danger to the public (e.g., a gas leak) the notice is limited to 21 days, which can be extended by one further notice. In cases not involving risk of danger, the notice may only last 5 days.

- Temporary Restrictions(Road Closure)

The applicant must inform the Highway Authority as soon as practicable if a closure is needed and the Highway Authority must issue a notice stating the reason for the order, its effect, the alternative route, and the date and duration of the closure. The Highway Authority must give prior notice to the police, fire and any other traffic authority whose roads will be affected.

14.8. Involving Parish and Town Councils in Highway Maintenance

It is traditional for Parish and Town Councils to have a strong interest in highway maintenance affecting their locality. In recognition of Parish and Town Council's pride and interest in their locality, the County Council is able to arrange for certain categories of maintenance work to be undertaken in several ways:

- by a village or town lengthsman.
- by a local contractor with appropriate skills, as and when required.
- by voluntary labour, using County Council funds to purchase materials, tools and equipment.

Delegation of the County Council's maintenance duties takes place under Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The types of work involved are:-

14.8.1. Drainage

- Clear leaves/debris from tops of gully grids and drainage grips.
- Clear vegetation at the entrance and exit of culverts under the highway.

14.8.2. Traffic Signs

- straighten up and clean traffic signs and reflecting bollards.
- clean and repaint finger posts and mile posts.
- remove tree and hedge growth obscuring traffic signs.

14.8.3. Grass Cutting

- Grass cutting to at least the County Council's minimum standards.

14.8.4. General Maintenance

- Tidy up and strim small, grassed areas which are not included in the grass mowing programme.
- Control of weeds at rear of footways and around lamp columns and signs.
- Cut grass and weeds at base of visibility fences at bends and junctions.
- Carry out periodic painting of visibility fences.
- Carry out sweeping and clearing of debris discharged onto the highway after storms.

14.8.5. Specific Maintenance

- Minor works, such as resetting a kerb or tidying verge damage.

14.8.6. General

- It is essential that appropriate public liability insurance (£5m) is carried by the parish or town councils, or their contractors.
- All work needs to be carried out in compliance with relevant legislation and with health and safety requirements and the County Council must be satisfied that those undertaking the work have received the necessary training in respect of health and safety matters.

Close co-ordination needs to be maintained between SCC and the Parish or Town Council concerned both to avoid duplication of effort, and to avoid conflict between their respective maintenance programmes.

14.9. ILLEGAL SIGNS

14.9.1. Illegal Signs

Illegal signs that are a safety hazard will be removed as obstructions to the highway, but the County Council may also remove any illegal sign at its discretion.

Any sign which is a danger or potential danger to the public must be removed.

A sign is a danger to the public if:

- It obstructs visibility.
- All or part of it is on the carriageway.
- It obstructs the footway. The width of the footway should be taken into consideration i.e., if a footway is three metres wide, a sign placed at the back of the footway may not form an obstruction, conversely, a narrow footway is almost bound to be obstructed by such a sign.
- It is attached to street furniture.
- It obscures an authorised sign.
- It may be blown onto the carriageway by a strong wind.
- It constitutes an unnecessary distraction to road users.

If the sign is an immediate danger to the public, it must be removed straight away.

If it constitutes a potential danger to the public, notice will be served either verbally or in writing.

Signs advertising local voluntary fund-raising activities, and election posters, may be tolerated for up to one week before the event.

The owners of illegal signs should be advised in writing of the County Council's intention to remove the sign and that if the sign is not removed by the owner, the sign will be removed to a County Council depot, and the owner will be advised of when and where it can be collected within 28 days, following which, it is liable to be destroyed.

Where permission is sought to display such signs, the organisation concerned will be advised that the signs must comply with the above criteria and must be removed as soon as practicable after the event. Companies or organisations wishing to display signs, will be asked to supply a schedule detailing the locations of all such signs.

14.9.2. Election Posters

The County Council, as Highway Authority, does not give any permission to any person or body to place election posters, or other election material within highway limits, or on street lighting columns, traffic signs and other street furniture. Anyone doing so, does so at their own risk.

Election Agents should be advised that any election poster or material should not be sited or displayed in a manner which obscures any highway sign or creates a safety risk or hazard to the use of the highway. Any sign or poster erected in contravention of these requirements is liable to be removed and the Election Agent charged with a removal fee currently set at £2.00 per item.

Any signs placed within the highway which are not removed shortly after the election will be removed by the Highway Authority and the £2.00 charge will apply.

14.10. ROADWORKS IN THE VICINITY OF LEVEL CROSSINGS

Roadworks in the vicinity of railway level crossings constitute a special hazard, and all such works will be carried out in consultation with Railtrack and in accordance with HAUC Red Book Part 2 'Guidance Note for Undertakers' Works at Railtrack Level Crossings.

Roadworks carried out in the vicinity of railway level crossings require special precautions. SCC Highway engineers should utilise the HAUC Guidance referred to above. Whilst this note essentially applies to the work of statutory undertakers in the vicinity of level crossings, the necessary precautions with regard to traffic control, guarding, and signing, apply equally to highway authority roadworks. It is essential that consultations with the rail company regarding the proposed roadworks are held at an early stage.

14.11. SWEEPING

District Councils are responsible for sweeping the highway and collecting litter. Where the safety of road users is at risk due to debris on the highway, the Highway Authority will take steps to remove the risk by implementing appropriate traffic control or by removing the debris to a safe location.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 makes District Councils responsible for the routine cleansing of all roads in the County. The Act does not, however, amend the County Council's duty under the Highways Act 1980, to assist and protect the rights of the public in the use and enjoyment of highways, and to make the highway safe by implementing traffic control, or by removing dangerous items from those highways.

Leaves are classified by the Environmental Protection Act as litter, and District Councils must remove them. It is possible there may be instances where leaves become a safety hazard, and the Highway Authority may have to take action, but due regard must be given to the District Council's responsibilities outlined above.

Fly tipping will not normally be considered a safety hazard and is for the District Council to clear. Section 89 of the Environmental Protection Act permits Highway Authorities to issue direction in respect of traffic management and periods when cleaning shall not be undertaken. These requirements need to be considered particularly in respect of heavily trafficked routes and areas of high pedestrian usage.

There is currently no duty for the highway authority under Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure that highways are clear of moss, algae, lichen or similar vegetation as they have not become part of the fabric of the road, pavement or pathway.

Where dead animals, clinical or animal waste, are encountered on the highway, then the Highway Authority's responsibility consists of taking steps to make the highway safe for pedestrians and road users and does not extend to the removal of the animal or waste from the site. In most cases, the presence of a dead animal does not constitute a safety hazard, but in all cases, the services of the relevant District Council's specialist environmental protection teams will be sought to affect its removal from the site.

14.12. STATUTORY UNDERTAKERS' WORKS ON THE HIGHWAY

To minimise any disruption caused to the public, the proper co-ordination of works carried out by the Highway Authority and the Statutory Undertakers is most important. The Council's Network Management Team work closely with Statutory Undertakers to ensure this co-ordination is effective.

All reinstatement of county roads, following works by Statutory Undertakers, must conform to the HAUC 'Specification for Reinstatement of Openings in Highways'.

All notifications and registrations of works must comply with the HAUC Code of Practice for the Co-ordination of Street works and works for Road Purposes and Related Matters.

All inspections of Statutory Undertakers' work must comply with the HAUC Code of Practice for Inspections.

Any trenches that are found to be defective in accordance with Clause S2 of the Specification for Reinstatement, must be rectified in accordance with the West Midlands Regional HAUC Agreement for Defective Reinstatements.

Investigatory inspections will be undertaken by the Highway Authority on Undertakers' trenches as required.

Details of the processes around management of Statutory Undertakers are included in the Network Management Plan which is available on the Council's website.

14.13. TEMPORARY SIGNING FOR EVENTS

Temporary traffic signs to special events may be erected for a limited period to guide traffic going to special events, such as major sporting events, shows or other public gatherings that are expected to attract large volumes of traffic to assist road safety and reduce congestion by giving clear directions to road users seeking the best route to an event.

They are not commercial advertisements intended to attract custom.

Regulation 53 of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 (TSRGD) provides for temporary signs to be erected to guide traffic to sporting events, exhibitions or other public gatherings which are expected to attract a considerable volume of traffic. Regulation 53 of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. Fixed signs must be one of the following: black on white; black on yellow; white on blue or blue on white. Under direction 38 of TSRGD1 they may only be displayed for the duration of the event, and not longer than 6 months without the approval of the Secretary of State.

They are usually erected by road user organisations with the consent of the traffic authority. For safety reasons, it is seldom appropriate for private individuals to erect signs on public roads.

In all cases, traffic management must be sited, maintained and removed by qualified personnel and if unqualified, permit applicants should contract out this duty to organisations qualified and resourced to do so. The following legislation applies in the use of traffic management:

Consent²³ from the traffic authority should be sought via application to the Network Management Unit.

14.14. PLAYING OF BALL GAMES ON THE HIGHWAY

The highway authority occasionally receives requests to place 'No Ball Games' signs (or similar) on landscaped areas within the highway.

The problems are often related to anti-social behaviour and nuisance. Under Section 161(3) of the Highways Act 1980 'if a person plays at football or any other game on a highway to the annoyance of a user of the highway, he is guilty of an offence'. The Traffic Signs and General Directions explains which signs can be used by highway authorities within the highway. 'No Ball Game' signs are not available for use in the highway.

Where the problem relates to anti-social behaviour, the district council has powers to consider the use of a Public Space Protection Order, and these are considered a more appropriate way of responding to such issues.

14.15. NO WAITING AT ANY TIME PLATES

The requirement to have 'At Any Time' plates with double yellow lines where prohibition applies at any time throughout the year was removed when the Traffic Signs, Regulations and Directions 2002 came into force.

Whilst the majority of these 'At Any Time' plates and posts will have been removed, where other maintenance activities such as footway preventative maintenance or resurfacing are taking place any remaining posts and signs should be removed.

²³ [Permission to temporarily manage traffic on the public highway - Staffordshire County Council](#)

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

HIGHWAYS AND BUILT COUNTY MANAGEMENT OF HIGHWAY TREES

June 2022

MANAGEMENT OF HIGHWAY TREES

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FOREWORD

The UK Government has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and on 25th July 2019, Staffordshire County Council (SCC) followed suit by declaring a climate emergency and committing to work with partners to agree Staffordshire's collective response.

Climate change presents the County Council and the Staffordshire public with both challenges and opportunities. By acting now and working together as a county, we can tackle the impacts that could arise, and at the same time benefit from initiatives that save money and protect the environment.

To this end, SCC have worked to develop an ambitious and forward-thinking Climate Change Action Plan for the county, which identifies actions across several key areas that will ultimately contribute to achieving a net zero carbon target for the county by 2050, in line with the national target.

Within that strategy, the role of land and specifically, green infrastructure, is identified as having significant potential to capture and store carbon emissions, as well as helping the county to adapt to a changing climate.

The Strategy introduces a policy of encouraging tree planting, especially along main roads, outside schools and areas of poor air quality.

Highway trees have the potential to contribute greatly to tackling the climate crisis. They help in adapting our communities to the effects of climate change and to reducing the risks of flooding. They enhance the biodiversity of the county, have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing, and help filter air pollution and noise. These benefits link trees to the vision set out in the Council Strategic Plan for greener living.



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. There are over 3,800 miles of road which are the responsibility of Staffordshire Council, and many of these roads have trees or woodlands close to the carriageway. There are estimated¹ to be 475,000 trees on the highway with a further 128,000 on adjoining land but which could affect the highway for example either due to the canopy overhanging or, the tree being within falling distance of the highway.
- 1.1.2. Trees in Staffordshire are an important asset that provides amenity value; carbon storage and sequestration; natural flood risk management and removal of pollution.
- 1.1.3. We also recognise that although trees are a positive feature, they can cause a range of problems, from being a nuisance or inconvenience to potentially causing serious injury or even death. As a tree owner, we have a direct responsibility for ensuring our trees do not pose a danger to the public or property and are managed appropriately.
- 1.1.4. This policy sets out a tree management strategy for controlling risk, responding to tree related incidents and service requests and for preserving and enhancing the Council's highway tree stock.
- 1.1.5. Implementation of this policy is supported by the Council's Highway Infrastructure Asset Management Plan, Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice, Residential Design Guide and the Highway Training and Competency Framework.
- 1.1.6. This policy considers published guidance such as the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Sector Information Minutes and, other national guidance such as those published by the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) entitled Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (CSRMT)².

1.2. Aims

- 1.2.1. This guidance is intended to set out the approach of the highway authority to the management of trees within the highway including:
 - Ensure public safety so far as is reasonably practicable and minimise damage to property due to highway trees.
 - Establish an inspection regime using a risk-based approach for all highway trees.
 - Deliver the Council's environmental, carbon and planting targets
 - Conserve, protect, maintain, and enhance the County's highway tree resources; and

¹ Based on BlueSky National Tree Map data October 2020

² NTSG Common Sense Risk Management of Trees - [FCMS024.pdf \(ntsgroup.org.uk\)](https://www.ntsgroup.org.uk/FCMS024.pdf)



- Meet our statutory and legal obligations.

1.3. Responsibility

- 1.3.1. Trees situated within the boundaries of the Highway Maintainable at Public Expense (HMPE) are generally the responsibility of the highway authority unless they were planted under licence or by another authority such as a District or Parish Council.
- 1.3.2. Trees on private roads and other private rights of way are the responsibility of the landowner/occupier.
- 1.3.3. Trees on private property adjoining the public highway are the responsibility of the owner/occupier BUT the Highway Authority has a duty, and powers of enforcement, to ensure that such trees do not endanger the Highway or its users under Section 154 of the Highways Act³.
- 1.3.4. Highway boundary trees and hedges will normally have been planted by, or on behalf of, the adjoining landowner, to define the boundary of his land with the public highway, and to contain his property. It is accepted by SCC that, unless there are specific agreements to the contrary, the maintenance of highway boundary hedges is the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, if a tree lies within the hedge line, then it is a non-highway tree that is considered to be an integral part of the hedge line and is therefore the responsibility of the adjoining landowner. For a tree to be deemed to be a highway tree, the tree trunk must lie, in its entirety, within the highway boundary (which is taken as the centre line of the hedge), or, in cases where part of the trunk has grown onto the adjacent landowner's side of the highway boundary, it must clearly be seen that the tree had originally grown/been planted inside the highway boundary.

1.4. Legislation

- 1.4.1. As the Highways Authority the County Council is responsible for the trees growing along the public highways which it has a duty to maintain. This duty arises from Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980⁴ but is mitigated by Section 58⁵ which allows the defence that the Highways Authority has taken such care as is required to ensure that the highway remains safe.
- 1.4.2. This policy has been created with due consideration to current national, regional, and corporate guidance and legislation. Through adopting a strategic approach, and aligning the approach of the Council, this policy will ensure the Council fulfils its legal and policy requirements.

³ Highways Act 1980 – Section 154 - [Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

⁴ Highways Act 1980 – Section 41 - [Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

⁵ Highways Act 1980 – Section 58 - [Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)



2. RISK MANAGEMENT

2.1. Managing Risk at an Acceptable Level

- 2.1.1. Tree risk management involves the process of inspecting and assessing trees for their potential to cause personal injury or damage to property.
- 2.1.2. With an extensive highway network and countless trees, it is not feasible to carry out frequent detailed inspections and assessments of every tree. The Council therefore carries out a programme of routine highway safety inspections and targeted detailed tree inspections, taking a risk-based approach.
- 2.1.3. According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE, 2007)⁶, each year between 5 and 6 people in the UK are killed when trees or branches fall off them. Around half of all fatalities due to falling trees or branches occur in public spaces, such as a park or beside roads. Whilst the risk of being struck whilst in a public place is extremely low, (in the order for one in 10 million for those trees in or adjacent to areas of high public use), the law requires that where reasonably practicable measures are available, in individual cases, they should be taken.
- 2.1.4. HSE guidance on the management of risk from falling trees and branches refers to guidance produced by the National Tree Safety Group (NTSG) entitled Common Sense Risk Management of Trees (CSRMT).⁷ HSE was consulted in the production of these publications and endorses the sensible, reasonable and balanced advice to owners on managing the risk from trees set out in the guidance. The advice in this guidance has been used in the development of the approach to the management of highway trees in Staffordshire.
- 2.1.5. The guidance in CSRMT advises a reasonable and balanced approach forms the basis for sensible tree safety management and should cover three essential aspects:
- Zoning: appreciating trees in relation to people or property.
 - Tree inspection; assessing obvious tree defects.
 - Managing risk at an acceptable level: identifying, prioritising and undertaking safety work according to level of risk.

2.2. Quantifying Risk

- 2.2.1. A purely reactive approach to risk management is vulnerable as being difficult to defend in the event of an incident. In order to address this Staffordshire County Council has adopted a position for managing tree failure risk by which the condition of individual trees is not seen to be the primary consideration. The Council's approach is to firstly consider the extent of

⁶ HSE Management of the risk from falling trees or branches [SIM 01/2007/05](#)

⁷ National Tree Safety Group – [Common sense risk management of trees](#)



usage of the land on which the trees stand, and then to use that information to inform the process of tree assessment.

- 2.2.2. This policy adopts an approach to assess and mitigate the risk of harm from trees primarily through a process of cyclical routine safety inspections and planned detailed inspections. This approach will provide a basis by which the Council can demonstrate that it has done what is 'reasonably practicable' to reduce the risk of harm resulting from its trees.
- 2.2.3. The methodology evaluates risk in terms of the potential likelihood for both people and property, situated underneath or within falling distance of trees. This assessment places individual, or groups, of trees into 'zones' which are characterised by usage.
- 2.2.4. CSRMT notes that annually, among the relatively few accidents from falling trees, the greatest risk to public safety has proved to be from trees within falling distance of where people move at speed in vehicles. It is both the high usage of roads and the speed at which people travel along them that makes this the most likely way that people will be killed by trees.
- 2.2.5. CSRMT further advises that not all roads are busy roads and not all roadside trees are large enough to kill or injure if they fall. It is nonetheless reasonable that certain roadside trees, particularly those alongside busy public roads, should be inspected. This approach is known as zoning.

2.3. Zoning

- 2.3.1. This methodology prioritises the most used areas, and by doing so contributes to a cost-effective approach to tree inspection, focussing resources where most effective. It is about appreciating tree stock in relation to proximity of people or property. Zoning contributes to sensible risk management.
- 2.3.2. HSE Management of the risk from falling trees advises that there are several approaches to managing the risks from trees that involve 'zoning' trees according to the risk of them falling and causing injury or death. As a minimum, trees should be divided into two zones.
- Zone 1 – where there is frequent public access to trees (e.g., parks/ recreation grounds, in and around picnic areas, schools, children's playgrounds, popular foot paths, car parks, or at the side of busy roads). As a rough guide trees in Zone 1 are those that are closely approached by many people every day.
 - Zone 2 – where trees are not subject to frequent public access.
- 2.3.3. Detailed inspections will be undertaken by an arboriculturist appointed or acting on behalf of SCC. The initial sequence of detailed inspection work has been established on a risk management basis so that locations with the greatest concentrations of people and trees are tackled first. The busiest

routes and those carrying high speed traffic will be prioritised in the programme.

- 2.3.4. Staffordshire County Council will focus initially on Class 'A' and 'B' roads and town centre footways as Zone 1 with a view to transitioning to an approach based on network hierarchy.

2.4. Perception of Risk

- 2.4.1. Unlike man-made structures, it is entirely normal and natural for parts to break and fall from trees. Leaves and twigs are regularly shed. Branches die and live branches may become wind damaged or overextended, occasionally falling to the ground. On rare occasions, roots can snap under wind load causing the entire tree to collapse.
- 2.4.2. These types of structural tree failures are natural and, in rare instances, can cause damage to property, injury or death. While the actual likelihood of these rare instances occurring is very low, the perception of many members of the public is that they are much more common than they really are.
- 2.4.3. However, the individual risk of death attributable to trees is 10 times less than the threshold of one death in one million per year that the Health and Safety Executive says people regard as insignificant or trivial in their daily lives.
- 2.4.4. The Health and Safety Executive refers to the role of perception in its guidance as follows: 'The risk, per tree, of causing fatality is of the order of one in 150 million for all trees in Britain or one in 10 million for those trees in, or adjacent to areas of public use. However, the low level of overall risk may not be perceived in this way by the public, particularly following an incident.'
- 2.4.5. By carefully considering how trees fit into a particular local context, the Council can better identify those areas and situations requiring action. It will also help ensure that any management is proportionate and strikes an appropriate balance between the real risks and benefits.

3. INSPECTION REGIME

3.1. Safety Inspection

- 3.1.1. Trees are important for amenity and nature conservation reasons and should be preserved but they can present risks if they are allowed to become unstable, cause obstruction or create visibility issues.
- 3.1.2. Well Managed Highway Infrastructure (WMHI) Code of Practice⁸ provides guidance to Highway Authorities relating to all aspects of highway maintenance and management, including trees. Although it is not a statutory requirement to comply with this code, it is recommended that it is adopted to

⁸ Well Managed Highway Infrastructure Code of Practice [Code of Practice | CIHT](#)



demonstrate best practice and to provide a more efficient and effective service.

- 3.1.3. Staffordshire County Council have developed a risk-based approach to tree inspection in accordance with the principles set out in WMHI. Routine inspections will be undertaken by SCC Highway Inspectors as part of the highway safety inspection process, with the frequency of these inspections' dependent upon the hierarchical standing of the respective carriageways, as detailed in the SCC 'Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice'⁹.
- 3.1.4. All trees on or within falling distance of the Highway will be inspected by a Highway Safety Inspector in in line with the SCC 'Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice'. These inspections will comprise the Visual Tree Assessment (VTA) process..
- 3.1.5. Tree defects likely to cause a hazard are identified. In the case of trees on land owned or adopted by the Council the authority is responsible for organising and undertaking any remedial works. In the case of trees on land owned by other parties, the landowner is contacted. Regardless of with whom the responsibility lies, identified hazards will be endeavoured to be rectified or made safe within specified time scales dependent on the severity and location of the defect.

3.2. Detailed Inspection

- 3.2.1. The focus of detailed inspections will be in dealing with trees in zone 1. The rationale for this order of assessments is therefore primarily around dealing with the most frequented areas where the potential for harm is greatest. Such 'zoning' of people and property is the first step recommended in CSRMT.
- 3.2.2. Detailed inspections will be undertaken by an arboriculturist appointed or acting on behalf of SCC on the roads described in paragraph 2.3.4. These detailed inspections will be carried out at least once every 5 years, or whenever triggered by the findings of a routine inspection or information from an additional source. Some trees will require a detailed inspection at intervals of less than 5 years dependent upon species, age, condition & location.
- 3.2.3. The detailed inspections will consider the overall condition of the tree and not just defects in relation to the likelihood of failure.
- 3.2.4. Carrying out this activity on the 'A' and 'B' road network and the town centres over a five-year period requires asset collection/condition inspection of around 36,000 trees per year.
- 3.2.5. After the initial inspection cycle is complete, it will be possible to review the approach and schedule re-inspections, and allocate resources, according to objectively assessed risks. Inspections may also be rescheduled during the

⁹ SCC Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice [SCC Highway Safety Inspections Code of Practice 2019](#)



inspection cycle for those trees where a further assessment needs to be undertaken before the completion of the inspection cycle.

3.3. Asset Data Collection

- 3.3.1. The intention is to inspect and catalogue all zone 1 highway trees on a rolling 5-year programme. The survey data will be stored in an electronic map-based system that registers inventory data, and timescales for future cyclic tree maintenance and inspection.
- 3.3.2. As the programme gains momentum, a detailed inventory of the highway-tree stock will be collected. Standard inventory data will comprise of the data captured in industry recognised risk management software.

4. DEFECT RESPONSE

4.1. Emergency Tree Work

- 4.1.1. If the highway is obstructed by fallen trees or other debris, the Council will normally clear the obstruction. If there is an immediate threat, work will be carried out as quickly as practicable. If necessary, the road may be temporarily closed in the interests of public safety until the danger is averted or problem resolved, which in the case of a tree on private land may mean requesting that the tree is removed by the third party. Less urgent matters will be prioritised according to the assessed level of risk.
- 4.1.2. Less urgent matters will be prioritised according to the assessed level of risk. Council response times are those that apply to highway defects generally, as set out in current Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice.

4.2. Routine Tree Work

- 4.2.1. With the exception of fallen and damaged trees that obstruct the highway and/or endanger highway users, non-specialist officers shall always obtain advice from an arboriculturalist, or approved consultants or contractors, regarding any work on trees which need specialist attention, or which have advanced signs of disease, damage or injury.
- 4.2.2. Where trees are in Conservation Areas or are subject to Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or are apparently in need of removal, advice must always be sought from an arboriculturalist. Specialist, approved contractors will be used for all non-routine tree works on the public highway. Formal application for any works to the Borough Council for trees subject to a TPO that are dead or dying is exempt with a 5-day notice required.

4.3. Approved Contractors

- 4.3.1. Contractors/sub-contractors must be appropriately trained and qualified for the type of tree work to be undertaken. For example, they must be Arboricultural Association approved, certified in the use of mechanical

cutting, sawing and lifting equipment and also in the implementation of traffic management measures if a specialist company is not being employed.

- 4.3.2. Contractors must have adequate public liability insurance (currently £5 million).
- 4.3.3. Contractors undertaking planned specialist tree surgery work must provide evidence of their competence to carry out such work, supported by generic and site-specific risk assessments.

5. DEFECTIVE TREES

5.1. General/Minor Nuisance

- 5.1.1. We will not fell or prune trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena, which are largely outside of our control.
- 5.1.2. There are a variety of potential natural nuisances associated with trees, most of which are minor or seasonal and considered to be normal and acceptable consequences of living near trees. Examples of such problems are:
 - Falling leaves, twigs, sap, blossom, fruit, nuts, bird and insect droppings.
 - Germinating seedlings in gardens.
 - Leaves falling into gutters, drains or onto flat roofs.
 - The build-up of algae on fences, paths or other structures.
 - Trees affecting tv or radio signal reception
- 5.1.3. Clearing of leaves from guttering and pathways and weeding of set seeds are considered to be normal routine seasonal maintenance which property owners are expected to carry out.
- 5.1.4. There is no legal right to good tv or radio equipment reception, and in many cases, it is possible to resolve issues of poor reception involving trees by finding a technical solution.
- 5.1.5. There is no duty imposed on a local authority to remove moss or algae from the footway unless the presence of vegetation has damaged the fabric of the highway itself. To remove moss or algae from every road, footway and footpath would not be practical or sensible let alone affordable.

5.2. Highway Obstruction

- 5.2.1. We will undertake work, based on an assessment of risk, to trees situated on the HMPE to maintain a minimum (where reasonably feasible) 2.5 metres height clearance over a footpath associated with a public street, road, or highway.
- 5.2.2. We will undertake work, based on an assessment of risk, to a tree situated on the HMPE to maintain a minimum (where reasonably feasible) 5.5 metres

height clearance over the carriageway (associated with a public street, road, or highway).

- 5.2.3. We will undertake work, based on an assessment of risk, to a tree situated on the HMPE to maintain clear sight lines at junctions and access points and to ensure road signs, traffic signals and streetlights can perform to their design specification.
- 5.2.4. In exceptional circumstances we may decide to undertake pro-active management where for instance trees have outgrown their current location/situation.

5.3. Problem Trees near the Highway

- 5.3.1. Wherever possible, the Council will advise adjoining landowners/occupiers of any problems relating to their trees and will seek to negotiate a remedy. Where this is not possible, formal notice to rectify the problem may be served on the owner or occupier of the land on which the tree is growing. If necessary, the Council may undertake the necessary work and reclaim costs back.
- 5.3.2. If the highway is obstructed by fallen trees or other debris from private land causing an immediate threat, the Council will usually clear the obstruction as soon as reasonably practicable without contacting the tree owner. If necessary, the road may be temporarily closed in the interests of public safety until the danger is averted or problem resolved.
- 5.3.3. Less urgent matters will be prioritised according to the assessed level of risk. This may mean that the Council may choose to leave the obstruction for the private landowner to remove.

5.4. Ash Dieback

- 5.4.1. Ash Dieback was first reported in Southeast England in 2012. It has rapidly spread across the UK with only a small fraction of Ash trees proving resistant.
- 5.4.2. The disease is caused by the fungi which attacks vessels carrying water and nutrients around the tree. The disease initially causes wilting foliage, bark lesions, sparse crown and dead branches and results in the death of the whole tree.
- 5.4.3. There is an estimated 80% fatality rate, with only 20% showing some resistance¹⁰.
- 5.4.4. From highway tree asset collection and condition surveys on the A class road network in Staffordshire it is estimated that around ten per cent are ash trees. Using the figures from the National Tree Map, this suggests around 43,000

¹⁰ [Ash Dieback \(Hymenoscyphus fraxineus\) - Woodland Trust](#)
the knot unites

ash trees on the highway network which are likely to require removal should they be subject to Ash Dieback.

- 5.4.5. This dataset will continue to be refined throughout the first cycle of detailed inspection.

6. COUNCIL TREES AFFECTING PRIVATE PROPERTY

6.1. Overhanging Branches

- 6.1.1. We will not fell or prune trees solely to alleviate problems caused by natural and/or seasonal phenomena, which are largely outside of our control.
- 6.1.2. Private landowners have a legal right under Common Law to deal with the nuisance associated with trees overhanging their property. This would be the case whether the trees are Council owned or in private ownership.
- 6.1.3. If branches from a Council tree are overhanging private property, the landowner can cut them back, unless the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or is situated in a conservation area. Where works are likely to impact upon trees in a conservation area or protected by a TPO, permission must be sought from the district or borough council conservation officer.
- 6.1.4. Branches can be cut back to the boundary of the private property but no further. The work must be carried out from the grounds of the private property. Any cuttings must be disposed of, do not leave them on Council land. To protect the trees structural integrity works should be limited to a third of the height of the tree.
- 6.1.5. Any work undertaken by private individuals must not affect the structural integrity of the tree.

6.2. Tree Roots

- 6.2.1. The same principles around the maintenance of overhanging branches are applied to tree roots. However, greater care needs to be applied as severing structural roots may cause the tree to become unstable and potentially fall. If a root is damaged and a tree dies or falls as a result of the work undertaken by the landowner, they could be held responsible in court for any damage or personal injury caused as a result. Private landowners are strongly advised to consult with the Council and appoint a professional tree surgeon.

6.3. Tree Root Damage and Subsidence

- 6.3.1. Many tree conflicts arise on account of the presence of tree roots and the perception that they are causing damage. Where damage is alleged, each complaint will be investigated on an individual basis. Damage incurred to the public highway by tree roots will be assessed during highway safety inspections and remedial work planned accordingly.

- 6.3.2. Trees situated close to property do not normally cause subsidence problems. However, each site is different, and the reasons for subsidence damage may be complex. The Council will carefully consider any relevant claims for subsidence damage but does not accept as a matter of course that nearby highway trees are likely to cause or contribute to a subsidence problem. Early investigation is recommended since early action can limit the potential for damage.
- 6.3.3. Subsidence claims relating to highway trees are administered by the Council's highway claims team. The claimant must provide positive evidence to demonstrate that highway trees have caused the subsidence. The onus is on the landowner to prove any perceived damage has been caused by the highway tree.
- 6.3.4. Where appropriate, the Council will obtain an independent third-party opinion.

6.4. Enforcement

- 6.4.1. SCC will enforce and prosecute where appropriate, in accordance with the Highways Act 1980, tree related contraventions and where appropriate the maximum penalty will be sought. SCC will also seek compensation from any external organisation responsible for significant damage to or removal of any SCC owned tree(s).

7. FELLING OF TREES

7.1. When Will Trees be Felled

- 7.1.1. The Council will avoid felling trees unless it is necessary for the following reasons:
- A dead or diseased tree that is a danger to the public.
 - A tree which is lifting at the roots and failure is imminent.
 - A tree obstructing or endangering a public highway, right of way, where the obstruction can't be overcome by pruning or other reasonable measures.
 - A tree on Council owned land causing an actionable nuisance to an adjoining property, where actual damage to property has been proved to have been caused by the tree, or clearly if no action is taken, damage will imminently be caused. This does not include general encroachment of branches and roots onto adjoining land where physical contact with buildings or structures is unlikely.
 - A tree that is proven to be a contributor to soil shrinkage and serious structural damage, where pruning alone would not provide a solution. Damage to light structures such as garden walls, paving, etc. is relatively minor and removal of the tree would not normally be acceptable.
 - Trees which, in the judgment of the Council's appointed arboriculturist, are clearly of a size and species inappropriate for their location.



- Thinning of trees to prevent overcrowding or removal for habitat improvement and landscape restoration in accordance with a management plan.
- Removal to allow authorised development. It may sometimes be necessary to remove trees to permit a development to take place.

- 7.1.2. Staffordshire County Council will avoid felling trees unless it is considered necessary. Each case will be carefully judged on its own merits following an inspection. If a tree must be felled three replacement trees will be planted, though not necessarily in the same place as the felled tree or the same species. Trees with high amenity value will be replaced as close to the location as possible.
- 7.1.3. Where trees are in Conservation Areas or are subject to Tree Preservation Order designation (TPO) and are considered in need of removal, advice must always be sought from the relevant Planning authority.

7.2. Consultation Relating to Tree Felling Work

- 7.2.1. If a tree is causing a serious safety risk the authority will fell the tree as an emergency measure without prior consultation. All other instances of tree felling will be judged on individual merit.

8. PLANTING AND REPLACEMENT OF TREES

8.1. Planting of New Highway Trees

- 8.1.1. To enhance tree cover across the county we encourage the planting of new trees on HMPE when suitable opportunities arise.
- 8.1.2. Section 96 of the Highways Act 1980¹¹ empowers a District or Parish Council to plant and maintain trees in a highway maintainable at public expense, subject to the consent of the County Council. The District or Parish Council will be required to indemnify the highway authority against third party claims arising as a result of the tree being planted in the highway. The highway authority will not maintain such trees.
- 8.1.3. When immature, certain species may seem appealing in urban or rural locations, however, inappropriate planting of the wrong species in the wrong environment or planting too many trees close together can cause a number of unnecessary issues such as invasive root infrastructure damage, high prevalence to wind damage, reduced visibility on the highway, restricted access on pavements. All these result in increased maintenance costs.
- 8.1.4. Having too many of the same type of tree in a locality is a concern because of the increased risk of a devastating loss of one or more species of tree due to pests/diseases or other environmental factors. The resilience of our trees will increase by planting species mixes rather than monocultures and single species avenues.

¹¹ Highways Act 1980 – Section 96 - [Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)



- 8.1.5. A provisional list of trees which will be considered by the County Council to plant on the highway will be developed as an appendix to this strategy. The list will help improve sustainable planting, prevent ongoing costly maintenance burden to the taxpayer and minimise potential damage to highway land or private property.

8.2. Replacement of Felled Trees

- 8.2.1. Provided the site is suitable, three replacement trees will usually be planted in place of any tree that has been removed. The replacements will normally be young trees of appropriate species. Replacements will normally be planted as close to the original(s) as possible but other locations, including other Council amenities such as parks and open spaces may be considered. If space is restricted the Council may accept replacement of one semi mature tree. In rural locations replacements should comprise native, ecologically appropriate species that enhance local landscape character.
- 8.2.2. Staffordshire County Council will approve the choice of species, location and planting specification and this may differ from that of the felled tree.
- 8.2.3. Examples of sites that may be unsuited to re-planting include those with ongoing safety, visibility or clearance issues, or a history of nuisance-related complaints. Decisions not to re-plant, or to provide alternative species or locations, rest with the Council.

9. TREES AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

9.1. Trees in Relation to New Development Sites

- 9.1.1. Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. However, site layout must allow sufficient space for trees to mature, including space for tree rooting zones and canopy spread. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.
- 9.1.2. The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined unless, in specific cases, there are clear, justifiable and compelling reasons why this would be inappropriate.



- 9.1.3. Long term, many trees introduced or retained for their attributes within new development projects are adopted by the Highway Authority and thus become the responsibility of the County Council. However, adequate resources are required from the developer to ensure the long-term maintenance of adopted trees through a commuted sum.
- 9.1.4. The definition for the term 'commuted sum' in relation to the adoption of new infrastructure is 'A payment of a capital sum by an individual, authority or company to the highway authority, local authority or other body, as a contribution towards the future maintenance and replacement of the asset to be provided, adopted or transferred'.
- 9.1.5. For highway infrastructure, commuted sums are secured by way of agreements made under the Highways Act 1980, using Section 38¹² for new roads constructed on private land and Section 278¹³ for alterations made to existing publicly maintained highways and are paid to the highway authority.
- 9.1.6. In considering the acceptability of tree planting on new developments, or existing adopted highways, the County Council will have regard to the following criteria:
- Tree planting should be an integral component of the overall site layout and design. Highway trees should be given adequate space to mature and thereby contribute to the sense of place, green infrastructure and climate change mitigation. In general planting larger trees will deliver more effective climate change mitigation than small trees, due to the combination of providing shade, reducing storm water runoff, carbon storage and sequestration etc., therefore proposals should create space for ultimately larger trees.
 - There should be no compromise on achieving desirable visibility standards.
 - There should be no compromise regarding the positioning of trees to minimise risk of vehicle impact.
 - There should be no compromise on achieving acceptable systems of street lighting.
 - Trees should not be positioned such that tree canopies and/or root systems will obstruct users of the highway or future maintenance operations including maintenance of highway drainage systems and statutory undertakers' plant.
 - Consideration will be given to historic road accident collision information. The siting of trees may be refused at sites considered to be unsuitable on road safety grounds.
 - Horizontal clearances and / or provision of protective measures shall be sufficient to avoid direct damage to drains, underground services, flexible surfaces, and adjacent private structures.
- 9.1.7. Conflicts arise between trees and utility services, both overhead cables and underground pipes and infrastructure. When planning to install or maintain

¹² Highways Act 1980 – Section 38 - [Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

¹³ Highways Act 1980 – Section 278 - [Highways Act 1980 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)



utility services in close proximity to trees precautionary measures must be taken to prevent root damage. When considering these issues, guidance should be sought from National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG) Publication 10 'Guidelines for the planning, installation and maintenance of utility services in proximity to trees'¹⁴ and BS5837 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction¹⁵.

- 9.1.8. It is the responsibility of developers to minimise the impact of new developments on all highway tree assets, especially those of high amenity value. Staffordshire County Council as the Highway Authority in Staffordshire will require compensation for the loss of highway tree assets under the road agreements process.
- 9.1.9. Full detail on the opportunities and restraints for the establishment of trees on new developments can be found in the Staffordshire Residential Design Guide¹⁶.
- 9.1.10. Appendix 01 contains a provisional list of trees which will be considered by the County Council to plant on the highway.

9.2. Asset Protection

- 9.2.1. Whenever possible trees should be located in an area of soft dig such as a verge or SUDS swale alongside the highway. Planting trees on the footway or other paved surface, requires a tree pit to be installed to prevent the footway collapsing into the tree hole and to protect private properties and utility apparatus from consequential damage. Guidance for Trees, Planning and Development can be sought from the Tree and Design Action Group¹⁷.
- 9.2.2. Tree pits will be suitable for the species of tree identified. An SCC landscape architect can provide advice if requested. When considering installing a tree pit, it is important that the footway width is not reduced to below 1.6m to allow full access along the footway.
- 9.2.3. Paved surfaces and utility pipe and cables are vulnerable to root damage. It is important to not plant trees too close to existing known utilities. In proximity to underground services protection measures such as root directors will be required. Tree roots should also be guided downwards, for a minimum of 300mm to remove the possibility of either the road or footway suffering from root heave.

9.3. Mitigation Planting

¹⁴ NJUG Publication 10 - [National Joint Utilities Group \(streetworks.org.uk\)](http://streetworks.org.uk)

¹⁵ BSI5837 - [Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction](#)

¹⁶ SCC Residential design guide - [Residential Design Guide - Staffordshire County Council](#)

¹⁷ TDAG Guidance - [Trees in Hard Landscapes: A Guide for Delivery - Trees and Design Action Group](#)

- 9.3.1. Where possible existing site features such as trees and hedgerows should be incorporated into the design of the layout. However, on occasions there will be justification to remove trees for new development or schemes. In this situation mitigation planting is expected. Replacement planting of three trees for every one lost is required, unless the applicant wishes to carry out planting with larger tree stock (semi-mature trees) and has limited space, in which case two trees would be expected.
- 9.3.2. This should be a consideration at design stage as the planning boundary must include enough room to carry out these landscaping proposals.
- 9.3.3. Detail on the planting of replacement trees can be found in the Staffordshire Residential Design Guide.

10. LICENSING AND CONSENTS

10.1. Vehicle Access Crossing Applications Involving Trees

- 10.1.1. Where Staffordshire County Council receives an application for a vehicular access crossing or an extension to an existing crossing and there is a tree in the footway or verge, considerations will be made as follows.
- Does the property already have the right of access satisfied by another access for example at the rear? If yes, the application will be turned down and the tree will remain. If not, the tree may be removed to allow construction of the footway crossing providing all other criteria set out in the vehicular access crossing specification are satisfied.
 - Does the excavation needed to construct the proposed crossing, impinge on the Root Protection Area as defined in British Standard 5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction recommendations?¹⁸ If yes, then the individual situation is to be considered by the Council to establish the extent of potential damage to roots. If no, the footway crossing application can proceed.
- 10.1.2. All costs associated with the removal of the tree, including its natural value, and the planting of a replacement tree in a suitable location must be met by the applicant.
- 10.1.3. Where trees are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) they will not be considered for removal.

10.2. Pay for Service

- 10.2.1. Where tree work is not justifiable as the result of a request for service from a resident, some residents may wish to pay for the work themselves. This will often be in relation to minor seasonal nuisance issues.

¹⁸ British Standard 5837:2012 - [BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction.](#)



- 10.2.2. The Council will not currently enter into any arrangements where members of the public pay for or contribute towards the cost of tree works.
- 10.2.3. We will not allow tree surgeons engaged by members of the public, access to climb trees under our stewardship.
- 10.2.4. Except in the case of branches overhanging private property any unauthorised works to Council owned trees carried out by any person would be treated as criminal damage.
- 10.2.5. However, the Council will be undertaking a review of processes for a community led provision as part of a cross-service review.

11. TREE HABITATS, ECOLOGY & PRESERVATION

11.1. Habitat and Ecology

- 11.1.1. Ancient woodland and Ancient and Veteran trees should be regarded as irreplaceable habitat (NPPF 180) so any removal of these trees should be resisted unless absolutely essential. Alternative advice on how to deal with very old trees should be taken from an arboriculturalist with a Vet Tree certificate. Where removal does occur, felled timber should be left in situ if possible, and habitat mitigation should be required.
- 11.1.2. Areas of Staffordshire with parkland and wood pasture may have veteran trees and their dependant species and nearby highway trees may provide habitat for these species even if not veteran themselves.
- 11.1.3. Non-emergency/non-urgent tree works will be deferred until the end of the nesting season (April to September inclusive).
- 11.1.4. In hazardous circumstances where work cannot be deferred, it may be possible to survey the trees to identify whether or not there are birds nesting in that tree or to reduce the impact on the nesting birds by undertaking the minimum work necessary to mitigate the hazard. Public safety is only a reason that an offence is avoided for birds not on schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 11.1.5. Trees displaying evidence of roosting bats or evidence of badger sets within the proximity will be referred to an ecologist before work commences. Any trees confirmed to be supporting roosting bats or live badger sets will not be worked on until Natural England is consulted.
- 11.1.6. Ivy on trees should not be removed or severed. It generally does not present a threat to the tree and can be supporting bats or nesting birds. However, if deemed necessary by the senior tree inspector and considered ecologically safe to do so, ivy may be removed from trees in Zone 1.



11.2. Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's)

- 11.2.1. A tree preservation order (TPO) is an order made by a Local Planning Authority (LPA) in respect of trees. A TPO is used to protect trees (including areas of woodland) where they provide significant local amenity benefits. The order makes it an offence to cut down, uproot, prune, damage or destroy the tree or trees without permission from the LPA who made the order. The Council endorses the use of TPO's to protect trees of high amenity, cultural or environmental value.
- 11.2.2. To find out if a tree has a TPO it is necessary to contact the LPAs within the County. Each District and Borough Council hold their own complete datasets of trees with a TPO.

11.3. Trees in Conservation Areas

- 11.3.1. Where works are likely to impact upon trees in a conservation area that are not protected by a TPO permission must be sought from the district or borough council conservation officer.
- 11.3.2. Where works are likely to impact upon trees in a conservation area the district or borough council will require a minimum of 6 weeks notification. Notice must be provided in writing (by letter or email) giving detail of the proposed work. This allows opportunity to consider whether an order should be made to protect the trees.
- 11.3.3. To find out if a tree has a TPO it is necessary to contact the Local Planning Authority. Each District and Borough Council hold their own complete datasets of trees with a TPO.

12. COMPETENCE

12.1. Competence

- 12.1.1. The competence of tree inspectors appointed arboriculturists and contractors undertaking planned specialist tree surgery work is of key importance to maintain the HMPE. The level of skill, and hence training, required to identify and remedy signs of mechanical weakness in trees should be appropriate for the role of the person concerned.



APPENDIX 01 – APPROVED TREE SPECIES

An approved tree species list for planting on highway maintainable at public expense is under development.

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STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

HIGHWAYS AND BUILT COUNTY

MANAGEMENT OF UNSURFACED ROADS IN STAFFORDSHIRE

June 2022

MANAGEMENT OF UNSURFACED ROADS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1. It has long been recognised that in addition to enabling people to enjoy the countryside, the rights of way network provide sustainable options for commuting and access to local services. It also contributes to people being able to lead a healthy lifestyle as the physical and mental benefits of regular exercise and of visiting the countryside are well documented. Finally, the contribution that visits to the countryside make to the rural economy cannot be overlooked.

1.1.2. The purpose of this document is to consider the legislation and government guidance on the management, maintenance, and recreational use of unsurfaced highways.

1.1.3. The rights of way network is made up of footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic. This policy will cover the following classifications of unsurfaced highways:

- Restricted byways - a highway over which the right of way is for pedestrians, horse riders and vehicles other than mechanically propelled vehicles (this includes a right of way for pedal cycles and horse drawn vehicles).
- A byway open to all traffic (BOAT) - a highway over which the public have a right of way for vehicular and all other kinds of traffic. BOAT's can also be used by the public for the purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used. A BOAT must have more use by pedestrian or equestrian traffic than vehicles. If vehicular traffic is higher, it should not be classed a BOAT.
- Unsurfaced unclassified roads (UCR) recorded on the List of Streets.

1.1.4. The public rights of way team look after other forms of rights of way including public footpaths and bridleways and these are covered in the Staffordshire County Council Public Rights of Way Guide¹.

1.2. The Need for a Policy

1.2.1. Although unsurfaced highways historically were used for transporting people and goods, it is widely accepted that they are now predominantly used for recreational purposes. They are also an important asset to the landscape, and often have a historic and wildlife interest.

1.2.2. Throughout the process of developing this policy we have been acutely aware of the need to consider the legal rights of passage for all types of use.

1.2.3. In Making the Best of Byways, DEFRA it states that 'in general, there is minimal direct conflict between byway user's'. This statement is, in the main, true in Staffordshire. However, conflict between users does on occasion

¹ [RightsofwayGuide1 \(staffordshire.gov.uk\)](http://RightsofwayGuide1(staffordshire.gov.uk))



arise. There is conflict not just between user groups but also adjacent landowners, community groups and with the highway authority's statutory duties.

- 1.2.4. Conflict arises due to concerns over a number of reasons, notably privacy, safety, noise, condition and perhaps lack of clarity on the rights of the user or understanding of the other user's needs. It can be an emotive subject, and often gives rise to strong views from various interest groups.
- 1.2.5. DEFRA's Making the Best of Byways recommends "that a clear policy is developed by Highway Authorities to manage byways and minimise conflict". This policy provides a framework for the authority to apply a robust and consistent approach in the management of its unsurfaced highways.

2. RECORDING OF PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

2.1. Legal Requirement

- 2.1.1. The Definitive Map is the legal record of the extent of the public's rights of way in the County. The List of Streets, maintained by the Highway Authority, records only the Highway Authority's maintenance responsibility, and says nothing about the extent of the public rights that may exist over the route.

A route can be recorded on both the List of Streets and the Definitive Map, and this is often inaccurately given the term 'dual status'. In fact, the relevance of inclusion in the List of Streets is simply that a way is highway maintainable at public expense (HMPE), it does not define its status.

- 2.1.2. The definitive map is a legal document and the inclusion of a right of way is conclusive evidence of the existence of that right of way, whatever its physical state may be. However, the reverse is not true. A way not shown on the Definitive Map can still be a right of way, although it would need to have come into existence before 1949 and its status would need to be proved. These routes are not publicly maintainable until such a time as they are recorded on the Definitive Map.
- 2.1.3. Staffordshire's Definitive Map and Statement of public rights of way includes footpaths, bridleways, byways open to all traffic (BOATs) and restricted byways. This data is available on the SCC website, which includes depictions of the relevant streets in map form.
- 2.1.4. If any person has evidence to suggest that the Definitive Map is in error, they may submit an application under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, for the Map to be modified:

2.2. The Public Byway Network in Staffordshire

- 2.2.1. In Staffordshire there are 127 roads identified with the class of 'unsurfaced highway' in the Local Street Gazetteer (LSG) with a total length of 125km. Over one third of these routes are in Staffordshire Moorlands District.

District	Length of 'Unsurfaced highway' (km)	Percentage of network
Cannock Chase	4.3	3.4%
East Staffordshire	17.5	14.0%
Lichfield	8.4	6.7%
Newcastle-under-Lyme	11.6	9.3%
South Staffordshire	18.7	14.9%
Stafford	17.7	14.1%
Staffordshire Moorlands	46.9	37.5%
Grand Total	125.1	

- 2.2.1. Around 33% (25 miles or 41km) of the unsurfaced highway network in Staffordshire is recorded as a byway open to all traffic. This network is relatively fragmented in terms of cohesive vehicular links. Geological conditions vary considerably across the county,

District	Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT)		
	No.	Length (km)	Percentage of network (%)
Cannock Chase	8	1.5	4
East Staffordshire	2	1.2	3
Lichfield	8	3.4	8
Newcastle-under-Lyme	14	9.8	24
South Staffordshire	13	3.8	20
Stafford	21	8.3	20
Staffordshire Moorlands	39	12.8	31
Tamworth	1	0.5	1
Grand Total	106	41.3	

3. NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

3.2. Legal Requirement and Guidance

- 3.2.1. As Highway Authority, Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has a statutory duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to use the County's highways which includes the rights of way network. This is primarily achieved through exercising the Council's maintenance and enforcement powers and duties.
- 3.2.2. The Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty on the Council to maintain the highway to the standard necessary to accommodate the ordinary traffic that passes, or may reasonably be expected to pass, along the highway.

- 3.2.3. The National Parks & Countryside Act 1949 (NP&CA 1949) imposed a duty on the County Council to prepare Definitive Maps showing public rights of way. Section 53 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (W&CA 1981) places a duty on the Council to keep the Definitive map under continuous review.
- 3.2.4. In 2005 the Department for Rural Affairs (DEFRA) issued the guidance “Making the Best of Byways: A Practical Guide for Local Authorities Managing and Maintaining Byways which carry Motor Vehicles”, to provide direction the management of byways in England and Wales which carry motor vehicles.

4. RISK BASED APPROACH

4.1. Maintenance Hierarchy

- 4.1.1. The Council, as highway authority, has a duty to keep all the highways maintainable at the public expense in its area in a condition suitable for their use by ordinary traffic at all times of the year.
- 4.1.2. Staffordshire have adopted a risk-based approach to the management of the unsurfaced highways based on the sensitivity of the route which reflects their relative importance and function.
- 4.1.3. The aim of the Hierarchy is not to promote or stop use but to eliminate irresponsible use. Routes are identified and surveyed and then categorised based on criteria such as overall condition, likelihood of conflict with other users, proximity to buildings and livestock, and narrowness. There is a three-colour code system:
- Green routes – In a condition suitable for expected use. Sustainable for recreational motor traffic at all times if mechanically propelled vehicle rights are proven. No problems or valid complaints over use identified.
 - Amber routes – In a condition suitable for lawful use but signs of deterioration which may require monitoring with a view to undertaking planned maintenance soon. If the route has proven mechanically propelled vehicular rights, it may be subject to moderate levels of use by recreational motor vehicles and a greater degree of sensitivity and responsibility is necessary to drive or ride them. The route with proven mechanically propelled vehicle rights may also be used by walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, pass by houses, go through farmyards or close to stock pens or the surface may mean use by recreational motor vehicles is unsustainable in all weathers.
 - Red routes - Routes are badly eroded. Experience significant/irresponsible use. Attract the greatest number of complaints regarding vehicular use, under the greatest pressure and are subject to the greatest conflict between users, and users and the environment.
- 4.1.4. Green and amber routes are surveyed once every two years while red routes are surveyed once each year.

- 4.1.5. Changes in condition or the number of complaints could lead to a route being moved into a different classification.

5. INSPECTION

5.1. Unsurfaced Highway with no Propelled Vehicle Rights

- 5.1.1. The Inspection should be carried out in the context of what would be the likely 'ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood' which may include walkers and horse riders. The surface should be usable/accessible by users wearing appropriate footwear, and they should expect to encounter some obstacles and alterations/unevenness in the surface regularity.
- 5.1.2. When assessing a surface defect and whether it's to be recorded the inspector will consider the severity and if there is an easy alternative route for the 'ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood'.
- 5.1.3. Some examples of what could be classed as surface defects are listed below:
- Significant trip hazards
 - Severely deteriorated surface
 - Severely deteriorated stile/gate
 - Severely deteriorated/damaged bridge
 - Obstructions of a natural and unnatural occurrence (e.g., overgrown hedges/trees or concrete blocks/farm equipment) that block access/use of the lane
 - Significant standing water
- 5.1.4. The SCC Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice should be followed when assessing defects such as –
- Ironwork
 - Signs
 - Dead/dying/diseased trees.
 - Overgrown trees/hedges. Whether they be in the lane or form part of the boundary
- 5.1.5. Unsurfaced highways will be a driven inspection if accessible but otherwise walked. Inspections should ideally be undertaken during the summer months between 1st June and 31st August.
- ### **5.2. Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT)**
- 5.2.1. The Inspection of BOATs should be carried out in the context of what would be the likely ordinary traffic that might be reasonably expected to use it. for the length or feature being inspected, which in the case of a BOAT may also include horses and vehicular traffic in addition to walkers.



- 5.2.2. If the surface of the BOAT is substantially metalled , the inspection should be carried out along that length or feature as per what that feature appears to serve as i.e., considering what would be the reasonable expectation of its use. If the route was handed over in 1929 as a metalled surface there is no obligation for the authority to maintain as such.
- 5.2.3. For other lengths or features the BOAT surface should be usable/accessible by users that are suitably equipped and competent. Users should be aware of the variable character of the route and they should expect to encounter some obstacles and alterations/unevenness in the surface regularity.
- 5.2.4. When assessing a surface defect and whether it's to be recorded you should consider the severity and if there is an easy alternative route for the reasonably expected use.
- 5.2.5. Some examples of what could be classed as surface defects are listed below:
- Significant trip hazards
 - Significant rutting where horses, farmers and 4x4 vehicles will find it impossible to navigate
 - Severely deteriorated surface
 - Severely deteriorated/damaged bridge
 - Obstructions of a natural and unnatural occurrence (e.g., overgrown hedges/trees or concrete blocks/farm equipment) that block access/use of the lane
 - Significant standing water
- 5.2.6. The Highway Safety Inspection Code of Practice should be followed when assessing defects such as –
- Signs
 - Dead/dying/diseased trees.
 - Overgrown trees/hedges. Whether they be in the lane or form part of the boundary
- 5.2.7. For all other non-surface defects, the relevant guidance in the Highway Safety Inspection code of Practice should provide guidance. .
- 5.2.8. It is common for edges of the lane to form into a natural open drainage channel. These channels will not be recorded as a safety defect unless their presence reduces the available width of running surface below that required for an agricultural vehicle to use the lane.
- 5.2.9. Following inspection, the relevant officer may recommend that regular monitoring of the byway is carried out. It may also be possible for these inspections to be undertaken by volunteers, parish councils or user groups.

6. **CONDITION ASSESSMENT**

6.1. **Condition Surveys**

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- 6.1.1. Guidance suggests that highway authorities should undertake regular condition surveys to identify deficiencies in the highway fabric which, if untreated, could adversely affect its long-term performance and serviceability.
- 6.1.2. The condition of a route is assessed to collect information at fixed point intervals about:
- Evidence of use.
 - Depth of ruts
 - Character of route – width, adjoining lane use, properties, walls.
 - Width of area affected by ruts
 - Type of surface
- 6.1.3. Additional points are added where there is a significant change in condition. By making these surveys as objective as possible it will be possible to identify routes whose condition is deteriorating over time.
- 6.1.4. Where damage can be attributed to either misuse or extraordinary traffic there may be alternative remedies.
- 6.1.5. This assessment will be part of the evidence by safety inspectors which will inform the hierarchy of the route.

7. MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

7.1 Background

- 7.1.1. The management approach detailed in this policy is based on and guided by the recommendations contained in Making the Best of Byways and the SCC risk-based hierarchy approach. There will, however, inevitably be a need for any recommendations to be set in the context of Staffordshire County Council's available resources.
- 7.1.1. There are a number of options available to the authority for the management of our unsurfaced highways are:

7.2. Voluntary Restraint

- 7.2.1. Voluntary restraint is a potential method for seeking to reduce impact on particular routes. The practice involves liaison with user groups to ensure that conditions stipulated within voluntary restraint agreements are respected.
- 7.2.2. In 'Making the Best of Byways' (2005) (section 3.1) it is stated that: "Discussions with authorities when drafting this guide indicate that voluntary restraint is widely seen as ineffective in managing mechanically propelled vehicle use of byways". The document goes on to conclude that, "voluntary restraint can be a useful tool for management of byways where reductions in mechanically propelled vehicle traffic is desirable, but not where the prohibition of mechanically propelled vehicles is agreed to be necessary".

- 7.2.3. These agreements are not legally binding however their adoption may cause sensitive routes to be used in a way so as to minimise impact on the surface; for example, during periods of adverse weather, a voluntary one-way system may counteract damage caused by up-hill acceleration. Where a voluntary restraint agreement is reached but does not succeed in changing the use of the way, it may be necessary to introduce more robust management measures.
- 7.2.4. Voluntary Agreement can be a useful tool where a reduction in mechanically propelled vehicle traffic is desirable but not where it is agreed that prohibition of such use is needed.
- 7.2.5. The use of voluntary agreements on highways will be agreed on a case-by-case basis. SCC will monitor the effectiveness of each agreement each year and review the route's long-term management.
- 7.2.6. SCC will seek to provide on the website a list of all the Voluntary restraints and Traffic Regulation Orders that are current on unsurfaced roads.
- 7.2.7. SCC will support voluntary restraint wherever it considers this to be appropriate and workable temporary solution. This will usually be when maintenance has proven inadequate, or the route is not deemed to be sustainable.
- 7.2.8. Voluntary restraint will not over-ride or preclude any form of management the Council may wish to implement.

7.3. Signage

- 7.3.1. Section 27 of the Countryside Act 1968 requires highway authorities to place signs along a path 'as may in the opinion of the authority be required to assist persons unfamiliar with the locality' to follow the route. The authority will ensure clear signage is installed and legible on relevant routes. A highway authority need not erect a signpost if after consultation with the Parish Council it is considered to be unnecessary.
- 7.3.2. Ensure clear signage is installed and legible on relevant routes. Ensure signage is maintained to make the situation clear.

7.4. Physical Restraint

- 7.4.1. It may be necessary to instigate physical restraint on a byway to protect its condition, users or the local environment. This needs to be installed in conjunction with a traffic regulation order.
- 7.4.2. The nature of the physical restraint applied will often be informed by the nature of the order (e.g., seasonal, experimental, permanent etc.) and the category of user restrained will be based on proven existence of a problem. The effectiveness and suitability of any restraint will also be monitored or reviewed at appropriate times. (e.g., In the spring following a winter/seasonal closure).



7.4.3. Physical restraint will also take account of any private rights of access along a byway.

7.5. Traffic Regulation orders

7.5.1. In some instances, it may be necessary to introduce a TRO. This may be to preserve the character of the route or to ensure that the route is not damaged when at its most vulnerable.

7.5.2. The Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 empowers the Council to restrict, prohibit or regulate the use of roads open to the public, including rights of way. The Council has used these Traffic Regulation Order powers effectively to manage routes. These are legal orders that suspend the rights of all, or some users, either temporarily or permanently.

7.5.3. Traffic Regulation Orders will be considered when the following considerations apply:

- No other reasonable solution exists to resolve conflict between types of use.
- There is a clear danger to users.
- The safety of other users is compromised through continued use by vehicles.
- Any other relevant legal criterion is satisfied.

There are three types:

Temporary TROs

7.5.4. These may be imposed for periods up to 18 months, with the possibility of further extensions of up to 18 months. Temporary TROs on unsurfaced highways are imposed usually when there is damage that can and will be repaired within the 18-month closure. The expectation of both the Authority and users of the route is that it will be repaired and re-opened to all users.

Experimental TROs

7.5.5. These are designed to test the likely efficacy of particular, targeted prohibitions: e.g. What might be the effect of prohibiting non-essential motors during the winter?

7.5.6. 'Making the Best of Byways' (2005) explains the use of experimental traffic regulation orders as follows: "Experimental traffic regulation orders are used in situations that call for monitoring and reviewing, such as monitoring byway condition to evaluate the cause of deterioration. These orders last no more than eighteen months before they are abandoned, amended or made permanent."

7.5.7. Will only be considered where there is a genuine need for monitoring and review of a situation to inform the management of a particular route. They remain a tool that the Authority could decide is appropriate for a given circumstance.

Permanent TROs

7.5.8. These can be total prohibitions, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, on all non-essential vehicles. Equally, they may be targeted at particular users or may apply to all vehicles during certain months of the year or may specify the direction of travel for vehicles – i.e., make the route one-way only.

7.5.9. There are a number of symptoms that often simulate requests for a permanent TRO that can also be used as evidence of the imposition. These include:

- The avoidance of danger to persons or other traffic using the road or any other road or for preventing the likelihood of any such danger arising.
- The prevention of damage to the road or any building on or near the road.
- The facilitation of the passage of any kind of traffic (including pedestrians) on the road or any other road.
- The prevention of the use of the road by vehicular traffic of a kind which, or its use by vehicular traffic in a manner which, is unsuitable having regard to the existing character of the road or adjoining property.
- The preservation of the character of the road in the case where it is particularly suitable for use on horseback or on foot.
- The preservation or improvement of the amenities of the area through which the road runs.
- The conservation or enhancement of the natural beauty of an area. This includes conserving flora and fauna, and geological or physiographical features.
- Motor vehicles are considered to be causing a public nuisance which may not have been envisaged when the route was created/dedicated.

7.5.10. If the proposed TRO is for a green lane that runs through protected countryside (e.g. national parks, AONBs, SSSIs, National Trails) an additional consideration applies:

- Affording better opportunities for the public to enjoy the amenities of the area, or recreation, or the study of nature in the area.

7.5.11. The County Council will not unreasonably impose a TRO. The County Council will consider every case on its merits.

Permissive Use

7.5.12. The County Council will support efficiently organised Motor Trial events where organisers can demonstrate that liaison with the Police, local communities, landowners and conservation bodies has been carried out, propelled vehicle rights are proven, and it complies with the law.



- 7.5.13. Each application will be judged on its merit with a risk assessment being carried out on each route informed by the maintenance hierarchy and a sensitivity assessment which includes consideration of public nuisance implications.
- 7.5.14. Organisers must restore or meet the cost of any repairs to damage to the route or infrastructure caused by the event. The County Council reserves the right to repair any damage to a route which occurs as a consequence of the trial and recharge the organisers for the cost of these works.

Enforcement.

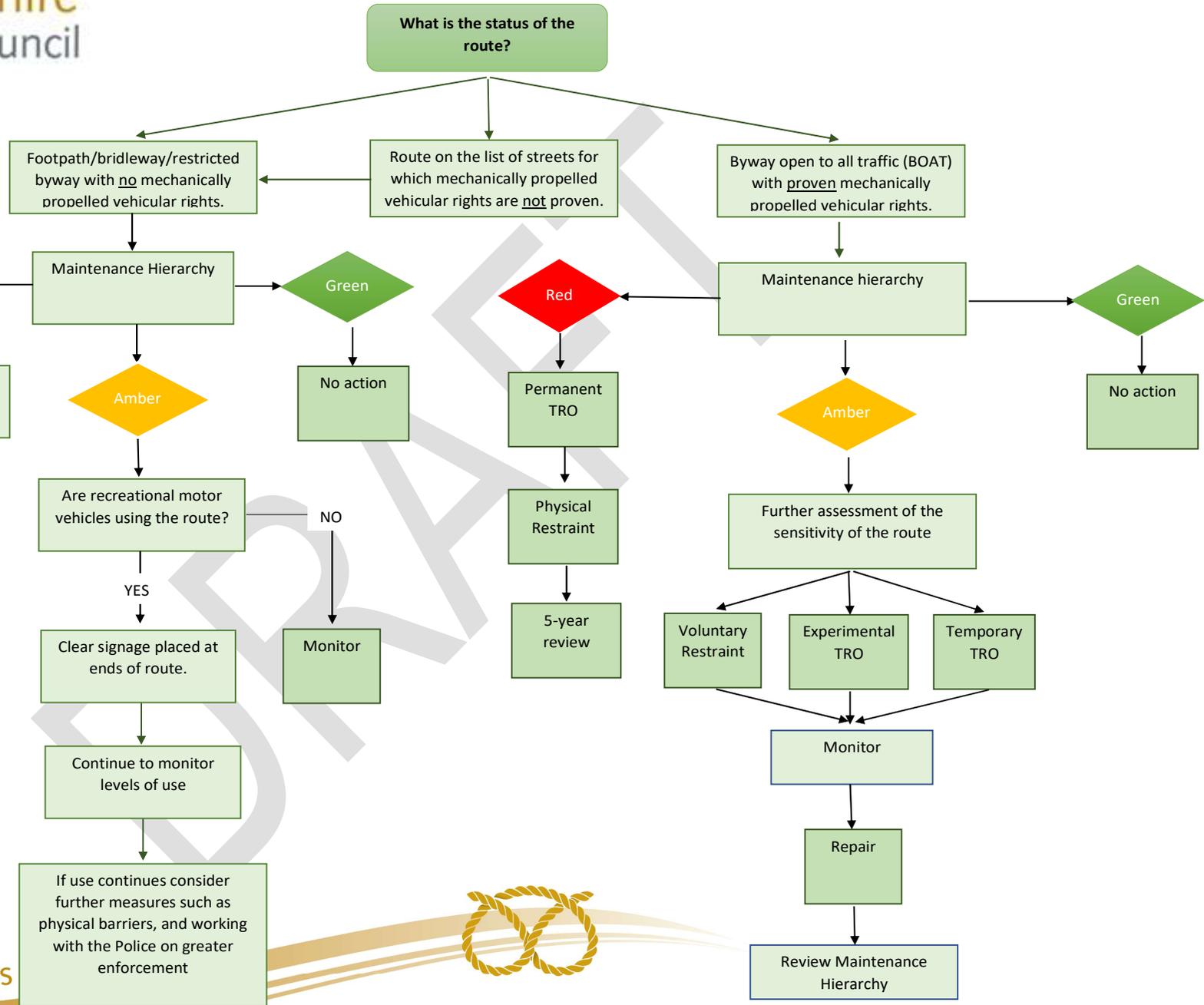
- 7.5.15. Enforcement operations with the Police Authority when appropriate.
- 7.5.16. All unsealed routes with public vehicular access are subject to the same laws as surfaced roads, so all vehicles must be road-legal, that is, taxed and insured, with MOT's if appropriate, and with visible and correctly sized number plates.
- 7.5.17. It is a criminal offence to drive or ride a motor-vehicle on any other land or public right of way (footpath, bridleway, restricted byway) without permission from the landowner. A landowner cannot grant right of usage if it could create public nuisance.

8. DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

8.1. Decision Making Flow Chart

- 8.1.1. A flow chart of the proposed management decision making process is given below:





8.2. Further Assessment of Sensitivity

- 8.2.1. The first factor to be considered when making decisions about management options for unsurfaced highways is the status of the route. Once the status of the route has been ascertained the maintenance hierarchy is reviewed. An assessment of the sensitivity of the route is undertaken. This will include an assessment of cross boundary arrangements if the route borders another authority or national park.
- 8.2.2. Where the status or public rights of a highway are unknown and the rights to propelled vehicles unproven, in the absence of any evidence that proves otherwise, they will be assumed to have no right of propelled vehicle passage and will be considered as historically a bridle road.
- 8.2.3. The selection of a particular management approach to deal with an identified issue needs to be based on sound evidence and evaluation. The evidence collected needs to relate to the options discussed in Section 7 and will provide a comprehensive portfolio of information about a particular route.
- 8.2.4. The collection of good quality and objective data underpins the Authority's decision-making process regarding the management of a particular route. By making such a process as clear as possible and involving users where restraint or regulation are proposed, it is believed that such measures will be more effective and receive greater support.

8.3. Evidence Collection

- 8.3.1. The classifications of green, amber, and red hierarchy to determine the existing surface carrying capacity will be used as the main criteria to prioritise the initial maintenance. Other factors that officers may consider are:
- Public safety.
 - How the route fits into the wider public rights of way network.
 - Whether private access is also being affected.
 - The priority of the route.
 - Whether it is part of a County Council or connects promoted route.
 - The maintenance hierarchy of the route.
 - The ecological sensitivity associated with the route.
 - The heritage of the route and its surroundings.
 - Conflict between recreational user groups.
 - Concerns of local residents and landowners/managers.
 - The durability of the route.
 - The condition of the route.
 - Does the route cross boundary into a neighbouring authority.
 - The location of the route.
 - a general description of its topography.



- any ecologically sensitive sites along, or close to it.
- any archaeological sites on the route or close to it.
- details of comments and complaints received.
- levels of use of the route by motor vehicles and other users.
- condition surveys of the route.
- an assessment of the risk of deterioration from the use of recreational motor vehicles.
- the importance of the route as part of the rights of way network; and
- the effect of current use on the special qualities of the National Park particularly the landscape and peace and tranquillity.

9. Volunteer Engagement

9.1. Use of Volunteers

- 9.1.1. The use of volunteers has many benefits such as partnership working with user groups, social inclusion and health and well-being to the volunteers in what is a rural geographical area.
- 9.1.2. A key benefit is the minimising of maintenance costs, but there are others such as improving user group relationships. Where beneficial, the Council will work actively with key user groups on a volunteer programme in relation to byway management. The above approach is supported by the Department of Environment's Circular 2/1993 in paragraph 18, which states that "Authorities should also seek to use any assistance which may be available from landowners or voluntary groups, in carrying out their work".
- 9.1.3. Volunteers can be used in reinstatement work, and this approach could be developed further to establish a skilled volunteer base, particularly in relation to surface, drainage and vegetation clearance. Volunteers are likely to come from the recreational user groups, such as GLASS (Green Lanes Association), BHS (British Horse Society), CRAG (Countryside Recreation Access Group) and the TRF (Trail Riders Fellowship).
- 9.1.4. The Council has a duty to ensure the safety of its volunteer workforce. Generally speaking, volunteers are supervised unless a risk assessment deems otherwise. Volunteers will need to be insured so that they are covered in the event of an accident. A minimum public liability insurance cover of £5 million, proof of which shall be required.
- 9.1.5. Once insured, residents/landowners will not be liable whilst work is taking place, but SCC must agree to the work being undertaken then inspect and certify the work on completion, in order to avoid any future liabilities resting on residents/landowners.
- 9.1.6. Works will generally be restricted to temporary filling of potholes, unblocking ditches and cutting back overgrowth because residents /landowners would rarely possess the machinery required to do more extensive work such as incorporate and compact material across the whole surface.

10. Maintenance Prioritisation

10.1. Prioritising Maintenance

- 10.1.1. Should a complaint be received about the condition of the surface of a right of way used as access to land or property, SCC will inspect the surface of the right of way and assess its safety and suitability for the public users. Should the assessment deem that work is required, then basic repairs will take place – for instance, basic regrading of the surface or filling of potholes.
- 10.1.2. Byway maintenance may involve major or minor works (e.g. surfacing, ditching, grading, signage, vegetation clearance etc.). Due to the varying local conditions on the byway network, maintenance works will be specified on a case-by-case basis. The level and type of public use over the byway in question reflected in the route hierarchy will be taken into account when undertaking maintenance improvements. Staffordshire County Council will prioritise maintenance to benefit non-motorised users.
- 10.1.3. Where practicable, thought should be given to routes where timely intervention will halt further deterioration, for example drainage repairs where water erosion has occurred as a result of blocked drains/ broken culverts for example.
- 10.1.4. Such repairs might also cater for the vagrancies of the opportunities for repair. At certain times of the year, it is not only difficult but impracticable to carry out any maintenance and repair.
- 10.1.5. The sustainability of the surface using the classification of green, amber and red: green routes are likely to be sustainable with minimal maintenance and red being sensitive to damage and unsustainable to maintain.
- 10.1.6. Maintenance will therefore be prioritised on routes that are green, then amber then red derived from surveys undertaken on the byway network. It is not uncommon for any public right of way, including byways to also be used as private access to residential properties. If this is the case, then these byways should be given prioritisation to ensure that the maintenance of the route is not severely disrupting access to their property.
- 10.1.7. When questioning the standard of maintenance, it will be a question of defining whether the repairs are fit for the ordinary traffic of the neighbourhood with diminishing resources, the Council has to prioritise its liabilities to ensure that resources are expended proportionately in relation to demand and other issues regarded as a priority on the public rights of way network.
- 10.1.8. In contrast to other carriageways, BOAT's are not generally maintained so as to promote ease of use by vehicles.

11. Notes on suitable materials and specifications



11.1. Material Specification

- 11.1.1. SCC will only authorise a surface which is consistent with its duty under Section 130 of the Highways Act 1980: “it is the duty of the highway authority to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which it is highway authority”.
- 11.1.2. In practice, this means that the Council will need to consider both the amenity value and the ease of use the public right of way. A hard-sealed surface such a tarmacadam is usually considered inappropriate in all circumstances, especially where there are public equestrian rights of way. Such sealed surfaces are also very costly to maintain once they begin to break up and may produce hazardous hard edges when deteriorating; this is another reason why sealed surfaced are to be avoided.
- 11.1.3. The best alternative would be a graded aggregate, suitably shaped to shed water, and compacted, because this is much more easily re-worked to restore a suitable surface. Sometimes, all that is needed to restore an old potholed aggregate surface is a redistribution of the surface material.
- 11.1.4. Where the existing surface of the lane is un-metalled, there will be no requirement to effect repairs with a bound material.
- 11.1.5. The provision of a granular material to correct areas of washout, subsidence or potholes will be appropriate to match the existing surface.



Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 April 2022

Staffordshire Means Back to Business Rural Economic Strategy - Draft for Consultation



Cllr Philip White, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills said,

“Almost four-fifths of Staffordshire is rural and output from that area accounts for more than half of the county’s economic activity.

Therefore, it’s vital we recognise and support the diversity of the rural economy and help create the conditions where businesses, communities and residents can prosper.

The way forward must involve working with those concerned and I hope their comments will shape the development of our Rural Economic

Strategy.”

Report Summary:

The Rural Economic Strategy (RES) is central to the county council’s Strategic Plan and is a priority for our new Economic Strategy, which will be presented to the county council’s cabinet in March 2022.

The Economic Strategy outlines the county council’s vision, ambitions, and priorities for the Staffordshire economy over the coming years and its focus are the overarching priorities agreed through the development of our Strategic Plan, namely town centres, start-ups & step-ups, higher skilled & higher paid workforce, the development of investment ready projects and strategic corridors.

The RES’s priorities closely reflect the aims and objectives of the Economic Strategy and will provide a specific rural focus for Staffordshire’s economy, the challenges it faces and the opportunities it presents for growth and prosperity. It also links with other county-wide strategies including the LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan; the Stoke and Staffordshire Skills Strategy, the county council’s Climate Change Strategy, and other thematic strategies and improvement plans such as transportation and connectivity.

The timescale for the RES Strategy is 2022 to 2030 to align with Government's missions for Levelling Up the UK, as set out in the recently released Levelling Up White Paper (LUWP).

Our proposal is to undertake a 4-week public consultation to provide the opportunity for partners, local stakeholders, residents, and businesses to help shape the Strategy. A final designed version will be published following any necessary changes being made and agreed with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills and Director for Economy, Infrastructure & Skills.

Recommendations

- a. Cabinet approves the Consultation Draft of the Rural Economic Strategy.
- b. Cabinet agrees to conduct a 4-week public consultation, seeking views from stakeholders, businesses, and residents on the draft Rural Economic Strategy.
- c. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills take the draft Rural Economic Strategy to the next available Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration and input.
- d. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills and Director for Economy, Infrastructure & Skills be authorised to agree changes and finalise the Rural 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. 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.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 April 2022

Staffordshire Means Back to Business Rural Economic Strategy - Draft for Consultation

Recommendations of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

I recommend that:

- a. Cabinet approves the Consultation Draft of the Rural Economic Strategy.
- b. Cabinet agrees to conduct a 4-week public consultation, seeking views from stakeholders, businesses, and residents on the draft Rural Economic Strategy.
- c. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills take the draft Rural Economic Strategy to the next available Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee for consideration and input.
- d. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy & Skills and Director for Economy, Infrastructure & Skills be authorised to agree changes and finalise the Rural 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. 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.

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background and context to the Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy

1. The Rural Economic Strategy is a basis for considering the opportunities and challenges facing the county's rural areas, businesses and communities and provides a focus for ensuring future priority

interventions by the county council and its partners are acknowledged and supported. This sits alongside the county council's main Economic Strategy which covers the whole of Staffordshire and includes priorities for the recovery and economic growth of key towns and urban areas.

2. In order to enhance further Staffordshire County Council's efforts and resources to develop our economy in the broadest sense and with 79% of its areas being deemed as rural, the Council commissioned and has been working with Warwick Economics and Development (WECD) to undertake an assessment of its rural economy.
3. The work has included the development of a draft rural economic strategy (Appendix 1), a new rural economic evidence base (Appendix 2), a project implementation plan (Appendix 3) to provide future direction for economic intervention opportunities, and a profile of the five rural hub towns (Appendix 4).
4. Staffordshire's rural area for the purpose of the RES and evidence base have been defined by Lower Super Output areas based on DEFRA's 2015 urban/rural classification and also includes the urban areas associated with the 5 rural hub towns of Leek, Cheadle, Uttoxeter, Stone and Rugeley.
5. The 2015 evidence base reported that Staffordshire's rural districts accounted for 58% (£9bn) of Staffordshire's total economic output (measured by Gross Value Added, GVA) and employed 288,000 people (58% across Staffordshire as a whole). As a consequence, there is a need to update and better understand the needs and requirements of our rural businesses post COVID 19 to highlight short- and long-term intervention methods to help kick start local economic activity and so facilitate growth.
6. A supporting document to the Staffordshire Local Economic Assessment – 'Understanding the economy of rural Staffordshire' – was produced in 2009 along with several internal discussion papers on the local rural economy. This was updated when Staffordshire County Council commissioned a rural economic evidence base study in 2015 on behalf of the Staffordshire Rural Forum.
7. Economic conditions for rural businesses in Staffordshire, not least the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic, now mean that the evidence base needs updating in order to inform a new Rural Economic Strategy and Implementation Plan to address the challenges businesses face now and in the future.

8. In addition, Defra updated its urban-rural classification and published a list of 'Hub Towns', which in Staffordshire includes, Leek, Cheadle, Stone, Uttoxeter and Rugeley and have been identified as 'substantial local concentrations of households and business, the location of which enables them to provide services to rural communities. Profiles of market towns in Staffordshire (internal Staffordshire County Council documents) were produced in the mid to late 2000's and it is timely to review and update this activity with a focus to understand the latest economic position of these important communities (Appendix 4). Findings from this data refresh will be used to identify appropriate projects and interventions to include the economic prospects of each of the rural hub towns.
9. There is currently limited local evidence available to confirm the profile of businesses in Staffordshire's rural area with a subsequent lack of understanding of rural business needs. This means that it is difficult to tailor appropriate support to respond to this. The proposed strategy and draft implementation plan seek to address this.
10. In addition to the county council's own economic strategy, policies, plans and programmes, the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has produced its Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and more recently a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS). Whilst the LIS has somewhat been superseded by events it still provides a useful reference point indicating growth sectors and is built around a series of key sectors which are expected to drive growth across the LEP area. This includes Agri-tech, which has been identified as one of five key advanced manufacturing sectors. Tourism and Leisure has also been identified within the SEP as being of importance to the county's economic growth. Both sectors are likely to have significance for the economy in Staffordshire's rural areas. Alongside the SEP & LIS, European Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF and EAFRD incl. LEADER) have played a key part in supporting economic growth since the 1980s. Some of this funding (EAFRD and LEADER) has been aimed specifically for rural areas whilst ERDF and ESF covers the whole of the LEP area and remains in place until June 2023.
11. The RES will also be closely aligned to the government's emerging Levelling Up agenda and ensure that future programmes and funding are appropriate and available to Staffordshire's rural businesses and economic opportunities and challenges.
12. It is intended that the updated rural evidence base, strategy and project implementation plan on Staffordshire's rural economy will also be instrumental in developing projects in support of economic recovery, renewal and transformation across the county.

Strategy Overview

13. The recovery of the Staffordshire economy is being supported by the county council in many ways including the £6m **Staffordshire Means Back to Business programme** which continues to deliver on a programme of targeted interventions aimed at assisting the Staffordshire economy's recovery and growth. These interventions utilise the county council's own resources already committed, together with government funding issued to County and District Councils through partnership working. Together this significant resource is being successfully used to address the specific needs of Staffordshire businesses and residents as part of the ongoing economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This important work is underlined by the county council's Strategic Plan, Economic Strategy and service/team plans as well as the latest Cabinet priorities to support Staffordshire's economic growth and prosperity.
14. The development of the RES and its implementation plan is entirely consistent with the new priorities for the county Council and its Economic Strategy, including supporting high streets and town centres, supporting businesses and developing a strong pipeline of future capital and revenue-based projects and programmes.
15. Staffordshire is a rural county with approximately 80 per cent of its land area considered rural and it has a rich and diverse asset-base that plays an important role in the county economy and that of the Stoke-on-Trent city region. Rural districts accounted for 61 per cent of Staffordshire's economic output (Gross Value Added, GVA) in 2018.
16. Staffordshire's central location and accessibility make it a popular business location. The rural business base is large and diverse, with 27,000 registered businesses accounting for 70 per cent of all registered businesses in Stoke and Staffordshire. Rural businesses operate across a diverse range of sectors, beyond land-based industries including farming, forestry and tourism; manufacturing is the largest sector in employment terms.
17. Staffordshire does however face challenges typical of rural areas, including peripherality and isolation in some parts, with relatively weak broadband and mobile phone connections, and significant gaps in some locations. Housing affordability and accessibility are relatively limited, with particular implications for younger and elderly residents.
18. The new Rural Economic Strategy is being developed to help address the challenges and opportunities facing the rural economy. The strategy complements other county-wide strategies including the Stoke and

Staffordshire Skills Strategy, the county council's Climate Change Strategy, and the LEP's Energy Strategy.

19. The RES seeks to build on the strength in diversity of Staffordshire's rural economy, whilst reflecting the role of agriculture and other key sectors of the rural economy and the significance of Staffordshire's rural assets to its visitor economy.
20. The RES is needed to support rural businesses, people and places (including the Rural Hub Towns) to identify and meet these specific opportunities and challenges and to become more productive and competitive. The RES and its implementation plan are consistent with the new priorities for the County Council and its Economic Strategy, including supporting high streets and town centres, supporting businesses and developing a strong pipeline of future capital and revenue-based projects and programmes to deliver growth.
21. The RES offers a framework for policy choices and investment decisions. Its delivery will depend on wide stakeholder commitment and collaboration across the public, private, academic, voluntary and community and third sectors, building on the foundations already established through Staffordshire's LEADER programme over the last 12 years.

Rural Economic Priorities

22. The proposed Rural Economic Strategy and Implementation Plan is an emerging workstream being developed by the county council which supports economic recovery and growth and seeks to align with the range of programmes and initiatives being delivered through Staffordshire Means Back to Business. The draft RES has been prepared with the support of external experts and has engaged with key stakeholders including District Councils, FE/HE providers, Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, FSB, NFU, DEFRA and Women in Rural Enterprise. The Implementation Plan will be aligned to the County Council's Economic Strategy and Strategic Infrastructure Plan and will include a pipeline of new projects and initiatives that will need a lot of development, through to adapting existing projects, to ensure that the substantial levels of growth planned are sustainable, and can be accommodated, without being detrimental to accessibility, connectivity and service delivery.
23. The RES is focused on five strategic priorities that reflect the diversity of Staffordshire's rural economy, the continued significance of farming and of the visitor economy, the role and potential of the Rural Hub Towns, and the connectivity and access challenges that constrain the rural

economy, particularly in more isolated areas. The strategy also provides a more up to date understanding of Staffordshire's rural economy, including the five rural hub towns, by examining business profiles and identifying barriers and opportunities in relation to economic growth and will form a key component of Staffordshire's strategy for economic recovery, renewal, and transformation. The implementation plan is an ongoing collection of project and programme ideas, or expressions of interest, from key stakeholders and partners, that demonstrate a strong alignment to the five strategic themes of the strategy:

- a. Stimulate enterprise and innovation to increase productivity, competitiveness and resilience across all sectors of the rural economy, including in overseas markets, to enable high-quality high-wage job retention and growth, and to enable the transition to net-zero carbon emissions.
 - b. Support sustainable intensification (SI) in agriculture whereby agricultural productivity is enhanced, whilst also creating environmental and social benefits through productivity investments and business support for improved viability, diversification, carbon reduction and succession.
 - c. Recover and grow the visitor economy, including 'green tourism', by supporting tourism businesses and developing an on-trend visitor offer, including a high-quality accommodation offer, drawing on Staffordshire's rich countryside and heritage assets.
 - d. Improve rural digital connectivity and access to opportunities for rural businesses, workers, residents and visitors, and develop digital and low-carbon energy infrastructure.
 - e. Support the regeneration of the five Rural Hub Towns (Leek, Cheadle, Stone, Uttoxeter and Rugeley) to unlock investment opportunities, develop their visitor offers, and improve their resilience via high-quality place management. It is proposed that bespoke rural hub town support programmes, that reflect specific economic opportunities and challenges in each of the rural town, are developed in collaboration with key stakeholders to bring forward key projects and initiatives that achieve economic resilience and growth. Although any investment by the county council will be subject to a detailed business plan.
24. Already the development of the draft RES has informed the launch of the next phase of the Staffordshire Business Loan scheme (a joint initiative between Staffordshire County Council and lender BCRS), by providing a focus of businesses in rural areas to access development finance and a County Farms Improvement Grant scheme as part of the wider proposals for the County Farms estate.

Strategy consultation and stakeholder engagement

25. For the Rural Economic Strategy to have relevance and an impact, stakeholders and key partners as well as the county council need to bring forward proposals that align with strategy themes and priorities that deliver outcomes for the rural economy. Early indications through the attendance of 35 key stakeholders at the workshop held in October 2021 has resulted in 27 potential project/activity expressions of interest being received. This is a sign of partners being willing to commit and engage with the Rural Economic Strategy and the development of a proposed implementation plan. A summary of key stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the RES (and submitted potential schemes to be included in the implementation plan) is attached as Appendix 5.

Timescale

September 2020	Draft strategy preparation
October 2020	Warwick Economic Development Commissioned to develop a new rural economic strategy
April 2021	Draft strategy finalised
May 2021	Commission stakeholder engagement to consult on proposed implementation plan
October 2021	Stakeholder engagement workshop
December 2021	Stakeholder input to rural implementation plan
January - March 2022	Draft implementation plan development
March - May 2022	SCC, SLT and cabinet reporting and decision
July-Sept	Establish Rural Economic Forum and launch Rural Economic Strategy

Legal Implications

26. At this stage in the development of the Strategy there are no specific legal implications to consider.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

27. **County Council Resources issues** – apart from the ongoing commitment of the county council to support the existing salary costs of the Rural Programme Manager and Support Officer posts (in the Funding, Business and Enterprise team in EI&S), a significant majority of financial resources to deliver the Rural Economic Strategy and Implementation Plan are expected to come from stakeholders own resources and bidding to government funding opportunities (i.e. UK Shared Prosperity Fund). Some financial commitment to the county council's own proposals could

be required, however this will be subject to the standard business case procedures.

Climate Change Implications

28. Climate Change and its impact on our rural landscape is an important consideration for the RES when delivering economic activity around all its themes and priorities. All intervention activity should seek to support Staffordshire's economy becoming net zero by 2050 in line with both local and national climate change policies and strategies. Supporting climate change is a key priority for the council and further details around how this will be achieved are set out in our Climate Change Action Plan

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Rural Economic Strategy

Appendix 2 - Rural Evidence Base

Appendix 3 - Rural Implementation Plan (confidential)

Appendix 4 - Key rural hub town profiles

Appendix 5 – Stakeholder Workshop list of attendees

Contact Details

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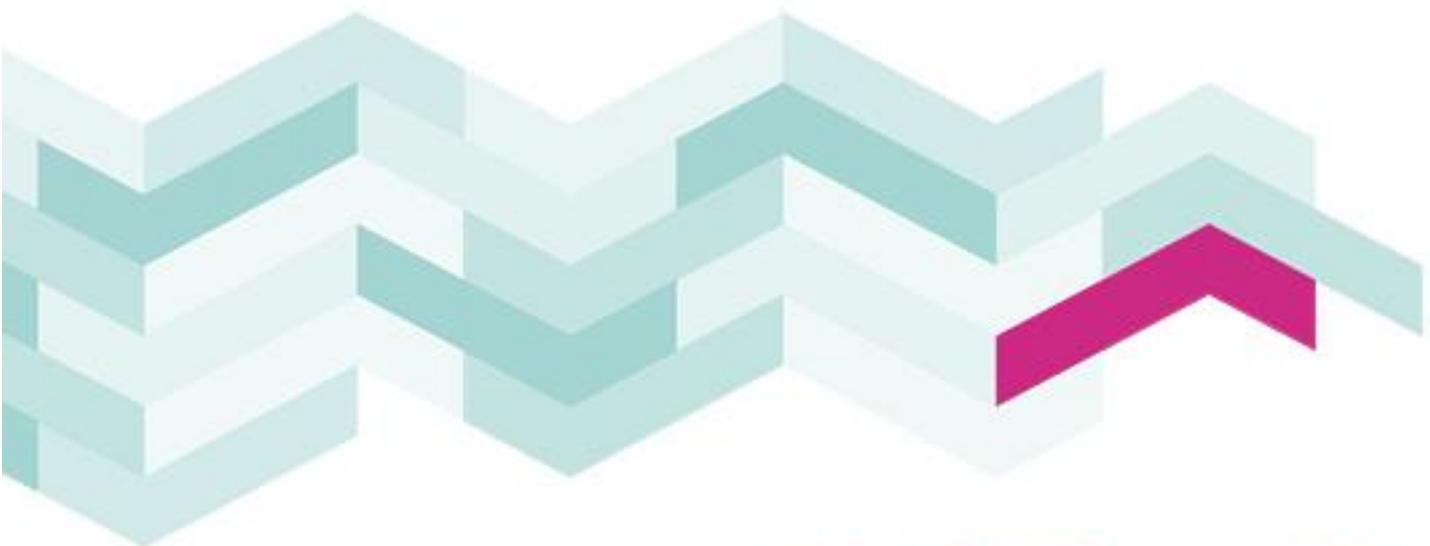
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Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy Draft for Consultation

2022-2030

April 22



With pride. With purpose. With you.

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April 2021

Executive Summary

Staffordshire County Council commissioned and has been working with Warwick Economics & Development (WECD) to prepare a new rural economic strategy for Staffordshire that responds to the opportunities and barriers facing the rural economy. It is a key component of Staffordshire's new Economic Strategy and recognises the significance of Staffordshire's rural areas to the county's economy and that of the wider region.

Staffordshire's rural area for the purpose of the Rural Economic Strategy have been defined by Lower Super Output areas based on DEFRA's 2015 urban/rural classification and also includes the urban areas associated with the 5 rural hub towns of Leek, Cheadle, Uttoxeter, Stone and Rugeley.

The strategy is based on evidence of Staffordshire's rural economy assets and strengths, and of the opportunities and challenges facing the rural economy, including the implications of national policy developments. The evidence base for the strategy and summary profiles of each of Staffordshire's five Rural Hub Towns (Leek, Cheadle, Uttoxeter, Stone and Rugeley) are available separately.

The strategy builds on stakeholders' commitment to the rural economy expressed in their Rural Declaration in 2013. and aims to "*maximise the contribution of Staffordshire's rural assets to the development of a 'thriving, digital, high value and clean economy' in Staffordshire that creates good jobs and supports inclusive growth, by developing the productivity, competitiveness and resilience of the rural economy*".

It is focused on five strategic priorities, as shown in the diagram below:



The Rural Economic Strategy is central to the county council's Strategic Plan and is a priority for our new Economic Strategy by providing a specific rural focus for Staffordshire's economy, the challenges it faces and the opportunities it presents for growth and prosperity.

The Economic Strategy outlines the County Council's vision, ambitions, and priorities for the Staffordshire economy over the coming years and its focus are the overarching priorities agreed through the development of our Strategic Plan, namely town centres, start-ups & step-ups, higher skilled & higher paid workforce, the development of investment ready projects and strategic corridors.

The RES's priorities closely reflect the aims and objectives of the Economic Strategy and will provide a specific rural focus for Staffordshire's economy, the challenges it faces and the opportunities it presents for growth and prosperity. It also links with other county-wide strategies including the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan; the Stoke and Staffordshire Skills Strategy, the County Council's Climate Change Strategy, and other thematic strategies and improvement plans such as transportation and connectivity.

The draft RES has been prepared with the support of external experts and has engaged with key stakeholders including District Councils, FE/HE providers, Chamber of Commerce, Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, FSB, NFU, DEFRA and Women in Rural Enterprise. The Implementation Plan will be aligned to the County Council's Economic Strategy and Strategic Infrastructure Plan and will include a pipeline of new projects and initiatives that will need a lot of development, through to adapting existing projects, to ensure that the substantial levels of growth planned are sustainable, and can be accommodated, without being detrimental to accessibility, connectivity, and service delivery.

It seeks to build on the strength in diversity of Staffordshire's rural economy, whilst reflecting the role of agriculture in the rural economy in particular, and the significance of Staffordshire's rural assets to its visitor economy. Although manufacturing is the largest rural sector in employment terms, the strategy does not specifically target manufacturing, as it is addressed in Staffordshire-wide strategies.

The strategy prioritises tackling the infrastructure and access challenges that particularly affect the rural economy (i.e., weaknesses in digital connectivity) and the need to develop low carbon energy infrastructure in rural areas. The opportunity has been identified to develop low-carbon business activities in rural areas, such as micro-generation schemes on farms. The strategy prioritises the sustainable intensification of agriculture – a process by which agricultural productivity is enhanced, whilst also creating environmental and social benefits.

The strategy targets the role of the Rural Hub Towns in the rural economy, alongside Staffordshire's strategic towns, and prioritises their regeneration to unlock investment opportunities, improve their resilience and develop their visitor offers, drawing on and developing their individual distinctiveness and asset bases.

The strategy takes a medium- to long-term perspective, although shorter-term action is also underway to support individuals and businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In detail, the **strategic priorities** are to:

1. Stimulate **enterprise and innovation** to increase productivity, competitiveness and resilience across all sectors of the rural economy, including in overseas markets, to enable high-quality, high-wage job retention and growth, and to enable the transition to net-zero carbon emissions;
2. Support **sustainable intensification (SI) in agriculture, whereby agricultural productivity is enhanced, whilst also creating environmental and social benefits** through productivity investments and business support for improved viability, diversification, carbon reduction and succession;
3. Recover and grow the **visitor economy**, including 'green tourism', by supporting tourism businesses and developing an on-trend visitor offer, including a high-quality accommodation offer, drawing on Staffordshire's rich countryside and heritage assets;
4. Improve **rural digital connectivity and access to opportunities** for rural businesses, workers, residents and visitors, and develop digital and low-carbon energy infrastructure; and,
5. Regenerate the five **Rural Hub Towns** (Leek, Cheadle, Stone, Uttoxeter and Rugeley) to unlock investment opportunities, develop their visitor offers, and improve their resilience via high-quality place management.

Skills are vital to helping achieve sustainable economic growth across all rural business sectors. Therefore, provision of relevant skills and knowledge is viewed as a crucial action to ensure that the objectives of each of the five strategic priorities are met.

Climate Change and its impact on our rural landscape is also an important consideration for the strategy when delivering economic activity around all its themes and priorities.

Successful delivery of the strategy will depend on a partnership that brings together the activities and resources of a wide range of stakeholders across the private, public, academic (HE and FE), voluntary, community and third sectors. A range of stakeholders have been consulted in the development of the strategy (see Appendix A for the list of stakeholders consulted).

A Rural Strategy Leadership Group will be formed, comprised of senior individuals from these sectors, with responsibility for driving forward the delivery of the strategy, using its expertise and influence to advocate for the rural economy, and a 'Think Rural' approach. The Group will lead on the development of new approaches to unlock the potential of the rural economy, and the development of strong business cases for investment and funding. The Group will draw on capacity and learning developed through Staffordshire's LEADER programme, and in other places.

The funding landscape for rural development has changed significantly with EU exit, and the end of the CAP-funded LEADER programme; a broad-based approach will be needed that draws on a wide range of partner assets, and resources and funding sources.

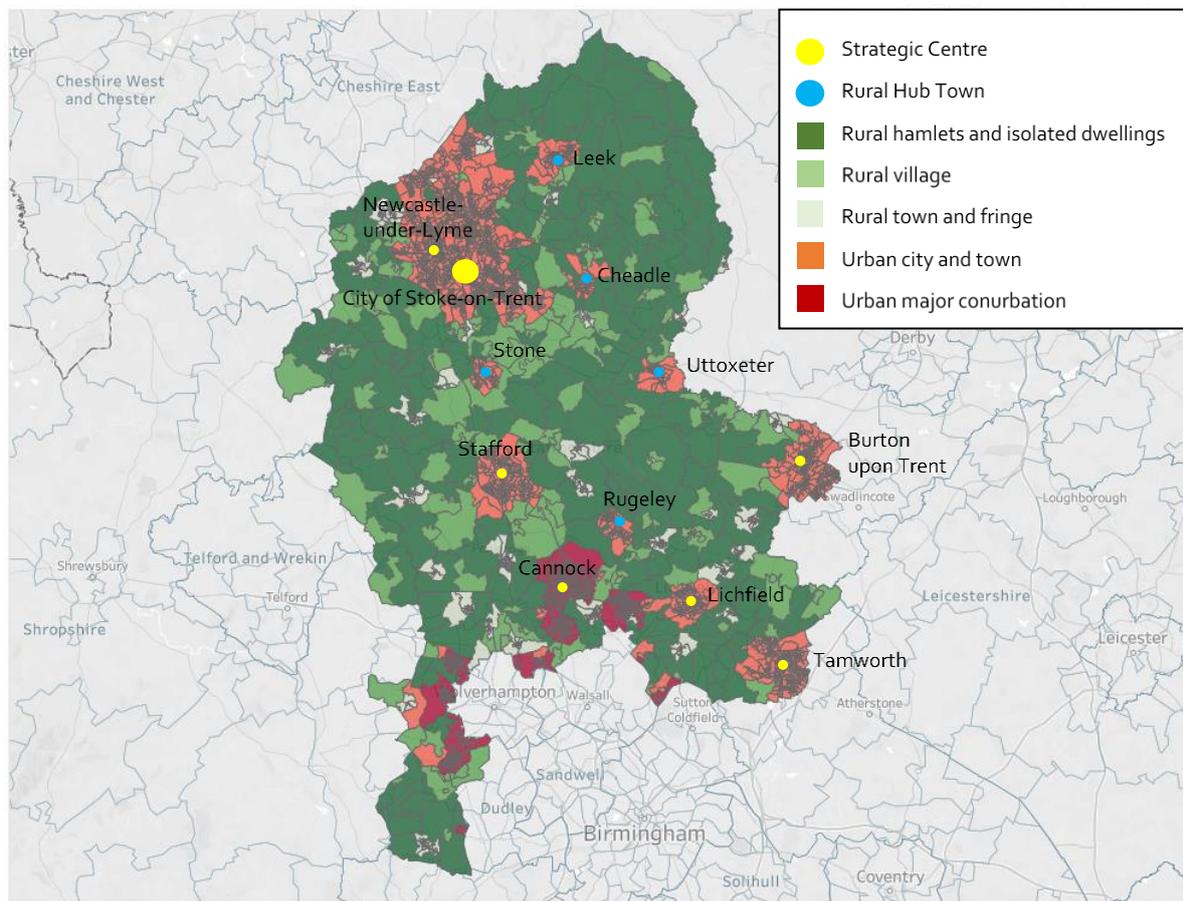
A number of intervention priorities are identified to guide the development of an action plan, including short-, medium- and long-term actions, including a combination of current and planned activities, and where gaps are evidenced, new initiatives and resources identified to address them.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Staffordshire is a rural county. Approximately 80 per cent of its land area can be considered rural (see Figure 1.1) and it has a rich and diverse asset-base that plays an important role in the county economy and that of the wider region. Rural districts accounted for 61 per cent of Staffordshire's economic output (Gross Value Added, GVA) in 2018.
- 1.2. Staffordshire's central location and accessibility make it a popular business location. The rural business base is large and diverse, with 27,000 registered businesses accounting for 70 per cent of all registered businesses in Stoke and Staffordshire. Rural businesses operate across a diverse range of sectors, beyond land-based industries including farming, forestry and tourism; manufacturing is the largest sector in employment terms.
- 1.3. For those considering living in a countryside location, Staffordshire boasts the added attraction of accessible employment, reflected in a well-qualified rural workforce, a high proportion of whom are employed in senior occupations.
- 1.4. Staffordshire's beautiful countryside (including parts of the Peak District National Park and Cannock Chase AONB), heritage, market towns and visitor attractions (particularly Alton Towers and Drayton Manor Park) attract large visitor numbers each year.
- 1.5. However, Staffordshire also faces challenges typical of rural areas, including peripherality and isolation in some parts, with relatively weak internal transport, broadband and mobile phone connections, and significant gaps in some locations. Housing affordability and accessibility are relatively limited, with particular implications for younger and elderly residents.
- 1.6. Social, technological and environmental developments have particular implications for rural areas. A large and growing elderly population necessitates changes to the way that health and social care services are delivered, for example through adoption of new technologies in assistive living. Net-zero targets and technology developments present opportunities and challenges in terms of demand for low-carbon energy generation and supply and transport.
- 1.7. The rapid evolution of digital technologies and the shift to online, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, requires ongoing upgrades to digital infrastructure and digital capability amongst businesses and workers to remain competitive, whilst creating opportunities for rural locations and sectors. EU exit brings significant changes for agri-food production, rural development policy and international trade, and may bring opportunities for attracting supply chain 're-shoring' investment, particularly in manufacturing.
- 1.8. A rural strategy is needed to support rural businesses, people and places (including the Rural Hub Towns) to identify and meet these specific opportunities and challenges and to become more productive and competitive. The rural strategy is a key component of Staffordshire's new Economic Strategy that will create good jobs and support inclusive growth.
- 1.9. The rural strategy offers a framework for policy choices and investment-decisions. Its delivery will depend on wide stakeholder commitment and collaboration across the public, private, academic, voluntary and community and third sectors, building on the foundations

established through Staffordshire's LEADER programme (2014-2020) and Rural Declaration of 2013.

Figure 1.1: Rural Staffordshire as defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas



Source: DEFRA definitions

Evidence Base

1.10. The strategy is based on evidence of Staffordshire’s rural economy assets and strengths, and of the opportunities and challenges facing the rural economy, including the implications of national policy developments. Figure 2.1 presents a summary SWOT analysis of Staffordshire’s rural economy, based on data analysis and qualitative evidence, including stakeholder insights.

Figure 2.1: Staffordshire Rural Economy SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrally located in the country between the Birmingham and Manchester conurbations and well-connected by motorway and rail • A diverse rural economy across primary industries, manufacturing, construction, services and visitor economy with high rates of employment growth • Significant farming and food and drink processing (particularly brewing) sectors • A base of large companies including fast-growing and global companies • A rich natural resource base, high quality landscapes and heritage assets and large visitor attractions e.g., Alton Towers • A large, highly-qualified, skilled workforce • A strong knowledge base (Keele, Staffordshire and nearby Harper Adams Universities and South Staffordshire College, with Reaseheath College nearby) • A network of five Rural Hub Towns offering employment sites and growth opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity constraints in agriculture and manufacturing • A limited connection between local food production and consumption • An ageing agricultural workforce and succession issues in farming • Limited levels of new enterprise formation • Gaps in broadband coverage, particularly at higher connection speeds (>=100Mbps), for commercial and residential properties • Weaknesses in internal transport connections, including public transport • Limited supply of employment sites and premises including food ready units, commercial starter units, flexible office space and ‘grow-on’ space • Industrial legacy sites which are not viable for new uses without considerable investment • Limited accredited tourism accommodation • Seasonal, low-paid employment • Issues of housing affordability and access, particularly for younger households
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in agri-tech skills (Agri-STEM Academy at Rodbaston) and investment opportunities in agri-tech • Growing interest food security, ethical and local foods • Growth markets for innovative health technologies and low-carbon goods and services, including opportunities in micro-energy generation • Increased demand for ‘staycations’, outdoor leisure and ‘green tourism’ • Increased demand for local products and services • Increased community engagement since the Covid-19 pandemic • Potential for manufacturing supply chain ‘near-shoring’ investment since EU exit • HS2 supply chain and connectivity gains • West Midlands Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at M6 J12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of sustained damage to key sectors including hospitality, non-essential retail, manufacturing and the Rural Hub Towns due to Covid-19 • Risks presented by EU exit to farming and manufacturing supply chains • Ageing and succession issues in farming • Risks of delayed or insufficient adaptation to trends, including climate change, the needs of a large and growing elderly population, competitiveness pressures, technology developments (including digital and low-carbon) and policy changes • Constraints on the supply of employment sites / premises and residential sites limit regeneration opportunities • Limited availability of investment finance and limited investment propositions, including limited growth of business propositions • Further decline of rural services

1.11. Staffordshire's rural economy assets and strengths include:

- A strongly performing and diverse rural economy that extends beyond traditional land-based sectors including agriculture and forestry, encompassing manufacturing (the largest sector in employment terms), construction and services, including a strong visitor economy.
- Some of Staffordshire's largest firms across manufacturing, construction and services. These include JCB, located across five rural locations, and firms based in the Rural Hub Towns such as Omua Foods in Leek, 2 Sisters Food Group in Uttoxeter, automotive firm Klarius in Cheadle, software developer Instem in Stone, and Amazon in Rugeley.
- A highly skilled and qualified rural workforce, including a high proportion of senior managers and entrepreneurs.
- A rich natural resource base with high-quality landscape and heritage assets, underpinning an attractive offer to investors, households and visitors, including the Peak District National Park, Cannock Chase AONB, the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal, and historic Rural Hub Towns.
- A strong University (Keele, Staffordshire and nearby Harper Adams) and Further Education base (South Staffordshire College and nearby Reaseheath) committed to offer excellence in research, innovation opportunities and education in disciplines, including agri-tech, food security, veterinary science, smart-energy networks, and innovative health technologies.
- Staffordshire's five Rural Hub Towns (Leek, Cheadle, Uttoxeter, Stone and Rugeley), centres for business, employment and services, offering visitor attractions and growth opportunities. There are examples of regeneration success, such as the development of Stone's visitor offer as a local 'food town', and arts and crafts hubs. However, further action and investment is needed to fully realise the potential of all five Rural Hub Towns.

1.12. The opportunities and challenges facing Staffordshire's rural economy include:

- The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is having a major negative impact on businesses and employment across the rural economy, particularly the hospitality, non-essential retail and manufacturing sectors; the extent of the damage to businesses and supply chains remains to be seen. However, there are also some consequent opportunities for the rural economy, including potential for a sustained increase in demand for local services. The pandemic restrictions and responses have also highlighted the importance of digital capability amongst rural business and workers, supported by competitive broadband infrastructure.
- EU exit, which presents significant challenges, as well as potential opportunities for the rural economy. Key risks include impacts on farms and associated uses arising from changes to the EU grant regimes, the potential for increased competitiveness pressures in farming and food, reduced availability of migrant labour, and disruption to manufacturing supply chains. Potential opportunities include increased access to a wider range of export markets, and inward investment opportunities relating to 're-shoring' of supply chains, particularly in manufacturing.
- Technology developments in agri-tech, e.g. genetic improvements, digital, big data, robotics and precision technologies. These have the potential to enable increased productivity and output in farming, and may be facilitated by a forthcoming national

R&D support programme, focused on farmer-led solutions. At the same time, many farm businesses are still likely to face significant challenges to their sustainability and growth, including competitiveness challenges, barriers to investment, workforce and skills constraints, and farm succession issues.

- Rapid developments in technology are required – particularly, but not exclusively, digital technologies. These are driving change across the economy, in response to which, high levels of entrepreneurship, adaptability and resilience are required amongst businesses, workers, and in planning infrastructure and land-use. A strong culture of enterprise and innovation across the rural economy is needed to take advantage of new market opportunities being opened up by emerging technologies, in areas such as innovative health and low-carbon energy.
- There is potential to develop the visitor economy, to increase visitor spend and the number of overnight visits, by harnessing Staffordshire’s countryside and heritage assets, and developing the visitor offer to become on-trend, including a higher-quality accommodation offer. This will include taking advantage of increased demand for ‘staycations’ (i.e., UK residents taking a holiday in the UK rather than overseas)¹, and self-contained holiday accommodation, outdoor activity-based tourism, ethical and ‘green’ tourism.
- Growth opportunities (employment and housing) in and around the Rural Hub Towns, which are reflected in District and Borough local and neighbourhood plans and masterplans. To achieve this, action is needed to identify and unlock investment opportunities, particularly commercial opportunities, and to develop the investor and visitor offer, including by addressing infrastructure barriers.
- Gaps in broadband coverage, particularly at higher connection speeds (>=100Mbps) and in mobile phone coverage, which are significant limiting factors for rural businesses and workers, particularly in more remote areas, with ongoing investment required to ensure competitive coverage.
- Weak transport connections, including to Leek and Cheadle, and including limited public transport services, requiring ongoing investment. Forthcoming investments, including HS2 and the West Midlands Rail Freight Interchange at Junction 12 of the M6, should provide a significant boost to Staffordshire’s transport connectivity and attractiveness as an investment location.
- Climate change and net-zero carbon targets require adaptation of rural businesses and energy and transport infrastructure, including development of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and incentives. Following EU exit, a new system of agricultural support is due to be launched, aimed at rewarding farmers for safeguarding environmental assets, with an accompanying grant scheme to support investment in technology, and equipment that improves environmental sustainability and carbon reduction. There are also potential opportunities for land-based industries to diversify into low-carbon and renewable technologies, such as micro-energy generation.

1.13. The evidence base used to develop the strategy is available in a separate report and in five Rural Hub Town profiles.

¹ Demand for staycations (also referred to as ‘domestic tourism’) has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic (see: https://www.visitengland.com/sites/default/files/visit_england_report_print_tcm30-39493.pdf)

2. The Strategy

Vision and Goal

- 3.1 A collective stakeholder vision for rural Staffordshire was expressed in Staffordshire's Rural Declaration of 2013: *"thriving rural communities and successful rural businesses in a living, working and respected Staffordshire countryside, contributing to the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the whole county and beyond, with every community reaching its potential"*.
- 3.2 In line with this vision, and Staffordshire's new Economic Strategy, this strategy seeks to *"maximise the contribution of Staffordshire's rural assets to the development of a 'thriving, digital, high value and dean economy' in Staffordshire that creates good jobs and supports inclusive growth, by developing the productivity, competitiveness and resilience of the rural economy"*.

Strategic Priorities

- 3.3 The strategy is focused on **five strategic priorities** that reflect the diversity of Staffordshire's rural economy, the continued significance of farming and of the visitor economy, the role and potential of the Rural Hub Towns, and the connectivity and access challenges that constrain the rural economy, particularly in more isolated areas:
- Stimulate **enterprise and innovation** to increase productivity, competitiveness and resilience across all sectors of the rural economy, including in overseas markets, to enable high-quality high-wage job retention and growth, and to enable the transition to net-zero carbon emissions;
 - Support **sustainable intensification (SI) in agriculture whereby agricultural productivity is enhanced whilst also creating environmental and social benefits** through productivity investments and business support for improved viability, diversification, carbon reduction and succession;
 - Recover and grow the **visitor economy**, including 'green tourism', by supporting tourism businesses and developing an on-trend visitor offer, including a high-quality accommodation offer, drawing on Staffordshire's rich countryside and heritage assets;
 - Improve **rural digital connectivity and access to opportunities** for rural businesses, workers, residents and visitors, and develop digital and low-carbon energy infrastructure; and
 - Regenerate the five **Rural Hub Towns** (Leek, Cheadle, Stone, Uttoxeter and Rugeley) to unlock investment opportunities, develop their visitor offers, and improve their resilience via high-quality place management.

4 Intervention Priorities

- 4.1 A range of interventions will be required to deliver the strategic priorities. 30 intervention priorities have been identified in the strategy to guide the development of an implementation plan, including short-, medium-, and longer-term actions, and a resourcing plan. This will reflect and build upon current and forthcoming relevant activities and learning gained from previous initiatives in Staffordshire and elsewhere.

Stimulate enterprise and innovation to increase productivity, competitiveness and resilience across all sectors of the rural economy, including in overseas markets, to enable high-quality high-wage job retention and growth, and to enable the transition to net-zero carbon emissions:

1. Ensure that **enterprise and business growth support and peer networks** reflect the needs of rural businesses, and increase awareness and take-up amongst rural businesses. This includes knowledge transfer and technology demonstration activities, investment-readiness support, supplier engagement events and export support. This will be achieved via a 'Think Rural' approach to business support, e.g. involving targeted comms and engagement activities by the Growth Hub, and targeted support programme, where there is evidence of unmet need and demand, and sustainable funding models can be identified.
2. Increase the supply of **enterprise space** (light industrial, office and hybrid) available to rural businesses, including incubation and grow-on space. Consideration will be given to the needs of rural businesses in developing the county network of enterprise centres, to ensure that the network includes space that meets the requirements of rural businesses, in accessible locations, and with competitive supporting infrastructure, including high-speed broadband and 4G /5G mobile connectivity. Consideration will also be given to ways of incentivising and removing barriers to the conversion or redevelopment of rural buildings for employment use, such as those deployed in Enterprise Zones (e.g. business rate relief and simplified planning).
3. Develop a **rural youth enterprise programme** to inspire and equip young people living in rural areas with the knowledge and skills to start-up and grow their own businesses, alongside wider careers inspiration activity, targeting young people in rural areas. A key component of this will be the development of a 'new entrants into farming' programme (see below).
4. Develop a **rural enterprise and innovation hub** as a focal point for rural entrepreneurs and innovators, public sector, academic, third sector and investors to come together, to identify, develop and showcase solutions to rural economy challenges, including the transition to a net-zero carbon economy. Virtual and physical delivery models for the hub and hub activities will be considered. For face-to-face networking, and challenge and showcasing events, opportunities to deploy the county network of enterprise centres and other venues across the county, such as the County Showground, will be considered, drawing on learning from elsewhere (e.g. Stoneleigh Park in Warwickshire).

5. Participate in the development of **growth initiatives**, such as the A500/A50 East West Growth Corridor and the emerging North Midlands Innovation Corridor, where these are aligned to the strategy priorities.

Support sustainable intensification (SI) in agriculture whereby agricultural productivity is enhanced, whilst also creating environmental and social benefits through productivity investments and business support for improved viability, diversification, carbon reduction and succession:

6. Increase **farmer engagement** with business support, and knowledge transfer and technology demonstration opportunities (e.g. the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) 'Farm Excellence' network) via targeted comms and engagement and specialist brokerage – including support for business and succession planning and diversification (e.g. into tourism, green energy or direct-to-consumer sales).
7. Develop one or more **agri-tech demonstrators**, that develop and showcase Staffordshire's strengths in agriculture, industry and science, and that are accessible and relevant to Staffordshire farmers. Delivery options considered will include opportunities to deploy the County Farm estate and collaboration opportunities, e.g. via the LEP-based 'Agri-Tech West' partnership. The County Showground will be considered as a potential focal point for demonstration activity.
8. Develop a '**new entrants into farming**' programme, including careers inspiration in schools and colleges, education and training pathways, including internships and apprenticeships, peer-mentoring, and specialist-brokered access to start-up support, including business planning and access to finance support. Consideration will be given to whether and how the county farm estate could be deployed to enable new entrants into farming, and opportunities to learn from previous initiatives, e.g. NFU Young Farmers initiatives.
9. Ensure a ready supply of **employment sites** in suitable locations for commercial agri-food developments, including for logistics and light-industrial uses, with interventions to unblock stalled sites as required, e.g. through increased promotion, enabling infrastructure investment, and Enterprise Zone-type incentives such as rate relief and simplified planning.

Recover and grow the visitor economy, including 'green tourism', by supporting tourism businesses and developing an on-trend visitor offer, including a high-quality accommodation offer, drawing on Staffordshire's rich countryside and heritage assets:

10. Develop **rural destination branding and marketing**, including for the Rural Hub Towns, aligned to Staffordshire's place-branding and market trends.
11. Ensure a responsive support offer for **tourism businesses**, to help them understand and develop their offer in line with emerging market trends and industry standards, particularly accommodation providers, and to develop their digital capability, informed by learning from previous programmes, e.g. Staffordsheer Excellence².

² <https://www.stokestaffslep.org.uk/staffordsheer-excellence-taking-your-tourism-business-further/>

12. Support **fam and forestry diversification** into tourism, in line with market trends (e.g. for self-contained accommodation and outdoor leisure), including through a supportive planning framework and business support.
13. Support the development and viability of Staffordshire's rural **cultural and heritage attractions**, by lobbying for funding, pursuing external funding bids, and through provision of enterprise and business support, including specialist brokerage.
14. Align **infrastructure investment** to visitor economy assets and opportunities, including investment in electric-vehicle charging infrastructure and high-speed broadband, and to create alternative forms of tourism accommodation, such as overnight parking for motorhomes and camping (e.g. French-style 'Aires').

Improve rural digital connectivity and access to opportunities for rural businesses, workers, residents and visitors, and develop digital and low-carbon energy infrastructure:

15. Work with telecoms providers and Government to secure the investment needed to improve **high-speed broadband and 4G/5G mobile phone coverage** to domestic and commercial properties, and, where necessary, explore alternative models of provision, e.g. digital white space and community-based models of provision, as per Broadband for the Rural North.
16. Develop **electric-vehicle charging infrastructure**, including incentives in hot-spot locations, e.g. via the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme.
17. Pursue **investment in low-carbon energy infrastructure and supply** that is compatible with the needs of rural areas, drawing on R&D assets (for example, Keele's Smart Energy Network Demonstrator, SEND), industry capabilities, learning from elsewhere (e.g. the Association for Decentralised Energy), and by lobbying for more responsive funding models that reflect the needs of rural areas.
18. Ensure a readily available supply of **employment sites** in accessible locations, and unlock stalled sites as required, e.g. working closely with planning, marketing and through enabling infrastructure investment.
19. Bring forward investment in **road and rail** aligned to rural growth opportunities, including those in the Rural Hub Towns and key employment and housing sites, and to maximise the benefits of increased connectivity provided by the HS2 and West Midlands Rail Freight Interchange investments.
20. Embed a **'Think Rural'** approach across service delivery and planning, including via lobbying and advocacy and application of rural-proofing methodologies.

Regenerate the five Rural Hub Towns (Leek, Cheadle, Stone, Uttoxeter and Rugeley) to unlock investment opportunities, develop their visitor offers, and improve their resilience via high-quality place management:

21. Undertake a review and analysis of **growth opportunity sites** (employment and housing) across each of the Hub Towns including public sector-owned sites; and bring forward a portfolio of sites for marketing to potential investors, and a prioritised list of 'oven-ready' sites for public sector intervention where barriers have been identified.
22. Identify and pursue opportunities to **unlock growth-opportunity sites** that are not commercially viable, for example through gap funding, enabling infrastructure investment, and public sector acquisition – where this is feasible.
23. Support **master planning** for the Rural Hub Town centres and high streets, to encourage commercial investment and explore opportunities to support and enable investments in public realm, cultural assets, and small-business space.
24. Develop and implement distinctive **place branding and marketing** for each of the Rural Hub Towns, including working with and supporting high street traders and tourism businesses (e.g. as per Leek's 'Totally Local' branding approach).

Develop a skilled workforce:

Skills are recognised as vital for a successful rural economy and will run as an inherent strand through all strategy priorities.

25. It is important to ensure that labour supply and skills needs in key rural industries are met. These industries include advanced manufacturing & engineering (e.g. shortage of plant operatives as identified in stakeholder consultations), transport & logistics (e.g. challenges around supply of drivers) and hospitality (e.g. recruitment challenges due to labour supply).
26. Health and social care is the sector of highest projected jobs growth across the Stoke & Staffordshire LEP area and likely to be a key area of increased demand in the labour market, given the relatively large and growing elderly population in rural Staffordshire .
27. Efforts will be made to strengthen the AgriSTEM Academy at Rodbaston (Staffordshire College campus) and inspire and support new entrants into farming noting the changing opportunities and career types in farming being driven through agri-tech adoption.
28. There is a general need for digital skills development and development of skills for the green economy, particularly those related to building retrofit and renewable energy generation.
29. Demand for apprenticeships amongst young people in rural areas is limited and there is a need to enhance the attractiveness and accessibility of the apprenticeship offer in rural Staffordshire.

Climate Change:

It is important that we consider the impact of economic interventions (both locally and globally) on our environment and how we deliver effective climate change actions to provide long term benefits to our landscape.

30. All intervention activity through the strategy should seek to support Staffordshire's economy becoming net zero by 2050 in line with both local and national climate change policies and strategies.

5 Delivery Arrangements

- 5.1 Delivery of the strategy will depend on the action and resources of a wide range of stakeholders and organisations, across the private, public, academic (HE/FE), voluntary, community and third sectors. A list of stakeholders consulted during the strategy development is included in Appendix A.

Rural Strategy Leadership Group

- 5.2 A Rural Strategy Leadership Group will be formed of senior individuals from the private, public, academic, and voluntary, community and third sectors, who can bring the insights, expertise, influence, and resources needed to enable the successful delivery of the strategy.
- 5.3 The Leadership Group will be responsible for driving forward the delivery of the strategy, with the support of an executive team who will coordinate the development and implementation of an action plan, securing stakeholder and partner inputs and resources.
- 5.4 The Leadership Group will use its influence to advocate for rural economy opportunities and challenges. This will include influencing within the Leadership Group's own organisations to secure their commitment to the delivery of the strategy, including through the adoption of a 'Think Rural' approach to planning and delivery, and also externally to policymakers and funding bodies.
- 5.5 The Leadership Group will bring expertise and insights to develop new approaches to rural regeneration, that maximises the potential of Staffordshire's rural assets and stakeholder resources. They will build on capacity and learning from approaches previously and currently being developed in Staffordshire and elsewhere (see Appendix B), including the LEADER programme, to develop strong business cases for investment, and to establish Staffordshire as a leader in rural regeneration.

Action Planning and Resourcing

- 5.6 The development and delivery of the strategy will require a dedicated executive resource, including to establish and facilitate the Leadership Group.
- 5.7 An initial priority will be to develop an implementation plan, including short-, medium- and long-term initiatives, including a combination of current and planned activities, and new initiatives where gaps are evidenced, and resourcing opportunities can be identified. The implementation plan will be based on a robust understanding of:

- opportunities for / barriers to investment, particularly commercial investment, including specific viability gaps that necessitate non- or pre-commercial intervention;
 - opportunities to adapt current and planned interventions to unlock rural growth opportunities, for example, by applying a 'Think Rural' approach;
 - stakeholder assets, and any opportunities to deploy them for greater benefit for the rural economy, e.g. the Staffordshire County farm estate;
 - the full range of relevant external funding opportunities, including, but not limited to the Levelling Up Fund for local infrastructure projects; the UK Community Renewal Fund and the forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund for investment in communities and place in need; UKRI funding for innovation; and funding for low-carbon infrastructure development such as the On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme for electric vehicles; and
 - opportunities to develop 'evergreen' or recyclable funds, should the need to set up new targeted funds be identified, drawing on models developed elsewhere (for example, loan or mezzanine-type funds offering combined debt and equity funding).
- 5.8 Potential schemes included within the Rural Implementation Plan will include both new initiatives requiring considerable development, through to adapting existing projects.

Progress Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.9 A number of Key Performance Indicators have been identified to support the monitoring and evaluation of progress and impact in delivering the strategy (Appendix C).

APPENDIX A: Stakeholder Consultees

Name	Organisation	Job Title
Andrea Sammons	Staffordshire County Council	Senior Marketing Officer, Destination Staffordshire
Anthony Baines	Staffordshire County Council	County Commissioner for Skills & Employability
Anthony Hodge	Staffordshire County Council	Assistant Director for Business & Enterprise
Councillor Mark Deaville	Staffordshire County Council	Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters
Debbie Harris	Cannock Chase District Council	Economic Development Manager
Helen Pakpahan	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	Senior Regeneration Officer
James Leavesley	Stoke & Staffordshire LEP	Board Director
Jeremy Lowe	National Farmers Union (NFU)	Staffordshire NFU County Adviser
Jill Norman	Support Staffordshire	North Staffordshire Operations Manager
Karen Woolley	Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)	Development Manager
Mark Parkinson	Stoke & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	Chief Executive
Martyne Manning	Stafford Borough Council	Senior Investment Manager
Matthew Shufflebotham	Staffordshire County Council	Senior Economic Development Officer
Matthew Hustwit	Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Stoke & Staffordshire Growth Hub	Growth Hub Team Leader and Funding & Finance Specialist Advisor
Paul Hodgkinson	Keele University	Associate Director for Programme and Project Delivery – Vice Chancellors Office
Polly Gibb	Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE)	Director
Sam Hicks	Stoke & Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	Strategy Lead
Thomas Deery	East Staffordshire Borough Council	Enterprise Manager

APPENDIX B: Learning Sources

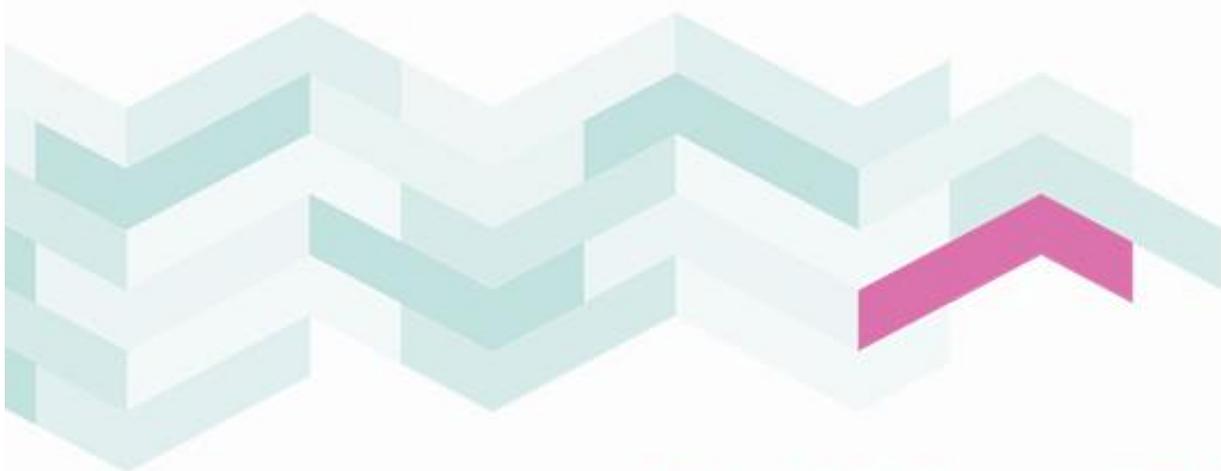
- Rural Services Network (RSN) and Institute of Economic Development **Rural Economy Toolkit** <https://www.rsnonline.org.uk/new-rural-economy-toolkit-to-support-missed-opportunity-around-rural-relevance-to-uk-productivity-and-prosperity> includes 'Rural Best Practice' examples including:
 - Borderlands Growth Deal (Low-Carbon Best Practice)
 - Broadband for the Rural North (B4N)
 - National Innovation Centre for Ageing
 - Transition Town Totnes
 - South West Mutual
- 'What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth' <https://whatworksgrowth.org/>

APPENDIX C: Key Performance Indicators

Key performance Indicators for Staffordshire Rural Strategy	Geographical definitions	Latest data	Latest update	Frequency of updates	Source
Economic Output (GVA)	Rural districts - DEFRA classification	£14,262m	2018	Annual	ONS, sub-regional GVA estimates
Productivity (GVA per hour worked)	Rural districts - DEFRA classification	£35,102	£2,018	Annual	ONS, sub-regional GVA estimates
Business start up rate (no. business births per 1000 working age population)	Rural districts - DEFRA classification	6.1	2019	Annual	ONS, Business demography
Business 3-year survival rate (%)	Rural districts - DEFRA classification	55.6	2019	Annual	ONS, Business demography
Broadband coverage at 100 Mbps - % residential properties	Rural - Ofcom definition	20	2020	Annual	Ofcom, connected nations
Broadband coverage at 100 Mbps - % commercial properties	Rural - Ofcom definition	12	2020	Annual	Ofcom, connected nations
Total jobs	Rural Lower Super Output Areas - DEFRA classification	110k	2019	Annual	ONS, Business Register Employment Survey
Agricultural jobs	Staffordshire	10k	2016	Every few years	DEFRA survey of Agriculture
Visitor spend (£ per annum)	Staffordshire	£1.3bn	2018	Annual	Research report on economic impact of tourism



Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy Evidence Base



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1. Introduction

Purpose and Context

- 1.1. This document brings together the existing evidence base to inform the development of a Staffordshire rural economy strategy. For the purposes of this work, Staffordshire includes Stoke-on-Trent. Most of the evidence is 'pre-Covid' although some recent data is included to try to bring out the potential effects of the pandemic and the response to it.

Spatial Definition and Presentation of Data

- 1.2. The data are presented in two different ways and the definitional difference between the two is important. The difference hinges on how to define 'rural'. Back in 2015, when a similar exercise was carried out, the definition of rural Staffordshire was based on DEFRA's 2011 Rural Urban Classification (RUC 2011) of local authorities¹. This classified Staffordshire Moorlands as 'Largely Rural' and Stafford, East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, and Lichfield as 'Urban with Significant Rural'. This approach makes a lot of sense in terms of data availability as there are good sources available at Local Authority level but is a relatively crude definition of the rural economy.
- 1.3. WECD have updated many of the same datasets that were presented in 2015 at Local Authority level but have also gone a step further to look at a more precise, granular definition of the rural economy. At the most basic geographical building block are Output Areas, each of which has a DEFRA classification on the urban-rural scale. In Staffordshire, the spread of classifications is as follows (Table 1):

Table 1: Output Areas in Staffordshire (based on the census of 2011)

Classification	Description	Number
A1	Urban major conurbation	502
C1	Urban city and town	2450
D1	Rural town and fringe	307
E1	Rural village	194
F1	Rural hamlets, isolated dwellings	157

- 1.4. There is very little data available at the level of Output Areas apart from the census, and 2011 census data is not presented in this report as it is all too dated now to be of much relevance. However, by grouping Output Areas into larger geographies (Lower-layer and Middle-layer Super Output Areas), some data sets start to become available. By looking at the 'average' urban-rural classification across these broader levels of geography, they can also be classified as rural or not. Geographies where the average classification is more rural than 'Urban City and town' are assumed to be rural, and this creates the following composition of the different geographies that can be used (Table 2):

Table 2: Different geographical definitions within Staffordshire, 2019

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/local-authority-rural-urban-classification>

	Rural	Non rural	Total
Output Areas	658	2952	3610
LSOA	138	549	687
MSOA	46	97	143
LA	6	3	9

Note: Local Authority classifications are based on the reference noted above

Source: DEFRA classifications combined with ONS lookup files

- 1.5. The main conclusion from this is that the lower level of disaggregation can give a more refined definition of rural, but that this is much smaller than that based on just Local Authorities. Around a fifth of Output Areas are rural according to the above definition and a similar proportion of Lower-layer Super Output Areas. At Middle-layer level, the proportion is a bit higher as there are more areas that average out as being on the rural side of the C1 split in Table 1, while at Local Authority level, rural accounts for much more.
- 1.6. Table 3 shows how these differences manifest themselves in a key data set, by looking at the level of employment in rural Staffordshire according to the two different definitions. Taking a more refined view of the definition of rural means that rural employment accounts for less than a quarter of Staffordshire employment rather than nearly 60 per cent if just based on Local Authorities.

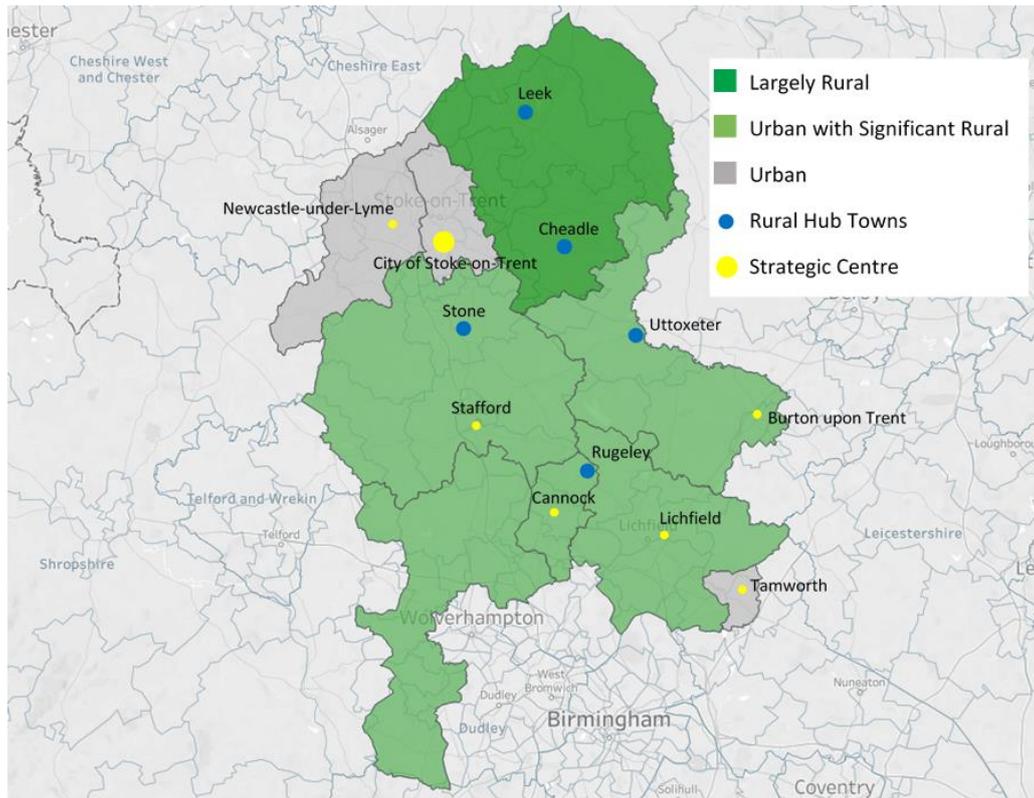
Table 3: Rural employment in Staffordshire, by alternative definitions, 2019

	LSOA basis	LA basis
Rural	110,055	276,975
All Staffs & Stoke	470,000	470,000
% rural	23.4	58.9

Source: BRES, ONS

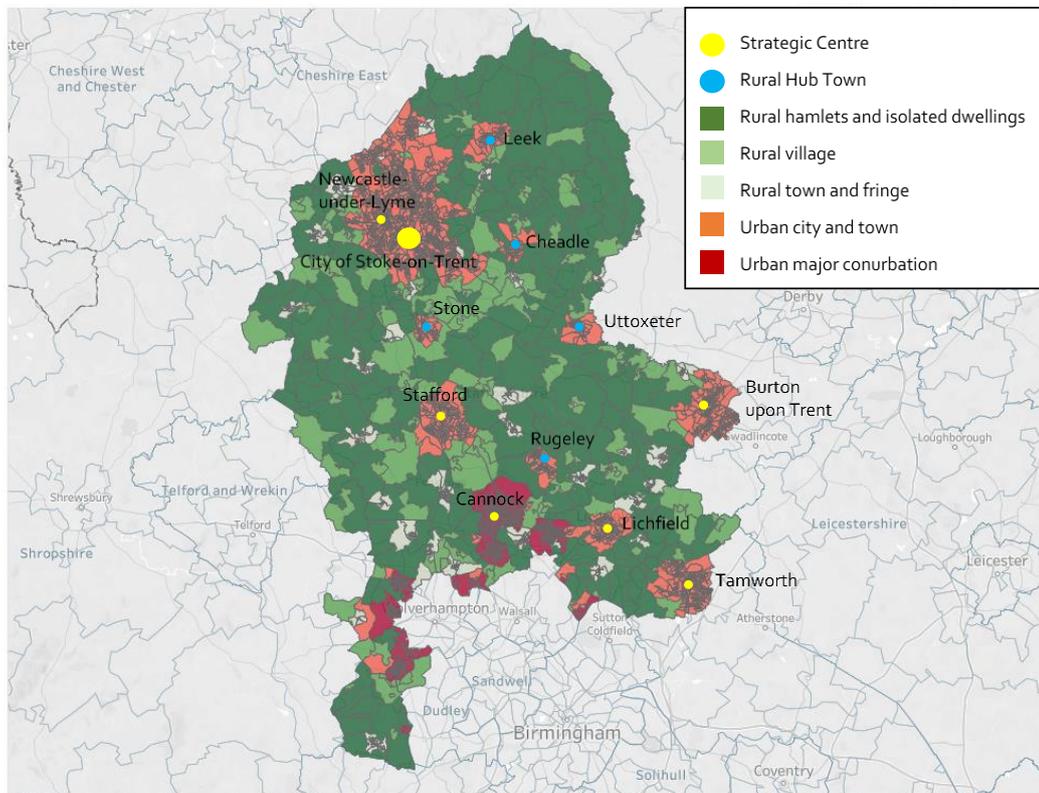
- 1.7. The alternative spatial definitions are shown below in Figures 4a and 4b. Our approach has been to use the more granular definition (figure 4b) where good data is available, but to give a comprehensive picture of rural Staffordshire by also using data based on local authority district areas (figure 4a). There are other dimensions that we do not consider here, such as the role of the Rural Hub Towns, but these are considered separately in stand-alone summaries.
- 1.8. Further detail on the main data sources used is at Annex A, while tables of all the data used in this document are available separately.

Figure 4a: Rural Staffordshire as defined by local authority districts



Source: DEFRA definitions

Figure 4b: Rural Staffordshire as defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas



Source: DEFRA definitions

2. Overview and SWOT Analysis

- 2.1. Approximately 80 per cent of Staffordshire can be considered rural and the county has a rich and diverse rural asset base that plays an important role in the county economy and that of the Stoke-on-Trent city region.
- 2.2. In 2018, Staffordshire's rural districts (Staffordshire Moorlands, Stafford, East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, Cannock Chase, and Lichfield) generated £14.3bn of economic output (Gross Value Added, GVA), accounting for 61 per cent of total economic output in Staffordshire (including Stoke-on-Trent). Productivity (GVA per hour worked) is also higher in the rural districts than the Staffordshire average (by just under 2 per cent).
- 2.3. Rural Staffordshire is home to a large and diverse rural business base extending beyond land-based industries such as farming and forestry, with manufacturing the largest sector of employment, and significant construction and service industries. Nearly 70 per cent of registered businesses in Staffordshire (27 thousand) are located in the rural districts, employing nearly 277 thousand (58.9 per cent of all Staffordshire jobs).
- 2.4. The rate of jobs growth in rural Staffordshire between 2015 and 2019 was significantly higher than the Staffordshire average (5.7 per cent compared to 3.1 per cent) and above the England average (5 per cent). Jobs growth occurred across most sectors of the rural economy with the strongest rates of growth in the most significant sectors of employment: manufacturing (particularly the manufacture of machinery and equipment), accommodation and food services, and transport and storage. The main sector of future jobs growth across Staffordshire is expected to be in Health and Social work.
- 2.5. Agriculture continues to be a significant sector of employment, with DEFRA identifying nearly 10 thousand jobs in Staffordshire in 2016 (latest available data), representing nearly a quarter of agricultural employment in the West Midlands which fell by 0.5% between 2016 and 2019.
- 2.6. The rate of new business formations in the rural districts is slightly higher than the Staffordshire average (2019 data) but significantly lower than the England average. However, business survival rates in Staffordshire, including rural areas, are higher than the England average.
- 2.7. Population estimates show a higher rate of population growth in rural areas than the Staffordshire average, and an older population profile with a higher proportion, that is growing, aged 65 and above.
- 2.8. Rural residents are relatively well-qualified with 42 per cent qualified to at least NVQ4 level, an increase since 2015. This is reflected in a relatively senior profile of resident employment and slightly higher than average earnings amongst rural residents. Those working in rural areas tend to earn slightly less than average, and housing affordability (the ratio of median house prices to median earnings) is slightly lower than the Staffordshire average and has worsened in recent years.
- 2.9. In 2019/20 the resident employment rate in rural districts was higher than the Staffordshire and England averages (80.5 per cent) including a higher rate of self-employment (11.1 per cent). Claimant unemployment has risen sharply since the Covid-19 pandemic emerged and at a higher rate than the Staffordshire and England averages although the rate is slightly lower having risen from a lower base. The sharper rate of increase probably reflects the greater significance of harder-hit sectors to rural employment including hospitality, transport, and

manufacturing.

- 2.10. Rural broadband coverage is more limited than urban, particularly at higher speeds (<= 100 Mbps). Residential properties tend to have much better levels of connectivity than commercial premises.
- 2.11. A SWOT analysis informed by the data analysis presented in this report and qualitative sources including insights obtained from stakeholder consultations is summarized in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Summary SWOT Analysis

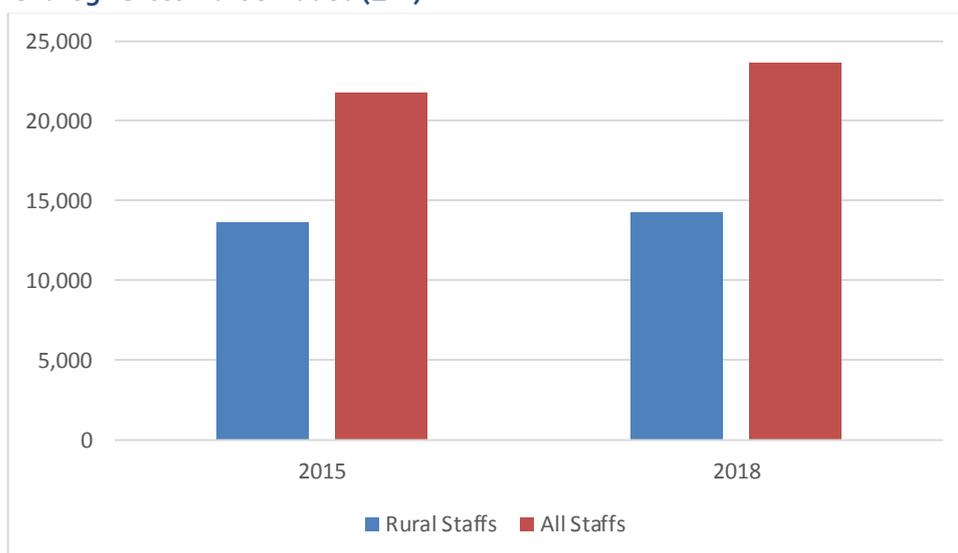
Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrally located in the country between the Birmingham and Manchester conurbations and well-connected by motorway and rail • A diverse rural economy across primary industries, manufacturing, construction, services and visitor economy with high rates of employment growth • Significant farming and food and drink processing (particularly brewing) sectors • A base of large companies including fast growing and global companies • A rich natural resource base, high quality landscapes and heritage assets and large visitor attractions e.g. Alton Towers • A large, highly-qualified, skilled workforce • A strong University (Keele, Staffordshire and nearby Harper Adams) and Further Education base (Staffordshire College and nearby Reaseheath) • A network of five 'Rural Hub Towns' offering employment sites and growth opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity constraints in agriculture and manufacturing • A limited connection between local food production and consumption • An ageing agricultural workforce and succession issues in farming • Limited levels of new enterprise formation • Gaps in broadband coverage, particularly at higher connection speeds (>=100Mbps), for commercial and residential properties • Weaknesses in internal transport connections, including public transport • Limited supply of employment sites and premises including food ready units, commercial starter units, flexible office space and 'grow-on' space • Limited accredited tourism accommodation • Seasonal, low paid employment • Issues around housing affordability and access, particularly for younger households
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in agri-tech skills (Agri-STEM Academy at Rodbaston) and investment opportunities in agri-tech • Growing interest food security, ethical and 'local foods' • Growth markets for innovative health technologies and low carbon goods and services including opportunities in micro-energy generation • Increased demand for 'staycations', outdoor leisure and 'green tourism' • Increased demand for rural living and working and for local products and services • Increased community engagement, since the Covid-19 pandemic • Potential for manufacturing supply chain 'near-shoring' investment since EU Exit • HS2 supply chain and connectivity gains • West Midlands Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at M6 J12 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of sustained damage to key sectors including hospitality, non-essential retail, manufacturing and the Rural Hub Towns due to the Covid-19 pandemic • Risks presented by EU Exit to farming and manufacturing supply chains • Ageing and succession issues in farming • Risks of delayed or insufficient adaptation to trends in demand including the needs of a large and growing elderly population, competitiveness pressures, technology developments (including digital and low carbon) and policy changes • Constraints on the supply of employment sites and premises and residential sites limit regeneration opportunities • Limited availability of investment finance and limited investment propositions, including business propositions, limit growth • Further decline of rural services

3. Economic Output and Productivity

Economic Output

- 3.1. Data are available at district level to enable an estimate of the economic output (Gross Value Added, GVA) of the Staffordshire area, and the rural component of this based on the district-level rural definition. Chart 5 shows this for the latest available data, 2018, and compares to 2015. Rural Staffordshire accounts for £14.3bn representing 61 per cent of all Staffordshire GVA in the latest figures, although between 2015 and 2018, the increase in GVA was proportionally higher for all Staffordshire (8.7 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent for rural Staffordshire, although both were less than the England average of 11.7 per cent).

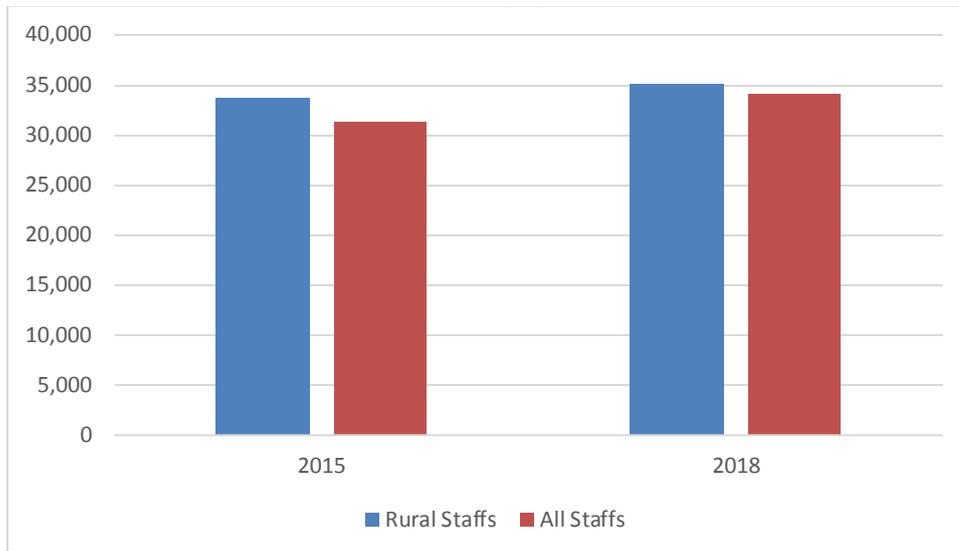
Chart 5: Gross Value Added (£m)



Source: ONS (district-based)

- 3.2. Another common way of looking at GVA is to use a measure relative to the working age population and Chart 6 shows this. Average GVA on this basis for rural Staffordshire is just over £35 thousand per person, about 3 per cent higher than for all Staffordshire, although the difference has narrowed between 2015 and 2018. GVA per working age resident has risen by 4.3 per cent in rural Staffordshire and by 8.3 per cent in the whole area. By comparison, it rose by just over 10 per cent across England.

Chart 6: Gross Value Added per working age resident (£)

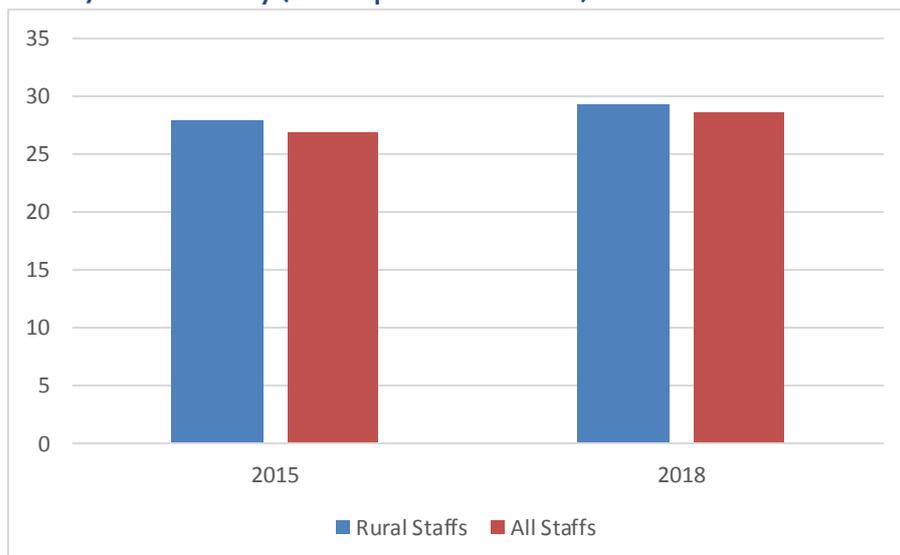


Source: ONS (district-based)

Productivity

3.3. GVA per hour worked, a key measure of productivity, is shown in Chart 7. Productivity per hour worked is slightly higher (just under 2 per cent higher) in rural Staffordshire, although productivity has increased slightly more in all Staffordshire (6.6 per cent compared to 4.6 per cent in rural Local Authorities).

Chart 7: Productivity (£ GVA per hour worked)



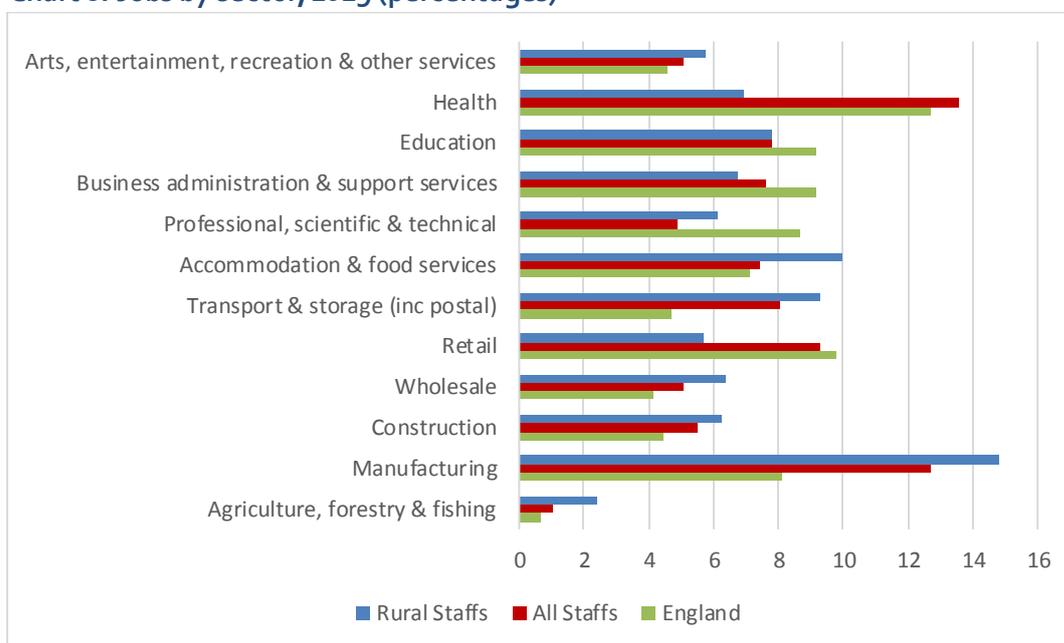
Source: ONS (district-based)

4. Sector composition

Sector Profile of Employment

4.1 The jobs profile of rural Staffordshire can be seen compared to all Staffordshire and to England in Chart 8 below. There are 110 thousand jobs in rural Staffordshire (based on the more granular definition of rural Staffordshire - see Table 3). Within these, Manufacturing emerges as an obvious strength, with some 80 per cent more jobs (relative to the total number in each area) than across England as a whole. Pursuing this further in more detailed industrial data shows that the main employing category is the manufacture of machinery and equipment, which will cover the work of JCB, among others. Conversely the proportion of jobs in Health is a lot lower than in all Staffordshire. Other strengths for rural Staffordshire are in Accommodation and food services and in Transport and storage.

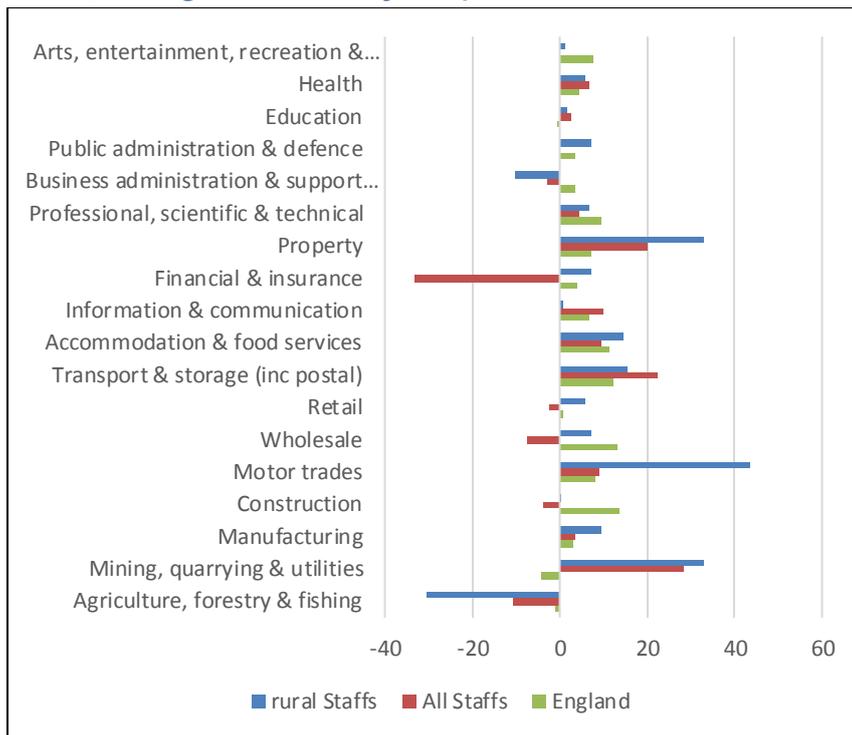
Chart 8: Jobs by sector, 2019 (percentages)



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS (LSOA based)

4.2 Chart 9 examines how the number of jobs in each sector has changed over time. In this period, there has been a steady increase in employment, such that the majority of bars on the chart are to the right, showing an absolute increase. The largest increases have been in Motor trades (more than 40 per cent), Property, and Mining, quarrying and utilities (both with increases of around a third). Meanwhile the largest fall in employment is Agriculture, fisheries, and food (although this is not completely reliable – see Table 11 and accompanying description below).

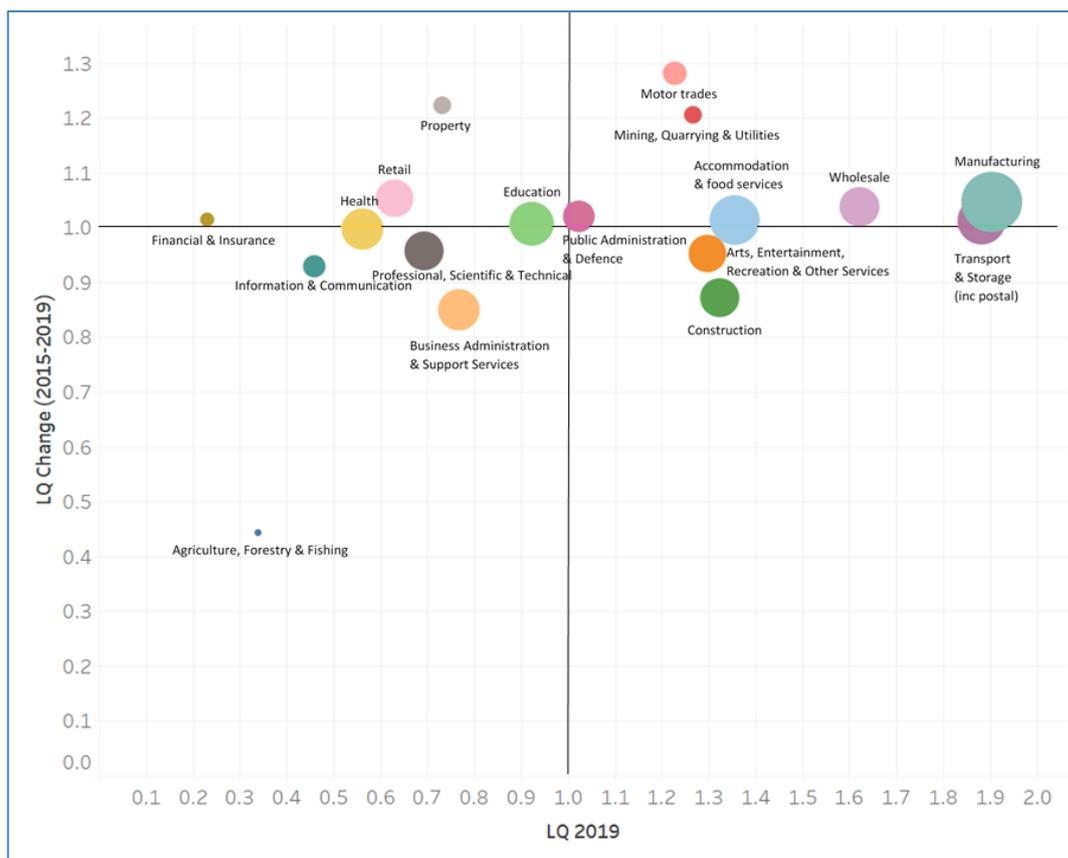
Chart 9: Change in number of jobs by sector between 2015 and 2019 (percentages)



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS (LSOA based)

4.3 Chart 10 brings together the data on jobs in a standard economic form, of location quotients. The x-axis shows the relative importance of sectors compared to the England average, while the y-axis shows the change in this between 2015 and 2019 (with no change represented as 1) and the size of the bubble is proportional to the number of jobs in that sector. This means that the top right segment is the important group of sectors which are both relatively strong and also growing, including the largest sectors in terms of jobs: Manufacturing, Accommodation and food services and Transport and storage. The top left group of businesses are relatively small sectors in terms of numbers of jobs, but have grown in the last few years, for example Property is also shown growing in Chart 9.

Chart 10: Location quotients for rural Staffordshire



Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS (LSOA based)

4.4 The sources used to present jobs in Agriculture are not robust at low levels of geography and Table 11 instead focusses on jobs in agriculture, using a source designed for that purpose. This is not specifically for rural Staffordshire, even though the jobs would presumably nearly all be in rural areas. Employment surveys covering all industries would be liable to miss some of these jobs, such as casual workers and some part-time partners, directors and spouses, so this can be considered to give a better overview of the jobs in Agriculture in Staffordshire.

Table 11: Employment in agriculture

	Farmers, partners, directors and spouses full time	Farmers, partners, directors and spouses part time	Salaried managers	Regular workers full time	Regular workers part time	Casual workers	Total labour
Staffordshire 2016 (latest data)	2 887	2 534	189	1 119	746	2 482	9 956
West Midlands 2016	12 009	11 279	1 205	5 167	3 145	10 084	42 890
West Midlands 2019	12 543	11 632	1 273	4 797	3 133	9 283	42 660
% change West Midlands 16-19	4.3	3	5.3	-7.7	-0.4	-8.6	-0.5
Absolute change W Midlands 16-19	534	353	68	-370	-12	-801	-230
Staffs as % of W Midlands 2016	24	22.5	15.6	21.7	23.7	24.6	23.2

Source: DEFRA survey of agriculture, 2016

4.5 More detailed insights into the agriculture, manufacturing and logistics sectors is provided in Appendix C.

Sector Projections

4.6 Some estimates have been made available by the County Council for the Stoke-on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership area, which look at forecasts of which sectors may grow in employment terms over time and it is interesting to compare to the charts above. Table 12 presents these forecasts. Health and Social Work employment growth is likely to figure highly in many areas as the population of older age groups increases and this is the main forecast increase in Staffordshire, with a projected increase of more than 6 thousand jobs between 2017 and 2027.

Table 12: Forecasts of jobs by sector, Stoke and Staffordshire LEP area, 2017-2027 (000s of jobs)

	2007	2012	2017	2022	2027	Growth 2017-27
Health and social work	57	65	75	78	81	6.2
Support services	37	42	38	40	42	3.8
Professional services	22	24	31	33	34	2.4
Accommodation and food	28	27	37	36	39	2.4
Transport and storage	30	31	40	41	43	2.4
Arts and entertainment	13	16	17	17	18	1.6
Construction	39	33	34	34	35	0.9
Information technology	11	9	12	13	13	0.8
Other services	14	14	20	21	20	0.3
Real estate	7	6	6	6	6	0.3
Water and sewage	2	3	3	3	3	0.2
Media	2	2	2	2	2	0
Electricity and gas	1	1	1	1	1	0
Mining and quarrying	1	1	0	0	0	0
Engineering	15	13	12	13	12	-0.1
Public admin and defence	23	21	17	17	17	-0.2
Education	38	44	38	38	38	-0.2
Agriculture	6	9	7	6	6	-0.4
Food, drink and tobacco	8	8	9	8	8	-0.5
Finance and insurance	12	8	9	9	9	-0.6
Wholesale and retail trade	86	89	91	90	89	-1.7
Other manufacturing	46	37	41	38	36	-5
All Industries	497	502	540	544	553	12.6

Source: Working futures employment forecasts, 2020

5. Businesses and enterprise

Business Base

5.1 Data on registered businesses is available at district level and Chart 13 below shows how the business population in rural Staffordshire compares to all Staffordshire. Rural districts account for nearly 70 per cent of total registered businesses in Staffordshire (27 thousand out of a total of 39 thousand), which means that on average these businesses have fewer employees given that rural districts account for some 60 per cent of jobs (Table 3). The number of registered businesses increased by around 7 per cent in rural Staffordshire and all Staffordshire.

Chart 13: Number of registered businesses

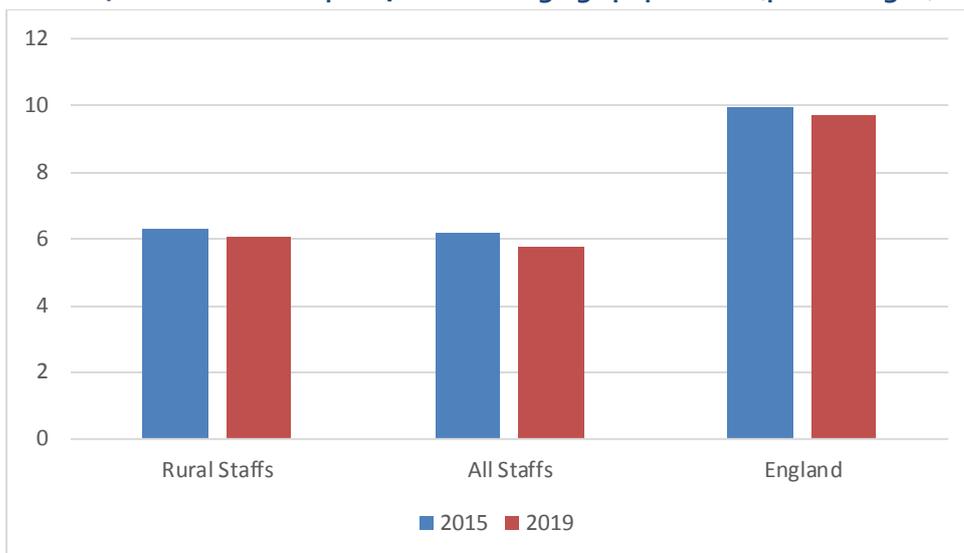


Source: UK Business, ONS (*district-based*)

Business Births and Survival Rates

5.2 The business population changes as new businesses are registered (for VAT and/or PAYE) and as existing businesses close. These, 'births and deaths' are also available at district level and Chart 14 shows the rate of business creation per 1,000 working age population. Rural Staffordshire saw 6.1 business births per thousand working age population, compared to 5.8 in all Staffordshire. The rate of business creation has fallen in all areas in recent years, with the rate for rural and all Staffordshire remaining significantly lower than for England.

Chart 14: Business births per 1,000 working age population (percentages)



Source: *Business Demography, ONS (district-based)*

5.3 Chart 15 looks at the other side of the equation, business deaths. There are various ways of measuring this, but a common method is to look at the survival rate over a fixed period: the proportion of businesses that are still active, some years after being born. Chart 15 shows the 3-year survival rates for the same geographies. In rural Staffordshire, 56 per cent of businesses born in 2016 were still active in 2019, slightly higher than for all Staffordshire (55 per cent) and higher than for England (52 per cent). Survival rates fell in all three geographies between the 2013 cohort of businesses and the 2016 cohort, with the fall being greater across England as a whole.

Chart 15: 3-year business survival rates (percentages)



Source: *Business Demography, ONS (district-based)*

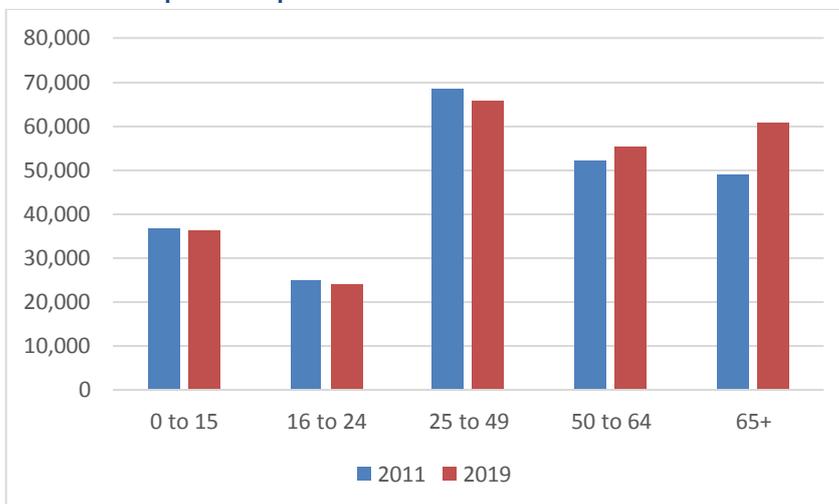
6. People: population, employment, skills

6.1. This section brings together a range of data about the individuals in Staffordshire and rural Staffordshire. One important distinction to make is that all the above data is about economic activity that happens in Staffordshire whereas this section is to do with the people who live in Staffordshire. The match between these two concepts is not perfect as some people from outside Staffordshire will commute in and generate economic activity inside Staffordshire, while conversely, some people who live in Staffordshire will commute out and generate economic activity elsewhere. The only source of data that can truly disentangle these effects is the census, but 2011 data is too old to help to interpret recent data.

Population

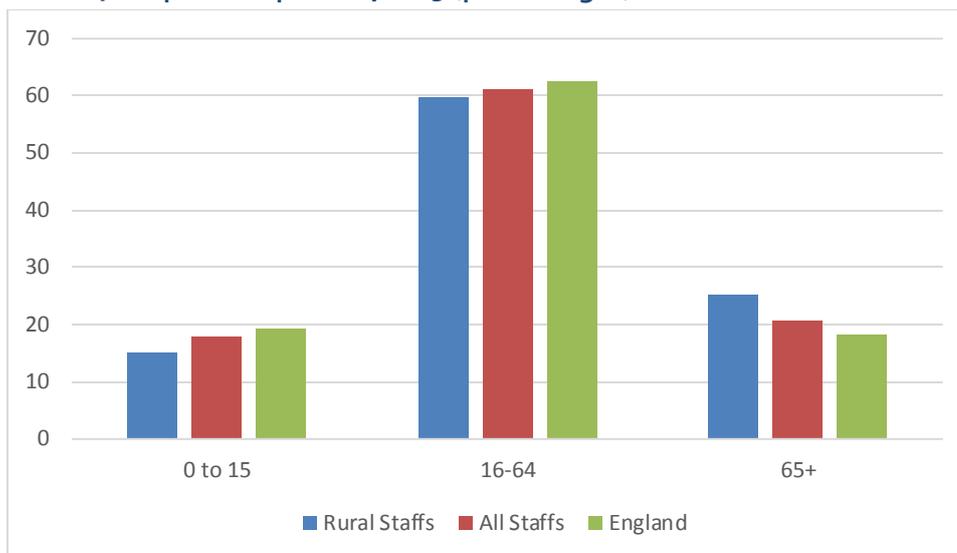
6.2. Chart 16 shows the population of rural Staffordshire on the more granular definition based on LSOAs and shows how this has changed since the census in 2011, according to the most recent estimates. This shows a rural Staffordshire population of just under a quarter of a million in 2019, up by nearly 5 per cent from 2011, compared to a population of 1.1 million for all Staffordshire in 2019, an increase of 3.4 per cent since 2011. The increase in the proportion of people in the oldest categories is quite large and is potentially quite significant for forward planning purposes. Similarly Chart 17 looks at how the current population in rural Staffordshire compares to all Staffordshire and to England. This shows that the population profile in rural Staffordshire is relatively older than in the comparison areas, as well as having aged relatively quickly as shown by Chart 16.

Chart 16: Population profile of rural Staffordshire



Source: ONS, census and population projections (LSOA based)

Chart 17: Population profiles, 2019 (percentages)

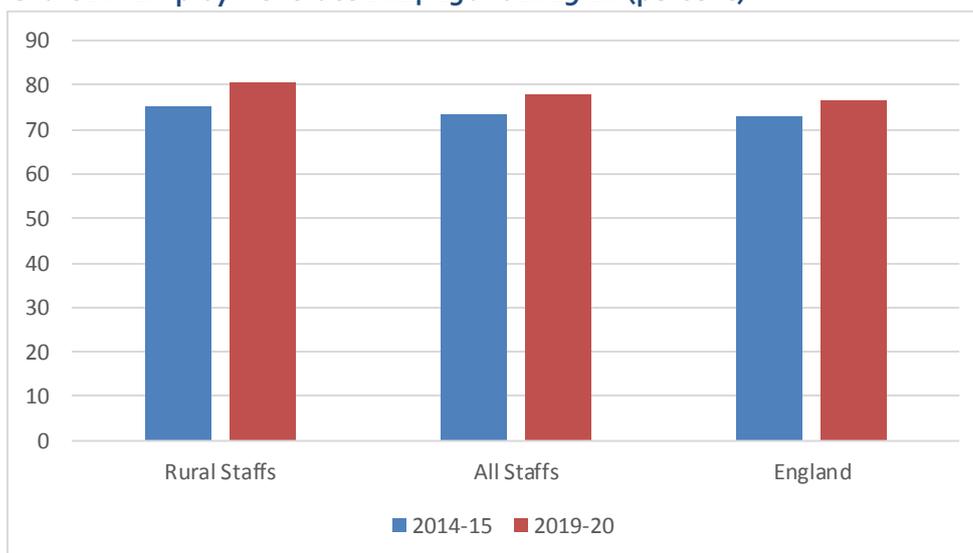


Source: ONS, population projections, 2019 (LSOA based)

Employment and Self-Employment

6.3. Of those of working age, the employment rate is the proportion that are working, so excludes those who are unemployed or inactive. Chart 18, using the district-based definition of rural Staffordshire, shows that the employment rate for rural Staffordshire stands at 80.5 per cent, higher than for all Staffordshire and higher than the England average (77.9 and 76.5 per cent respectively). The rise between 2015 and 2019 is also greatest for rural Staffordshire, rising by more than 5 percentage points compared with 4 for the whole of Staffordshire and 3 for the England average.

Chart 18: Employment rate 2014-15 and 2019-20 (percent)

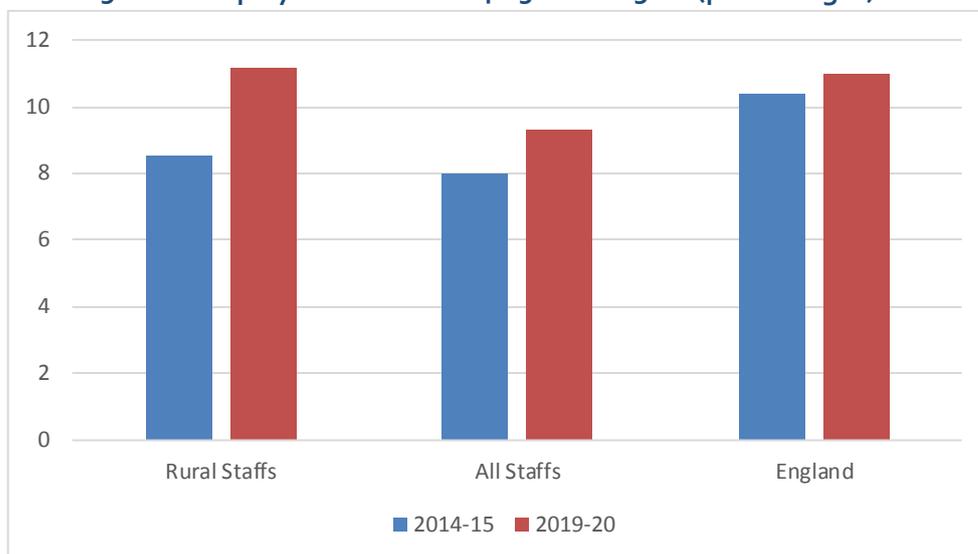


Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS (district-based)

6.4. Of those who are employed, the numbers of self-employed have increased between 2014-15 and 2019-20, as has been the case across England. Chart 19 shows that rural Staffordshire has a higher rate of self-employment than both Staffordshire all and the average across England at

11.1 per cent compared to 9.3 per cent and 11.0 per cent, respectively. As with the employment rate, the increase has also been greatest across rural Staffordshire, increasing from 8.5 per cent in 2014-15 to 11.1 per cent in 2019-20.

Chart 19: Self-employment rates 2014-15 and 2019-20 (percentages)

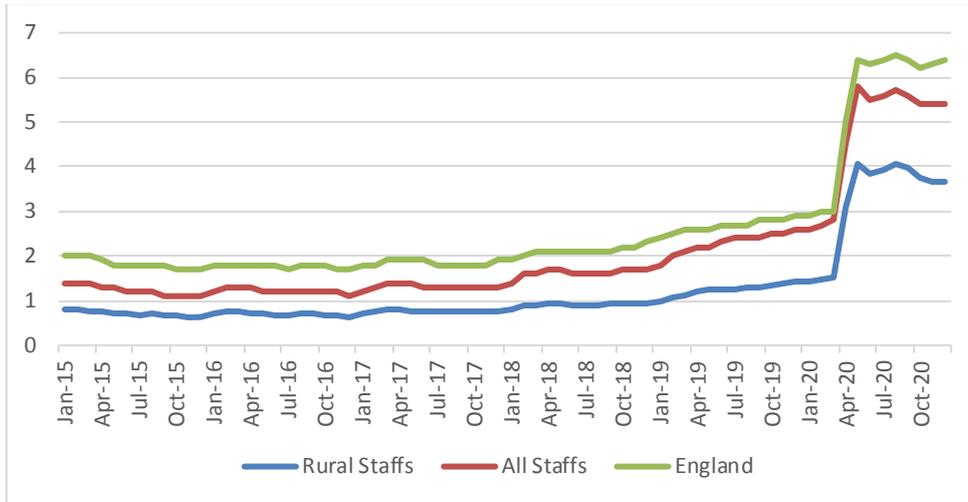


Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS (district-based)

Claimant Unemployment

- 6.5. A further labour market category to cover is claimant unemployment. Because a detailed data series is published regularly, this also has the advantage of showing recent data, affected by the pandemic, in this case up to the end of 2020.
- 6.6. Chart 20 shows the series of claimant count rates for rural Staffordshire as well as for all Staffordshire, based on the LSOA definition of rural Staffordshire. After being flat for the first 3 years of the series, the rate climbs slightly between 2018 and early 2020 before rising quickly as the effects of the pandemic hit around April 2020. Throughout the series, the claimant count rate is slightly lower in rural Staffordshire although because of this, the proportional increase through the pandemic is higher.

Chart 20: Claimant Count in rural and all Staffordshire, 2015-2020 (rate per 100 working age population)

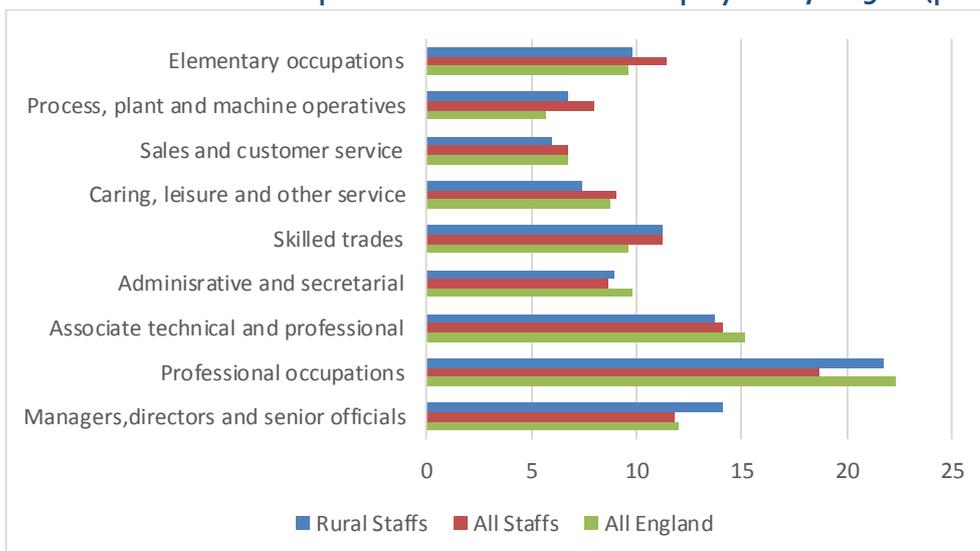


Source: DWP, NOMIS (ONS) (LSOA based)

Occupational Profile of Employment

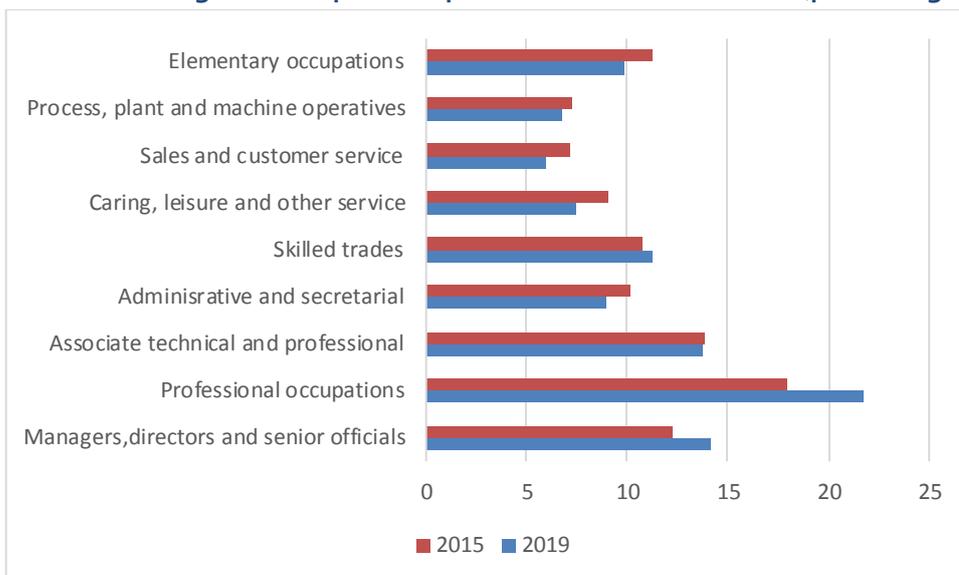
6.7. Data were presented earlier on the sectoral split of jobs in rural Staffordshire. It is also possible to look at the types of job carried out by rural residents, using Standard Occupational Classifications. This data is available at district level (as is also the case for charts 22-27) and, as described above is for jobs held by those who live in rural Staffordshire. Chart 21 shows that rural Staffordshire residents have a relatively senior profile of employment – with a higher proportion employed in senior roles and a smaller proportion in elementary and manual type roles. Chart 22 then shows the changes over the last few years, highlighting an increase in the proportion of residents employed in senior roles and a decrease in the proportion employed in more routine jobs.

Chart 21: Standard Occupational Classification of Employment, 2019-20 (percentages)



Source: Annual Population Survey, 2019-20 (district-based)

Chart 22: Changes in occupational profile in rural Staffordshire (percentages)

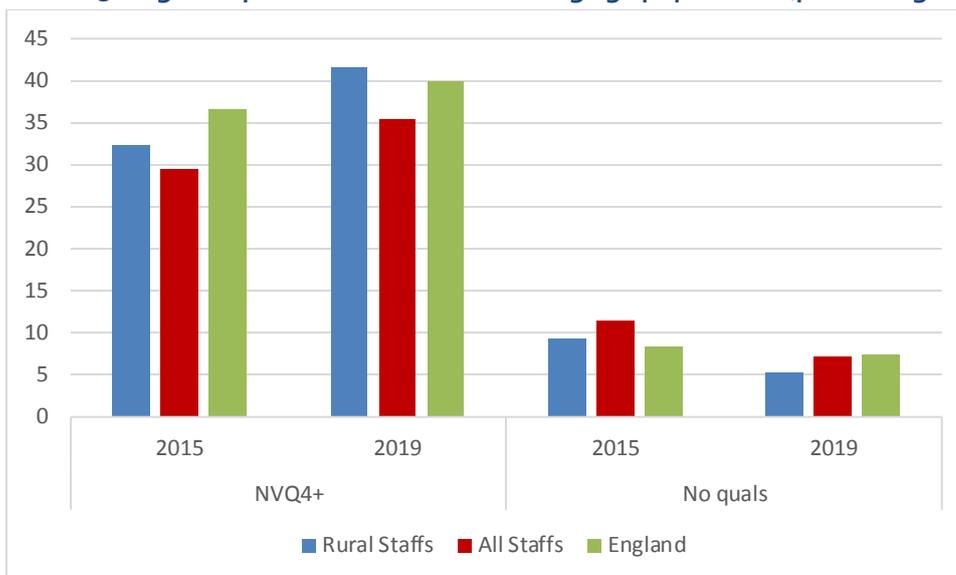


Source: Annual Population Survey, 2019–20 (district-based)

Working Age Qualification Levels

- 6.8. Part of the reason for the profile of jobs seen above can be explained by looking at levels of qualifications. Chart 23 looks at the top and bottom parts of the distribution of qualifications – the proportions qualified to at least Level 4 and those with no NVQ equivalent qualifications. Residents of rural Staffordshire are relatively well qualified, with higher proportions at the top of the qualifications’ distribution and lower proportions at the bottom end, compared to either all Staffordshire or the England average. 42 percent of rural Staffordshire residents are qualified to at least NVQ4, compared to 35.5 and 40 per cent respectively for all Staffordshire and England).
- 6.9. In all cases, the proportions qualified to L4+ has risen between 2015 and 2019, while the proportion with no qualifications has fallen. The largest rise in L4+ was in rural Staffordshire, while the improvements for the whole of Staffordshire were larger than for the England average.

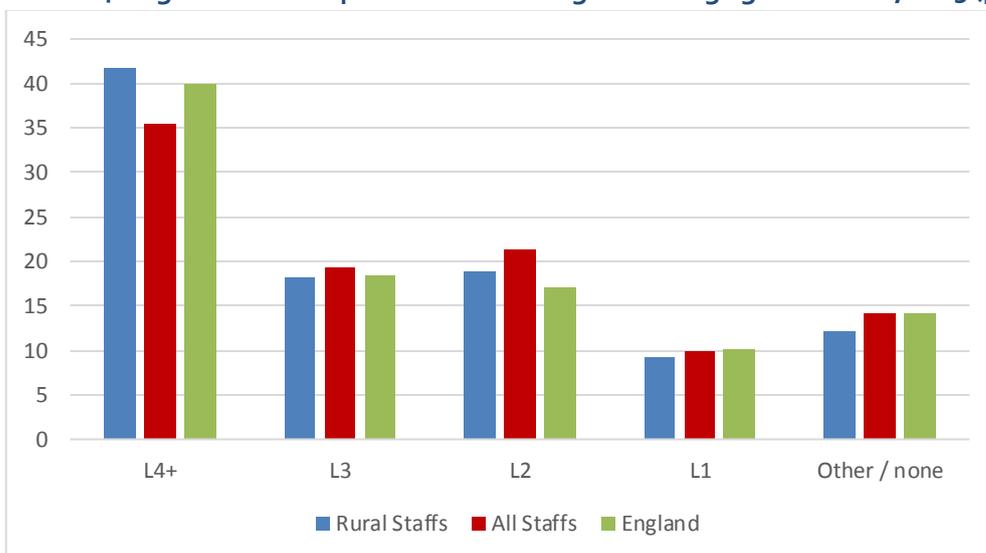
Chart 23: Highest qualification of the working age population (percentages)



Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS (district-based)

6.10. Chart 24 looks at a broader distribution of qualifications for Staffordshire and for England. As above, the working age population across rural Staffordshire is better qualified than all Staffordshire, and England while all Staffordshire lags both rural Staffordshire and England.

Chart 24: Highest level of qualification amongst working age residents, 2019 (percentages)



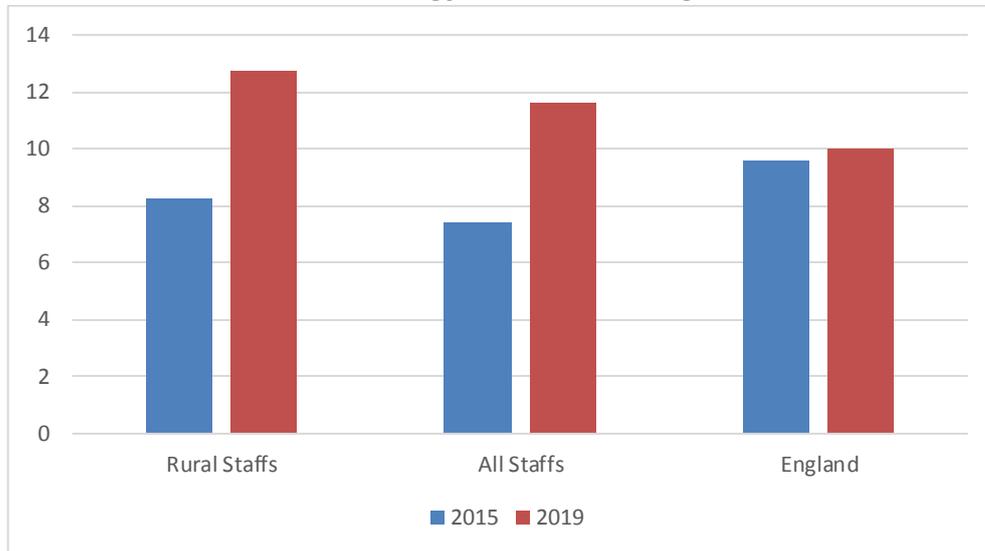
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS (district-based)

Participation in Job-Related Training

6.11. As well as formal qualifications, job-related training can be an important part of employment and Chart 25 shows the results of a question about job-related training over the 4 weeks prior to the Annual Population Survey questionnaire. In 2019, nearly 13 per cent of rural Staffordshire residents had undertaken job related training in the previous 4 weeks, compared to less than 12 per cent for all Staffordshire and 10 per cent across England.

- 6.12. For both rural Staffordshire and all Staffordshire, the amount of job-related training has increased by much more than for England overall. While in 2015, job-related training was more common across England, by 2019 it was much more common in rural Staffordshire.

Chart 25: Proportions undertaking job related training in previous 4 weeks

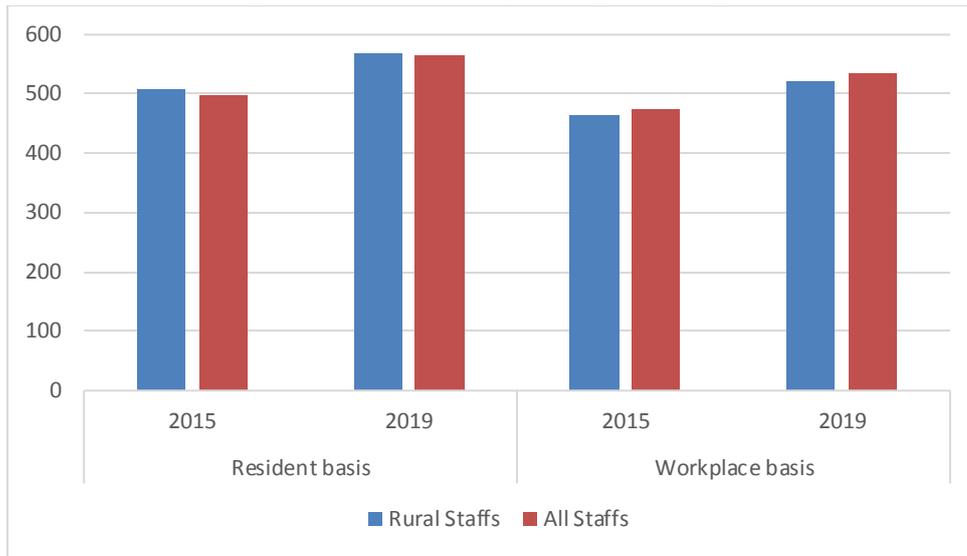


Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS (district-based)

Earnings

- 6.13. Another way of looking at jobs is to examine earnings from those jobs. Chart 26 shows how full time median gross weekly earnings have changed for rural Staffordshire between 2015 and 2019 and, again, compares to all Staffordshire. For this source of data, earnings in an area can either be based on all those who live in the area, or all those who work in the area and commuting patterns mean that these can be quite different at times. While residents in rural areas earn slightly more than residents across all Staffordshire (£569 compared to £565), those working in rural areas tend to earn slightly less (£522 compared to £535). The increases between 2015 and 2019 have been very similar at 12-13 per cent in all cases. This is a slightly higher increase than for England overall (11 per cent) although the England figure for average earnings is significantly higher, skewed by London.

Chart 26: Full time gross median weekly average earnings (£)



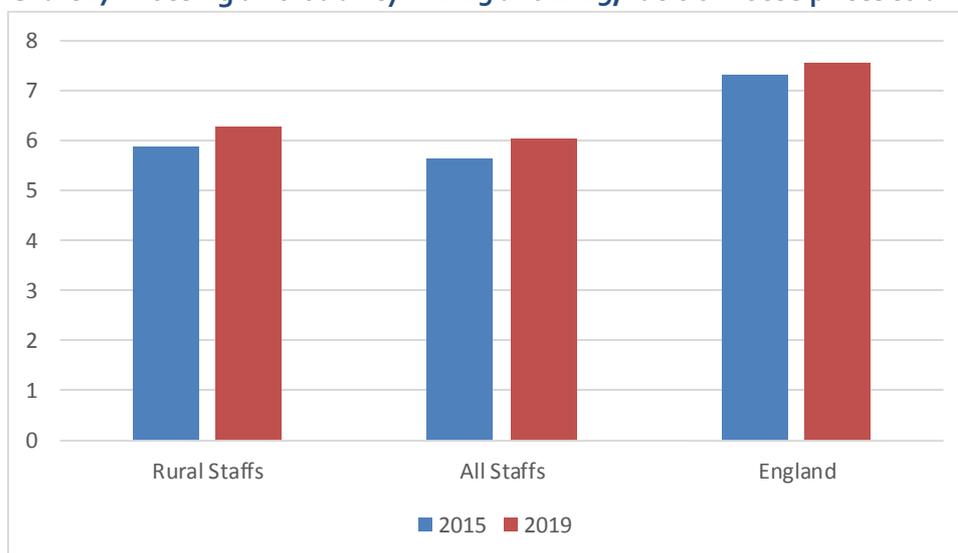
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS (district-based)

7. Place: housing, broadband and deprivation

Housing Affordability

7.1. Following on from Chart 26, which shows average earnings, it is possible to combine this with information on house prices to derive a measure of housing affordability, by taking the ratio of median house prices to median earnings. Chart 27 shows how this has changed between 2015 and 2019 for the three comparison areas. A higher figure means that housing is less affordable. Housing is slightly less affordable in rural Staffordshire than in wider Staffordshire (6.3 compared to 6.1), although more so than in England overall (as with wages, housing affordability in England tends to be skewed by very high house prices around London). Between 2015 and 2019, affordability has decreased in all areas, with decreases in rural Staffordshire and all Staffordshire larger than those in England as a whole.

Chart 27: Housing affordability in 2015 and 2019, ratio of house prices to average earnings

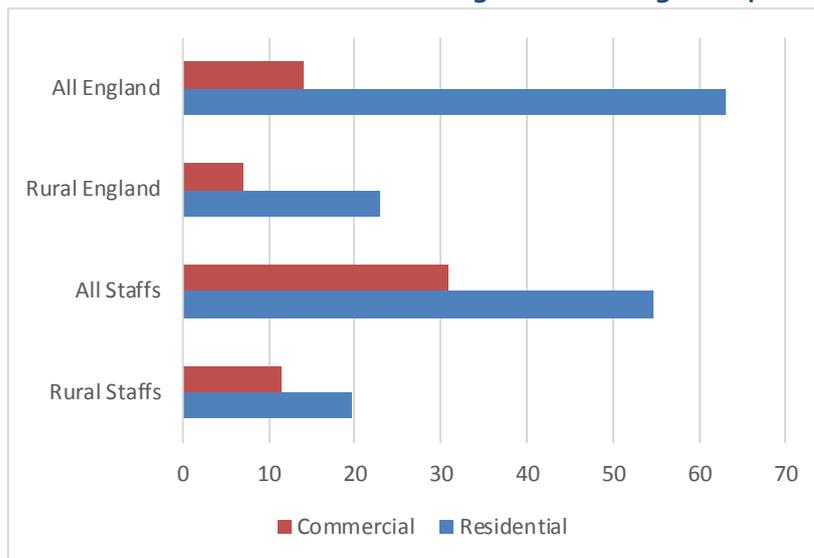


Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; house price statistics, ONS (district-based)

Broadband Coverage

- 7.2. A reliable internet connection is an important aspect of life, both for work and leisure, and has in the past been a concern for rural areas in particular, where coverage tends to be less reliable.
- 7.3. Chart 28 shows the proportion of premises, separately for residential and commercial, for which fixed broadband coverage of at least 100 Megabits per second is available. This is a relatively high threshold, but at lower levels such as 10 Mbs or 30 Mbs, coverage tends to be consistently high (as it is with availability of 4G mobile coverage), so this higher threshold allows for greater distinction between geographies.
- 7.4. The definition of rural Staffordshire in this case is different from anything else in this report, based on Ofcom classifications. The two main conclusions from the data are that residential premises tend to have much better connectivity than commercial premises (many of which may not need a high level of connectivity) and that rural areas do have lower connectivity than other areas.

Chart 28: Fixed broadband coverage at 100 Megabits per second, 2020 (percentages)

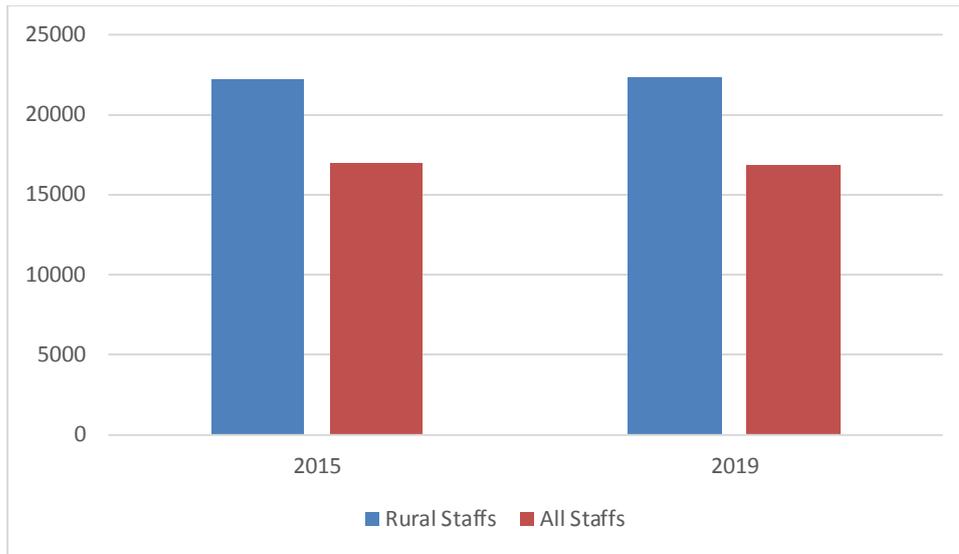


Source: Connected Nations, Ofcom, 2020 (Ofcom definition of rural)

Deprivation

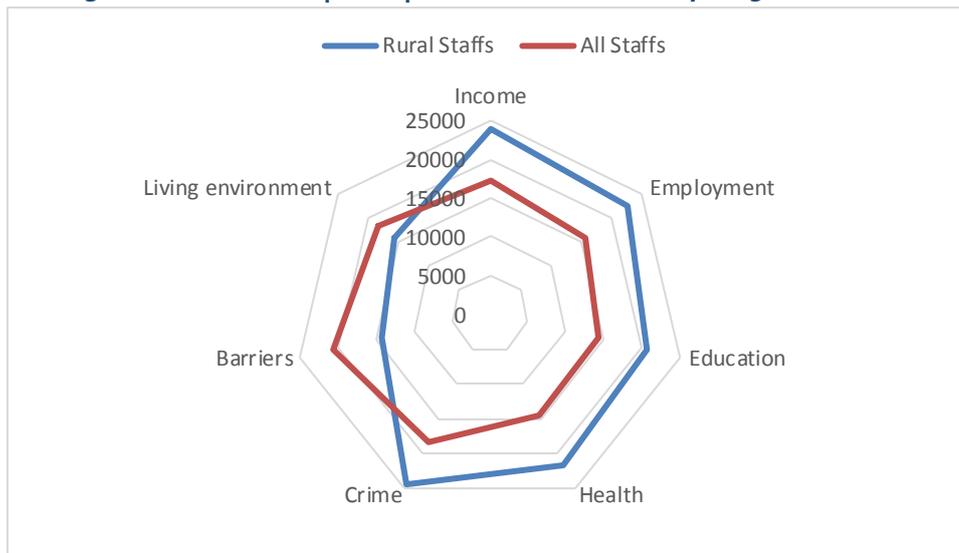
- 7.5. Very detailed data has been assembled by Government to enable analysis of deprivation by detailed geographies. For every LSOA, data is compiled according to seven 'sub-domains': income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services and, finally, living environment. Each of these is ranked from 1 (most deprived) to 32844 (least deprived) and LSOAs can be combined to create average rankings for areas such as rural Staffordshire. The sub-domains are also combined, by a weighted average, into an overall score for deprivation.
- 7.6. Chart 29 presents the headline IMD score for both 2015 and 2019, while Chart 30 shows the sub-domain data in such a way that a larger area means less deprivation. Rural Staffordshire is less deprived overall (Chart 29) and consistently less deprived across the sub-domains (Chart 30), except for Barriers to Housing and Services and Living environment.

Chart 29: Indices of Multiple Deprivation



Source: MHCLG (LSOA based)

Chart 30: Indices of Multiple Deprivation sub-domains, 2019



Source: MHCLG (LSOA based)

APPENDIX A: Data Sources

The geographical data used comes from a mixture of DEFRA classifications, at [Output Area](#) and at [Local Authority](#) areas. Smaller areas can be aggregated together by using [ONS lookup files](#).

Data on GVA comes from [ONS](#) and this can be combined with data on population (see below for source) to give per capita data. GVA per hour is also [ONS](#).

The ONS [NOMIS](#) service provides a lot of the data: everything on jobs and from the Annual Population Survey, population estimates, claimant count data and average earnings data, while housing affordability combined average earnings and [house price data](#).

Jobs in Agriculture come from DEFRA's [Survey of Agriculture](#) while forecasts of jobs by sector were supplied by Staffordshire County Council

Data on businesses comes from two sources at ONS, [UK Business](#) and [Business Demography](#).

Broadband coverage comes from an [interactive web report](#) published by Ofcom.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation are available from [MHCLG](#).

APPENDIX B: Data Tables

This section presents all the data from this report that is not already in tabular form.

Chart 6: GVA per working age resident (£)

	2015	2018
Rural Staffs	33666	35102
All Staffs	31405	34023

Source: ONS, sub regional GVA, population estimates

Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas

Chart 7: Productivity - GVA per hour worked

	2015	2018
Rural Staffs	28	29.3
All Staffs	26.9	28.7

Source: ONS

Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas

Chart 8: Jobs by sector, 2019 (percentages)

	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	Manufacturing	Construction	Wholesale	Retail	Transport & storage (inc postal)	Accommodation & food services	Professional, scientific & technical	Business administration & support services	Education	Health	Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services
England	0.6	8.1	4.5	4.1	9.8	4.7	7.1	8.7	9.1	9.2	12.7	4.6
All Staffs	1	12.7	5.5	5.1	9.3	8	7.4	4.9	7.6	7.8	13.6	5.1
Rural Staffs	2.4	14.8	6.3	6.4	5.7	9.3	10	6.1	6.8	7.8	6.9	5.8

Source: ONS, Business Register Employment Survey

Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas

Chart 9: Change in number of jobs by sector between 2015 and 2019 (percentages)

	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	Mining, quarrying & utilities	Manufacturing	Construction	Motor trades	Wholesale	Retail	Transport & storage (inc postal)	Accommodation & food services	Information & communication	Financial & insurance	Property	Professional, scientific & technical	Business administration & support services	Public administration & defence	Education	Health	Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services
England	-1.2	-4.3	3	13.7	8.3	13.2	0.8	12.3	11.3	6.6	3.9	7.1	9.6	3.7	3.4	-0.5	4.5	7.9
All Staffs	-10.8	28.6	3.4	-3.7	9.1	-7.7	-2.2	22.6	9.4	10	-33.3	20	4.5	-2.7	0	2.8	6.7	0
Rural Staffs	-30.5	33.2	9.6	0.4	43.3	7.4	5.8	15.6	14.6	0.7	7.1	33.2	6.8	-10.4	7.3	1.7	5.9	1.3

Source: ONS, Business Register Employment Survey

Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas

Chart 10: Location quotient and change in quotient between 2015 and 2019 for rural Staffordshire

	Agriculture, forestry & fishing	Mining, quarrying & utilities	Manufacturing	Construction	Motor trades	Wholesale	Retail	Transport & storage (inc postal)	Accommodation & food services	Information & communication	Financial & insurance	Property	Professional, scientific & technical	Business administration & support services	Public administration & defence	Education	Health	Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	
LQ 2019	0.34	1.27	1.9	1.32	1.23	1.62	0.63	1.88	1.36	0.46	0.23	0.73	0.69	0.77	1.02	0.92	0.56	1.3	
Change	0.44	1.2	1.05	0.87	1.28	1.04	1.05	1.01	1.01	0.93	1.01	1.22	0.96	0.85	1.02	1.01	1	0.95	
Size	0.2	1.44	15.13	6.4	2.3	6.5	5.82	9.49	10.19	2.06	0.82	1.29	6.29	6.92	4.13	8.01	7.11	5.9	
Source: Business Register Employment Survey, ONS and WECD calculations																			
Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas																			

Chart 13: Registered business population

	2015	2019
Rural Staffs	25400	27110
All Staffs	36600	39245
Source: UK Business, ONS		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 14: Business births per 1000 working age residents

	2015	2019
Rural Staffs	6.3	6.1
All Staffs	6.2	5.8
England	9.9	9.7
Source: ONS, Business demography		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 15: 3 year business survival rates (percentages)

	2016	2019
Rural Staffs	62	55.6
All Staffs	61.4	55.3
England	60.9	51.5
Source: ONS, Business demography		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 16: Population profile of rural Staffordshire						
	All Ages	Aged 0 to 15	Aged 16 to 24	Aged 25 to 49	Aged 50 to 64	Aged 65+
2011	231104	36748	25152	68287	51962	48955
2019	242556	36415	24164	65672	55353	60952
Source: ONS population projections						
Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas						

Chart 17: Population profiles, 2019 (percentages)			
	0 to 15	16-64	65+
Rural Staffs	15.0	59.9	25.1
All Staffs	18.0	61.2	20.8
England	19.2	62.4	18.4
Source: ONS population projections			
Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas			

Chart 18: Employment rate (percentages)		
	2014-15	2019-20
Rural Staffs	75.4	80.5
Staffs	73.6	77.9
England	73.2	76.5
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 19: Self employment rates (percentages)		
	2014-15	2019-20
Rural Staffs	8.5	11.1
Staffs	8	9.3
England	10.4	11
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 20: Claimant count rate, 2015-2020 (percentage of working age population)

	Rural Staff	All Staffs	England			
Jan-15	0.8	1.6	2.0			
Feb-15	0.8	1.7	2.0			
Mar-15	0.8	1.6	2.0			
Apr-15	0.8	1.6	1.9			
May-15	0.7	1.6	1.8			
Jun-15	0.7	1.5	1.8			
Jul-15	0.7	1.5	1.8			
Aug-15	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Sep-15	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Oct-15	0.7	1.2	1.7			
Nov-15	0.6	1.2	1.7			
Dec-15	0.6	1.2	1.7			
Jan-16	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Feb-16	0.7	1.5	1.8			
Mar-16	0.7	1.5	1.8			
Apr-16	0.7	1.5	1.8			
May-16	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Jun-16	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Jul-16	0.7	1.4	1.7			
Aug-16	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Sep-16	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Oct-16	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Nov-16	0.7	1.4	1.7			
Dec-16	0.6	1.3	1.7			
Jan-17	0.7	1.4	1.8			
Feb-17	0.7	1.6	1.8			
Mar-17	0.8	1.6	1.9			
Apr-17	0.8	1.7	1.9			
May-17	0.8	1.6	1.9			
Jun-17	0.8	1.6	1.9			
Jul-17	0.8	1.6	1.8			
Aug-17	0.8	1.6	1.8			
Sep-17	0.8	1.5	1.8			
Oct-17	0.7	1.5	1.8			
Nov-17	0.7	1.5	1.8			
Dec-17	0.8	1.6	1.9			
Jan-18	0.8	1.7	1.9			
Feb-18	0.9	1.8	2.0			
Mar-18	0.9	1.9	2.1			
Apr-18	0.9	1.9	2.1			
May-18	0.9	1.9	2.1			
Jun-18	0.9	1.9	2.1			
Jul-18	0.9	1.8	2.1			
Aug-18	0.9	1.8	2.1			
Sep-18	0.9	1.9	2.1			
Oct-18	1.0	2	2.2			
Nov-18	0.9	2	2.2			
Dec-18	1.0	2.1	2.3			
Jan-19	1.0	2.2	2.4			
Feb-19	1.1	2.4	2.5			
Mar-19	1.1	2.5	2.6			
Apr-19	1.2	2.6	2.6			
May-19	1.2	2.6	2.6			
Jun-19	1.2	2.7	2.7			
Jul-19	1.3	2.8	2.7			
Aug-19	1.3	2.8	2.7			
Sep-19	1.3	2.8	2.8			
Oct-19	1.3	2.8	2.8			
Nov-19	1.4	2.9	2.8			
Dec-19	1.4	2.9	2.9			
Jan-20	1.4	3	2.9			
Feb-20	1.5	3.1	3.0			
Mar-20	1.5	3.2	3.0			
Apr-20	3.1	4.9	5.0			
May-20	4.0	6.1	6.4			
Jun-20	3.8	5.9	6.3			
Jul-20	3.9	6	6.4			
Aug-20	4.1	6.1	6.5			
Sep-20	4.0	6.1	6.6			
Oct-20	3.8	5.9	6.3			
Nov-20	3.7	5.4	6.3			
Dec-20	3.7	5.4	6.4			

Source: DWP, NOMIS

	Managers, directors and senior officials	Professional occupations	Associate technical and professional	Administrative and secretarial	Skilled trades	Caring, leisure and other service	Sales and customer service	Process, plant and machine operatives	Elementary occupations
All England	12	22.3	15.2	9.8	9.6	8.8	6.8	5.7	9.6
Staffordshire	11.9	18.7	14.1	8.6	11.3	9.1	6.7	8	11.5
Rural Staffs	14.1	21.8	13.7	9	11.3	7.5	6	6.8	9.8
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS									
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas									

	Managers, directors and senior officials	Professional occupations	Associate technical and professional	Administrative and secretarial	Skilled trades	Caring, leisure and other service	Sales and customer service	Process, plant and machine operatives	Elementary occupations
2019	14.1	21.8	13.7	9.0	11.3	7.5	6.0	6.8	9.8
2015	12.3	17.9	13.9	10.2	10.8	9.1	7.2	7.3	11.3
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS									
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas									

	NVQ4+		No quals	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Staffordshire	29.6	35.5	11.5	7.3
Rural Staffs	32.4	41.6	9.2	5.3
England	36.7	40	8.4	7.5
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS				
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas				

	L4+	L3	L2	L1	Other / none
Rural Staffs	41.6	18.2	18.9	9.2	12.2
All Staffs	35.5	19.2	21.3	9.8	14.2
England	40	18.5	17.2	10.1	14.2
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS					
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas					

Chart 25: Proportion of workforce engaged in work related training (percentages)

	2015	2019
Rural Staffs	8.3	12.8
All Staffs	7.5	11.7
England	9.6	10
Source: Annual Population Survey, ONS		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 26: Full time gross median average weekly earnings, 2015 and 2019 (£)

	Resident basis		Workplace basis	
	2015	2019	2015	2019
Rural Staffs	507	569	465	522
All Staffs	500	565	476	535
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS				
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas				

Chart 27: Housing affordability (ratio of median house prices to median earnings)

	2015	2019
Rural Staffs	5.9	6.3
Staffs	5.7	6.1
England	7.3	7.6
Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, house price statistics, ONS		
Rural Staffordshire defined by Local Authority district areas		

Chart 28: Fixed broadband coverage at at least 100 Mb/s, 2020

	Residential	Commercial
Rural Staffs	19.8	11.5
All Staffs	54.8	30.8
Rural England	23	7
All England	63	14
Source: Connected nations, 2020		
Rural areas according to Ofcom definition		

	2015	2019					
Rural Staffs	22271	22312					
All Staffs	17045	16890					
Source: MHCLG							
Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas							

	Income	Employment	Education	Health	Crime	Barriers	Living environment	
Rural Staffs	23902	22525	20645	21833	24426	14214	15680	
All Staffs	17227	15722	14279	14412	18374	20599	18184	
Source: MHCLG								
Rural Staffordshire defined by Lower-layer Super Output Areas								

APPENDIX C: Sector Insights

Agriculture

Staffordshire has around 190,000 hectares of land on 3,300 agricultural holdings² with almost 117,000 (62%) of that being grassland suitable mainly for livestock grazing and growing of hay and silage for animal feed. The livestock sector output in Staffordshire was £300m in 2019, nearly three times the output of its crops at £113m. The sector spent £292m with suppliers.

Staffordshire's agricultural and horticultural production is very diverse, and the vast bulk is commodity output for further processing. Latest data show 220,000 cattle with the dairy herd being twice the size of the beef herd; 280,000 sheep, 60,000 pigs (for breeding and fattening) and 1.8m poultry, 70% of these being for chicken meat.

In terms of arable crops, wheat accounted for 26,000 ha, followed by barley (winter and spring) at 11,000 ha and oilseed rape at 7,200. There is a further 13,000 ha of arable crops plus nearly 1,400 ha of high value fruit and vegetables, the largest segments being fruit followed by vegetables and salads. Farm woodland accounts for 7,000ha.

There are nearly 10,000 workers on Staffordshire's farms including part time and casual workers. Over half of these are farm business owners and their spouses. In total, nearly 3,300 workers (one third) are part time.

Much of Staffordshire's commodity produce is processed on the edges of the county or within adjacent areas. Most of the major dairy buyers are active in the Staffordshire milk field. For example, milk may be processed at Mueller's Market Drayton or Telford plant. Ornu Foods, based in Leek cuts and packs hard cheese produced in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Meat may be processed at plants in the Midlands or ABP Shrewsbury with limited processing within Staffordshire (mainly small scale). Potatoes are processed at McCains in Wombourne. Soft fruit is generally sold via producer organisations into supermarket supply chains e.g. Berryworld. And Staffordshire is home to several salad producers.

Looking to the future, there is a continuing need to improve productivity and support succession of family farms with new entrants. The presence of Harper Adams and Reaseheath provides a wide range of training to the sector. Improving productivity will rely on a range of techniques including genetic improvement through breeding (animals and crops plus the use of Genetic prediction in animals), the application of digital and data e.g. electronic recording, development of specialist apps for a range of purposes plus the application of technology e.g. robotic milking, controlled irrigation and scheduling to name but two. Agricultural diversification can provide a source of additional income but typically only about 5% of that of agriculture based on experience across the UK. Some farm businesses will be able to expand into added value processing, direct sale to consumers etc. But the focus needs to be on developing production in line with market trends. This requires a mix of

² The latest detailed agricultural statistics at the Staffordshire level are for 2016 as they are not produced annually.

training and skills, entrepreneurialism, capital investment (both in individual businesses and by the public sector e.g. broadband, utilities, transport, starter units), a supportive planning system and exposure to the latest consumer trends. With Amazon's move into the UK grocery sector, there will be stronger competition and a need to adapt quickly. This combined with Brexit, potential for cheaper food imports and an increasing focus on localism means that the sector is at a critical point in its development.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing is the most significant sector to Staffordshire's rural economy in terms of employment contribution – accounting for over 15 per cent of rural employment.

The most significant manufacturing sub-sector is the manufacture of machinery and equipment, accounting for nearly a third of manufacturing employment (29.7 per cent). Other significant sub-sectors are the manufacture of motor vehicles, fabricated metal products, food production and mineral products.

Figure 1: Manufacturing Employment in Rural Staffordshire by Sub-Sector

	Jobs	%
10 : Manufacture of food products	1,645	10.7%
11 : Manufacture of beverages	200	1.3%
13 : Manufacture of textiles	300	2.0%
14 : Manufacture of wearing apparel	10	0.1%
16 : Manufacture of wood and of products of wood and cork...	415	2.7%
17 : Manufacture of paper and paper products	20	0.1%
18 : Printing and reproduction of recorded media	225	1.5%
20 : Manufacture of chemicals and chemical products	370	2.4%
21 : Manufacture of basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical preparations	110	0.7%
22 : Manufacture of rubber and plastic products	640	4.2%
23 : Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products	1,590	10.4%
24 : Manufacture of basic metals	605	3.9%
25 : Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment	1,840	12.0%
26 : Manufacture of computer, electronic and optical products	270	1.8%
27 : Manufacture of electrical equipment	110	0.7%
28 : Manufacture of machinery and equipment n.e.c.	4,555	29.7%
29 : Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers	1,860	12.1%
30 : Manufacture of other transport equipment	180	1.2%
31 : Manufacture of furniture	210	1.4%
32 : Other manufacturing	205	1.3%
	15,360	100.0%

Source: ONS Business Register of Employment Survey (BRES)

Rural Staffordshire is the location for a number of Staffordshire's largest and growing manufacturing firms across a range of sub-sectors including food processing companies Ornuva Foods and Florette, Prince Minerals, Roltech Engineering and JCB.

Staffordshire's Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering Hub for skills development includes sites at Stafford College's Rodbaston Campus (AgriSTEM Academy), Penkridge (Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering and Agri-Tech) and the JCB Academy at Rocester (Advanced Engineering Academy). Manufacturing productivity, measured in terms of GVA per job, ranges from 110% the England average in Staffordshire Moorlands to 70% in Cannock and East Staffordshire (LIS evidence).

Supporting manufacturing firms to remain competitive through innovation, adoption of new technologies including digital technologies, and support for skills development is a priority of the Local Industrial Strategy.

EU Exit threatens to cause significant disruption to manufacturing supply chains but with potential new investment opportunities arising from supply chain re/on or near-shoring.

Visitor Economy

Staffordshire is an attractive county with a large proportion of England and Wales' population within a short drive time³. Its rurality, the presence of two major theme parks (Alton Towers and Drayton Manor) plus other assets such as the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the nearby Peak District, Canal network, National Memorial Arboretum, Trentham Monkey Forest and Trentham Gardens, pottery heritage and so on are what create its tourist draw. Much of its visitation is people from the UK rather than abroad and the focus is on short trips. Many of the visitors come because of the countryside as well as the draw of the theme parks.

Staffordshire's accommodation offer includes hotels, pub accommodation, guest houses and B&Bs, holiday cottages, holiday lodge parks, holiday parks, touring caravan and camping sites, glamping sites, group and youth accommodation, spa resorts, and wedding venues with accommodation. There are also 13 canal boat holiday hire companies at 12 marinas across the area.

There are an estimated 677 establishments with 27,000 beds in the commercial sector. On top of this a further 600 beds are offered through private accommodation such as AirBnb. The total annual capacity is 27,600 beds with just over 10m bed nights not including canal boats.

The economic impact of the sector is estimated annually with the latest data for 2018 estimating 27m trips, direct visitor spend of £1.34bn and 32,000 direct and indirect jobs supported. Prior to COVID-19 the sector was growing by around 3% even though the number of trips fell between 2017 and 2018.

Hotels are concentrated in the main urban centres with a dominance of budget provision at 3 star level and little 4 star provision. Budget performance is strong but the 3 and 4 star hotel performance is weak. This is related to a range of factors including variable quality, lack of corporate demand and strong price-driven leisure business driven by the theme parks. There is little 4 star and branded 3 star provision and little development in the past 5 years. Despite this, demand is strong for

³ Information in this report is drawn from the Staffordshire Accommodation Strategy by Hotel Solutions and Economic Impact of Tourism Staffordshire 2018 by The Research Solution.

boutique, luxury, and 4-star B&Bs with shortages of accommodation throughout peak season. Other serviced accommodation is small scale and of variable quality while high quality pub accommodation trades well.

To grow the sector, the aim is to attract more visitors to stay longer and spend more. To do so, improving the quality and range of accommodation is key. There is potential as follows:

- Existing businesses - to upgrade their quality, get 'on-trend' expand provision at peak times and to develop extra facilities such as spas, function space and leisure facilities that will attract new markets and extend the season.
- New serviced accommodation – there is demand for budget hotels, other types of accommodation and full service 3 and 4-star hotels, though public subsidy may be required given the level of returns.
- Non-serviced accommodation – to grow in rural areas and near major attractions especially in peak season, but with potential to have a weather-proof offer for out of season. Opportunities such as the creation of French-style 'Aires' for motorhomes and camping could be considered.

There is a need to raise awareness of the opportunities, prioritise hotel sites, back existing successful businesses with expansion plans and grow interest amongst asset owners, developers, and other stakeholders. There may be a need for financial support for viability of some developments as well as supporting existing businesses to invest. There is also potential to develop more guided activities such as mountain biking, walking and other sustainable outdoor activities.

Logistics

During the last decade there has been strong growth in online retail, coupled with associated parcel delivery, logistics and warehousing. In areas of low warehouse vacancy, rents have increased by almost 100% in five years as businesses rush to acquire units to improve supply chain efficiency.⁴

Staffordshire has a particularly strong logistics, transport, and storage sector, thanks to its location at the heart of England and its excellent connectivity by road (M6, M6 Toll, M54) and rail (West Coast Mainline). For example, between 2009 and 2017, the number of jobs in the logistics sector in the SSLEP area grew by 19.9% (approximately 6,700 new jobs), almost double the England average of 10.8%.⁵ Moreover, the transport and storage sector accounts for 32,000 jobs in the SSLEP area, higher than the national and regional average.⁶ This large logistics presence in Staffordshire is perhaps why wholesale retailers (in particular, vegetables and fruit, and cosmetics) are also large employers in the county, and higher than national and regional averages.⁷ The logistics sector in Staffordshire is particularly strong around Rugeley (also a rural hub town), Tamworth, Stafford, and Stoke-on-Trent.⁸

⁴ Savills, Rural Logistics (November 2020), p.2.

⁵ SSLEP, LIS Evidence Base (September 2019), p.3, p.21, p.29.

⁶ SSLEP, LIS Evidence Base (September 2019), p.24.

⁷ SSLEP, LIS Evidence Base (September 2019), p.29

⁸ SSLEP, LIS Evidence Base (September 2019), p.38.

The impact of Covid has accelerated two trends: the growth in online retail and associated delivery/logistics, and increased demand for homes in rural locations as preferences shift from convenience of urban life towards green space and space to work from home.⁹ For example, 91 local authorities have seen parcel deliveries increase by more than 100% over the past year, with some experiencing a 500% increase.¹⁰

However, rural areas present a challenge to logistics sector growth in due to their sparse populations, meaning delivery routes are less efficient. There is therefore a need for rural logistics space to service the added demand, with Savills calculating that an additional 24.6 million square feet of warehouse space will be needed in rural areas by 2025.¹¹

Whilst land is needed for additional warehouse capacity, current rural industrial estates may not be suitable. This presents a diversification opportunity for landowners who can deliver new buildings in appropriate locations, or re-purpose existing buildings that are no longer required for agricultural purposes.¹² So, logistics and warehousing is a further potential diversification opportunity for agricultural businesses, sitting alongside office space, tourism accommodation, and food services.

This is particularly relevant for post-Covid economic recovery, with SSLEP recognising logistics and distribution as a locally important growth sector,¹³ and noting the impact of Covid on hospitality businesses, which may affect farm diversification enterprises, for example, tourist accommodation.

⁹ Savills, Rural Logistics (November 2020), p.3.

¹⁰ Savills, Rural Logistics (November 2020), p.4.

¹¹ Savills, Rural Logistics (November 2020), p.4.

¹² Savills, Rural Logistics (November 2020), p.5.

¹³ Staffordshire County Council, Back to Business: Covid-19 Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy (2020), p.11.

STAFFORDSHIRE RURAL STRATEGY - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Potential Projects Overview

27 Eol's

Project details are currently confidential

Concept Stage	Priority Alignment (most Eol's are multi priority & some multi town)	Scoring	Potential Area/s	Sector/s (most multi)
11 Project Start Stage	15	1 Score 1 - Low	24 Local	2 Agri
	4	5 Score 2 - L/M	11 Regional	15 Tourism
16 Eol's with synergies to others listed	16	12 Score 3 - Med	2 National	2 Retail
	12	9 Score 4 - M/H		1 Leisure
11 Eol's with no synergies	14	0 Score 5 - High	16 Job creation	1 Hospitality
			11 New businesses	1 Creative
			10 Business space	1 Heritage
			3 Housing	1 Education
			4 Infrastructure	7 Numerous

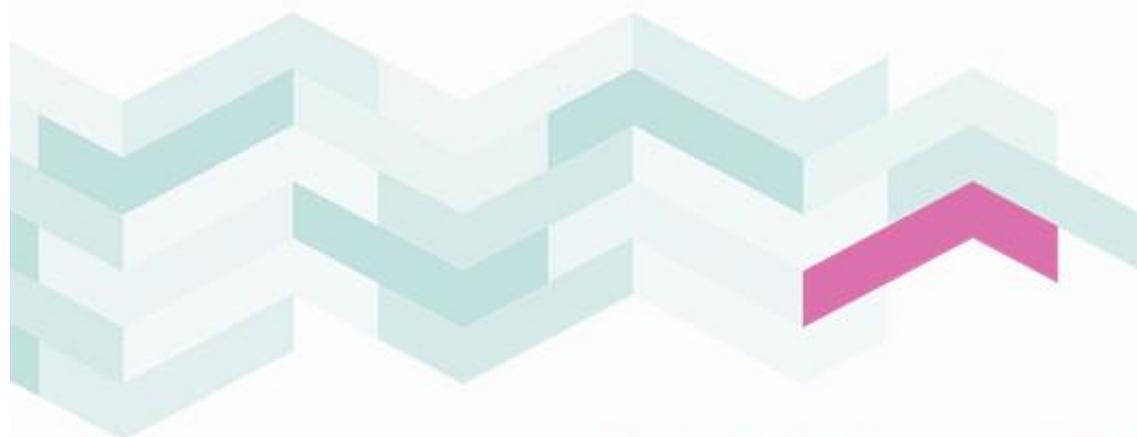
14 - SCC role TBC
 8 - SCC as Partner
 5 - SCC as Lead
 395

Number per town - 3xCheadle, 10xLeek, 5xRugeley, 1xStone, 1xUttoxeter

PROJECT DETAILS HAVE BEEN EXCLUDED DUE TO CONFIDENTIALITY REQUEST FROM DISTRICTS

Staffordshire Rural Economic Strategy

Rural Hub Town Profiles



With pride. With purpose. With you.

Staffordshire Rural Hub Town Profile – Leek

Vision: “Leek will be an important civic and service centre for its population and will further strengthen its role as the principal town in the District. The quality of the retail offer in the town centre will have improved further, and the diversity of employment opportunities, facilities, and services it offers increased. It will have enhanced its role as a tourist attraction, building on its special character, heritage and built environment assets.” *Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020)*

Local Economy

There are 6,800 jobs in Leek (2019)¹

19% Retail (England 9%)

10% Manufacturing (England 8%)

9% Arts & Leisure (England 5%)

7% Accommodation & Food (England 7%)

7% Financial & Insurance (England 4%)

Key employers (250+ employees)



Key employers (50-249 employees)



People

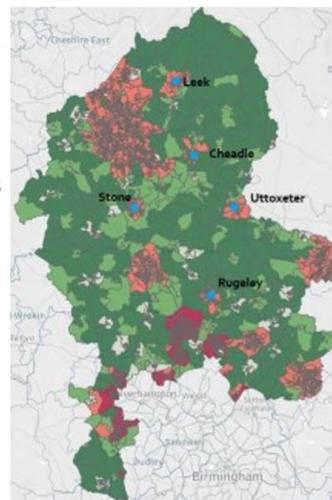
Leek is home to 20,260 residents (2019):

61% working age (16-64) (England 63%)

22% aged 65+ (England 19%)

Place

- ✓ Peak District: 3 miles
- ✓ Derby: 50 minutes
- ✓ Manchester: 1 hour
- ✓ Birmingham: 90 minutes



Deprivation

Leek scores well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 'Barriers to Housing and Services' and 'Crime', but below average for 'Education'.

Strengths and Opportunities

- ✓ Strong employment base, with global businesses (e.g. Ornuu, Capita)
- ✓ Thriving high street – independent retailers, local branding, low shop vacancy rates
- ✓ Local centre for agricultural supplies
- ✓ Tourism opportunities:
 - Proximity to the Peak District
 - Visitor-focused shops, markets & facilities
 - Historic and attractive townscape

Challenges

- ✓ Empty mill buildings and contaminated industrial land (viability gap)
- ✓ Weak transport links (especially public transport, and no rail station)
- ✓ Lack of modern business space and serviced land for business growth

1. Agriculture catchment employment is not well represented in Lower Layer Super Output Area data. Employment 8% (2,421 jobs) in Staffordshire Moorlands Produced by WEC Don behalf of Staffordshire County Council
Data sources: ONS population estimates (2019), Staffordshire County Council IDBR (2020), ONS BRES (2019), MHCLG IMD (2019). www.ecd.com

Staffordshire Rural Hub Town Profile – Cheadle

Vision: "A modern rural hub with a historic core and a thriving micro-business heart. Cheadle will become a more sustainable settlement, better able to meet its own needs, enhancing and enlarging its role as a significant service centre for the local population and those in its rural hinterland, and achieved through growth in housing and employment, with significant investment in the town's social and physical infrastructure." *Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020)*

Local Economy

There are 4,425 jobs in Cheadle (2019)¹

38% Manufacturing (England 8%)

9% Retail (England 9%)

6% Accommodation & Food (England 7%)

6% Construction (England 5%)

Key employers (250+ employees)



Key employers (50-249 employees)



People

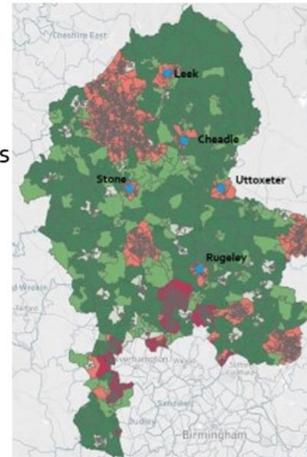
Cheadle is home to 11,353 residents (2019):

59% working age (16-64) (England 63%)

25% aged 65+ (England 19%)

Place

- ✓ Derby: 45 minutes
- ✓ Birmingham: 1 hour
- ✓ Manchester: 90 minutes



Deprivation

Cheadle scores well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 'Barriers to Housing and Services', but below average for 'Employment', 'Health' and 'Education'.

Strengths and Opportunities

- ✓ Strong manufacturing base with global businesses (e.g. JCB, Klarius)
- ✓ Opportunity to re-shape key sites to serve the town (following change of use/demand)
- ✓ Close to A50 (Derby-Stoke) growth corridor
- ✓ Tourism opportunities:
 - Proximity to Alton Towers
 - Proximity to the Peak District
 - Historic townscape and local attractions, including St Giles' church

Challenges

- ✓ High shop unit vacancies and part-time use (poor quality frontages)
- ✓ Lack of house building to meet local needs and stimulate economy
- ✓ Poor transport infrastructure (poor links to A50 for industrial traffic, no rail station)

1. Agriculture catchment employment is not well represented in Lower Layer Super Output Area data. Employment 8% (2,421 jobs) in Staffordshire Moorlands. Produced by WECD on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. Data sources: ONS population estimates (2019), Staffordshire County Council IDBR (2020), ONS BRES (2019), MHCLG IMD (2019). www.ecdc.com

Staffordshire Rural Hub Town Profile – Uttoxeter

Vision: “Uttoxeter will have a multi-functional, attractive Town Centre that incorporates a wide-ranging mix of activities set within a high-quality network of pleasant streets and spaces, which create a strong identity and a place where people want to live, work and visit. The town will build upon its strategic location, its unique historic environment and its shops and markets, to attract and retain new investment for the benefit of local business and residential communities.”

Uttoxeter Masterplan(2020)

Local Economy

There are 6,470 jobs in Uttoxeter (2019)¹

26% Manufacturing (England 8%)

16% Retail (England 9%)

11% Accommodation & Food (England 7%)

7% Arts & Leisure (England 3%)

Key employers (250+ employees)



Key employers (50-249 employees)



People

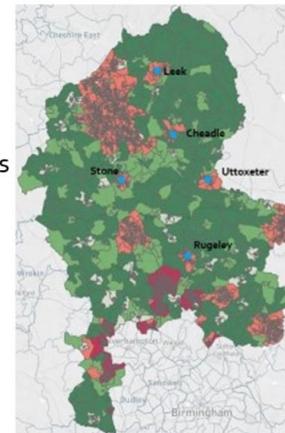
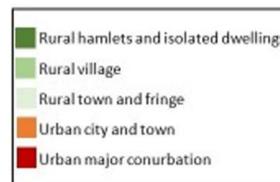
Uttoxeter is home to 13,467 residents (2019):

62% working age (16-64) (England 63%)

20% aged 65+ (England 19%)

Place

- ✓ Derby: 30 minutes
- ✓ Birmingham: 1 hour
- ✓ Manchester: 80 minutes



Deprivation

Uttoxeter scores well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for ‘Barriers to Housing and Services’ and ‘Crime’ but below average for ‘Employment’, ‘Health’ and ‘Education’.

Strengths and Opportunities

- ✓ Tourism opportunities
 - Proximity to Alton Towers
 - Proximity to surrounding countryside
 - Racecourse
- ✓ Good road and rail transport links
- ✓ Number of retail and residential development site opportunities

Challenges

- ✓ Town centre investment needed (high retail unit vacancies, lack of quality, old retail stock)
- ✓ Limited high-quality hotel accommodation offer
- ✓ Number of sites in third party ownership, restricting Council ability to intervene

1. Agriculture catchment employment is not well represented in Lower Layer Super Output Area data. Employment 2% (1,283 jobs) in East Staffordshire. Produced by WECD on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. Data sources: ONS population estimates (2019), Staffordshire County Council IDBR (2020), ONS BRES (2019), MHCLG IMD (2019). www-ecd.com

Staffordshire Rural Hub Town Profile – Stone

Vision: “Stone will be notable as a thriving market town alongside the river and canal, with an attractive and accessible historic centre, a high-quality network of green space, a wide range of leisure and recreational activities, a successful tourism sector, high quality local services and a diversity of local employment opportunities.” *Stone Neighbourhood Plan (2018)*

Local Economy

There are 7,075 jobs in Stone (2019)¹

22% Manufacturing (England 8%)

9% Retail (England 9%)

9% Business Admin & Support (England 9%)

8% Accommodation & Food (England 7%)

8% Arts & Leisure (England 7%)

Key employers (250+ employees)



Key employers (50-249 employees)



People

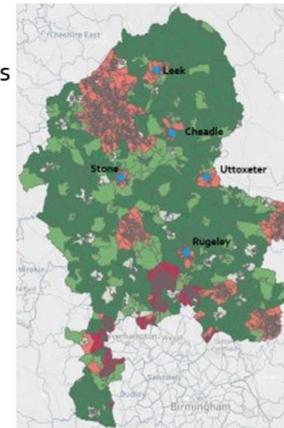
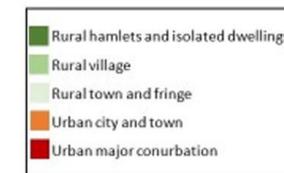
Stone is home to 16,979 residents (2019):

59% working age (16-64) (England 63%)

23% aged 65+ (England 19%)

Place

- ✓ Stoke-on-Trent: 20 minutes
- ✓ Birmingham: 45 minutes
- ✓ Derby: 50 minutes
- ✓ Manchester: 70 minutes



Deprivation

Stone scores well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 'Barriers to Housing and Services' and 'Living Environment' but below average for 'Employment' and 'Education'.

Strengths and Opportunities

- ✓ Historic and attractive townscape, including local tourist attractions (e.g. canal)
- ✓ Growing arts, crafts and creative sector
- ✓ Strong local food and drink offer
- ✓ HS2 – local supply chain and employment opportunities
- ✓ Housing and employment site development opportunities (e.g. Meecebrook)

Challenges

- ✓ A34 Meaford industrial site needs further development, promotion and investment
- ✓ Risk that HS2 results in Stone becoming a 'commuter town' with loss of its village and community 'feel'

1. Agriculture catchment employment is not well represented in Lower Layer Super Output Area data. Employment % (2,693 jobs) in Staffordborough. Produced by WECD on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. Data sources: ONS population estimates (2019), Staffordshire County Council IDBR (2020), ONS BRES (2019), MHCLG IMD (2019). www-ecdc.com

Staffordshire Rural Hub Town Profile – Rugeley

Vision: “We will preserve, enhance and develop the identity, environmental impact and rich history of Rugeley, whilst drawing upon the advantages and opportunities to be found in forthcoming developmental projects. With many conservation areas, Rugeley will be well used by its communities and will also attract visitors to its unique location between the River Trent, the canal and Cannock Chase AONB.”

Rugeley Town Council Strategy and Action Plan (2021/22)

Local Economy

There are 8,680 jobs in Rugeley (2019)¹

25% Transport & Storage (England 5%)

17% Manufacturing (England 8%)

12% Retail (England 9%)

8% Accommodation & Food (England 7%)

Key employers (250+ employees)

amazon

JCB

Armitage Shanks

Key employers (50-249 employees)

ULTRA

HAWKINS LOGISTICS

PREMIER NUTRITION

N. S. CLARKE TRANSPORT LTD

Royal Mail

People

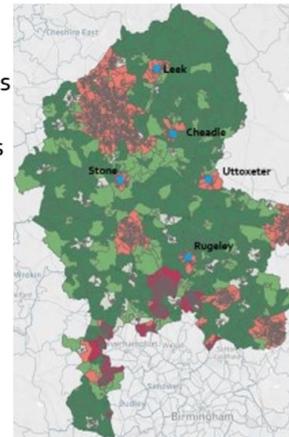
Rugeley is home to 24,735 residents (2019):

61% working age (16-64) (England 63%)

21% aged 65+ (England 19%)

Place

- ✓ Birmingham: 40 minutes
- ✓ Derby: 40 minutes
- ✓ Manchester: 90 minutes



Deprivation

Scores well on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for most measures, including ‘Income’, but below average for ‘Barriers to Housing and Services’.

Strengths and Opportunities

- ✓ New large housing opportunities at former Rugeley Power Station site (including opportunities for innovative, low carbon solutions) and at Aelfgarsite
- ✓ Good transport connectivity (road and rail)
- ✓ Tourism opportunities: attractive and historic town centre, close to Cannock Chase AONB
- ✓ Independent traders dominate town centre

Challenges

- ✓ Town centre investment needed, including public realm
- ✓ Need to look at mixed use opportunities in the town centre
- ✓ Pockets of deprivation, including education and connectivity

1. Agriculture catchment employment is not well represented in Lower Layer Super Output Area data. Employment 1% (1,222 jobs) in Cannock Chase, Tamworth and Lichfield council areas. Produced by WECD on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. Data sources: ONS population estimates (2019), Staffordshire County Council IDBR (2020), ONS BRES (2019), MHCLG IMD (2019). www.ecdcom

NAME	ORGANISTAION
Nigel Senior (E,I&S)	SCC
Ian Jackson (E,I&S)	SCC
Eric Henderson (E,I&S)	SCC
Gemma Amphlett (E,I&S)	SCC
Townsend, Joanne	DEFRA
Richard Bower	Lower Drayton Farm (Business Rep)
Matthew Hustwit	Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce
Katie Judge	WECD
Martyne Manning	Stafford BC
Marek Hornak	Staffordshire University
Tony Millar	Great Grounds (Business Rep)
Polly Gibb	WiRE
George Dibble	WECD
Jeremy Lowe	NFU
Rose Judeh-Elwell	Harper Adams
Paul Chatwin (E,I&S)	SCC
Rhouda Elalfy	Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce
Jonathan Vining (E,I&S)	SCC
Philip White (County Cllr)	SCC
Kim Graham	Newcastle under Lyme BC
Sarah Simpson (E,I&S)	SCC
Sarah Bentley (F&C)	SCC

Simon Pemberton	Keele University
Richard Hadland (E,I&S)	SCC
Matthew Shufflebotham (E,I&S)	SCC
Andrea Sammons (E,I&S)	SCC
Donald Brook	WECD
Stephen Deakin	BCRS
Ann Pittard	Keele University
Anne Boyd (EnterpriseStokeStaffs)	SSLEP
Helen Pakpahan	SMDC
Karen Woolley	FSB
Mark Parkinson (E,I&S)	SCC
Anthony Hodge (E,I&S)	SCC

Community Impact Assessment

Rural Economic Strategy

Draft for Consultation

Ian Jackson

Date Friday, 08 April 2022

➤ Equality Assessment

The Public Sector Equality Duty is part of the Equality Act 2010, and this Duty requires us as a public body to have ‘due regard’ to eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act. It requires us to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a ‘relevant protected characteristic’ and people who don’t.

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Age - older and younger people	N/A		As below
Disability - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.	N/A		However, inclusive growth and levelling-up is a ‘golden-thread’ throughout the RES and therefore the impact on specific groups will be considered as part of project development.
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another	N/A		However, inclusive growth and levelling-up is a ‘golden-thread’ throughout the RES and therefore the impact on specific groups will be considered as part of project development.
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work	N/A		As above
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers	N/A		As above

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins	N/A		As above
Religion or Belief - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered	N/A		As above
Sex - men or women	N/A		As above
Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes	N/A		As above

➤ **Workforce Assessment**

Key considerations:

- Consider the impact of your proposal on staff with different **protected characteristics** – the staffing profile data can be a useful source of evidence and can be presented below in graph form to supplement your narrative.
- You should consider the impact of job losses (pre and post change), changes to terms and conditions, available support for staff and what the HR protocols are.
- For support to complete this section, please contact your People Operations Adviser.

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
N/A			

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➤ Health and Care Assessment

Key considerations:

- Determine how the proposal will impact on resident's health and wellbeing (mental and physical), and whether the proposal will impact on the demands for, or access to health and care services for those eligible for care and support under the Care Act 2014.

- Also consider whether your proposal promotes healthy lifestyles, personal responsibility, and independence (including independent living) with support from family, friends and/or the community.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
The Covid crisis and negative impacts on the economy may have adversely affected mental health due to concerns related to jobs and money.	The Rural Economic Strategy aims to support the recovery of the economy and return to growth as quickly as possible, thereby reducing the impacts on mental health.	A key concern is that residents become long-term unemployed with associated emotional and well-being adverse effects.	The RES sets out how we will minimise such effects by supporting people to return to work as soon as possible and be able to find good quality employment.

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➤ Communities Assessment

Key considerations:

- Determine whether your proposal will provide opportunities to strengthen community capacity to create safer and stronger communities and provide opportunities for volunteering.
- Consider the different localities and communities your proposal may impact, identifying any communities that could be more adversely impacted than others, for example, rural communities.

- Engage with [Strategic Delivery Managers](#) (SDMs) – they have a great deal of knowledge about their relevant localities and will be key to providing insight and expertise.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Inclusive growth and levelling up cuts across all priorities within the Rural Economic Strategy, with the aim being that growth will benefit all residents.	The Rural Economic Strategy sets out how we will create a more prosperous Staffordshire to the benefit of all our residents in rural communities.	Not delivering the RES has the potential to adversely affect our resident's economic wellbeing, including for specific groups.	Whilst setting our overall priorities, the RES allows us to remain agile and respond accordingly to changing conditions to ensure we are continuing to have a positive impact on the development of the local rural economy.

➤ Economic Assessment

Key considerations:

- Determine whether the proposal will impact economic growth and whether it will promote Staffordshire as a 'go to' location for new businesses to invest and start up and existing businesses to grow.
- Consider whether the proposal will impact upon resident's income and access to good quality jobs.
- Also consider how the proposal will allow residents to improve, diversify and adapt their skills and qualifications.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
The Rural Economic Strategy sets out our priorities to support the creation of more, good quality jobs in the county through the delivery of support programmes to rural businesses.	Enabling the creation of more, better jobs and supporting people to take advantage of these opportunities has significant benefits including, including for the wealth, health, and wellbeing of residents.	Doing nothing risks the creation of poor-quality jobs that negatively impact the health and wellbeing of residents.	Delivery of the Rural Economic Strategy will support the creation of more, good quality jobs within the county especially focusing on jobs created in the rural hub towns and sectors prevalent across the county's rural areas.

➤ Climate Change Assessment

Key considerations:

- Our mission is to 'Make Staffordshire Sustainable', and we have made a commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across every aspect of our service provision and estate. Our [Climate Change StaffSpace page](#) sets out our plans to achieve this which will help you to consider the impact of your proposal on Climate Change and how it helps us to achieve our vision of "net zero".
- If the project has some negative aspects with this strategic goal in mind, then you should demonstrate how this is to be mitigated.
- It would also be useful if there could be a carbon impact (tons of CO2e), attributed to the completion of the entire project.

- Any carbon saving that can be attributed to the proposal, should also be explained and quantified.
- It is essential that you complete the [Climate Change Learning Hub module](#) before completing this assessment.
- If there are no climate change implications arising as a result of the project, you can provide background to show this has been considered.
- Please contact the Sustainability and Climate Change Team at sustainability@staffordshire.gov.uk for further advice and guidance.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
All residents.	Climate change and the need to support the transition to a low carbon economy is a key priority that cuts across all strategic priorities within the Rural Economic Strategy.	Not supporting clean growth has the potential to lead to unsustainable future development.	Climate change is a key strand throughout the Rural Economic Strategy and will need to be considered as part of project / programme development. All intervention activity through the RES should seek to support Staffordshire's economy becoming net zero by 2050 in line with both local and national climate change policies and strategies.
Specific projects are already being developed and delivered as part of delivery plans for the Rural Economic Strategy. However, inclusive growth and levelling-up is a 'golden-thread' throughout the RES and therefore the impact on specific groups will be considered as part of project development.	Supporting growth is a key part of the Rural Economic Strategy, i.e., providing residents with good employment and all the benefits this brings.	Development needs to be delivered sustainably to ensure any adverse impact on the environment is mitigated.	Any impact of the delivery of the Rural Economic Strategy on the environment will be considered as part of the development of specific projects / programmes and delivery plans.

Environment Assessment

Key considerations:

- You should consider whether your proposal will affect: the built environment; the rural environment including agriculture; air, water and land quality; waste and recycling; and ability to travel/access to transport, particularly sustainable methods.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Creating bespoke projects and programmes for the agricultural and food/drink sectors.	The Rural Economic Strategy seeks to support agricultural and food/drink businesses.	Lack of available resources to support growth and investment in these sectors.	The RES contains a specific priority theme to support sustainable intensification in agriculture to enhance productivity and reduce waste.
The delivery of projects that both support economic growth and sustainable travel.	Projects can help to enable businesses and people to make	Without consideration of air quality, future	A key aspect of the Rural Economic Strategy is the delivery of infrastructure to support

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>positive healthy lifestyle choices and benefit of improved air quality.</p>	<p>investment in economic projects could have a negative impact on the environment.</p>	<p>growth. We have successfully delivered sustainable transport projects in recent years, and this will continue to support improved air quality.</p>

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 April 2022

Formal Report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman



Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

“Protecting children and young people is a priority for this council, so we take the investigation of any complaint very seriously.

If the Council declines to deal with a complaint in this area, which is past its submission deadline, then the authority has to demonstrate that it took certain factors into consideration before reaching its decision.

We note that the Ombudsman has criticised us not for failing to take those factors into consideration, but for failing to reference that we had when writing to the complainant. We have updated our processes accordingly.”

Report Summary:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) provides independent and impartially investigated complaints about councils and other bodies within its jurisdiction.

The appended Formal Report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is in relation to the failure to fully consider a complaint about Childrens social care.

Due to the complaint being late the Council’s decision was not to investigate the complaint but did provide a full response to the questions raised by the complainant. The complainant escalated their complaint to the LGSCO who recommended that the Council re-considered their decision to investigate. The Council disagreed with the recommendation as it was felt that there was nothing more to add due to the age of the complaint.

The LGSCO disagreed and this has resulted in the Formal Report with a recommendation to reconsider the complainant’s request for the complaint to be considered under the statutory children’s complaints regulations. The Council is happy to accept this recommendation.

The finding on the investigation is *upheld, maladministration and injustice*. The LGSCO has found the complainant suffered injustice as a result of fault and therefore has issued a formal public interest report and requires the report to be considered at Cabinet

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Considers the Formal Report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in relation to the decision making of accepting a complaint for investigation.
- b. Considers the recommendations made as part of the investigation report and the finding of “upheld, maladministration and injustice”

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 April 2022

Formal Report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Considers the Formal Report from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) in relation to the decision making of accepting a complaint for investigation.
- b. Considers the recommendations made as part of the investigation report and the finding of “upheld, maladministration and injustice”

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. The appended Formal Report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is in relation to the failure to fully consider a complaint about Children’s social care.
2. Within the formal report of the LGSCO it can be seen the complainant contacted the Council about the care and support she received 10 years ago as a looked after child and a care leaver.
3. When the complaint was assessed, the Council took into consideration Paragraph 3.3.1 “Getting the Best from Complaints” statutory guidance which states that “Local authorities do not need to consider complaints made more than one year ago after the grounds to make representations arose” and made the decision to refuse the complaint. The reasoning for this decision was that whilst there would be records to access, an investigating officer would not have the opportunity to speak with individuals who were involved at the time and therefore a thorough and full investigation could not take place due to the passage of time.
4. Whilst the Council refused to respond to the concerns as a complaint, it did provide a full response to the questions raised by the complainant

along with the reasoning around not being eligible for a Care Leavers Grant.

5. The draft decision from the LGSCO recommended that the Council reconsiders the complainant's request for her complaint about children's social care to be investigated within one month of their final decision. The Council disagreed with this recommendation as it was felt that we had nothing to add to the response and therefore it would be better for the LGSCO to investigate the complaints raised as they had already taken 2 months to consider the original complaint.
6. The LGSCO disagreed and this has resulted in the appended formal report in which it is recommended that we reconsider the complainant's request for a complaint about children social care to be investigated. The Council is happy to accept this recommendation.
7. The LGSCO investigates complaints about "maladministration" and "service failure". The finding of the Report issued is upheld, maladministration and injustice and therefore needs to be considered at a high decision-making level such as a Cabinet meeting.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Formal Report by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Investigation into a complaint about Staffordshire County Council (reference number: 20 012 417).

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Tracy Thorley, Assistant Director, Corporate Operations

Report Author: Kate Bullivant
Job Title: Complaints, School Appeals and Access to Information Manager.

Telephone No.: 01785 277407

E-Mail Address: kate.bullivant@staffordshire.gov.uk

**Report by the Local Government and Social Care
Ombudsman**

**Investigation into a complaint about
Staffordshire County Council
(reference number: 20 012 417)**

1 March 2022

The Ombudsman's role

For more than 40 years the Ombudsman has independently and impartially investigated complaints. We effectively resolve disputes about councils and other bodies in our jurisdiction by recommending redress which is proportionate, appropriate and reasonable based on all the facts of the complaint. Our service is free of charge.

Each case which comes to the Ombudsman is different and we take the individual needs and circumstances of the person complaining to us into account when we make recommendations to remedy injustice caused by fault.

We have no legal power to force councils to follow our recommendations, but they almost always do. Some of the things we might ask a council to do are:

- > apologise
- > pay a financial remedy
- > improve its procedures so similar problems don't happen again.

Section 30 of the 1974 Local Government Act says that a report should not normally name or identify any person. The people involved in this complaint are referred to by a letter or job role.

Key to names used

Miss C The complainant

Report summary

Education & Children's Services

Miss C complained about the care and support she received from the Council as a child. Miss C says because of the Council's fault she did not receive proper support and missed out on a care leavers grant.

Finding

Fault found causing injustice and recommendations made.

Recommendations

The Council must consider the report and confirm within three months the action it has taken or proposes to take. The Council should consider the report at its full Council, Cabinet or other appropriately delegated committee of elected members and we will require evidence of this. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 31(2), as amended*)

To remedy the injustice caused, we recommend the Council reconsider Miss C's request for her complaint about children's social care to be investigated within one month of the date of this report.

If the Council decides not to investigate, it should show how it has taken account of the statutory guidance in reaching its decision and write to Miss C explaining the reasons for its decision.

The Council should also advise Miss C of her right to reapproach the Ombudsman.

The Council has accepted our recommendations.

The complaint

1. The complainant, whom we have called Miss C, complained about the care and support she received from the Council when she was a looked after child and as a care leaver. Miss C says because of the Council's fault she did not receive proper support and missed out on a care leavers grant.

Legal and administrative background

2. We investigate complaints about 'maladministration' and 'service failure'. In this report, we have used the word 'fault' to refer to these. We must also consider whether any fault has had an adverse impact on the person making the complaint. We refer to this as 'injustice'. If there has been fault which has caused an injustice, we may suggest a remedy. (*Local Government Act 1974, sections 26(1) and 26A(1), as amended*)

How we considered this complaint

3. We produced this report after examining relevant documents and interviewing the complainant.
4. We gave the complainant and the Council a confidential draft of this report and invited their comments. The comments received were taken into account before the report was finalised.
5. We took account of our report '[Are we getting the best from children's social care complaints?](#)' published in March 2015 and [guide for practitioners about the statutory complaints procedure](#) published in March 2021.
6. Under our information sharing agreement, we will share this decision with the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

What we found

Background

7. The Children Act 1989 says councils have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need.
8. A Looked after Child (LAC) is any child who is subject to a care order or accommodated away from their family by a local authority under [section 20 of Children Act 1989](#). The accommodation can be voluntary or by care order. The child becomes looked after when the local authority has accommodated them for a continuous period of longer than 24 hours.
9. The law and regulations also set out a three-stage statutory procedure for councils to follow when looking at most complaints about children's social care services. The accompanying statutory guidance, Getting the Best from Complaints, explains councils' responsibilities in more detail. We would normally expect a council and complainant to follow the full complaint procedure.
10. The guidance says councils do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the grounds to make the complaint arose. However, it says decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis and there should generally be a presumption in favour of accepting the complaint unless there is a good reason not to.

-
11. The guidance says councils have discretion to extend the time limit for making a complaint if it is still possible to investigate effectively and efficiently. Councils may also wish to consider complaints if it would be unreasonable to expect the complainant to have made the complaint sooner. For example, a child may not be able to make a complaint or feel confident to do so within the year time limit.
 12. The guidance sets out possible grounds for accepting a complaint made after one year, including:
 - genuine issues of vulnerability;
 - the council believes there is still benefit to the complainant in proceeding; and
 - information and individuals involved at the time are likely to be available to enable an effective and fair investigation.
 13. In our focus report '[Are we getting the best from children's social care complaints?](#)' (2015) we found a common problem was councils refusing to allow complaints to go through all stages of the statutory complaints procedure.

What happened

14. Based on the records the Council provided to us, there was contact with Miss C and her family by the police and the Council in early 2011. Miss C moved into an emergency foster placement in May and her mother agreed a voluntary care arrangement under section 20 of the Children Act 1989. Miss C moved to a more permanent foster placement in June. During this period the Council completed an assessment, care plan and care plan review. Miss C returned to her parent's address towards the end of August and the voluntary care agreement was discharged in early September. The Council completed a further care plan review in September and completed the core assessment at the end of September and recommended the case be closed. Miss C contacted the Council again in October to seek help as she was 15 years old and pregnant and her parents did not want to support her.
15. Miss C wrote to the Council towards the end of November 2020 when she was aged 24 to complain about the care she received while in the care of the Council. Miss C said she had been told during a telephone call that the Council did not have any record of her being in its care despite being placed in foster care in 2011. Miss C raised issues about her second foster care placement and that her concerns about this and feeling she had no alternative but to return home to her parents were not properly considered. Miss C says she was also not offered adequate support when she returned to her parents and after this arrangement broke down despite having a new baby. Miss C also asked why she had not received a care leavers grant and specific questions about the above events.
16. The Council responded to Miss C towards the end of January 2021 and apologised for the delay in replying. The Council stated it could not investigate the matter she had raised under its complaint procedure as the matters happened some years ago and the legislation which supported the complaints procedure stated the Council did not need to investigate complaints which were over 12 months old. However, the Council was able to reply to some of Miss C's specific questions.
17. Miss C remained unhappy with the Council's response and complained to us.
18. In response to our enquiries the Council said it gave due consideration to Miss C's circumstances and history in reaching its decision not to accept a late complaint. The Council noted the matters Miss C had raised related to events

some 9 or 10 years ago and its involvement with her as an individual appeared to have stopped in 2014. The Council says it did not consider a meaningful investigation could take place given the passage of time and says this was in line with the statutory guidance. The Council noted it had attempted to answer some of Miss C's questions to bring her some form of resolution outside of the statutory complaints process.

Analysis

19. Paragraph 3.3.1 of the statutory guidance referred to above says “Local authorities do not need to consider complaints made more than one year after the grounds to make the representation arose (regulation 9). In these cases, the Complaints Manager should write to advise the complainant that their complaint cannot be considered and explaining the reasons why he has adopted this position. This response should also advise the complainant of their right to approach the Local Government Ombudsman. However, as with freezing decisions, decisions need to be made on a case by case basis and there should generally be a presumption in favour of accepting the complaint unless there is good reason against it.”
20. Paragraph 3.3.2 of the guidance says “The time limit can be extended at the local authority’s discretion if it is still possible to consider the representations effectively and efficiently. Local authorities may also wish to consider such complaints if it would be unreasonable to expect the complainant to have made the complaint earlier. For example, where the child was not able to make the complaint or did not feel confident in bringing it forward in the year time limit.”
21. Paragraph 3.3.3 of the guidance says “Though not exclusive, possible grounds for accepting a complaint made after one year are:
 - genuine issues of vulnerability.
 - the local authority believes that there is still benefit to the complainant in proceeding.
 - there is likely to be sufficient access to information or individuals involved at the time, to enable an effective and fair investigation to be carried out; and
 - action should be taken in light of human rights-based legislation.”
22. Miss C was 15 years old and pregnant at the time of the matters affecting her. There is evidence that Miss C’s return to her parents broke down soon after her return and she sought further help from the Council. Miss C says she has only more recently had the support of a previous foster carer in making her complaint. The Council has been able to provide records relating to the period in question.

Conclusions

23. As the Council closed Miss C’s case more than 12 months ago, her complaint is late. However, the guidance says councils should be in favour of accepting a late complaint unless there is a good reason not to. When deciding whether to investigate, the Council needs to show it has considered Miss C’s age, any issues of vulnerability, any potential benefit to Miss C of now investigating the complaint, and whether a fair and effective investigation can still take place. The Council’s response to Miss C in January 2021 did not evidence it properly considered these factors which is fault.

Recommendations

24. The Council must consider the report and confirm within three months the action it has taken or proposes to take. The Council should consider the report at its full Council, Cabinet or other appropriately delegated committee of elected members and we will require evidence of this. (*Local Government Act 1974, section 31(2), as amended*)
25. In addition to the requirements set out above, the Council has agreed within one month of the date of this report, to reconsider Miss C's request for her complaint about children's social care to be investigated.

If the Council decides not to investigate, it should show how it has taken account of the statutory guidance in reaching its decision and write to Miss C explaining the reasons for its decision.

The Council should also advise Miss C of her right to reapproach us.

Decision

26. We have completed our investigation into this complaint. There was fault by the Council which caused injustice to Miss C. The Council should take the action set out at paragraphs 24 and 25 to remedy that injustice.

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20 April 2022

Framework Agreement for Demolition Services



Cllr Mark Deaville, Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters said,

“Managing our property portfolio to maximise their use or to breathe new life into sites is a key priority for the county council.

Ensuring we have the rights contracts in place to demolish redundant buildings means we can turn around schemes as quickly as possible and get the best value for taxpayers’ money at the same time.”

Report Summary:

As part of its property management functions Staffordshire County Council (the “Council”) may be required to demolish existing buildings either for redevelopment of sites to provide better facilities for the Council or its partners, or to secure better value in the sale of surplus land assets.

This report seeks authority to undertake a procurement exercise to procure a framework agreement for demolition services and to delegate authority to the Director for Corporate services to enter into the necessary arrangements once the procurement exercise is complete.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Agrees to officers undertaking a procurement exercise in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the “Regulations”) for the Framework Agreement for the Provision of Demolition and Associated Services (the “Framework Agreement”).
- b. Approves that following the procurement process, the successful suppliers be appointed to the Framework Agreement for the period 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2024 and that dependent on the quality of their delivery, that the 24-month service extension be implemented to an end date of 30th June 2026; and

- c. Agrees that the Director for Corporate Services be delegated authority to:
- i. Approve the initial awards of the tendered providers to the Framework Agreement.
 - ii. Approve all subsequent award of call-off contracts under this Framework Agreement; and
 - iii. (If applicable) approve the 2-year extension to the Framework Agreement in its 2nd year.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 April 2022

Framework Agreement for Demolition Services

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Agrees to officers undertaking a procurement exercise in line with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the “Regulations”) for the Framework Agreement for the Provision of Demolition and Associated Services (the “Framework Agreement”).
- b. Approves that following the procurement process, the successful suppliers be appointed to the framework agreement for the period 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2024 and that dependent on the quality of their delivery, that the 24-month service extension be implemented to an end date of 30th June 2026; and
- c. Agrees that the Director for Corporate Services be delegated authority to:
 - i. Approve the initial awards of the tendered providers to the Framework Agreement.
 - ii. Approve all subsequent award of call-off contracts under this Framework Agreement; and
 - iii. (If applicable) approve the 2-year extension to the Framework Agreement in its 2nd year.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. The Council has a large property portfolio of varying age, condition and suitability. As the Council continues to innovate and develop its services in line with the strategic plan it needs to be able to manage its property assets effectively. Part of that management process occasionally requires the demolition of buildings to allow for the construction of new facilities for ourselves and partners. Also, demolition of buildings on land surplus to Council requirements can increase the value when the land is disposed of ensuring the most amount of money is obtained for reinvestment in priorities.

2. The annual spend on demolition can be highly variable but is estimated to be an average £1,000,000 per annum for Council directly.
3. The total procurement will be qualified for up to £5 million to consider flexibility in the Council's spend and to accommodate any potential additional spend of public sector partners.
4. Tenderers to the Framework Agreement will be asked to provide the Council with an agreed schedule of rates for Demolition and Associated Services for Council owned buildings, including Council offices, schools and Academy buildings along with other public bodies with property in the county
5. It is envisaged that 3 providers will be appointed to the Framework Agreement.
6. Other public framework agreements have been considered but following initial investigations the frameworks are not suitable for the Council's requirements. The option to publicly tender this not only serves as an opportunity for local providers to tender but also serves as a benchmark on value for money.
7. Without recourse to a framework agreement, officers would be required to invest more resource into spot tendering / quoting for individual work packages which would require a plethora of separately tendered projects per annum

Legal Implications

8. The potential value of spend for the services lends the procurement process to strictly follow the Regulations. The implications of any process failing to follow these Regulations could lead to serious legal challenges to the Council with the probable halt by a court on any contract award. A framework agreement will be developed in conjunction with Legal Services to allow for the relevant works to be called off, as and when required using the JCT Minor Works Contract with contractor's design as amended by a schedule of amendments. There are no other Legal implications noted at this stage.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

9. The Framework Agreement will be commissioned by the Council, led by a strategic property lead, and procured by the Council's commercial team. The ongoing technical day-to-day contract management is delivered in conjunction and managed by the Council's property technical services provider. There are no resource implications known at the time

of writing this report. The failure to conduct a competitive tender process will inevitably lead to a disaggregation of spend with each project being contracted separately when it arises leading to increase in prices, inefficiencies in the contracting process and a sharp increase in procurement and commissioning effort and therefore this is considered the best way to achieve best value.

Climate Change Implications

10. Demolition of buildings only takes place where careful consideration of the specific circumstances has been undertaken. It is predominantly undertaken as part of a wider project providing new facilities or services or part of the capital receipts programme.
11. Where demolition is essential the contractors will be required to follow the necessary statutory regulations regarding safety and waste transportation and disposal.
12. The Framework Agreement and call-off contracts will emphasise the need to recycle and re-use waste products where appropriate and require environmental plans and licenses to ensure correct management and disposal of waste.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Community Impact Assessment – Summary Document

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Ian Turner, Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets
Report Author: Lee Wells
Job Title: Head of Corporate Assets
Telephone No.: 01785 277732
E-Mail Address: lee.wells@staffordshire.gov.uk



Community Impact Assessment – Checklist and Executive Summary

Name of Proposal: Framework Agreement for the provision of Demolition and Associated Services

Project Sponsor: Ian Turner, Assistant Director of Commercial and Assets

Project Manager: Laura Kendall, Procurement Manager, Commercial Team

Date: 10/01/22

Final Checklist

Prior to submitting your Community Impact Assessment (CIA), please ensure that the actions on the checklist below have been completed, to reassure yourself/ SLT/ Cabinet that the CIA process has been undertaken appropriately.

Checklist	Action Completed (tick)	Comments/Actions
The project supports the Council's Business Plan, priorities and MTFS.	Yes	Obtaining best value and open tendering
It is clear what the decision is or what decision is being requested.	Yes	
For decisions going to Cabinet, the CIA findings are reflected in the Cabinet Report and potential impacts are clearly identified and mitigated for (where possible).	Yes	n/a Impacts
The aims, objectives and outcomes of the policy, service or project have been clearly identified.	Yes	
The groups who will be affected by the policy, service or project have been clearly identified.	Yes	
The communities that are likely to be more adversely impacted than others have been clearly identified.	Yes	This will vary form site to site but will have local engagement on all demolition works as part of the planning submission process.
Engagement / consultation has been undertaken and is representative of the residents most likely to be affected.	n/a	This will vary form site to site but will have local engagement on all demolition works as part of the planning submission process.
A range of people with the appropriate knowledge and expertise have contributed to the CIA.	Yes	
Appropriate evidence has been provided and used to inform the development and design of the policy, service or project. This includes data, research, engagement/consultation, case studies and local knowledge.	Yes	
The CIA evidences how the Council has considered its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and how it has considered the impacts of any change on people with protected characteristics.	Yes	

The next steps to deliver the project have been identified.	Yes	
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Executive Summary – The Executive Summary is intended to be a collation of the **key issues and findings** from the CIA and other research undertaken. This should be completed **after** the CIA and research has been completed. Please structure the summary using the headings on the left that relate to the sections in the **CIA template**. Where no major impacts have been identified, please state N/A.

	Which groups will be affected?	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
PSED – What are the impacts on residents with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 ? <i>Highlight any concerns that have emerged as a result of the equality analysis on any of the protected groups and how these will be mitigated. It is important that Elected Members are fully aware of the equality duties so that they can make an informed decision and this can be supported with robust evidence.</i>	N/A			
Health and Care – How will the proposal impact on residents' health? How will the proposal impact on demand for or access to social care or health services?	Locality	Sites are regenerated and find new uses which often benefit the locality in terms of new services or improved accommodation.	Demolition can create significant noise and local management issues or disruption.	Local planning requirements ensure that suitable demolition strategies are submitted for comment in advance, including mitigating processes to minimise these as much as possible.
Economy – How will the proposal impact on the economy of Staffordshire or impact on the	Locality	Sites are regenerated and find new uses which often benefit the locality in terms of new services,		

income of Staffordshire's residents?		businesses or additional housing.		
Environment – How will the proposal impact on the physical environment of Staffordshire?	Locality/County	Sites are regenerated and find new uses which often benefit the locality. Applications usually include open or green spaces as part of the final solution.	Demolition creates significant waste and can impact environment and species.	Framework Agreement and Call-Off Contracts will emphasise the need to recycle and re-use waste products where appropriate and responsible contractors will have environmental plans and licenses to ensure correct management and disposal of waste. Planning applications and consents require environmental mitigations to be in place prior to consent being granted.
Localities / Communities – How will the proposal impact on Staffordshire's communities?	Locality	Sites are regenerated and find new uses in the community which often benefit the locality more than the previous use and accommodation.	Demolition creates local change and loss of an existing building asset.	Demolition is always a last resort on an asset which has no use to the County Council or unviable for a local community to take responsibility. Localism Act allows communities to submit applications to retain these assets.

Cabinet – 20 April 2022

Decisions Taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers

Recommendation of the Leader of the Council

1. That the decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers, as detailed in paragraph 3 below, be noted.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations

2. To inform Cabinet of recent decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers.

Background

3. Cabinet are requested to note the following decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers:

Cabinet Member	Decision
Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters	In approving the termination of Joint Venture Agreements with Kier Ltd and Winding up of Penda Ltd/

Report author:

Author's Name: Mike Bradbury
 Telephone No: (01785) 276133

List of Background Papers - Cabinet Members Delegated Decision No. 538.

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS
Period: 18 May 2022 - 21 September 2022

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is prepared on a monthly basis and published at least 28 days before the start of the period covered. Key Decisions are defined as those Executive decisions which are likely:

- (a) to result in the County Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions in the County's area.

The Forward Plan will contain **ALL** matters which the Leader of the Council has reason to believe will be the subject of a Key Decision to be taken by the Cabinet. It may also include decisions that are not key decisions but are intended to be determined by the Cabinet. Part of the Cabinet meetings listed in this Forward Plan may be held in private where a report for the meeting contains exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. If you would like to make representations about any particular decision to be conducted in private then please email: michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk. Such representations must be received in advance 6 clear working days before the date on which the decision is scheduled to be taken.

The Membership of the Cabinet consists of:

Leader of the County Council – Alan White
 Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills – Philip White
 Cabinet Member for Health and Care – Julia Jessel
 Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change – Simon Tagg
 Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters – Mark Deaville
 Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – David Williams
 Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources – Ian Parry
 Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture – Victoria Wilson
 Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Mark Sutton
 Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) – Jonathan Price

A copy of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions may be inspected, free of charge, at the Member and Democratic Services office, County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford, during normal office hours Monday to Friday. A copy of the notice will also be available on Staffordshire County Council's Website at www.staffordshire.gov.uk.

Documents submitted for decision will be a formal report which will be available on the County Council's website at least 5 clear working days before the date the decision is to be made, unless that report is subject to any prohibition or restriction on its disclosure. Other relevant background documents used in compiling the report will also be made available in the same way unless they are subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure. Minutes of Cabinet meetings will be published within three working days and will be subject to call-in. The call-in period lasts for three working days. If the decision is not called-in it will be implemented on the fourth working day. Special urgency items are exempt from call-in.

John Tradewell
Director of Corporate Services

Forward Plan of Key Decisions
Period: 18 May 2022 - 21 September 2022

NOTE:

- (1) The Forward Plan of Key Decisions sets out all Key Decisions intended to be made by Cabinet during the above period.
- (2) The Cabinet date can be provisional and items may move/roll forward to another meeting date but this will be monitored.
- (3) Items should remain on the Notice until a decision is made by Cabinet or is formally removed.
- (4) Where there is an intention to make a decision in private the exemption paragraph relied upon will be included within this notice

Predicted Date of Decision	Public or Private Decision	Title and Description	Background Documents	Consultation	Contact Officer
May 2022	Public	<p>Staffordshire Better Care Fund 2021-22 (Cabinet Member for Health and Care (Julia Jessel))</p> <p>Provide an update on the Better Care Fund performance across 2021-22, and a request for Cabinet to Delegate approval to enter into the section 75 agreements to the Director of Health</p>		n/a	<p>Dr Richard Harling MBE (Tel: 01785 278700)</p> <p>Service Area: Health and Care</p>
June 2022	Public	<p>Corporate Delivery Plan 2022/23 (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Ian Parry))</p> <p>Review and approval of The Corporate Delivery Plan for 2022/23, a plan of key priorities across the organisation that identifies the key activities underway across each directorate</p>		N/A	<p>Kerry Dove (Tel: 07855 679112)</p> <p>Service Area: Strategy and Transformation</p>

Predicted Date of Decision	Public or Private Decision	Title and Description	Background Documents	Consultation	Contact Officer
June 2022	Public	<p>Bus Service Improvement Plan - Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport)</p> <p>This report outlines the purpose of the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme, which summarise the main themes of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, in setting out an analysis of local bus services in Staffordshire, the objectives for the quality and effectiveness of bus services and how the Enhanced Partnership Scheme or Schemes are intended to achieve these objectives. The Enhanced Partnership Scheme describes the Facilities, Measures and Obligations to be implemented to meet those objectives and how the partnership is constituted and operates. Both the Enhanced Partnership Plan and the Enhanced Partnership Scheme have been prepared by Staffordshire County Council, in consultation with the bus operators and district councils, under the Transport Act 2000 (c.38).</p>		Staffordshire Bus Operators and Community Transport Providers	Clive Thomson (Tel: 01785 276522) Service Area: Connectivity and Sustainability

Predicted Date of Decision	Public or Private Decision	Title and Description	Background Documents	Consultation	Contact Officer
June 2022	Public	<p>Digital Connectivity in Staffordshire (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Simon Tagg))</p> <p>To provide an update on Digital Connectivity in Staffordshire and future priorities for investment.</p>		Borough	<p>Anthony Baines (Tel: 01785 895984)</p> <p>Service Area: Economy, Infrastructure & Skills</p>
June 2022	Public	<p>Staffordshire Sustainability Board - Vision and council commitments (Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Simon Tagg))</p> <p>Staffordshire Sustainability Board - Vision and council commitments for consideration, after being passed and approved by members of the Staffordshire Sustainability Board.</p>		None	<p>Clive Thomson (Tel: 01785 276522)</p> <p>Service Area: Staffordshire County Council/Sustainability</p>
June 2022	Public	<p>Final Financial Outturn 2021-22 (Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Ian Parry))</p> <p>To update Cabinet with the final financial position against the 2021/22 budget.</p>		Directorate Management Teams, SLT.	<p>Rachel Spain (Tel: 01785 854455)</p> <p>Service Area: Finance</p>

Predicted Date of Decision	Public or Private Decision	Title and Description	Background Documents	Consultation	Contact Officer
June 2022	Public	<p>Mobilisation of Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters (Mark Deaville), Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Simon Tagg))</p> <p>To provide Cabinet with an update on the mobilisation of the HWRC's from a contractual to an in-house service</p>		None, update to Cabinet on mobilisation only	Clive Thomson (Tel: 01785 276522) Service Area: EI&S
July 2022	Public	<p>North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan (NSLAQP) (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport)</p> <p>Consideration of the Full Business Case for Phase 2 - A53 bus gate of the North Staffordshire Local Air Quality Plan and associated bid to the Clean Air Fund.</p>		none	Clive Thomson (Tel: 01785 276522) Service Area: Connectivity and Sustainability
August 2022	Public	<p>Families Health & Wellbeing (0-19) Service - from April 2024 (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Mark Sutton))</p> <p>Options and recommendations for Cabinet regarding the Families Health & Wellbeing (0-19) service from April 2024.</p>		None at this stage.	Natasha Moody (Tel: 07976191079) Service Area: Children's Wellbeing & Partnership Team
August 2022	Private	<p>Family Hub Model (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Mark Sutton))</p> <p>To scrutinise and review the proposed Family Hub model and offer</p>		N/A	Natasha Moody (Tel: 07976191079) Service Area: Wellbeing and Partnerships

Predicted Date of Decision	Public or Private Decision	Title and Description	Background Documents	Consultation	Contact Officer
		constructive feedback on the proposed model.			

Not for publication by virtue of paragraph(s) 3
of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972

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