

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 20 January 2022

10:00

Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford

NB. The meeting will be webcast live which can be viewed here -

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

John Tradewell
Director of Corporate Services
12 January 2022

A G E N D A

PART ONE

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of the two meetings held on 6 January 2022** (Pages 1 - 18)
4. **Proposed New Joint Coroners Service** (Pages 19 - 42)
Report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture
5. **Strategic Plan 2022 - 26** (Pages 43 - 68)
Report of the Leader of the Council
6. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027 - Report of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group** (Pages 69 - 98)
Report of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group.
7. **Work Programme** (Pages 99 - 106)
8. **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)

Membership

Charlotte Atkins	Jeremy Pert
Tina Clements	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
Colin Greatorex (Chairman)	Samantha Thompson
Gill Heath (Vice-Chairman (Scrutiny))	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman (Overview))
Jeremy Oates	Mike Worthington
Kath Perry, MBE	

Note 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.

Scrutiny and Support Officer: Mandy Pattinson

**Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting
held on 6 January 2022**

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

Tina Clements	Bob Spencer
Jeremy Oates	Samantha Thompson
Kath Perry, MBE	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman (Overview))

Also in attendance: Councillors Syed Hussain, Keith Flunder, Philip White, Victoria Wilson.

Officers: Janine Cox, Wayne Mortiboys, Catharine Mann, John Tradewell and Chris Ebberley.

Apologies: Charlotte Atkins, Gill Heath, Jeremy Pert, Bernard Peters and Mike Worthington

PART ONE

26. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Peters had declared an interest in advance of the meeting as he was a Cabinet Member at East Staffordshire Borough Council. He did not attend or take part in the meeting.

Councillor Philip White and Victoria Wilson both declared that they were members of the Burton Town Deal Partnership Board.

27. Minutes of the meetings held on 7 September 2021, 5 October 2021 and 16 November 2021

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on the 7 September 2021, 5 October 2021, and 16 November 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

28. Consideration of the Call In of the Cabinet Decision - Burton Town Deal - Proposed Library Move

The Chairman explained the call-in procedure to the Committee and the order of speakers.

The Decision and reasons for the Call in were detailed in the report. In advance of the meeting a detailed written response to the reasons for the call in had been circulated to members. Both the reasons for the call in and the detailed response are attached to these minutes for information.

Councillor S Hussain as the Lead Member for the call in, expressed concern that the people who had responded to the consultation exercise and had opposed the move (77%), had been ignored. It was felt that the results of the consultation had not been listened to. Cllr Hussain felt that there was no evidence that the move would increase library usage. There was also concern that the Market traders would suffer if the move took place. He felt that options 2 and 3, as considered by the Cabinet and which didn't propose moving the library were favourable and had also been the preferred options for users. He also questioned the financial shortfall of the proposed scheme and how this would be funded.

Councillor Tina Clement, as Chairman of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed concern that the majority of the consultation responses had not been taken into account and questioned the purpose of consultation if it was ignored. She also expressed concern the item had not been considered at Overview and Scrutiny committee before a decision was taken.

Councillor Philip White, Deputy Leader and Cabinet member for Economy and Skills, explained that one of the responsibilities of the County Council was to support and work alongside the Districts/Boroughs/Partners in Economic development and regeneration. It was explained that there had been a number of Town Deal development projects that joined together to deliver the regeneration of Burton. Due to their separated evaluation processes and different time scales it could appear difficult to see the benefit of the schemes and what they would deliver for the town in their entirety.

The transformation programme would be led by East Staffordshire Borough Council and it was at their request that the County Council had put in motion the consideration of the Library move which would facilitate the rest of their development plans. The development of the Waterfront was key to how they develop that part of the town and make it more desirable to residents.

He also reminded members that the item had been in the for Forward plan for some time and could have been considered by Overview and Scrutiny during that time if requested.

Councillor Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, addressed the Committee. She felt that the reasons and plans for the proposed move had been clear and had included an extensive consultation and engagement programme. The purpose of the proposal was to generate greater footfall into the marketplace and to generate business interest in a currently

underused part of the town centre and ensure a long term future for the market hall. There was a strong track record in the County of providing excellent Library services.

In support of the Cabinet Members, officers responded to each of the issues raised within the call in (detail attached).

A Member highlighted that the consultation exercise had been conducted during a pandemic and couldn't have been as wide ranging as that normally carried out.

The written response to the call in was welcomed but members felt that there had not been enough time to read and digest it. It was explained that this was due to the holiday period and the Cabinet member being out of the county until the day before the meeting.

It was requested that the Cabinet should reconsider the decision and suggested that the library should stay in its current location and compliment the development of the Waterfront building into a 'Washlands Visitor Center', (project D). The Committee was informed that if it stayed in the building, it would lose some of the space to the Plaza and the building would have to be extended.

The Cabinet member reminded the Committee that the decisions on how to develop the Town had been made following months of careful consideration by the Town Development Board.

The following information was gained by the Committee:

- An extension to the 'Washlands visitor centre' was not a viable option and would require the Government to change its bid criteria.
- The deadline for the government submission was the 24 March 2022.
- The decision taken by the Council related to the Library and the development proposals were within the remit of East Staffordshire Borough Council.
- Cabinet Members felt that there had been an opportunity to consider the proposals prior to Cabinet decision.
- It was felt that the important point was that the services offered were what the public wanted and were accessible not necessarily the building they are located in.
- The proposed relocation site was a short walk away from the current location.

Councillor Wileman moved a motion, seconded by Councillor Clement:

1. That the matter be referred back to Cabinet for further consideration including the option of the library remaining in the Washlands visitor centre, with the extensions as discussed at the meeting and

consideration of concerns raised in reasons 2 and 3 of the call in regarding footfall and MTFS savings.

2. That due consideration be given to the opinions of the objectors.
3. That a meeting be held with local councillors to discuss the comparison exercise (results of 1 above) before the Cabinet makes its final decision.

Following a vote by the Committee this motion was lost.

Councillor Clements - For
Councillor Oates - Against
Councillor Perry - Against
Councillor Spencer - Against
Councillor Thompson- Against
Councillor C Wileman - For

Councillor Oates moved a motion, seconded by Councillor Spencer, that the Committee agree the Cabinet decision be implemented as set out in the original decision notice.

This motion was agreed.

Councillor Clements - Against
Councillor Oates - For
Councillor Perry - For
Councillor Spencer - For
Councillor Thompson- For
Councillor C Wileman - Against

RESOLVED – that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree for the Cabinet decision to be implemented as set out in the original decision notice.

The Chairman thanked all those involved in the meeting for their fair and robust discussion.

APPENDIX TO THE MINUTES

Burton Town Deal – Proposed Library Move

Decision made: 15 December 2021

Decision – (a) Subject to confirmation from Government and the Town Board that a Town Fund allocation of £6,991,549, or greater, is awarded following submission of the necessary Business Case, and that the identified shortfall of £1,036,382 can be resourced from either the Town Board or other external funding; Cabinet agrees to re-locate Burton Library and consolidate other County offices into the Market Hall and Crossley House with a maximum capital investment from the County Council of £1,067,000.

(b) Cabinet delegates authority to negotiate with East Staffordshire Borough Council, secure their ongoing support and deal with all aspects of any property transactions necessary to implement (a) above to the Property Sub Committee

(c) Cabinet delegates authority to submit the Final Business Case to East Staffordshire Borough Council to the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the County Treasurer

Reasons for call in

- 1. Inadequate consideration given to the principle finding of the public consultation, which confirmed 77% of respondents did not agree with the proposed library move.**

In summer 2021, SCC carried out a community engagement and consultation exercise about the proposed library move. Out of 1,161 respondents, 77% did not agree with the proposed library move. 48% of those who were regular library users stated that they would not continue to use the library if it was moved into Burton Market Hall. The Cabinet report also confirmed that

"the strength of objection is highest amongst respondents who said they were regular library users or living within the eight Burton wards."

We would like to point out that unlike a petition where you might simply add your name online to a particular cause, this consultation asked many questions with options for adding free text – 781 respondents added detailed free text according to the Cabinet report. The process would have taken the average person 15-20 minutes to complete. 1,161 responses is therefore a significant number and warrants serious and careful consideration.

The strength of this objection should in our view have triggered SCC and its Burton Town Deal partners to reflect on the current proposal and consider alternative ideas for library location and potential uses for Burton Market Hall. Instead, SCC and partners gave no consideration whatsoever to alternative ideas and continued to pursue the proposed library move against the wishes of Burton residents, which has culminated in SCC Cabinet making the decision to proceed with the proposed library move on 15 December 2021.

We call on SCC Cabinet to urgently work with its Burton Town Deal partners to consider alternative ideas which keep the library in its current location.

Response to reason 1:

The eight-week consultation was a vital part of the decision-making process, and the purpose of this was so that we could be clear about the community's views and respond appropriately. We carefully considered the feedback of around 1,500 people who responded either via the questionnaire or at one of the face-to-face opportunities.

This represents around 1.6% of the population of the town. Just over three-quarters of those who responded were opposed to the scheme and we have carefully considered the reasons they gave for doing so.

All free text comments, plus the comments made at the focus groups, pop-up events, drop-in sessions and the public meeting have been analysed by "theme".

These free text "themes" are presented in full at Appendix 6 of the Cabinet report. The key reasons for opposing the move are as follows:

- a. Happy with the current library offer / location*
- a. Concerned over lack of facilities / parking / access*
- b. Concerned what will happen to market and market traders*
- c. No need for change / waste of money*
- d. Spend the money on the Market Hall*
- e. Concerned what will replace the library*

We recognise that many respondents did not see the need to relocate the library at the time of the consultation, however this was prior to the Borough Council releasing details of their proposals for the redevelopment of the waterfront.

Respondents to the survey expressed concern about a lack of facilities and parking. If the relocation does take place, Burton Library will be smaller than the existing library, however it will remain one of the largest libraries in

Staffordshire. The range of services will be maintained but will be delivered in a more modern setting and the entire library offer will be located on the ground floor which will improve access. There are more than 40 parking spaces in the immediate vicinity of the Market Hall and these will be reviewed to increase access to disabled parking, short term parking and spaces for parents with children.

Concern was also expressed about the market and market traders and what would replace the library. Appendix 4a and 4b of the report set out ESBC's proposals for the existing library site and "the relocation of remaining small number of market hall traders" which will help protect those small business interests. This information was not available during the public consultation.

Respondents were asked to rank which elements of the library offer they valued the most. These are as follows:

- f. Range & availability of books*
- g. Information & advice*
- h. Parking*
- i. Café facilities*
- j. Helpfulness of staff*

If the library is relocated, the range and availability of less frequently borrowed books may reduce slightly. However, it should be noted that this has happened within recently relocated libraries and book loans have still risen. It is important to note that popular titles are available on demand often in greater quantities and that less popular titles are available via request.

No changes to the Burton library staffing establishment are planned and therefore access to information and advice or the availability of helpful staff will not be impacted if the library is relocated.

Following the consultation an analysis of existing parking opportunities within the vicinity of the current library site and the Market Hall has been completed. This evidences that spaces immediately adjacent to the existing library are greater than at the Market Hall but both sites have a substantial number of parking spaces in their immediate vicinity. However, the Market Hall has more spaces within a 250-metre walk than the existing library and is also closer to local bus stops. Availability of dedicated disabled spaces and parent and child spaces will need to be increased in the immediate environs of the Market Hall if the relocation proceeds. These spaces are predominantly provided through on-street parking which is managed by SCC and therefore within the SCC's span of control.

It should also be noted that the car parking adjacent to the existing library is due to be pedestrianised as part of the Project D proposals set out by the

Borough Council, so this could not be relied upon if we were to retain our current library site.

A commercial café has been part of the SCC's plans and would be located at the front of the Market Hall, facing Market Place. This will provide an opportunity to increase footfall and enhance the café culture of the Market Place by creating an informal space within the library for people to meet.

We would like to reassure you that the reasons for opposing the move have been fully considered. A full Community Impact Assessment (CIA) has been completed and is attached at Appendix 8 of the report.

The CIA sets out the benefits and risks of the proposal, making recommendations to ensure that any impacts are mitigated where possible.

We want to continue to deliver an excellent library offer for the Burton community. Library staff will continue to work with partners to engage with groups and individuals to promote the library offer and encourage people of all ages shape the internal design to ensure that the library building remains a safe welcoming space within Burton town centre.

Alternative ideas for the use of the Market Hall are a matter for East Staffordshire Borough Council to consider as the current owners of the Market Hall and the accountable body for the Town Funds. They will need to give serious consideration of the alternative proposals to use the Market Hall as a Food Hall and decide whether those proposals are more favourable than the SCC proposals. The decision before SCC Cabinet on 15th December related to whether SCC wishes to pursue a re-location of the library if the opportunity comes to fruition and if a set of specific conditions are met. At their meeting on 23rd December the Town Deal Board reviewed a document created by ESBC which outlined why the Market Hall would be inappropriate as a Food Hall but explaining how a purpose-built food hall, with appropriate ventilation, delivery access, parking etc could be incorporated into the Project D proposals – subject to commercial interest.

2. The Cabinet Decision to proceed with the move of Burton Library into Burton Market Hall was decided without giving sufficient consideration to the alternative option of retaining and refurbishing the current Burton Library building.

The Cabinet decided in a Part 2 meeting in August 2020 to agree in principle to the proposed library move subject to meeting four criteria. The criteria were set to ensure that the proposed library move would bring about economic benefits to Burton and not expose SCC to any obvious financial risk. When we analyse at least three of these criteria below, the alternative option of retaining and refurbishing the current library is likely to outperform the proposed library move, yet there has been no public debate on this issue

and no real consideration of this in the Cabinet Report – the only option that is seriously considered is the proposed library move. Taking each relevant criteria in turn:

a) *The proposal delivers the relevant Property MTFS revenue savings*

The financial analysis presented at Appendix 9 of the Cabinet Report contains various options. Option 8a and 8b are essentially the proposed library move. Options 2 and 3 retain the library in its current location.

On face value, options 8a and 8b appear to be the better options in respect of generating MTFS revenue savings, however options 8a and 8b include:

- £1,067,000 “Investment Funding” from SCC which is already committed by SCC.
- £6,991,549 Stronger Towns Fund funding.

If you were to include the £1 million Investment Funding as part of option 2 or 3, this would significantly reduce overall borrowing and thus the costs of borrowing, meaning options 2 and 3 may generate increased MTFS revenue savings compared with what is shown in Appendix 9.

In addition, we believe that some of the Stronger Towns Funding could be repurposed for refurbishing the current library building, especially if the library building was to become part of Project D (another Stronger Towns Fund Board project) and therefore this could entirely remove any borrowing and associated costs from the project and mean options 2 and 3 would be clear winners in terms of generation of MTFS savings. We have not seen any financial analysis which compares the two ideas in the way explained above.

Response to 2a) The proposal delivers the relevant Property MTFS revenue savings

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members are reminded of the Cabinet recommendations when considering the points raised through the call in.

(a) Subject to confirmation from Government and the Town Board that a Town Fund allocation of £6,991,549, or greater, is awarded following submission of the necessary Business Case, and that the identified shortfall of £1,036,382 can be resourced from either the Town Board or other external funding; Cabinet agrees to re-locate Burton Library and consolidate other County offices into the Market Hall and Crossley House with a maximum capital investment from the County Council of £1,067,000.

*The Full Business Case analysis shows that the option of moving the library to the Market Hall and Crossley House **is** the most cost-effective option in achieving the stated aims of the Property MTFs revenue savings providing an additional £1,036,382 of external funding can be secured.*

As stated in the Cabinet report, The difference between the annual revenue costs of the "do nothing" option (option 1) and moving to the Market Hall and Crossley House (Option 8) is estimated at £91,000 per year if the funding shortfall can be met with additional external funding (shown as option 8b in Appendix 9).

This does compare favourably with the option of consolidating some of the SCC's services within the existing library site (option 2). The difference between option 2 and option 8b represents a difference to Staffordshire's taxpayers of £65,000 per year. However, the analysis set out in paragraph 55 of the report does highlight that the cost of borrowing would erode the difference between option 2 and 8 to only £17,000 per year if the County Council were to have to borrow the un-funded gap (shown as option 8a in Appendix 9) which is why the Cabinet recommendations moved at the meeting caveated the recommendation with the need to secure additional external funding.

There are no guarantees however that if the county council were to proceed with option 2 that The Town Deal Board and ESBC as the accountable body would agree to renegotiate with the government to invest in the current library building.

b) The proposal can be shown to increase town centre footfall and vitality

The Cabinet Report did not compare town centre footfall projections expected from the proposed library move to projections if the library was to remain and be refurbished in its current location. If we then consider as per the consultation results that 48% of current library users will not use Burton library if it moves into Burton Market Hall, we are perplexed as to why SCC would decide to run the risk that library usage may decline overall never mind that the project will cost over £9 million and have a serious impact on SCC resources and capacity.

Response to 2b) The proposal can be shown to increase town centre footfall and vitality

At present the full impact is on town centre footfall is unknown as it will depend on how ESBC choose to deal with the relocation of their current tenants of the Market Hall and the decisions taken by the affected traders.

East Staffordshire Borough Council, as you are aware, has indicated an intention to support the affected traders to relocate. The Business Case

assumes that they will be relocated elsewhere within the town centre and therefore this footfall will not be lost to the town.

The public consultation has evidenced that of the 1,161 responses only 37% visited the market stalls regularly (regularly defined as at least once per month). The proposals for the new library and enterprise hub include a café and public toilets. These two existing facilities within the Market Hall were the second and third most popular reasons for visiting the venue, at 30% and 26% respectively.

It is anticipated therefore that this footfall will not be "lost" or "displaced elsewhere" but will remain within the Market Hall. In addition to the retained footfall, the library, has an anticipated uplift of 40% which has been seen elsewhere in Staffordshire when the library offer is modernised plus the footfall to the public sector hub and Registration Services.

A calculation of the anticipated footfall that will be generated by the County Council's proposals for the Library and Enterprise Hub are provided at Appendix 3 of the report. These indicate an additional footfall of 189,471 per year on the Market Place area of the town centre, an uplift of 83% on the current Market Hall footfall.

Lichfield achieved an increase +97% in first year after re-opening. The calculation for Burton has made assumption that there would be a 40% uplift which takes account of some local opposition from registered library members who might choose not to visit a new library if it were to be re-located into the Market Hall.

c) The proposal facilitates broader regeneration activities on the existing library site.

If Burton Library move goes ahead, ESBC will secure the library site for redevelopment. On 13 December 2021, ESBC recently released their vision of the library site and surrounding area by Burton's waterfront, otherwise known as Project D. This vision to date includes cladding the current library building and repurposing it as a Washlands Visitor Centre.

The current library building is far too big for a Washlands Visitor Centre and ESBC acknowledge this by stating that they will need to consider additional uses for the building such as a conference centre and the inclusion of bike hire facilities. This begs the question as to why leaving the library in the current library building and adding a Washlands Visitor Centre is not seriously being considered. This would provide the additional use that the building needs and could create a "cultural quarter" by the river if ESBC go ahead with their idea of creating a heritage centre close by too. Incorporating the library into Project D could contribute to the

broader regeneration activities envisaged but again no serious consideration of this idea appears to have been given.

Overall, we believe that Cabinet should look again at the benefits of retaining the library in its current position and work with ESBC to finalise exciting proposals for Project D. Moving the library is not the “key” to unlocking ambitious plans, in fact leaving it where it is could make Project D a more viable proposition and create an exciting cultural quarter for Burton.

Response to 2c) The proposal facilitates broader regeneration activities on the existing library site

This would be achieved through the delivery of an associated Burton Town Deal Board project led by ESBC. This project (project D) is progressing in parallel to the development of the library project.

ESBC released details of their proposals in early December – their vision is to create a Washlands Visitor Centre. This will provide a gateway to an improved Washlands Park and associated café / restaurant and bike hire facility.

A letter from the Leader of East Staffordshire Borough Council outlining how “the use of the library area is fundamental to our plans both as the Borough Council but also as a wider Towns Fund partnership looking to deliver on the whole vision of the Burton Town Investment Plan” is included at Appendix 4 of the report. Also included in Appendix 4 is the analysis of the latest Project D proposals, as referenced in Cllr Goodfellow’s letter, which highlights the creation of a Washlands Visitor Centre on the site of the existing library as being the third highest ranking of nine proposals considered through the latest public consultation exercise.

The Market Hall is in very close proximity to the proposed Washlands redevelopment. It will be essential therefore that SCC continue to work with ESBC to ensure a clear linkage between both sites to strengthen the cultural offer within the town centre.

The library service already delivers children’s and promotional activities outdoors on the Washlands and it is anticipated that this will continue if the library is relocated.

The only way that a Visitor Centre could be incorporated into the existing library offer, without compromising it, would be to extend the existing library building.

Incorporating a new Washlands Visitor Centre as a significant extension on the side of the existing library building would also constitute a “new

project” in the eyes of the Government and would not meet the terms of their original “in principle” funding offer. It would also fail to achieve the footfall uplift in the Market Place and the improvement of the Market Hall, a building of significant historical interest. The Town Investment Plan presented to Government already focuses strongly on the “hidden heritage” within the town. There is no guarantee that this level of deviation would be approved at this late stage by Government. This level of speculation would add significant risk to the Town Board’s proposals.

- 3. Burton library in its current location is one of the most frequently used libraries across Staffordshire. This speaks for itself. Moving Burton library into Burton Market Hall will mean the library loses its prime location overlooking the green expanse of the Washlands and lose proximity to a large and generally quiet car park. This may mean fewer residents use the library service as shown in the responses to the public consultation.**

Concerns over the effect of the move on Burton library service have been cast aside due to wider regeneration goals, however moving a library and offices into a traditional Market Hall and events space doesn’t particularly strike us as exciting or imaginative and therefore we would like to ask the Cabinet to re-consider in consultation with local members whether overall this move is actually worth it, and in doing so have due regard to ESBC’s vision for the current library site which was only released on 13 December 2021 – two days before the SCC Cabinet Decision.

Response to reason 3:

The comments regarding parking and the response to the public consultation have been covered in the responses to previous points.

Historically Staffordshire’s library network was established before the 1974 review of local government and provision therefore differs across the county. Some of our static libraries were established by Rural and Urban District councils which has left a Hub and spoke model in parts of the county.

For example, Cannock Library has 6 libraries within a 5-mile radius; Newcastle has 3 libraries and Lichfield has 2.

While the Burton area does have an extensive mobile library service which visits Anslow, Branston, Stretton, Rolleston and Tutbury, the closest static Staffordshire library to Burton is Barton Library which is 6.3 miles.

Library use in Burton Library is concentrated on one central library and is not diluted across multiple community libraries which accounts in part for the high level of visits.

Also contributing to the high Burton Library visitor numbers is the popular café and 2 large meeting rooms, which prior to COVID were hired extensively. A café offer and meeting room provision will remain if the library is relocated to the Market Hall.

We believe that libraries can be a fundamental part of High Street regeneration. As you are aware, over the last six years Staffordshire County Council has demonstrated their commitment to modernising our library offer in relocating three libraries into new buildings.

Stafford Library moved into our corporate building – July 2015. Newcastle Library was relocated into a community hub with the Borough Council, Police, Families First and Aspire Housing - July 2018. Lichfield Library moved into a former church sharing space with a community arts organisation and Tourist Information Centre – December 2018. All three library buildings are smaller than the buildings that were vacated, however if Burton Library does relocate into the Market Hall, Burton would still be the second largest Staffordshire Library.

The rationale behind all three relocations was to bring increased footfall into more centrally located library spaces and key areas of town centres. During its first year of operation the new Lichfield library saw a 97% increase in footfall, 85% increase in new membership and a 19% increase in stock issues.

The learning from the Lichfield relocation inspired confidence in rejuvenating historic buildings and the success of the Lichfield Library relocation influenced our decision to consider the proposal to relocate Burton Library.

Burton Market Hall is a beautiful building benefiting from considerable space and natural lighting which we feel will provide a similarly engaging library space to Lichfield and will continue our success in reimagining and preserving significant heritage buildings as libraries.

Chairman

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 6 January 2022

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chairman)

Attendance

Tina Clements	Bob Spencer
Mike Davies	Samantha Thompson
Jeremy Oates	Conor Wileman (Vice-Chairman (Overview))
Kath Perry, MBE	

Also in attendance: Stephen Funnell (Stoke-on-Trent City Council); Simon Goodall (Tamworth Borough Council) and; Shelagh McKiernan (Tamworth Borough Council)

Apologies: Charlotte Atkins, Gill Heath, Jeremy Pert and Bernard Peters

PART ONE

29. Declarations of Interest

County Councillor Jeremy Oates declared an interest in Item No. 3 on the Agenda, "Scrutiny Review of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership" owing to his Membership of the Partnership's Executive Board as Leader of Tamworth Borough Council and their former Portfolio Holder for Heritage & Growth. Cllr Oates left the meeting room and took no part in the discussion and Resolutions set out in minute No. 30 below.

30. Scrutiny Review of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership 2020-21

The Committee considered a report and PowerPoint presentation of the Chair, Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) regarding the operation and performance of the Partnership during 2020/21 (schedule 1 to the signed minutes).

The meeting was attended by Alun Rodgers, Chair, SSLEP and Anne Boyd, Chief Executive, SSLEP.

SSLEP was formed in 2011 to bring principal Local Authorities, businesses and other stakeholders together with the aim of driving economic growth and prosperity within the County (including Stoke-on-Trent). Following incorporation as a company limited by guarantee in April 2019, SSLEP Board became their main decision-making body. The Board currently comprised 18 Directors, 10 of whom were from the private sector and 6 from the public sector.

SSLEPs were required to agree and publish an Assurance Framework setting out their governance arrangements, in line with Central Government's National Local Growth Assurance Framework. The National Framework stated that LEPs should participate in relevant Local Authority scrutiny arrangements to guarantee the effective and appropriate democratic scrutiny of their investment decisions. Furthermore, SSLEP's Assurance Framework provided that scrutiny should be undertaken annually via joint arrangements between relevant Local Authorities in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

During his presentation of the report the Chair highlighted: - (i) the purpose of their attendance at the meeting; (ii) the function of SSLEP; (iii) the composition of SSLEP's Board; (iv) SSLEP's Strategy; (v) Central Government's anticipated review of LEPs nationwide during 2022; (vi) SSLEP's governance structures; (vii) SSLEP's Delivery Plan for 2020/21; (viii) SSLEP's programme management of current initiatives such as Local Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund etc and; (ix) the recommendations contained in the report having regard to the above-mentioned Assurance Framework.

During the full and wide-ranging discussion which ensued, Members gave detailed scrutiny to the work of SSLEP, asking questions and seeking clarification of various matters including: - (i) the background to Central Government's review of LEPs and likely outcomes for Staffordshire; (ii) initiatives aimed specifically at promoting skills and young people; (iii) the focus of SSLEPs work having regard to the diversity of Staffordshire's economy and business sector; (iv) the involvement of SSLEP in Central Government's Levelling-up Agenda; (v) the inward investment levered by SSLEP during 2020/21 and; (vi) benchmarking of performance of SSLEP with other LEPs in the West Midlands Region and beyond.

In addition, the Chairman invited the representatives of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire District and Borough Councils present to ask questions of the Chair and Chief Executive, SSLEP, as they related specifically to their local areas.

The Chairman then thanked the representatives of SSLEP for an interesting and informative presentation and looked forward to continued partnership working with all stakeholders in the promotion of economic growth and prosperity in the County for the benefit of residents.

RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and noted.

(b) That the good performance of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership in delivering their objectives during 2020/21 be welcomed.

(c) That the uncertainty regarding the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships, nationally, be noted and that future developments relating to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, in this respect, be monitored closely.

(d) That the future delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Staffordshire through partnership working arrangements continue to be scrutinised, as appropriate.

Chairman

Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 20 January 2022

Proposed New Joint Coroners Service

Recommendation

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Reviews and comments upon the draft business case for submission to the Chief Coroner and Ministry of Justice, subject to a similar discussion/resolution by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Report of Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is being asked to scrutinise and comment upon the draft Cabinet report and draft business case attached at Appendix x which proposes a Joint Coroners service for Staffordshire, joining the South Staffordshire jurisdiction with that of Stoke on Trent and North Staffordshire.
2. The proposed new joint service would follow national policy established by the Ministry of Justice and supported by the Chief Coroner to merge smaller coronial areas and reduce the overall number of Coronial jurisdictions in England and Wales. The retirement of the South Staffordshire Coroner has provided the opportunity to consider consolidating the Coroners service into a single service, which would enable a more consistent, resilient service for Staffordshire residents and over time deliver efficiencies through economies of scale.
3. Comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be incorporated into the Cabinet report which is due to be presented to Cabinet on 16 February 2022.

Report

4. Since 2014 The Chief Coroner and the Ministry of Justice have had a long-term plan to reduce the number of Coroner areas in England and Wales. As a result, area mergers are always considered whenever the opportunity arises, invariably when a senior coroner retires.
5. Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council are now being requested to consider this as Andrew Haigh, Senior Coroner, Staffordshire South retired on 31 October 2021. The Chief Coroner encourages Local Authorities to consider a merger as it his belief that merging two or more areas leads to a more consistent service for bereaved families, and results in more coroner's areas being of a similar size and population.
6. The process and timescale to create a joint service is lengthy and interim arrangements have been put in place to ensure that Staffordshire County Council maintains a Coroner in post. Mr Andrew Barkley, North Staffs Coroner has agreed to provide the interim Coronial cover for the Staffordshire South jurisdiction whilst a business case is progressed and pending a decision regarding the joint service.
7. Staffordshire County Council is required to advise the Chief Coroner's office should they wish for the Coronial jurisdictions to be merged.
8. The required business case has been completed and is appended to this Report.
9. On acceptance of the business case by the Ministry of Justice, preparation for the required laying of the statutory instrument for the legal process will commence. A period of at least 4 months is required to provide sufficient time for this to take place. The Ministry of Justice will also complete the required 4-week targeted consultation.
10. The proposed merger will have a positive impact on service delivery. It will provide an opportunity to focus upon improving services to bereaved families, whilst retaining high quality and consistent services for local people across both jurisdictions. It will also ensure that the service is sustainable and fit for the future.
11. The alignment and improvement of working practices to deliver a single simplified process will enable efficiencies to be made together with potential economies of scale from the combination of contractual arrangements.

12. Whilst it is proposed to have a single back-office Coroners support team, the current arrangements for the location of inquests will continue. This means that a Coronial presence will be maintained in both Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. There will be an opportunity to enhance the local service with the use of additional sites to provide access to the service within increased locations across the new coronial jurisdiction.

Legal Implications

13. As highlighted at paragraph 1.5 the Ministry of Justice will prepare the laying of the statutory instrument for the legal process once the business case has been agreed and submitted. Coroner jurisdiction areas may be amended under schedule 2 of the Coroners and Justice act 2009.

14. Legal representatives from Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council will support the preparation of a joint legally binding agreement which will clearly set out the provision of the service, accountabilities, responsibilities, monitoring and financial arrangements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

15. The proposed joint service will operate within the current budget envelope of Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council. The joint service will enable processes and procedures to be standardised across the merged jurisdiction which will then enable efficiencies to be delivered.

Link to Strategic Plan

Please refer to the relevant strategic priority.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

N/A

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Business Case for a joint Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Coroners Service

Contact Details

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**ALTERATION OF CORONER AREAS UNDER SCHEDULE 2 OF THE CORONERS AND
JUSTICE ACT 2009¹
MINISTRY OF JUSTICE BUSINESS CASE TEMPLATE FOR MERGERS**

NAMES OF CORONER AREAS THAT ARE PROPOSING TO MERGE

- Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire
- South Staffordshire

PROPOSED NAME OF NEW AREA

- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Coroners Service

INFORMATION ON AREAS THAT PROPOSE TO MERGE

- Please provide key details in the table as follows:

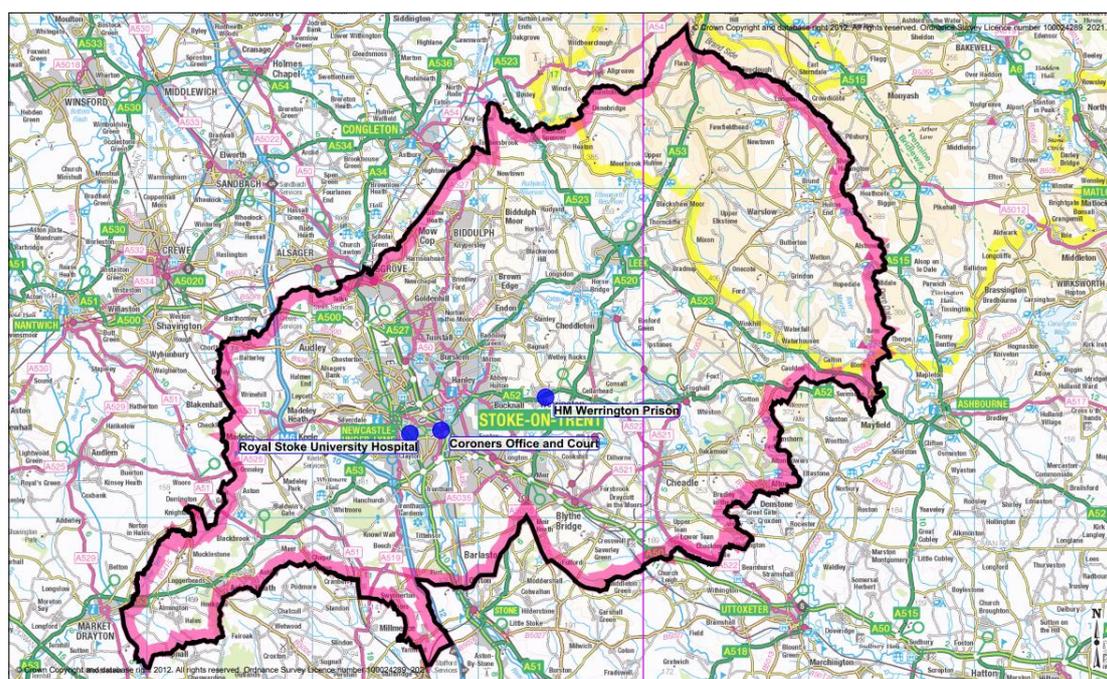
Coroner area	Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire	South Staffordshire	Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Coroners Service
Geographical area covered	Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire	South Staffordshire	Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Coroners Service
Local authority/authorities that fund(s) coroner area and %	Stoke-on-Trent 51% Staffordshire 49%	Staffordshire County Council	% To be agreed
Relevant authority (formerly lead authority)	Stoke-on-Trent City Council	Staffordshire County Council	Joint committee
Police Force(s)	Staffordshire Police	Staffordshire Police	Staffordshire Police
Transport links	West Coast Rail Line M6	M6 motorway, M6 Toll Road, M54 as well as several major A-roads, main west coast rail line to/from London and the North West.	As now
Major hospitals	University Hospital of North Midlands – Royal Stoke	County hospital (managed by UHNM) Burton Hospitals NHS	As now

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2009/25/schedule/2>

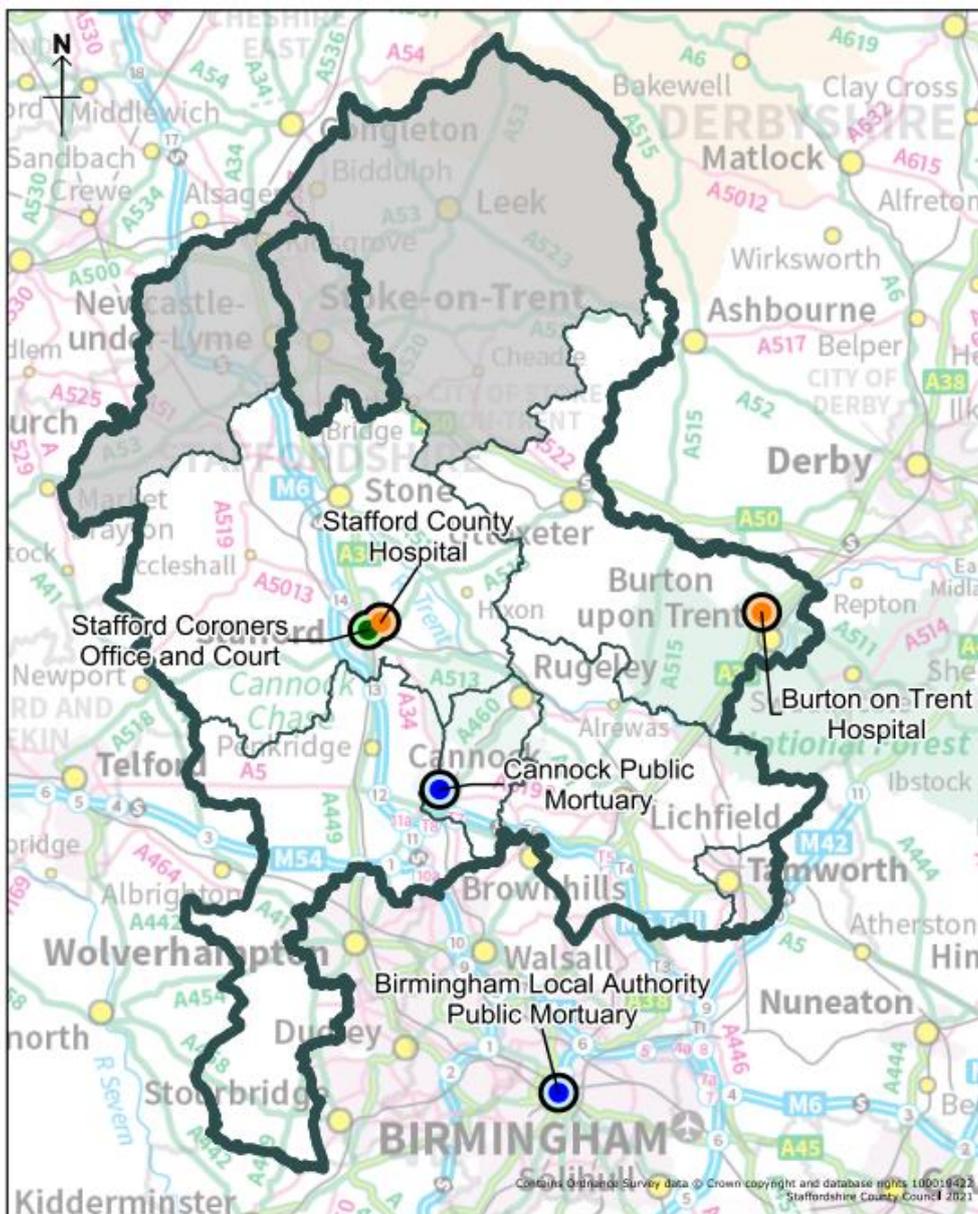
Coroner area	Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire	South Staffordshire	Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Coroners Service
		Foundation Trust	
Prisons in area		HMP Featherstone HMP Stafford HMP Oakwood HMP Brinsford HMP Drake Hall HMP Dovegate HMP Swinfen Hall YOI	
Other state detention facilities	HM Werrington young offender detention centre	NHS mental health unit with facilities for compulsory detained persons in St Georges hospital, Stafford.	
Courtrooms/ inquest venues	Stoke Town Hall X 2 Court rooms	Cannock Chase Coroners Court Staffordshire Place Digital – Teams	Continued use of existing or new and improved facilities is anticipated
Office/staff accommodation – location and capacity	Spacious office suite in Stoke Town Hall accommodating all coroners, support staff and Coroners officers There is capacity to accommodate additional staff and expand into an adjacent area if necessary	Ground floor Offices in Staffordshire Place 1, capacity for Coroner and two support staff	Continued use of existing or new and improved facilities is anticipated with a move to a single back office location in the medium term
Employer of coroner's officers'	Staffordshire Police	Staffordshire Police	
Name of senior coroner	Mr Andrew Barkley	Mr Andrew Haigh now retired – Mr Andrew Barkley Interim Senior Coroner	Mr Andrew Barkley
Number of area coroners	1	0	2
Number of assistant coroners	5	4	7 – 4 of the Assistants have been recruited for

Coroner area	Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire	South Staffordshire	Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Coroners Service
			both jurisdictions hence individual columns =9
Number of coroner's officers	5	3	8
Number of administrative support staff	1 X Office Manager 3 X Coroners Support Staff	3 (2 FTE) + nil hours contract staff	As Now
Number of deaths reported in the previous calendar year	2401	2395	4796
Inquests held in the previous calendar year	433	336	769
Post-mortem rate as % of reported deaths in the previous calendar year	27 %	15 %	n/a

Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire current jurisdiction Map



Staffordshire South existing jurisdiction Map



SENIOR CORONER APPOINTMENT

- **Why are you seeking a merger now (i.e., which area’s senior coroner is stepping down, when and why)?** South Staffordshire Coroner Andrew Haigh resigns at the end October 2021

The request for a merger is following the retirement of Mr Andrew Haigh, Senior Coroner for Staffordshire South on 31 October 2021. This has provided the potential to form a new (merged) jurisdiction comprising of Staffordshire South, Stoke on Trent, and North Staffordshire areas. Mr Andrew Barkley Senior Coroner for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire is providing cover following Mr Haigh’s retirement.

This is an interim arrangement pending a decision relating to the proposed merger to form a new jurisdiction.

This proposed merger would follow national policy established by the Ministry of Justice and supported by the Chief Coroner to merge smaller coronial areas and reduce the overall number of Coronial jurisdictions in England and Wales.

- **How do you propose to appoint the Senior Coroner for the new merged area – (i.e., does the relevant authority propose to appoint one of the senior coroners from the affected areas or to hold an open competition)?**

It is the intention that the current Senior Coroner for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire, Mr Andrew Barkley, will be appointed as Senior Coroner for the merged jurisdiction. At the time Mr Barkley was appointed as the Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire Coroner in April 2019, the potential for a future merger was discussed. Mr Barkley confirmed his support for a merger should the opportunity arise and is fully engaged in this request.

- **Are all affected senior coroners aware of and content with this approach?**

Senior Coroners for both jurisdictions are aware of the approach however there is no impact on the Staffordshire South Senior Coroner as he retired on 31 October 2021. Mr Barkley has indicated his support for a merged jurisdiction, and it is the intention that he would become the Coroner of the new merged jurisdiction.

Based on the latest Annual Return 2020 there were 2,395 reported deaths in Staffordshire South and 2,401 reported deaths in North Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent. On this basis the total number of deaths reported in a merged area would be approximately 4,800.

IMPACT OF PROPOSED MERGER ON SERVICE DELIVERY

- **What will be the impact of the proposed merger on service delivery?**

The merger will have a positive impact on service delivery. It will provide an opportunity to focus on improving services to bereaved families, whilst retaining high quality and consistent services for local people across both jurisdictions. It will also ensure that the service is sustainable and fit for the future.

Through the leadership of a single Senior Coroner the merger presents an opportunity to streamline processes and procedures across the merged jurisdiction and therefore deliver efficiencies. There will be the opportunity to align and improve working practices by identifying best practice across the merged jurisdiction; working with members of the team to drive positive change, to deliver a single simplified process for partners who currently engage with both jurisdictions and must deal with different processes; and it will enable economies of scale. Both

local authorities use the same service provider for IT, however the systems operate differently, the merger will provide the opportunity to move to a single platform and have a single contract.

Staffordshire (including Stoke-on-Trent) is a large geographically spread county, and it is intended to keep current arrangements for the location of inquests; these will continue to be held locally, both in Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. There will be opportunity to enhance the local service with the use of additional sites to provide access to the service within increased locations across the new coronial jurisdiction.

- **Will additional coronial or administrative support be provided in the new area? (e.g., will additional coroners need to be recruited or will workloads be increased/redistributed etc? How will additional caseloads be managed?)**

As above, the merged area will deal with approximately 4,800 deaths per annum.

The recruitment of an additional Area Coroner, alongside a small team of Assistant Coroners will ensure that the caseload is managed effectively, and the service is resilient, should additional cases present themselves.

Both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent provide administrative support to their respective teams based in Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent. It is proposed to have one centralised back-office team based in one location (anticipated to be Stoke-on-Trent), however it is expected that the existing officers and administration staff will remain in their current locations and with their existing employer, should they not wish to move to the central location. This situation will remain until such time as staff retire or leave which will then enable us to achieve a single physical office space. This will enable a smooth transition to the new structure and minimise the loss of experienced staff and keep the use of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) to a minimum.

It is intended to use a Section 113 agreement to allow the joint service to operate under the Local Government Act 1972.

- **What will be the impact of the merger on associated services – such as post-mortem examinations, and mortuary provision?**

Body storage and post-mortems facilities are currently based at Cannock and Stoke-on-Trent public mortuaries and there is an arrangement in place for use of facilities at Birmingham City Council public mortuary.

Body storage and post-mortem facilities are also based at the NHS hospitals across the County in Stoke-on-Trent, Stafford, and Burton on Trent. These arrangements will initially remain in place.

However, we do intend to review all the current arrangements as part of the merger, to mitigate any deficiencies that exist, due to shortages of pathologists. It is recognised that the existing Public Mortuary facilities in the North and the South are aging and require significant investment to maintain them to the required standard, therefore the review will make recommendations on an appropriate way forward which will reflect the needs of the new joint service. There will also be an exercise to consolidate contractual arrangements to deliver increased value for money. It is hoped that the joint procurement of services will achieve economies of scale and create financial savings which will benefit both authorities

There is also an opportunity to review body removal arrangements and align these arrangements to provide a more cost-effective single service.

There are several options that will be considered once the merger has taken place about mortuary facilities and these are as follows:

1. Own Mortuary Service – provide an inhouse mortuary to fully meet the demands of the joined service, including the services of pathologists. This option includes exploring the potential to work in partnership with Keele University School of Medicine to create a centre of excellence
2. Subcontract – consider outsourcing of the arrangements to a third party e.g., another Local Authority
3. Arrangement with NHS – via contract to provide comprehensive mortuary services removing the need for a public mortuary infrastructure

- **How will the relevant local authority administer the new coroner area?**

It is proposed that the new Coroner Area will be overseen by a Joint Executive Committee comprising of Cabinet Members from both authorities, together with appropriate Lead Officers and with support from Legal and Finance teams. Responsibility for full administration including the appointment of Senior, Area and Assistant Coroners, subject to Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor consents, and employment of coroner's support staff will be undertaken by Stoke-on-Trent City Council who will employ the administrative staff required to manage the operation on a day-to-day basis. Stoke-on-Trent City Council will be accountable to the Joint Committee. Discussions are being progressed to determine an equitable charging methodology which will be applied between Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, replacing existing arrangements.

- **How will administrative governance be achieved between the relevant local authority and other funding local authorities?**

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent City Councils have a well-established and positive working relationship which has operated successfully for many years. On approval of the merger, both local authorities will enter into a legally binding agreement which will clearly set out the provision of the service, accountabilities, responsibilities,

monitoring arrangements and financial arrangements. Governance will be through the Joint Committee who will agree funding allocations, approve, and authorise expenditure and other appropriate decision making.

It is anticipated that there will be an Accountable Officer within each authority who will have strategic and operational oversight of the Coroner's service and they will provide appropriate advice and reports into the Joint Committee.

There will be equally weighted membership, with an alternating chair using the North and South locations to host the joint executive committee.

- **How will the affected local authorities manage budgets?**

Budgets will be set and agreed by the Joint Committee consisting of Staffordshire County Council Cabinet Members, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Cabinet Members, with support from finance and legal officers.

The Joint Committee, in addition to setting budgets will, act as the management board for support activities, review the production of an annual report and carry out performance monitoring of the joint service. Meetings will be held quarterly, and HM Coroner will attend these meetings

A revised cost sharing basis will be considered between the two authorities and agreed at the Joint Committee. The service will not exceed funding over and above the current financial commitment of either authority. Therefore, the total budget envelope for this joint service will not exceed £2,132,130 with Staffordshire County Council's commitment not exceeding £1,363,780 and Stoke-on-Trent City Council's commitment not exceeding £768,350.

The current proportion of total costs equates to 64% being met by Staffordshire County Council and 36% by Stoke on Trent City Council. This proportion will be maintained in the new service which shall be subject to periodic review and adjustment if required.

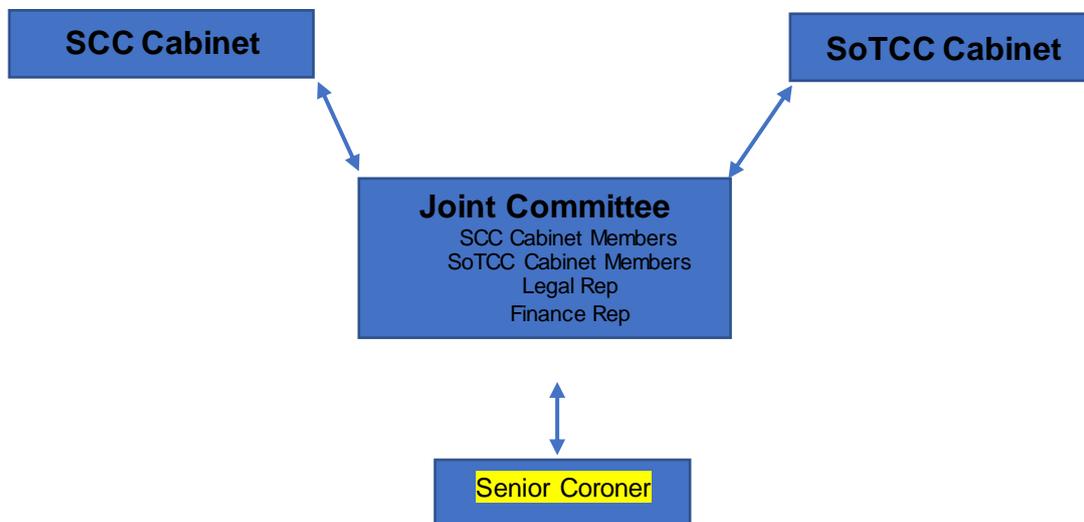
Overheads from Staffordshire are not included in the figures below as these will remain in the Authority when the service is managed as planned by Stoke-on-Trent City Council. In the event of Staffordshire being the host authority then the same principle would apply, and Stoke-on-Trent City Council's overheads would not form part of the budget envelope. It is the aspiration that the total cost of a joint service would over time deliver efficiencies as described elsewhere in the business case.

Summary Costs – Budget Envelope for Joint Service

	Stoke-on-Trent & North Staffordshire £	Staffordshire (South) £	Total Funding Available for Merger £
Operational Budget	1,448,500	640,880	2,089,380
Overhead Recharge Budget	42,750	-	42,750
Staffordshire's 49% Contribution – North Staffs Coroners Service	(722,900)	722,900	-
Overall Total	768,350	1,363,780	2,132,130
*Staffordshire's overheads are not shown in the table as they are notional - It is only the operational budget that will transfer to the joint service administered by Stoke		*19,040	

A full breakdown of existing budgets for both local authorities Coroners Service are included at Annex A

Proposed Governance Arrangements



IMPACT OF MERGER ON THOSE WORKING IN / WITH THE SERVICE

- What will be the impact of the merger on:
- Coroners (e.g., will the workloads of the Senior Coroner, Area Coroner (if applicable) and assistant coroners be affected? Will all existing assistant coroners transfer to the new area? Are the current assistant coroners all currently working and being trained? Do they or will they all have the Chief Coroner’s recommended 15 days a year of work?)

Due to the scale and average number of deaths for the merged area, it is proposed that the Senior Coroner will be supported by the existing and a new Area Coroner plus the 7 Assistant Coroners.

The existing Area Coroner and existing 7 Assistant Coroners would transfer to the new area. A joint recruitment process took place in September 2021 to recruit four new Assistant Coroners to support the Senior Coroner and ensure resilience across the jurisdictions.

- **Coroners Officers**

Coroners Officers in the North are based within Stoke-on-Trent City Council Offices alongside the Coroner and other staff. The Coroners Officers in the South are based remotely at Lichfield Police Station in Staffordshire. It is intended that the Coroners Officers will relocate to the central back-office location when the merger takes place. Coroners Officers currently have different working practices in the North and South jurisdictions. It is intended that these working practices are aligned and for the Coroners officers to be integrated into the centralised back-office arrangement. This will be subject to a HR consultation process at the appropriate time once the single location has been agreed.

- **Other staff in the coroner's offices**

It is proposed that Coroners Support Office staff will be based in the central location with the Coroners Officers, and Coroners. However, it is anticipated that this will take place gradually as existing staff may initially operate as a virtual single team remaining in their existing location to minimise the risk of losing valuable experienced staff.

Court hearings will continue to be held in both Stoke and Staffordshire and therefore existing resource requirements will remain as at present when court is sitting.

- **Pathologists**

Pathologists will benefit from having a single back-office function, as there will be one point of contact and back-office process.

- **Others**

It is intended that the contracts remain in place with the Coroners Court Volunteers Support Service, however it is proposed that this will become a single contract following the merger.

Currently there are differing practices in the North and South jurisdictions in respect of the body removal service; the North have an in-house provision whilst the South contract out these services. Services in the North are currently under review. These arrangements will be reviewed to allow alignment, economies of scale and better market management.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF MERGER

A requirement of both local authorities is that the new service operates within existing resource/budgets on day one with an expectation that efficiencies are delivered as the joint service develops and matures.

It is planned that existing staff remain on their current local authority terms to minimise the cost of redundancy, and impact on office staff whilst maintaining the skilled workforce.

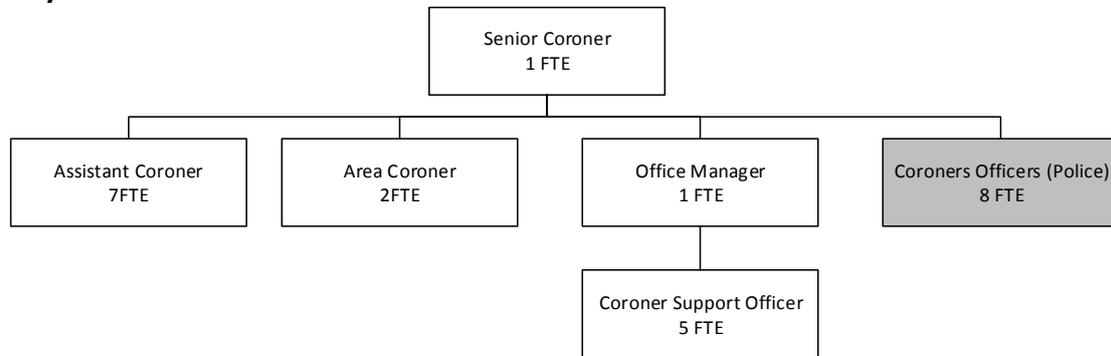
A local Coronial presence will be maintained in Stafford and Stoke on Trent, and it is intended that further access points for the bereaved will be introduced through utilising meeting rooms within libraries and other Council premises.

Existing arrangements for post-mortems will be maintained until the completion of the review of public mortuaries.

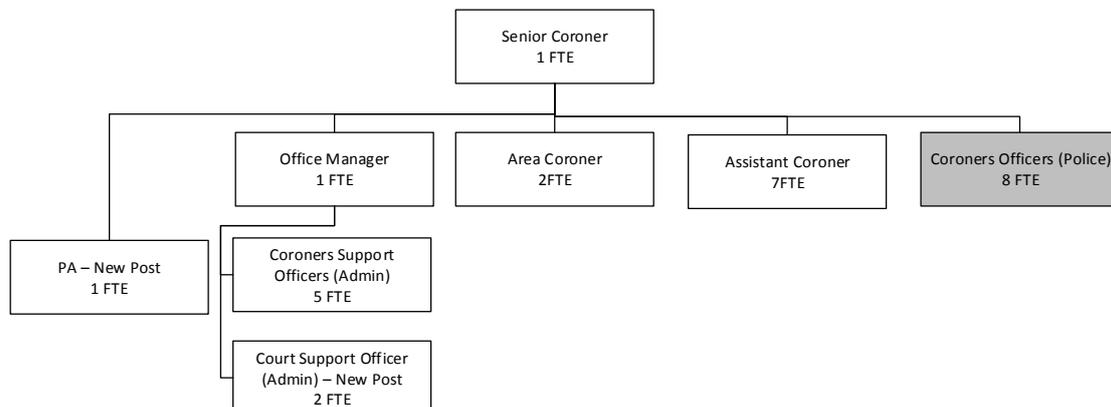
Please see Annex A for the full costing breakdown.

STAFFING

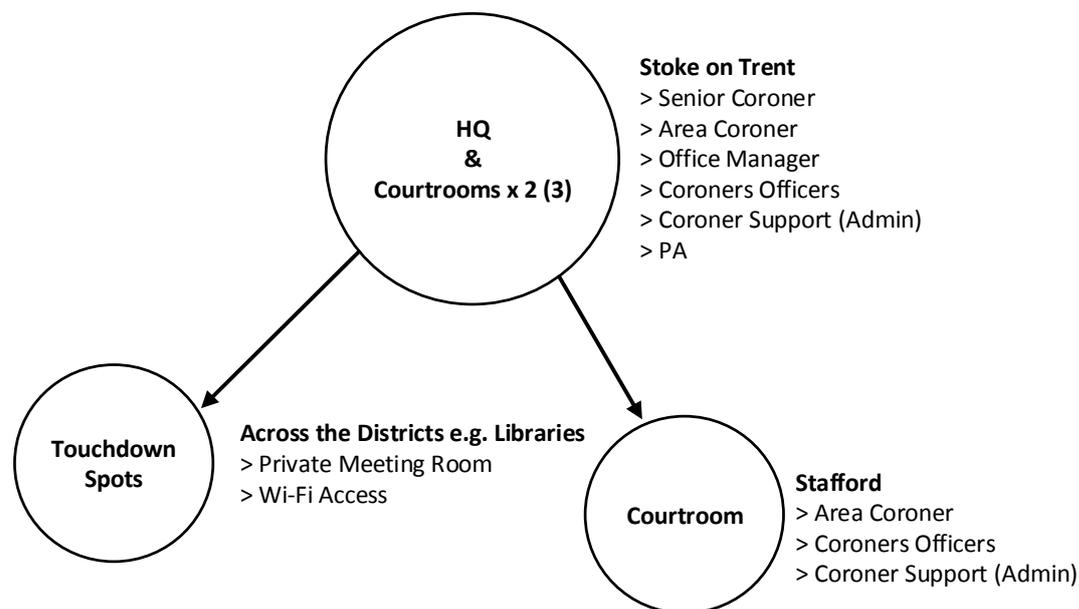
Day 1



Aspiration



Office Bases / Locations



LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- **Are you aware of any legal issues that need to be resolved before a merger can go ahead (in addition to the Lord Chancellor making an order under Schedule 2 of the 2009 Act)? If so please give details.**

No. Legal representation from both local authorities will be key to the production of the Legal Framework for the joint service.

VIEWS OF THOSE AFFECTED BY MERGER

- **Do all affected local authorities support the merger? Please provide details.**

Yes, both Chief Executives support this in principle, this business case has been appended to reports for senior leadership teams and Cabinets for both local authorities.

- **Have the local authority councillors / cabinets approved the merger? Please provide details.**

Yes –(tbc subject to Cabinet approval taking place in February 2022)

- **What is the view of affected coroners and their staff?**

Affected coroners and staff are all aware of the proposals and formal consultation will be taking place following approval of the Business Case.

- **How will bereaved people be affected by the merger – e.g., travelling to inquests, being able to contact coroners' offices?**

Bereaved people will see a benefit from the merger and experience a more accessible service: inquests will continue to be held locally in Stafford and Stoke. Most communication with families is carried out by telephone, email and by post. There will also be an increased opportunity for officers to meet with the bereaved locally face to face if required at 'touchdown' locations throughout the district.

- **Have you sought the views of other affected stakeholders - such as police authority and constabulary, hospitals, prisons, GPs, faith groups and funeral directors? Please provide details.**

A brief consultation has been sent out to key stakeholders and responses are expected by 7 January 2022

- **What are the views of other stakeholders?**

As above

- **What impact will the merger have in terms of disability, gender, and racial equality?**

The impact will be positive with the provision of more accessible touchdown centres across the jurisdictions.

RISKS AND MITIGATING ACTIONS

- Please provide details of any risks identified and mitigating action (to be) taken.

See Attached risk log as Annex C.

ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S)

- Please describe other options considered, in addition to the proposed merger, and the advantages and disadvantages for each option.

The alternative to a merger would be for Staffordshire County Council to recruit a new Senior Coroner. This will be considered should it not be possible to obtain a merger.

**CONTACT WITH THE CHIEF CORONER'S OFFICE / MINISTRY OF JUSTICE /
CONSULTEES**

- **Have you had previous discussions with the Chief Coroner on the proposed merger? Yes (This is a requirement before MoJ can formally consult on the merger.) Please provide details of the discussion.**

A letter of intent has been forwarded to the Chief Coroner and MoJ in October 2021. Communication from the Chief Coroner's Office on 7 December confirmed that discussions to date with the Office were sufficient for requirements

- **Have you had previous contact with MoJ on the proposed merger?**

Yes, a letter of intent has been forwarded to MoJ and Chief Coroner in October 2021.

- **Are you happy for this business case in its entirety to be sent to all consultees? If not please provide details.**

Yes

- **Please list consultees for the consultation on the proposed merger – the organisation's name and the most appropriate email address - at Annex B. MoJ will remove email addresses from Annex B before sending the business case to consultees.**
- **Further information on the merger process is available in the form of Chief Coroner guidance at: <http://www.judiciary.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/guidance-14-mergers-of-coroner-areas.pdf>.**

Annex A

Resource implications of the merger

Table A: Details of current Senior Coroners and Area Coroner/s (if applicable) in each existing coroner area

Position (e.g., Senior Coroner, Area Coroner)	First name	Surname	Current salary (including National Insurance and pension contributions)	Long Inquest Payments (if applicable) or other additional payments	Proposed salary in amalgamated area (if applicable) (including National Insurance and pension contributions)
Senior	Andrew	Barkley	2020/21 £192,192.00	n/a	
				n/a	
Senior	Andrew	Haigh	2021/22 £185,130	n/a	
Area	Emma	Serrano	£145,918.94	n/a	

Table B: Budgets Summary

	Stoke on Trent & North Staffordshire £	Staffordshire (South) £
Operational Budget:		
Salary Costs of Senior Coroner including on-costs	195,500	185,130
Salary Costs of Area Coroner including on costs	148,100	-
Salary Costs of Coroners Officer(s) including on-costs (**picked up by Police)	N/A	N/A
Salary Costs of Admin Staff including on-costs	141,200	62,210
Casual Hours Cover	0	27,000
Assistant Coroner - Fees Charged	46,000	22,000
Insurance Charges	4,000	5,390
Buildings (exc insurance on above line)	5,300	-
Transport Related Costs	1,900	1,890
Supplies and Services Costs (ie. General Running Costs)	22,000	9,860
Funeral Director Costs	0	7,320
Post Mortems/Pathology Costs	200,000	132,820
SLA's with Other Providers of Services:		
Cannock	-	105,150
Burton	-	44,310
Stoke	-	13,170
Birmingham	-	6,520
Other Costs:		
Legal Charges		
Other Costs Charged Against Inquest Expenses	25,000	18,110
I-gene	101,000	-
Coroners Removal Team	376,900	-
Public Mortuary	181,600	-
Total Operational Budget	1,448,500	640,880
Overhead Recharges Budget:		
Office Accommodation	3,000	5,490
ICT Costs	19,500	6,640
Finance	2,700	920
HR	6,300	2,150
Occupational Health	700	240
Property Services	3,800	1,300
Legal	500	170
Procurement	400	140
Central Expenses	150	50
Business Services	5,700	1,940
Total Overhead Recharges Budget	42,750	19,040
Overall Budgeted Cost of Service	1,491,250	659,920
Notes:		
North Staffs Coroner Recharge	(722,900)	722,900

	Stoke on Trent & North Staffordshire £	Staffordshire (South) £	Total Funding Available for Merger £
Operational Budget	1,448,500	640,880	2,089,380
Overhead Recharge Budget	42,750	-	42,750
Staffordshires 49% Contribution - NorthStaffs Coroners Service	(722,900)	722,900	-
Overall Total	768,350	1,363,780	2,132,130

Annex B**List of consultees**

[Please include:

- *All effected Senior Coroners, Area Coroners and Assistant Coroners in the areas in question;*
- *relevant local authority contacts from all neighbouring coroner areas (MoJ can assist with this if necessary);*
- *all MPs with constituencies within the effected coroner areas;*
- *pathologist contacts;*
- *representatives of local funeral directors within the effected coroner areas;*
- *representatives from hospitals and/or prisons within the area;*
- *the Chief Coroner (MoJ will have the relevant contact details)*
- *local police contacts(MoJ can assist with this if necessary and will include a national ACPO contact as standard))*

Organisation	Email address (please note these will be removed when business case is sent to consultees)
SCO	ben.adams@staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk
Police	Colin.Mattinson@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk
Police	Alan.Lyford@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk
Police	Sarah.Hales@staffordshire.police.uk
CCU	Carmel.Warren@staffordshirefire.gov.uk
CCU	Rob.barber@staffordshirefire.gov.uk
CCU	Bethan.Morgan@staffordshirefire.gov.uk
Funeral Directors	tim@cmcgoughandsons.co.uk
Medical council	gmc@gmc-uk.org
NHS Trust – Royal stoke	Mike.Elton@uhn.nhs.uk
NHS Trust – Royal stoke	Nick.Doorbar@uhn.nhs.uk
NHS Trust – Royal stoke	Tracey.bullock@uhn.nhs.uk
NHS Derbyshire	ifti.majid@nhs.net
NHS Derbyshire	gavin.regan@nhs.net
SCC Registrations	Adam.cooper@staffordshire.gov.uk

Annex C

Risks

Risk Number	Subgroup	Risk Description	Date Raised	Raised By	Owner	Likelihood	Impact	Score
R1	Joint agreement	Agreement of Heads of Terms may be challenging due to differing requirements and/or priorities for both parties.	25/08/2021	BD	TC/CE	4	4	16
R2	Business case	Timescales for gaining SLT approval may be longer than expected	25/08/2021	BD	TC/CE	4	3	12
R3	Joint agreement	Forecast costs for the new joint service are higher than current service resulting in this being unacceptable to SCC	25/08/2021	BD	TC/CE	5	4	20
R4	Joint agreement	SCC and SoT are unable to reach agreement on merger	25/08/2021	BD	TC/CE	4	5	20
R5	Joint agreement	Unable to reach an agreement with SoT Coroner on merger	25/08/2021	BD	TC/CE	4	5	20
R6	Joint agreement	SoT Coroner removes interim agreement before merger is complete or alternative SCC arrangements are in place	01/09/2021	TC	TC/CE	3	5	15
R7	Communications	SCC and SoT do not fully engage all relevant partners with the joint vision for the proposed merger	02/09/2021	BD	TC/CE	2	3	6
R8	Business case	There is a risk that the merger loses political support with the council leadership	02/09/2021	BD	TC/CE	2	2	4
R9	Communications	There is a risk that staff within the Coroners system do not feel sufficiently informed	02/09/2021	BD	TC/CE	2	2	4
R10	Business case	External factors adversely impacting on the progress of the business case (eg issues with lack of pathologists, digital autopsy contract (Stoke), Covid related etc)	06/09/2021	TC	TC/CE	3	4	12
R11	Service delivery	Loss of specialist staff - uncertainty on location of service	06/09/2021	TC	TC/CE	2	3	6
R12	Communications	Reputational risk if perception is that the "local" service is going to be removed	06/09/2021	TC	TC/CE	3	2	6

Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 20 January 2022

Strategic Plan 2022-26

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Consider the progress on developing a Strategic Plan 2022-26
- b. Provide comments and feedback on the Strategic Plan 2022-26, prior to its consideration at Cabinet on 26 January 2022.

Report of Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Committee is being asked to review the attached draft Cabinet report, which is due to be considered by Cabinet on 26 January 2022. The Committee are asked to consider the progress in developing a Strategic Plan 2022-26 and provide comments and feedback on the Plan.

Report

Background

2. The Strategic Plan sets out our ambitions and priorities for the years ahead. It outlines what we want to achieve and how we intend to do it. It is the Council's primary strategic document that shapes our financial and delivery plans. Whilst the Plan may cover a four-year period, the ambitions contained within it set the direction of the Staffordshire we want to shape for decades and generations to come.
3. The attached draft Cabinet Report provides background to the development of the Strategic Plan, and a summary of the key elements contained within the Strategic Plan for 2022-26. Also appended is the full Strategic Plan for 2022-26

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

4. The Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) are developed in conjunction with each other. As such the current work of the MTFS Working Group is linked to this.

Community Impact

5. The Strategic Plan describes the Council's overall strategic vision and priorities. As the Strategic Plan has been developed in conjunction with the MTFS, a separate Community Impact Assessment (CIA) hasn't been completed. The MTFS CIA does provide consideration to the Strategic Plan.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Strategic Plan 2022-26 Draft Cabinet Report
Appendix 2 - Draft Strategic Plan 2022-26

Contact Details

Director:	John Tradewell, Director for Corporate Services
Report Author:	Kerry Dove
Job Title:	Head of Strategy and Digital
Telephone No.:	07855679112
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Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 26 January 2022

Strategic Plan 2022 - 26



Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

“This county council has bold ambitions for Staffordshire and the people who live and work in this fantastic county.

Our strategic plan maps our goals and priorities for the years ahead and how we will deliver them.

It is this plans that will help shape a positive, affordable future not just in the medium term but for generations to come.”

Report Summary:

The Strategic Plan sets out our ambitions and priorities for the years ahead. It outlines what we want to achieve and how we intend to do it. It is the Council’s primary strategic document that shapes our financial and delivery plans.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the progress made in developing the Strategic Plan 2022-26 and that it be referred to the County Council for approval on 10 February 2022.
- b. Agree that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be authorised to finalise the details of the Strategic Plan 2022-26 prior to final publication.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 26 January 2022

Strategic Plan 2022-26

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Note the progress made in developing the Strategic Plan 2022-26 and that it be referred to the County Council for approval on 10 February 2022.
- b. Agree that the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive be authorised to finalise the details of the Strategic Plan 2022-26 prior to final publication.

Report of the Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Following Council elections in May 2021, work began on developing a new Strategic Plan for 2022-26. This report provides an update on its development. A new Plan offers us the opportunity to both reflect on our strengths and achievements in recent years and reassert our ambitions and priorities.
2. The last four years have brought many challenges and opportunities for local public services, not least the global pandemic. Throughout, the Council has remained ambitious for Staffordshire, and focused on delivery. A selection of highlight include:

Families and Communities

- a. Successfully completed a large-scale Children’s System Transformation programme, taking circa.2000 staff through consultation to implement a district footprint, and lead to better outcomes.
- b. Staffordshire has continued to successfully deliver is Building Resilient Families and Communities Programme. In 2020/21, Staffordshire’s programme achieved successful outcomes for 1,203 families, exceeding its annual target of 784, and helping over 9,000 families since 2015.
- c. We successfully launched virtual Family Hubs during Covid-19, which have been held up nationally as an example of good practice.

- d. Our award winning Hungry Little Minds campaign, equips Staffordshire families with personalised emails and messages to support their child's speech and language development
- e. Staffordshire County Council and its partner, the William Salt Library Trust, have received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of nearly £4m towards the Staffordshire History Centre Project.
- f. We continue to build on our successful Community Managed Library Model, with 12 out of the 27 existing contracts already renegotiated in 2021.

Health and Care

- a. Staffordshire is nationally recognised for its response to Covid-19. A collective effort by the public sector, voluntary organisations, residents and businesses to minimise the spread of the virus and protect those most at risk.
- b. Our innovative Support Communities Programme has continued to deliver in 2021. The community-led approach to prevention, supports people to live healthier lives and stay independent for longer. 18 Community Help Points have been established across the county, with over 700 staff and volunteers being trained.
- c. Staffordshire Warmer Homes, in partnership with District and Borough Councils, aims to better insulate and heat homes to reduce fuel poverty and support our efforts to reduce carbon emissions.
- d. Staffordshire has built two Dementia Centres of Excellence in Stafford and Burton, leading the way in delivering care that is person-centred and promotes independence.

Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

- a. The Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme, a £6m partnership with Staffordshire's District and Borough Councils is providing critical support for small businesses and people whose jobs and employment prospects have been impacted by Covid-19.
- b. Since 2014, Staffordshire's Economic Growth Programme has created or safeguarded more than 10,000 jobs and enabled construction of more than 4,000 new homes.
- c. We have successfully delivered a number of key infrastructure projects including the Lichfield Southern Bypass, Stafford Western Access Route and the 60 acre first phase of the i54 Western extension. These projects are creating more jobs and homes for Staffordshire.
- d. Significant success in recent years improving adult skills levels, both by reducing the number of adults with no qualifications, and increasing the number with higher level skills.
- e. We have achieved a 25% reduction in the council's carbon emissions in the first year since declaring a climate change emergency.

Strategic Plan 2022-26

3. Whilst the Plan may cover a four-year period, the ambitions contained within it set the direction of the Staffordshire we want to shape for decades and generations to come.
4. We have a clear vision for Staffordshire – an innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be health and happy. We want everyone in Staffordshire to:
 - a. Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth
 - b. Live in thriving and sustainable communities
 - c. Be healthier and independent for longer
5. Our Plan on a Page, summarises our ambitions, and priorities:



6. Our Strategic Plan identifies five priorities:

- a. Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs
- b. Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections
- c. Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence
- d. Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable

- e. Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential
7. A successful, vibrant economy is at the heart of achieving our vision. Creating opportunities and removing barriers for people to get better-paid jobs, is key to delivering our vision. We have a successful track record of investing to create the right conditions for our economy to grow and improving skills. Covid-19 has affected every part of the economy, it is essential that Staffordshire people have the chance to learn new skills throughout their career and seize opportunities as the economy continues to recover and evolve.
8. Great places enjoy great connections. Whether by road, rail or ultrafast broadband, we want the people and businesses of Staffordshire to be well connected to one another, to the UK and across the globe. We know that improving our highways is one of the top priorities for Staffordshire people. Maintaining and improving this network is very challenging. We need to do it with less funding from central government, costs are rising, and the growing county is making the network busier. Despite this we want Staffordshire people to see an improvement in our highways over the next four years.
9. Climate change is affecting more people's lives every year and we all need to act fast, to do our bit to slow and reverse the damage being done. We have a leading role to play in Staffordshire, by reducing carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions from our operations, as well as working with industry and other organisations to help lower their emissions and make our county more resilient to climate change.
10. Our health and wellbeing are influenced by many things: by our environment; our living conditions; and our own behaviour. Inspiring and encouraging everyone to look after their physical and mental health is at the heart of our ambitions for Staffordshire. For our most vulnerable residents, who do need care, we want to assess their needs quickly and fairly, and provide the quality services they need, at a price taxpayers can afford.
11. We want every child and young person in Staffordshire, whatever their background, to have the opportunity to achieve their potential, and go on to live happy and healthy lives. Families are at the heart of giving children and young people the best start in life. We want Staffordshire families to have the strengths, skills and knowledge to support their children and young people. Working with partners, parents and carers to keep our most vulnerable children and young people safe and improve their outcomes is at the core of this priority.

12. In order to deliver against our priorities, we must continue to evolve the way that the Council operates. We believe that the following four statements need to be central to everything we do as a Council:
 - a. Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered
 - b. Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other
 - c. Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire
 - d. Engage and listen to our communities, partners and businesses, working together to improve our county
13. We want everyone who works for the Council to live our values in all they do; to be ambitious for Staffordshire, courageous in their work and empowered to make a difference. Our workforce are critical to achieving our Strategic Plan.
14. People who are independent and in control of their lives are more likely to enjoy better health and wellbeing. We need to continue to empower and inspire our communities and people to help themselves and each other. Our communities were critical to supporting our most vulnerable during Covid-19. Without our involvement, residents across the county were doing their bit to support each other. Collaborating with and working with our voluntary, community and social enterprise partners will continue to be crucial in helping to enable and support the growth of community action.
15. Technology is fundamental to how we work, live and communicate with each other. We will continue to review and develop our digital approach in everything we do, from helping the economy to grow to improving the lives and opportunities for the people of Staffordshire.
16. We cannot achieve our ambitions without listening to, and working with our communities, partners and businesses. Collaboration is at the core of everything we do in the Council and will be central to our plans over the next four years. We work best when we work together, never was this more evident than during the pandemic.
17. The Council has reaffirmed its pledge to live within its means and deliver value for money. The Council is financially stable and well run. However the financial outlook for whole of local government is challenging and uncertain. We must continue to find different ways to help more people to help themselves and reduce demand for public services. We need to continue to:
 - a. Reduce costs to live within our means
 - b. Use our assets wisely to gain the best return for the council

- c. Work with central government to achieve fair funding, particularly for social care
- d. Develop initiatives and ways of working that encourage our communities to help themselves and each other, and use digital technology to make services efficient and effective
- e. Grow and support the economy
- f. Help partner organisations to build more homes

Conclusion

18. The Strategic Plan 2022-26 clearly sets out our vision and ambitions for Staffordshire. Building on our strengths, and strong foundations, we believe the Strategic Plan provides the clarity and focus, to allow us to turn our ambitions into reality and continue to make a positive difference for the people of Staffordshire.

Legal Implications

19. There are no specific legal implications for the development of the Strategic Plan.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

20. The Strategic Plan has been developed in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022-26, as such the financial implications of the Strategic Plan are set out in the MTFS Cabinet Report which is also being considered by Cabinet on 26 January 2022.

Community Impact Assessment

21. As the Strategic Plan has been developed in conjunction with the MTFS, a separate Community Impact Assessment (CIA) hasn't been completed. The MTFS CIA does provide consideration to the Strategic Plan.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Strategic Plan 2022-26

Contact Details

Director: John Tradewell, Director for Corporate Services

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Strategic Plan

2022-26



Foreword

Staffordshire is a great county, the nationally valued centre of Great Britain. We are an area with so much to celebrate, to inspire and to offer, with national attractions, jaw-dropping natural beauty, global brands, and towns and cities steeped in history. Our greatest asset though, is Staffordshire people: innovators and creators, earth movers and brewers, pioneers in energy and sustainable living, and much, much more. We are grounded, we work hard, we enjoy life, and we are a community.

Our Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 explains how we will build on these strengths and focus our resources on the things that matter most to the people we serve. The plan may cover a four-year period, but the ambitions it contains are about the Staffordshire we want to shape for decades to come, and for future generations. It is ambitious - as it should be.

We want to raise aspirations across our county, to unlock the true potential across Staffordshire and empower more people to strive, to succeed and to enjoy the lives they want for themselves and their families. And we want to do it in a way that protects our environment, reduces our impact on the planet, and promotes good health and wellbeing.

These ambitions are rooted in our track record of delivery, of achievement, and of capability. From business parks, broadband and roads, to schools, skills and training, we invest where there is real need. We deliver results, attracting more business to the county, creating more, better-paid jobs for our people, putting more money in people's pockets.

We do not do this alone. In Staffordshire we work best when we work together, with council partners, with the NHS, with business, education, and with our residents. Never has this been more evident than during the pandemic, when organisations and individuals came together to protect, support and care for one another. This collaboration will continue and be central to our plan over the next four years, as we recover from the pandemic, act on climate change, fight for Staffordshire's fair share of the Government's 'Levelling Up' approach, and tackle the health and social problems that Covid-19 has created.

One of our greatest challenges is in care. We will always step in when needed, whether to keep vulnerable children and young people safe from harm or to look after the frail elderly. However, over the next four years, through innovation and inspiration, we will work to reverse the numbers of children coming into care and shape a stable care marketplace, so that older people can access the support they need in the right place, at a cost we can all afford.

Most importantly, we will promote good health, wellbeing and independence, and continue our approach of empowering communities to provide more support to the people within them. Getting this right will mean more people living in good health, independently, for longer, which is something that we all want. It will also ease the burden of rising care costs on Staffordshire taxpayers.

There is much to do, and challenges ahead, but with such solid foundations to build on, we will strive to turn our ambitious vision into reality and continue making a positive difference for the people of Staffordshire.



Alan White
Leader of the Council



John Henderson CB
Chief Executive

Vision & Outcomes

We have a clear vision for Staffordshire - an innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

We want everyone in Staffordshire to:



Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth



Live in thriving and sustainable communities



Be healthier and independent for longer

We are hugely ambitious for Staffordshire. There is enormous potential in our people and places just waiting to be unleashed.

Our role, working with others, is to help create the conditions for more people to flourish, achieve their potential and live in good health for as long as possible. By focusing on the priorities outlined in this plan, modernising and improving how we work, and delivering against our financial pledge, we will continue to deliver for the people of Staffordshire.



Vision: An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes

Everyone in Staffordshire will:



Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth



Live in thriving and sustainable communities



Be healthier and independent for longer

Priorities



Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs



Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable



Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence



Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections



Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

How we work



Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other



Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered



Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire



Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county

Pledge: Live within our means and deliver value for money



Priorities



Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs

To achieve our vision we need a successful, vibrant economy creating opportunities for people to secure better-paid jobs, and to prosper.

Staffordshire's economy is diverse and our location in the centre of the UK is one of many economic strengths. We have a thriving and growing high-value manufacturing sector. While the county is home to many world-renowned businesses, most of our businesses are small and medium enterprises. They are the lifeblood of our economy. Entrepreneurs and start-ups are essential to Staffordshire's economic future, creating the jobs and prosperity for tomorrow, so we will do more to support new businesses to launch, grow and thrive.

We have a successful track record of investing to create the right conditions for growth. Since 2014, Staffordshire's Economic Growth Programme has created or safeguarded more than 10,000 jobs and enabled construction of more than 4,000 new homes. We have invested in sites to attract business and create more and better jobs, from i54 South Staffordshire and its extension, to Redhill Business Park, Stafford, and Liberty Park in Lichfield. We also continue to plan for and invest in the infrastructure needed for the economy to grow, such as the Stafford Western Access Route and Lichfield Southern Bypass, both opened in 2021. As part of our commitment to tackle climate change, we will encourage and support the shift towards a low carbon, clean economy. This will include embracing the opportunities that innovation in the green economy offers Staffordshire, including creating new jobs.

Our investment in skills is also delivering results. We have halved the number of people in Staffordshire with no qualifications since 2014, and significantly reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Creating opportunities for people to get higher skilled, higher value and higher paid jobs, is key to growing the economy and giving everyone more opportunities to get on, and prosper.

Covid-19 has affected every part of the economy. We created a range of support and targeted initiatives, to mitigate the impact on local businesses and support recovery. They include the Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme, Staffordshire Start-Up Loan Scheme and Plan for Jobs Programmes.

Whilst our economy continues to bounce-back quickly, economic recovery from Covid-19 will continue to be a significant challenge. It is essential that Staffordshire people have opportunities to learn new skills throughout their career, as the economy recovers and evolves.

Our town centres and high streets play a vital role in our economy. Working in partnership, we are committed to reimagining and reshaping Staffordshire's high streets, increasing their vibrancy and reflecting the unique circumstances of each place.

Staffordshire has an important role to play in helping the regional economy to grow. In fact, our location is one of our key strengths, which is why we will work with national and regional partners to ensure key strategic corridors in the Midlands can create the conditions for Staffordshire businesses to innovate and grow.

In the next four years, we will:

- **Work with our partners to regenerate our town centres**
- **Support more people to start and grow their business**
- **Develop investment-ready projects vital to the future of the county**
- **Enable people to benefit from better-paid, local jobs**
- **Make sure investment in activities such as highways supports economic growth and unlocks external investment**
- **Support businesses on their journey to net zero**
- **Develop an east/west strategic corridor project that enables businesses in Staffordshire to innovate and grow as part of the wider Midlands Region**

What will success look like?

- **More businesses start-up, grow and invest in Staffordshire**
- **Improved skills levels**
- **Improved wage levels**
- **People are proud of their town centres and local area**



Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable

Climate change is affecting more people's lives every year and we all need to act fast, to do our bit to slow and reverse the damage being done. We have a leading role to play in Staffordshire, by reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from our operations, as well as working with industry and other organisations to help lower their emissions and make our county more resilient to climate change.

In 2019 the county council declared a climate change emergency and set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Since then, we have reduced our CO₂ emissions by 25%, and published annual action plans outlining how we will meet our net zero target. Our plan is ambitious, and not without challenges. The latest plan, agreed in October 2021, outlines five key themes for action:

- **carbon reduction**
- **air quality**
- **natural environment**
- **waste**
- **behaviour change**

Staffordshire is a county of breathtaking beauty, with a rich and varied natural environment. Our landscapes help improve health and wellbeing, and make the county an attractive place to live and visit. We directly manage a countryside estate of some 6,000 acres of country parks, open spaces and greenways, together with a 2,500 mile network of public rights of way. We are custodians of these natural treasures and will protect and enhance them.

We will:

- **Deliver, and continue to evolve, our Climate Change Action Plan**
- **Work in partnership across Staffordshire to tackle climate change**

What will success look like:

- **The county council's carbon emissions are reduced**
- **Staffordshire's total carbon emissions are reduced**
- **Staffordshire's natural environment is protected and enhanced**
- **Increased flood protection**
- **A county more resilient to the impact of climate change**





Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence

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Our health and wellbeing are influenced by many things, by our environment, our living conditions, and our own behaviour. Inspiring and encouraging everyone to look after their physical and mental health is at the heart of our ambitions for Staffordshire. The homes we live in, the jobs we do, the food we eat, and how much exercise we take, are far more important to our health and wellbeing than health services.

Covid-19 has increased demands on health and care services, and widened health inequalities across the county. It is more important than ever, that people take more control over their health and wellbeing, so that they can live longer in good health.

Research tells us that when people need help, it is often most effective when it comes from their family and friends. We want more people to draw on their personal strengths and to find support in their communities when they need it.

Funding and ensuring a stable, quality social care market is one of our greatest challenges locally and nationally. We will always step in when needed, to look after those who need support. And we will innovate and collaborate with our health partners and beyond, to support Staffordshire's care market to be able to meet demand and tackle workforce challenges. For our most vulnerable residents, who do need care, we aim to assess their needs quickly and fairly, and provide the quality services they need, at a price taxpayers can afford.

We will:

- **Promote good health and independence so that people can take personal responsibility for their wellbeing**
- **Ensure effective and efficient assessment of care needs that offer fair access to services**
- **Maintain a market for care and support that offers good services at an affordable price**
- **Ensure best use of resources, people, data and technology**

What will success look like:

- **A healthier population**
- **Increased use of community support to help people stay healthy and independent**
- **Timely social care assessments that are strengths-based and look first at what people can do for themselves, to achieve the best outcomes**
- **A care market that offers quality services at an affordable price**



Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections

Great places enjoy great connections. Whether by road, rail or ultrafast broadband, we want to make sure the people and businesses of Staffordshire are well-connected to one another, to the UK and across the globe.

Roads and transport are essential to everyday life, enabling us to see family and friends, get to work and school, access healthcare, shopping and leisure activities. Smooth, efficient and increasingly greener transport supports our economy to grow. However, vehicle emissions play a significant role in climate change. We will work in partnership to reduce these emissions, promote greener travel, and increase cycling and walking.

We know that improving our 6,200km of roads and 4,500km of pavements and cycleways is one of the top priorities for Staffordshire people. Maintaining and improving this network is very challenging. We need to do it with less funding from central government, costs are rising, and the growing county is making the network busier. Despite this we want Staffordshire people to see an improvement in our highways over the next four years.

Covid-19 is revolutionising how we work and live. Modern business operations, the growth in remote working, and reliance on technology to stay in touch with family and friends, make digital connectivity more important than ever.

Great digital connections supercharge economic growth. Access to fast, gigabit broadband services is a must, especially in rural areas, for Staffordshire to compete as a place to live and work, and for Staffordshire people and businesses to embrace the opportunities and benefits of this digital age.

The Superfast Staffordshire programme has connected 97% of premises in the county to superfast broadband services. But we are not finished. As well as finding solutions for the final 3%, our work will expand bandwidths and support 5G roll-out, expanding connections and our digital economy.

In the next four years, we will:

- **Develop a new investment strategy to fix more roads**
- **Transform highways operations, improving customer service and community engagement**
- **Achieve value for money in all spend on our roads and footpaths**
- **Work with telecommunication suppliers, communities and businesses to secure investment in gigabit infrastructure and technology, and connect more premises**
- **Improve bus travel in Staffordshire through a Bus Service Improvement Plan**

What will success look like?

- **Improvement in the condition of our highways**
- **Improved customer satisfaction for highway maintenance**
- **All properties in Staffordshire have access to gigabit-capable bandwidth by 2030**
- **Improved digital infrastructure contributing to economic growth**
- **Increases in walking, cycling and public transport usage**





Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

We want every child and young person in Staffordshire, whatever their background, to have the opportunity to live happy and healthy lives.

Good education is fundamental to creating opportunities for our children and young people and improving life chances. In Staffordshire there is a mix of types and sizes of institutions, from early years through to adulthood, from individual childminders caring for a few children, to universities with 15,000 students. All play an important role in improving outcomes for children and young people. We will work with them all to further improve access to high quality education, and provide the right support in the right setting.

The early years are critical for laying the foundations for a lifetime of good health and wellbeing. This time offers the greatest opportunity to make a long-term, positive difference on what can be achieved in later life. We want every parent in Staffordshire to form a close bond with their child. We want parents to talk lots as this early communication creates hungry little minds, ready to learn. For those parents who face difficulties, we will work with families on their independence and resilience.

In Staffordshire our strong track record of improving the uptake of early years places has achieved positive results. We will continue to develop and evolve the early years provision and support available to our children.

Stable, loving families give children and young people the best start in life. We want more Staffordshire families to have the strengths, skills and knowledge to support their children. Families have told us they do not want to be 'in services', but instead supported by their friends and community to tackle day-to-day challenges. We will continue to develop the right approaches that help families build on their strengths and find the support they need in their communities.

Some families will need more formal early help from professionals, and a few will need statutory services and interventions. Where required, this will be timely, stop a situation worsening, and focus on helping families get back on track.

We are committed to working with others to keep our vulnerable children and young people safe. When the only safe option is for them to come into our care, we will explore whether they can be cared for within their extended family, if possible. When it is not, we want children in our care to have the best possible experience that supports better lifelong outcomes.

We will:

- **Make sure there are enough high-quality early years and schools places, which are accessible to all, including those with special educational needs and disabilities**
- **Promote the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and young people**
- **Deliver effective early help that is focused on helping families to get back on track**
- **Work with partners, parents and carers to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people have the support they need to keep them safe and improve their outcomes**
- **Develop our workforce to help us recruit and retain skilled, diverse and experienced professionals**

What will success look like?

- **Improved school attendance with more children educated locally, and fewer children excluded from school**
- **Improved educational attainment**
- **More children in early years places, and ready to start school at the age of 5**
- **A reduction in the number of children and young people in care**
- **Securing permanent, alternative carers for those children unable to remain within their family, at the earliest possible opportunity**
- **Better outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people**



How We Work



This plan sets out our ambitions for Staffordshire. To achieve them, we need to keep challenging and changing how we work, to make sure we deliver the very best for the people of Staffordshire. We believe the following four statements, need to be at the heart of everything we do as a county council.



Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered

We want everyone who works for the county council to live our values in all they do; to be ambitious for Staffordshire, courageous in their work and empowered to make a difference. They are critical to achieving our vision, outcomes and priorities.

In 2019 we launched our People Strategy which sets out goals and aspirations for attracting, retaining and developing our workforce. Since then, we have launched a programme of work to attract and keep more talented people, make sure our workforce have the skills they need for now and the future, promote a positive working environment, and develop our current and future leaders.

Covid-19 changed how we work overnight. As the county council began to adopt flexible working in 2010, we were able to respond quickly and positively to our entire workforce working remotely. We will continue to invest in technology that supports modern ways of working, attracts talented people, but most importantly, continues to deliver the very best for the people of Staffordshire.



Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other

People who are independent and in control of their lives are more likely to enjoy better health and wellbeing. We need to continue to empower and inspire our communities and people to help themselves and each other. We therefore take an approach that looks at the strengths of our people and communities, thinking first about what they can do for themselves and others, rather than what they might need from us or our partners. Often the best solutions to personal or social problems do not need public service involvement. Inspiring communities to help themselves and act upon the things that matter most to them, leads to greater social action, supporting people to thrive and become more resilient.

Staffordshire's response to Covid-19 was inspirational, with people across the county doing their bit to support each other and the most vulnerable in their neighbourhood. Some communities have been badly affected by Covid-19, and we will work with them and our voluntary, community and social enterprise partners, to maintain and increase community action as we recover from the pandemic.



Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire

In this digital age, technology is fundamental to how we live, work and communicate with each other. The county council must continue to review and develop our digital approach in everything we do, from helping the economy to grow to improving the lives and opportunities of the people we serve.

In February 2021, we refreshed our Digital Strategy and Plan, to focus on our key priorities. We want to improve how we connect, engage and communicate with the people of Staffordshire, including improving self-serve and self-help tools. We want to embed the right digital tools and resources to allow our workforce to work efficiently and effectively.

We want to make the most of the opportunities that digital offers to support our front-line workforce to support our most vulnerable residents and promote independence. We want to ensure we have the right digital infrastructure in place across Staffordshire to make the most of digital opportunities, and improve digital inclusion across the county.



Engage and listen to our communities, partners and businesses, working together to improve our county

We cannot achieve our ambitions without listening to, and working with our communities, partners and businesses. Collaboration is at the core of everything we do in the county council. We have a strong track record in working with public and private partners locally, regionally and nationally to make Staffordshire a great place to live, work and visit. We are united with our district and borough councils in our desire to enhance and strengthen two-tier working in Staffordshire. We will pursue a County Deal with Government to accelerate our ambitious plans, and build on the significant strengths that we have in Staffordshire.

We will continue to actively seek views and feedback from our residents, on the issues that matter most to them. We will continue to include our residents and communities in transforming and improving our services. In particular we want to make it easier for people to find out about the work we are doing, and easier to engage with us, by using the latest digital technology, streamlining our processes, and providing the right information at the right time.



Our Pledge

Our pledge to the people of Staffordshire is that we will spend our money wisely and well to deliver the greatest impact from every pound we spend. We will always live within our means.

The county council is financially stable and well run. However, the financial outlook for the whole of local government is challenging and uncertain. Covid-19 has impacted on our finances, due to the leading role we played, and continue to play in the response to and recovery from the pandemic. We must continue to find different ways to help more people to help themselves, and reduce demand for public services. If we succeed in this, we can target our resources on the people that really need them.

Our approach to financial planning has six strands.

- **Reduce costs to live within our means**
- **Use our assets wisely to gain the best return for the council**
- **Work with government to achieve fair funding, particularly for social care**
- **Develop initiatives and ways of working that encourage our communities to help themselves and each other, and use digital technology to make services efficient and effective**
- **Grow and support the economy**
- **Help partner organisations to build more homes**



Strategic Plan

2022-26

Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Thursday 20 January 2022

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022-2027 Report of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Agree their final report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022-27, subject to any amendments, for submission to the Cabinet at their meeting on 26 January 2022. The final report is attached as an appendix to this report.
- b. If the Committee does wish to make amendments, it is recommended that the Committee give permission to the Chair to approve the final version

Report of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group

Summary

1. The Committee is being asked to consider and agree its final report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022-27, subject to any amendments, for submission to the Cabinet at their meeting on 26 January 2022.
2. The scrutiny process provides challenge during the Council's MTFS, annual budget and council tax setting process. Cabinet is recommended to consider and respond to the Working Group Report findings and recommendations to help develop a good and balanced budget.

Report

Background

3. The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the development of the County Council's MTFS and the annual budget and council tax setting process. The work of scrutiny helps to ensure that the Council develops a good and balanced budget, which is in line with the Council's aims and

objectives and is used as a base to determine spending. As part of the Committee's Work Programme Planning for 2021/22, Members agreed to set up a Working Group to undertake this work.

4. The attached final report sets out details of the work the Committee's Working Group has undertaken between October 2021 and January 2022; and their conclusions and recommendations for submission to Cabinet. Members are now asked to agree this report for submission to the Cabinet for their response.

Next Steps

5. Any amendments to the report which are requested by Members will be made and the report provided to the Chair for final approval. The report will be circulated to Members of the Cabinet prior to their meeting on 26 January 2022.
6. The Chairman will present the final report to the Cabinet which will consider the conclusions and recommendations and will provide an executive response to each one. The final consideration of the MTFS 2022-27 will take place at the County Council meeting on 10 February 2022. Council will be provided with details of scrutiny recommendations and the Cabinet's response as part of that report.

Link to Strategic Plan

7. The MTFS is the financial expression of the aims and objectives of the County Council, which are set out in the Strategic Plan outcomes, priorities, and principles. The Council Pledge is to 'Deliver value for money VFM for residents and businesses and live within our means'.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

8. In preparing their report, the Working Group have taken into consideration any work undertaken by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee where budget related matters were raised.

Community Impact

Refer to CIA guidance on the [Learning Hub](#)

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Final Report of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2021 – 2026 Working Group

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Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022 - 2027

**Final Report of the Medium Term Financial
Strategy Working Group**

Chairman's Foreword

With the central government still dealing with the upheaval from the effects of the pandemic, on top of previous challenges emanating from its deficit budget situation, it has been particularly challenging and uncertain time for local government in relation to financial planning and strategy. The Working Group has been cognisant of these circumstances and has, hopefully, attempted to be constructive and understanding in its investigations and processes.

As this year has been a post-election one, we have been able to benefit from a strong input from the longer-served members but with some new intake from others who have been able to give some diversity. The new members have been able to pose the 'innocent' questions, with no pre-conceived views. Those with more experience have been able to home in on service areas that have previously been the subject of budget pressures. It has been helpful to have, in the group, all four standing committee chairmen represented, as well as the minority group lead member. This has provided for a widespread knowledge in the group and has helped avoid duplication in areas of investigation.

The MTFS Group agreed to focus on the key areas of Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Highway Maintenance as being the three areas with the greatest financial exposure. It added Digital Innovation as a fourth area because it had cross cutting effects on costs and efficiency of service and was key to the delivery of all of the other three areas.

In previous years, the MTFS group has benefited from the online availability of representatives of other local authorities or coordinating groups to assist with our findings and conclusions, where in-person meetings have been less practical. We have found in the previous year that online and hybrid meetings have allowed the input of those from a distant location, and this has again been a useful contribution to some of our thoughts and recommendations.

The Group is grateful to all the officials who administered the process, particularly Carol Bloxham, Nick Pountney and Rachel Spain. I would also like to thank Deborah Breedon who has been latterly involved in putting together minutes and reports as the other officers have ceased to be available. In addition, I thank Members for their enthusiasm, support, and insightful enquiries.

Colin Greatorex

MTFS Working Group Chairman

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

1. Overall, given the assurances we have had to date, we feel it has been demonstrated that the process of preparing the County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2022 – 2027 and setting the 2022/23 Annual Budget and Council Tax has been thorough and robust, resulting in a good and balanced budget.
2. We feel that Staffordshire residents can have confidence that the County is well managed financially and has a budget strategy in place aligned to the to the ambitions and delivery of the principles, priorities, and outcomes of the Staffordshire Corporate Plan. The Council is developing strategies to address the issues and future proof services in the County which impact on residents, businesses, and some of the most vulnerable in our communities.
3. The presentation provided by the Corporate Finance Manager to the Working Group at the first meeting highlighted the budget gaps in 2022/23 and 2023/24 and the many risks inherent in the MTFS. The Group reviewed the issues and risks and agreed to focus on 4 key areas:
 - a. Adult Social Care Precept
 - b. Children's System Transformation
 - c. Highway Maintenance Liabilities
 - d. Delivery (capacity) – Digital innovation
4. Over the last two years the Covid-19 Pandemic has created uncertainty, necessitated flexibility and change which has impacted on the way services are delivered, the use of resources and on the MTFS. The impact of Covid is also likely to have had bearing on previous recommendations of this working group. In our review this year, we have considered best practice from other Local Authorities and interviewed Cabinet Members. This report presents our findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
5. Last year this group highlighted that over the years the County Council had significantly reduced its running costs, whilst demand in the care sector for both adults and children continued to grow. In Adult Social Care, this year we identified increasing demand and shortage of staff in services, this highlights the need to reduce demand on services to be able to allocate resource where needed most, and to focus on prevention of escalating need through early intervention. We identified the need to build up support mechanisms in communities for people to live independently, to use digital innovations to streamline tasks and to do this it was essential to appropriately support primary care network PCN and community and voluntary sector to carry out preventative work locally. We identified that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and of lockdowns has had significant impact on mental health and may have for years to come and highlight the need to build up social care in addition to work in the community. Public

Health is investing in supporting healthy lifestyle choices to keep people healthier longer.

6. In Children's Care we considered the number of children in care in Staffordshire to be high (around 1200), recent admissions to care on section 20 orders (at the family's request) are complex and costly cases. A place based early help strategy had been operating for 4 years and the committee were assured that it was working well, and the service offered value for money. The Building Resilient Families initiative has developed around keeping children out of care through effective early help. The current issues challenging families were around financial deprivation and domestic abuse. Children's Transformation had invested into more Family Support Workers to support the early help initiatives. Children's Service transformation went live on 25 October and progress monitoring would be required. We identified a need to reduce LAC costs, to look to early intervention to reduce the number of looked after children entering the care system and to work toward moving children out of care earlier, and to consider best practice models to achieve this safely. Children's Services Transformation – whilst recognising reasons for delay the WG would like to see pace continue and timelines to see when measures highlighted have been done. Also, would like to see an emphasis on what success will look like.
7. In Highways, the current delivery concerns were raised, and we were reassured and encouraged by the proposed investment strategy to commence in April 2022 to address issues with the condition of the road network and address customer service issues. There will be a need to monitor delivery to demonstrate value for money on its spend and that it has delivered desired outcomes in coming years. The risks to delivering transformation were engagement of demoralised staff in the process, availability of skilled staff, better team working between contractor and the Council and highways teams addressing working relationship with local members. We maintain the importance of informing District, Borough and Parish Councils on Highways Transformation, to have regard to minor and rural roads in any improvement strategy and stress the need to embed environmental matters and ambition for climate change in all aspects of their work. Highways Investment Strategy: that the WG support option 3 £15.5m as the increased amount. That the word re-assured be deleted and retain that the WG was encouraged by the Highways Investment Strategy.
8. Digital - 32 key digital projects were progressing, determining where to invest further was important in the overarching strategy for IT based on priority. We think there should be an elected member at Digital Programme Board to offer constructive challenge and support and that IT should be considered as part of the whole solution when addressing a challenge. It is important that new apps and access should be user friendly, and residents should not feel digitally excluded from support and services they require and that connectivity issues across the County should be investigated as a

matter of urgency. We feel that innovations in AI should be developed for adult social care to consider how it could help people retain independence longer and there is opportunity to horizon scan in terms of new technologies and to capture suggestions for improving IT from staff and partners.

9. Settlement Grant - The additional grant in 2022-23 is welcome. However, the 12 month nature of the settlement is disappointing, and we feel that the settlement grant should extend beyond one year. We understand and welcome the government's commitment to finally conclude the outstanding reviews of the funding system and welcome that SCC is part of a group of LAs to lobby Government but have a concern relating to the timelines to effectively complete the review. There are a range of cost pressures against some of the new funding streams, but, significantly, the costs of social care reform remain uncertain. We welcome the £'s in, £'s out principle and the MTFs three phase approach used in Staffordshire County Council (SCC).

Recommendations

Cabinet Member for Health and Care	
R1	That the voluntary sector must be appropriately supported in Communities to support people to live independently.
R2	That public health be requested to focus messages of healthy lifestyle choices to residents in the County to encourage living healthier longer and deflect from increasingly expensive care costs.
R3	The working Group would support the efforts to introduce consistency and best practice in digital innovations in adult social care where some care centres would benefit from this (e.g., some are less innovative or are using paper-based systems where technology could help).
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	
R4	The Working Group highlight the importance of progressing work towards moving children out of care towards permanency whether by returning them home, or to adoption or fostering families and that this should be done with immediate effect to address the rising cost of Looked After Children. It is recommended that Staffordshire Children's Services carry out a review of processes to consider the continued suitability of placements and that best practice identified by the Working Group be considered to develop a placement team to look at exit strategies to move children out of care, when appropriate.
R5	To assist with early detection of potential care issues, Worcester CC look at school exclusion records, targeting families with missing school attendance issues and have a vulnerable learner team. Staffordshire should review its early detection trend data availability in this way.
R6	That the Children's Transformation Programme progress be monitored and measured, and that a report be requested to

	Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months to update on actions and timelines for implementation.
Cabinet Members for Highways and Transport, and Commercial Matters	
R7	That appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate the identified risks to delivering transformation relating to availability of skilled staff, regaining control over quality, and fully engaging front line staff in the process.
R8	To ensure that processes are in place to ensure Highways teams work proactively with local members on highways enquiries. It was suggested that best practice identified by the Working Group be considered to work with the communications team to provide elected members a weekly bulletin of planned activities for each member. It was considered this would be very useful in reducing the cost of dealing with enquiries.
R9	That Cabinet give consideration to good practice to potentially reduce operational costs. Surrey CC operates a Find and Fix scheme with its contractor and Staffordshire might want to consider something similar to reduce the costs of revisits to locations.
R10	Staffordshire should review whether greater quality checking would have cost benefits. The target for Surrey CC is to have 5% quality control checking of completed works, also requesting before and after pictures from its contractor.
R11	That effective communication is in place to inform District, Borough and Parish Councils on matters relating to Highways Transformation.
R12	That the Cabinet Member gives consideration to minor and rural roads in any improvement strategy.
R13	That the Cabinet Member champions embedding environmental matters and climate change in all aspects of highways and transport work.
Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources	
R14	That the Cabinet Member consider innovations and best practice developing in artificial intelligence AI to transform social care and the potential financial benefit associated.
R15	That Cabinet agree to carry out horizon scanning to identify new and up to date technologies and applications, and to note the importance of consulting residents when developing new apps such as MyStaffs to ensure they are user friendly and have attraction to being used.
R16	That the Digital Programme Board invite an elected member to attend meetings to offer constructive challenge and support to the Board, and that the Board also give consideration to suggestions and feedback from front line staff and partners.
R17	Consider having a user group of residents to trial new applications or software and give feedback.

R18	Consider an employee reward scheme for new innovation or cost saving ideas suggested.
To Cabinet	
R19	That Cabinet monitor risk of uncertainty around future funding from central Government and where possible lobby the Government to extend the settlement grant for a three year period.
R20	That Cabinet give approval for an initial one-year investment of £15.5m (£5.5m high priority areas plus £10m i.e. 50% of DfT gap) and revenue (£1.0m initial investment in new model plus contract management capacity plus an element of community teams capacity) with December 2022 Review Point.

Scope

10. We are mindful of the Council's vision and the pledge: 'to deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means'. The largest proportion of the Revenue budget continues to be allocated to the care sector. The council must maintain a lobby on Government and must continue to develop their thinking around community and digital. We understand the £ in/£ out policy continues so that a service wanting to invest needs to evidence savings to the same value.
11. There remains so much uncertainty around the MTFS – the level of funding, the Fair Funding Review, and the Business Rates Reform. The aim must continue to be to live within our means and set reasonable expectations in line with the current year. 2020/21 had resulted in a small underspend which has been added to general funds and balances (total £47m). Any future underspends will be moved to bolster the balances so that any funding gaps in the short to medium term can be bridged (anticipated to be £40m over next 5 years).
12. We agreed to focus on the budgetary areas where we could exert influence. We believe the 'steady ship' approach precludes the council from embarking on alternative, radical or ambitious strategies: how can we use our capital budget to greater effect.
13. This year, we agreed an approach to our work programme to learn from best practice in other local authorities and to hear from external guests. We identified the following areas of focus:
- Digital
 - Highways
 - Climate change (this theme is the focus of another working group of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee)
 - Social care

Method of Investigation

14. To scope this work, we received an overview of the current position including the revenue budget and capital programme 2021/22, short and medium term planning, key issues and risks, and the revised MTFS three phased approach to scope their work within timelines. We focused on four budgetary areas (themes) we could influence where capital budget may be used to greater effect.
15. From research on local authorities demonstrating best practice, we identified an exemplar for each theme and agreed that our meetings should constitute an interview with an external guest which would inform an interview with our appropriate Cabinet Member to follow. We intended this approach to be constructive and outcome focussed.

Adult Social Care

- Professor Graeme Betts, Director of Adult Social Care at Birmingham City Council
- Cabinet Member for Health and Care and Director for Health and Care

Highways Maintenance

- Lucy Monie, Director of Highways and Transport, Surrey County Council
- Cabinet Members for Commercial Matters and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Children's Care

- Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services, Worcestershire County Council
- Member for Children and Young People, Mark Sutton and Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities, Helen Riley

Digital Innovations

- Interview with Head of Strategy and Digital and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resource

Budget Interviews: table

Date of Interview	Interviewee/s
2 September 2021	Scene setting meeting with County Treasurer
1 October 2021	Adult Social Care impact on MTFS - Professor Graeme Betts, Director of Adult Social Care at Birmingham City Council
5 October 2021	Cabinet Member for Health and Care and Director for Health and Care
19 October 2021	Recruiting to a Highways Maintenance Contract - Impact on MTFS Lucy Monie, Surrey CC
29 October 2021	Children's Social Care - impact on the MTFS - Meeting with Tina Russell, Director of Children's Services, Worcestershire County Council

3 November 2021	Children’s Social Care Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, Mark Sutton and Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities, Helen Riley
25 November 2021	Cabinet Members for Commercial Matters and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
30 November 2021	Digital Innovations Interview with Head of Strategy and Digital and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resource

Membership

16. The membership of the MTFS Working Group is:

County Councillor C Greatorex
County Councillor B Peters
County Councillor C Atkins
County Councillor J Pert
County Councillor G Heath
County Councillor S Thompson
County Councillor J Oates

Findings

GENERAL

17. The County Council has changed significantly over the last decade and can no longer afford all the things it used to do or would like to do. The pandemic has accelerated change and the need to look to find different ways of working and new technologies. That pace of change must accelerate in the changing financial landscape. If we succeed in this and reduce demand on public services, the County Council can target the reducing resources where there is most need.

SOCIAL CARE

Adults:

18. Best Practice: Birmingham City Council

The council’s journey of improvement. Where services were delivered on a local footprint and had a strength-based approach, this draws on strengths from wider family and communities. The City had invested into neighbourhood networks and community/voluntary groups with a focus on prevention of escalating need through early intervention. Commissioning was focussed on quality and co-production to ensure that clients help shape services. Multi-disciplinary teams worked in an integrated way with the NHS. In terms of MTFS, the plan had been delivering against its savings targets since 2018, but now the greatest risk was workforce.

19. Findings:

a.	There were higher numbers of people coming through the system with learning disabilities, poor mental health in young people, as well as young people with complex cases attributed to Child sexual exploitation CSE, grooming and county lines.
b.	There was evidence that would suggest traditional services were inadequate and local authorities were ill equipped to respond.
c.	An impact of Covid had been the emergence of community groups but it had also highlighted and exacerbated existing inequalities.
d.	In terms of costs associated with integrated care, the City Council developed a programme to examine how people progress through the system. The process has been revolutionised with a focus on better outcomes for individuals. Delays through bed blocking have reduced by 20,000 over the course of a year which is hugely beneficial to hospitals. Currently 90% of people are regularly discharged with either no or a very small care package.

20. Staffordshire County Council

The Cabinet Member for Health and Care explained that in the last 18 months, the service had received additional one-off funding and seen demand reduce but that now they were experiencing a significant surge of people wanting assessments. As experienced nationally, the recruitment and retention of care staff was an ongoing challenge. The Cabinet Member constantly reviews how she commissions services. She believes the absence of bed blocking at care homes has offered stability to providers and better value for money to the county council.

21. We understood that pre covid the service had a good handle on predicting expenditure and forecasting budget despite uncertainties in Adult Social Care and it had achieved its savings targets. The immediate effect of the pandemic had been to reduce demand which had resulted in significant underspend in last year and the current year.

22. The service identified 3 key current risks:

1. Demand – both the NHS and social care anticipate a significant increase in demand as the pandemic has left an elderly population who are more isolated and fragile and now presenting with problems which have been 'stored' for 18 months.
2. Price – this had held up during the pandemic but since restrictions have been lifted care homes are losing staff to other sectors which translates into a real pressure.
3. Legal – Government increasing liability on the state to pay for people's care and support. Some funding has been promised but it is not clear whether it will be sufficient.

23. Findings:

a	<p>Ambition</p> <p>There is a difference in geography and demographic between Staffordshire and Birmingham authorities. The Cabinet Member maintains her longer term vision was to facilitate and encourage people to lead as independent and fulfilling a life as they can. There is a need for a clear direction of travel but in the light of the last 18 months, a flexible approach is essential.</p>
b	<p>Digital</p> <p>Care homes need to become more innovative in light of workforce in short supply and need to have a flexible approach. Technology may provide some answers, for example minimising the time staff spend on record keeping to free up more face to face time.</p> <p>We asked for clarity around digital innovations. The Cabinet Member explained that it would be increasingly important to use staff in the most productive and creative way, make the most of human contact and streamline other tasks.</p>
c	<p>Voluntary and Community</p> <p>There needs to be re-connection and engagement with the community and voluntary sector, and she is working with the primary care network to encourage this. During the pandemic the value of the voluntary sector had been demonstrated. Social prescribing is known to have far better outcomes for individuals, whilst not over-burdening the voluntary sector. We stressed the need for the voluntary sector to be appropriately supported.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member agrees the voluntary sector must not be overwhelmed but rather they must feel a valued and integral part of the solution. She referred to a programme of support for communities and a variety of community self-help websites, libraries, and community settings where support is provided. It will be crucial to reduce demand on services so to allocate the resource where it's really needed. In particular, she anticipates mental health services will be swamped – community resilience must be strengthened in this area – and people must not be over-medicalised. Social interaction must be used appropriately at an early stage of intervention.</p> <p>We asked whether the notional monetary value of voluntary care had been evaluated that might otherwise have fallen to the local authority and whether more funds are being allocated to public</p>

	<p>health to bolster the message of healthy lifestyle choices to deflect from increasingly expensive care costs.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member is aware that with an aging demographic, costs will inevitably rise even given the public health message. She believes that under these circumstances, achieving an even keel would be a success.</p>
d	<p>Funding and care costs:</p> <p>The Government plan for Social Care post 2023 addresses some issues but shifts the burden onto local authorities when clients have used up their own funds. Funding around the Plan is still not clear. In the short term, the authority will have to live within its means and the service will have to be creative around recruitment, no sector should be excluded, and all opportunities explored.</p> <p>We recognise the real challenge presented by increased demand on the service notwithstanding shortages of staff. The problems facing adult social care are not dealt with by the Government's Plan and all local authorities are lobbying hard for additional short term funding. Staffordshire is well placed being a well run and efficient organisation with a low spend. However, demand is unpredictable, and we are concerned that if it continues on the current trajectory there will be greater challenge ahead.</p>
e	<p>Care Homes</p> <p>In terms of domiciliary care, we understand care homes operate on small profit margins and workforce challenges will get worse. Some small initiatives are helping in the short term – subtle changes to shift patterns, retention of bonuses – but there is a significant systemic and strategic problem which will need Government funds to address as local authorities do not have the resources to manage it.</p>
f	<p>Care home providers</p> <p>There is a balance of care home providers needed in the marketplace – if we contract with too few – it makes us vulnerable to the risk of provider failure but if too many, we reduce the economies of scale. There are still inefficiencies, and the service is working with providers to allow them flexibility to deploy their resources to best effect.</p>

The Cabinet Member is confident she will manage the MTFs in 2022 as the service is in a strong and efficient place financially, to address the risks and challenges ahead.

Children:

24. Worcestershire Children First – Best Practice

The Chief Executive and Director for Children’s Services gave an overview of their budget and how they manage demand given high cost placement pressures. Worcestershire County Council has been identified as demonstrating best practice in their delivery of children’s social care. Following a poor Ofsted, Worcestershire Children Social Care service had undergone a fundamental review and re-development of the service including the organisational structure, management and leadership approach, the practice standards, tools, and the social work practice model of intervention and importantly the development of a child centred culture of practice. Changing the culture of the organisation in terms of putting children at the heart of everything they do and having accountability for finance have been key in the transformation of their services.

25. Staffordshire County Councils Cabinet Member for Children and Young

People said that for the past 4 years, the service had been operating a place based early help strategy - intervention as soon as need was identified by any agency (including the voluntary sector). Children’s Transformation went live on 25 October 2021.

Findings:

a	<p>Place based early help strategy</p> <p>The is approach is working well in Staffordshire and the number of referrals into children’s social care is lower than for their statistical neighbours. The same approach he believes was also building resilient families and communities. The service in Staffordshire uses a mix of hard and soft intelligence to identify children in need.</p>
b	<p>Children in Care</p> <p>The number of children in care in Staffordshire was high. Staffordshire needs to perform better in returning children to their families where it is safe to do so. The Restorative Practice ideology was about working with children in a family setting, this service was focussed on preventing children coming into care where it was safe for them to remain at home and if they do need to come into care, to immediately work towards permanency whether returning them home, or to adoption or fostering families.</p> <p>We understood that increased numbers of children coming into care in Staffordshire had reflected the national trend over the last 10 years. This had been principally driven by a risk averse culture. We understood that every option was explored before the decision to take a child into care.</p>

	<p>There had been a number of challenging teenagers admitted to care recently on Section 20 orders (at the family's request) – these were the most complex and consequently the most costly cases. If there had been effective early help six years ago, it was likely these cases wouldn't have escalated. The Building Resilient Families initiative had developed around this.</p>
c	<p>Thresholds for care</p> <p>The thresholds belong to the Safeguarding Partnership – of Police, Social Services, and the CCGs. It is a referral based service and those that don't meet the threshold are offered low level support and those who need protecting are brought into care. The quality assurance framework is thorough, and a Quality Assurance Steering group ensure consistency.</p>
d	<p>Placements</p> <p>In response to a question on whether the placement team assess on quality or cost, we are told that the market is very difficult and there is often little or no choice around placements especially for the most complex cases. Providers can name their price and often are reluctant to take the most challenging cases. More inhouse facilities would give the service more control.</p>
e	<p>Transformation of care</p> <p>Whilst it is too soon to measure progress on Transformation, we are assured the service is working hard to improve work on reunification and exit planning and exploring all alternatives to care – kinship care, Special Guardianship Orders etc. Integrated teams on a local footprint are now delivering children's social care and a District lead is in place in each District and Borough.</p>
f	<p>Workforce</p> <p>In terms of staff retention and recruitment, Staffordshire has always had a good record for training, developing, and supporting social work staff and their turnover rate for staff is amongst the lowest regionally. Pay compares favourably across the region. Nevertheless, a national campaign for the recruitment of social workers would be useful in addressing the national shortage.</p>

Highways Maintenance

26. Surrey County Council

Director of Highways and Transport demonstrated identified best practice in terms of their approach to recruiting to a new Highways Maintenance contract.

27. Findings:

a	The areas of focus were to move from a balance of planned and targeted reactive work to a more targeted model accepting some risk and incorporating flexibility.
b	The new contract demonstrated value for money for Surrey residents and included innovations and incentives.

28. Staffordshire County Council

Highways Maintenance is a significant issue for all members and affects all constituents and our Cabinet Members for Highways and Transport and for Commercial concur. The Council is looking at how to deliver highways maintenance from 2024 when the current contract finishes. However, the contract refresh in 2022 is an opportunity to take action ahead of that. We agree the County Council needs to take back control and bringing elements of the service back in-house will afford greater control and greater flexibility. The Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters believes there is room for improvement around attention to detail and quality of workmanship. The focus of a future Highways Maintenance contract will shift to customer service.

29. Findings:

a	<p>Transformation</p> <p>Cabinet intends to move beyond delivering the minimum statutory highways maintenance service to delivering excellent customer service and to improve the quality of the county's roads. The Future Highways Research Group (employed by Surrey County Council in preparing for their negotiations) will advise on the first phase of the Highways Transformation programme. The Cabinet Members shared their plans which include three key elements of the programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing a new highways delivery model that better meets the council's vision and ambitions for post 2024• Changing the current operating arrangements now by strengthening the authorities control and flexibility by returning key accountabilities and resources in house.• Additional investment from April 2022 <p>Additional investment is needed.</p> <p>We maintain the importance of informing District, Borough, and parish councils on Highways Transformation.</p>
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	<p>We urge Cabinet not to disregard minor and rural roads in any improvement strategy.</p>
b	<p>3 Year Investment Strategy</p> <p>The Cabinet Members were confident that the 3 year Investment Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would bring tangible and visible improvements in the network and excellent customer service as well as demonstrating value for money. • The extent of the deterioration in the road network, over many years, would be reversed through this investment. • The proposal would be for the investment strategy to include capital investment of £35m pa for the next three years (£105m) and was intended to 'halt the decline'. In addition, revenue investment of £3.2, pa is ongoing. <p>We were encouraged by what we heard and agree the need to reverse the deterioration of the road network and deliver visible improvements whilst giving central Government time to find a more sustainable funding model for the country's highway network. The Investment Strategy will reinvigorate the workforce and their capacity to deliver will be mitigated by regaining control over quality. We accept that HS2 had taken up many resources, but the Cabinet Members remained optimistic they can deliver according to the plan.</p>
c	<p>Risks</p> <p>Currently public perception of highways maintenance is low. The Cabinet Members have assessed risks to delivering transformation and hope there is sufficient capacity to deliver, a major risk is uncertainty around future funding from central Government. There is a risk around availability of skilled staff and front line staff need to be fully engaged in the process.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport accepted that the reputation of the council around highways maintenance was an issue and that Highways teams must work closely and proactively with local members (currently there are frustrations that this does not happen). A Highways Communications Officer will manage the message through to the public and members</p>
d	<p>Performance and Quality</p> <p>We asked about the milestones to monitor progress and we stress the importance of learning lessons from previous and current practice regarding the deterioration which has occurred due to disinvestment. The Cabinet Member Commercial confirmed that performance will be measurable in key areas. He said that additional funding must be focussed into the right areas - those which customers will see. Concentrating funding on specific jobs will make a real and identifiable difference. The quality of the main roads will be much improved, and people will see the results of the investment.</p> <p>We expressed concern about the quality of workmanship which currently is variable. We maintain the importance of working closely with local members under the new arrangements. The Cabinet</p>

	Member has assured us that any incidence of poor workmanship will be addressed.
e	<p>Climate Change</p> <p>We are mindful of the impact of the climate change agenda and are concerned over problems with traffic flow; active travel; green busses and electric charging points. The Cabinet Members agree the need to embed environmental matters in all aspects of their work and said that Cabinet are aware and ambitious regarding climate change. We feel Cabinet must show clear leadership on these matters. In terms of electric charging points, the Cabinet Member Highways and Transport said it was challenging working with many different providers, but he is committed to achieving a realistic offer for Staffordshire people. The Cabinet Member agreed the need to improve air quality especially in urban areas.</p>
f	<p>Technology</p> <p>We asked Cabinet Members whether they had explored application of AI and how that could impact positively. The Cabinet Member Highways and Transport acknowledged that he was considering AI and is ready to embrace any technology which could help – he could see potential around communications. It is accepted that there is scope for innovation and the use of technology applied to highways maintenance.</p>

Digital

30. We asked the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources whether the authority is prioritising its IT investment into the big spend areas to alleviate issues. He firmly believes that it is wrong to look at a piece of software or IT and see how it can be applied. Rather, it should only be considered as part of the whole solution when addressing a challenge and can clearly be identified as part of a solution.

31. Best Practice

We encourage the Cabinet Member to take note of best practice in IT. The service is linked into the Association of Councils Chief Executive Officers Digital Group which is a useful forum for sharing good ideas. We suggest there is a place for horizon scanning in terms of new technologies to keep up to date and aware of what is possible and available.

32. Findings:

a	<p>IT work streams</p> <p>IT work streams are ongoing around the council and further investment will be prioritised and focussed. This is complex in an organisation as large and diverse as the council. The Cabinet Member agrees that AI will be the next 'game changer' and will be applied to many areas of work.</p>
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	<p>We warn against digital exclusion and assurance was given that services will not transition if it means leaving people behind – no one will be excluded from the support or services they require.</p>																				
b	<p>IT investment</p> <p>There is an overarching strategy for IT investment based on these three priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There must be demonstrable return on investment • Clear link to the council’s key priorities • Impact positively on MTFS <p>Investment will be cautious and well thought out as there are huge demand pressures in many areas.</p>																				
c	<p>Digital Programme</p> <p>Across the original 32 identified projects that formed the digital programme agreed by Cabinet in February 2021, four priorities had been identified: Digital Care; Digital Citizen; Digital Council and Digital Economy.</p> <p>One project ‘History Centre online’ had an MTFS target against it and delivered £309k.</p> <p>External Consultancy Support: A number of projects within the digital programme engaged with and utilised external consultancy support. Of the 32 projects 4 reached out externally, whilst 1 priority project (EDRMS) intends to do so in the next financial year. There was a total cost of approx. £44k spent to provide this support.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Project</th> <th>Delivery Lead</th> <th>External Consultancy</th> <th>Cost</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Digital Archives</td> <td>Joanna Terry</td> <td>Preservica Digital Archive System</td> <td>£4,208pa</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Digital Community Learning Programme</td> <td>Amanda Darlington</td> <td>HOLEX Digital Ace Project</td> <td>n/a (within annual subscription cost)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Assistive Technology</td> <td>Lucy Hegarty</td> <td>Living Made Easy (Shaw Trust)</td> <td>c.£30k</td> </tr> <tr> <td>History Centre Online</td> <td>Joanna Terry</td> <td>Audience Research</td> <td>£9,950 (supported by</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Project	Delivery Lead	External Consultancy	Cost	Digital Archives	Joanna Terry	Preservica Digital Archive System	£4,208pa	Digital Community Learning Programme	Amanda Darlington	HOLEX Digital Ace Project	n/a (within annual subscription cost)	Assistive Technology	Lucy Hegarty	Living Made Easy (Shaw Trust)	c.£30k	History Centre Online	Joanna Terry	Audience Research	£9,950 (supported by
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			Heritage Fund grant)
	<p>Progress against 8-9 identified key priorities will be monitored throughout the year in the Digital Programme Board.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member sees technology an enabler and not a driver for change. There must be an appetite and reason to transform a service and not just add on a piece of software or technology because of its availability. Sometimes new software is not compatible with what is already in use. He urged a cautious approach.</p>		
d	<p>Risks</p> <p>We share the Cabinet Members concern about security given that cyber security is one of the greatest risk areas for all authorities.</p> <p>There are still areas of the county with poor connectivity, and we are assured that such gaps are being addressed and specialist capacity around digital infrastructure has been recruited from the private sector for this purpose.</p>		
e	<p>Connectivity</p> <p>We suggest a minimum standard of connectivity could become a prerequisite of planning consent in co-operation with District and Borough colleagues. We wonder how far AI can be applied to alleviate issues in the care sector and urge the Cabinet Member to explore all options. We understand a programme for independence has been launched – ‘Happy at Home’. We feel there could be a significant financial impact if AI were applied carefully to adult social care. If innovations are not being developed in this sector, then local authorities should take a lead. Current staffing issues in the care sector make it even more important; necessity being the mother of invention!</p>		
f	<p>Developing Apps</p> <p>The authority must be fleet of foot in terms of identifying and applying apps. We note that MyStaffs app is not perfect but found to be useful. It is important to talk to residents when developing new apps such as MyStaffs to ensure they are user friendly and have an attraction to being used</p>		
g	<p>Digital Programme Board</p> <p>We think there should be elected member presence at the Digital Programme Board to offer constructive challenge and support.</p>		

We hope suggestions from front line staff and partners are being captured. The Cabinet Member acknowledges the value of learning from employees especially in this post pandemic period. He agrees that learning from every opportunity should be captured. Another member encouraged an employee reward scheme for idea contributions which ensures employees feel valued. We understand that the Digital team tend to be a young demographic who are keen to come forward with ideas and the service has worked hard to create a culture in which that can happen.

Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23

33. The Provisional Settlement was announced on Thursday 16th December 2021 by Secretary of State, Michael Gove. This settlement followed the Spending Review announced in October. The Settlement is for **one year only** which does not assist longer term planning.

34. The Settlement included additional funding for social care alongside the continuation of some existing funding streams. Revenue Support Grant and the Improved Better Care Fund both continued at 2021/22 levels with an uplift for inflation. The social care funding consists of an increased Social Care Support Grant which can be spent on both Adults' and Children's social care. The allocation for Staffordshire is £34.6 million. In addition to this there is a new Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care grant for adult social care and that allocation is £2.4 million. The Settlement also included a one-off Services Grant of £7.0 million which is unringfenced.

35. Staffordshire

36. The County Council's allocations are shown in the table below which also indicates whether this is an increase or reduction against our prior assumptions.

	Assumed	Settlement	(Additional Funding) / Reduction
	£m	£m	£m
Revenue Support Grant		(11.256)	(11.256)
Core Services Grant		(6.976)	(6.976)
New Homes Bonus	(0.803)	(2.026)	(1.223)
Better Care Fund	(31.737)	(32.708)	(0.971)
Social Care Support Grant	(20.809)	(34.634)	(13.825)
Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care		(2.391)	(2.391)
Total	(53.349)	(89.991)	(36.642)

Grant conditions will apply to some of these funding streams and more will be known on those in the coming weeks. In addition, some of these grants (iBCF, Market Sustainability and Fair Cost of Care) will need to be earmarked for Health and Care.

37. Council Tax

The Settlement confirmed the referendum thresholds as announced in the Spending Review. The threshold for the general council tax precept will be 2% in 22/23 whilst the Adult Social Care precept threshold is set at 1%. The MTFs had assumed an increase in the Adult Social Care precept of 2% and therefore this represents a reduction in income of £3.9m a year. In 22/23 this reduction has been offset by increases in tax base.

38. Conclusion

The additional grant is welcome. However, the 12 month nature of the settlement is disappointing but understandable given the government's commitment to finally conclude the outstanding reviews of the funding system. There are a range of cost pressures against some of the new funding streams, but, significantly, the costs of social care reform remain uncertain.

39. Interview with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and County Treasurer.

The Leader and Cabinet Members welcomed the scrutiny process as an important part of the MTFs process. The Leader of Staffordshire County Council has recently worked with Leaders of 20 Local Authorities (LAs) to consider Fair Funding for the less well funded LA's, the group had sent a letter to the Secretary of State before Christmas to make representation about Fair Funding. The Leader would also continue to meet MPs to discuss fair funding. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resource advised that post settlement some of the proposed plans in the draft MTFs had to be revised in order to be more prudent. He advised that some Councils had got into difficulty financially and highlighted the importance of adjusting the MTFs to take the medium term view of the financial risks and difficulties for this Authority.

A Cabinet Workshop had taken place on 5 January 2022 to consider the revised MTFs. The County Treasurer provided a presentation to the Working Group highlighting the position:

- Strategic Plan refresh:

Priorities: Supporting economies; climate change; fixing more roads.

Pledge: to live within our means and to deliver value for money.

- MTFS three Phase Approach.
- Local Government Finance Settlement 2022/23 more uncertainty from 2023/24. Additional grant welcome but future years uncertain
- Risks - commitment to early identification and mitigation more important than ever.
- Risks – inflation:
- Changes since February – pressures
- Changes since February - general funding
- Highways Investment - 3 Scenarios
- Conclusions

40. Findings:

a	<p>Fair Funding Review:</p> <p>The Government had announced that outstanding reviews of the funding system were to be considered in spring 2022. There were some concerns about time scale to effectively carry out a Fair Funding Review and that it may be rushed but acknowledged that it would get more money into the system and close the gap in funding. We considered that the one year settlement for 2022-23 would be to ensure that fair funding review findings were taken into account in next year’s settlement as part of levelling up agenda.</p>
b	<p>Pressures and General Funding:</p> <p>There would be no additional Covid grant.</p> <p>Social Care Support Grant: £20.809m – this was mainly distributed through Adult Social Care, the grant had been raised by £13.8m in recognition of pressures, but this was a one-off allocation, a multi -year grant would be preferable.</p> <p>Services Grant (extra): This is shown as £6.79m across all years in the table provided, it was a one-off grant, but it is likely it will be repeated and has been built into the MTFS and highlighted as a risk in future years.</p> <p>We feel that the settlement grant should be beyond one year to be able to plan and invest in future services.</p>
c	<p>Three Phase Approach</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live within approved budget • Strategic Plan and MTFS • Targeted Use of General Balances (to be repaid in future years) - Well Run Council & £in £out Principle <p>Significant cost pressures are to be funded. We feel the three phase approach works very well in Staffordshire. In particular the £in £out Principle to encourage invest to save and improve services.</p>
d	<p>Social Care Reform:</p> <p>In relation to social care reform risks and plans to meet social care demands the Leader advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there was a move to more block contracts for social care; • to address the fragmented care market in areas of the County consolidation was being looked at, there may be a way forward through Nexus, however other issues are also highlighted; • the Leadership Board (9 LAs exc. Stoke on Trent) was considering how the County and Districts can work between them to address a range of issues and solutions – evaluating the tools available and how to better use what they have.
e	<p>Children in Care:</p> <p>Children’s Transformation had been progressing at a steady pace, there had been some industrial issues and virtual negotiations but was now moving forward. There were risks around the repercussion of last year cases and a response by the courts had not been seen yet. There was a need to progress Children’s transformation to ensure children are looked after well and safety. We feel it is important to support social workers and to look to other ways to achieving VFM. The Leader advised a residential property had been bought by the Council, to staff it and make ready for children to occupy, this project was new and was based on work carried out in Lincolnshire to provide homes for looked after children, they had up to 20 houses of this type. A bid would be prepared for submission to try to get more funding for other houses.</p>
f	<p>Highways Investment:</p> <p>It was confirmed that the options for investment were in addition to the base grant of £25.1m. The Authority had anticipated a three-year settlement to commit to the £35m capital investment to deliver the three-year highways investment strategy. Due to the one-year settlement option 1 was deemed not financially viable. The second option to invest £25m would still require the Council to</p>

	produce a savings programme for £4m and given the pressures this was not considered an option at this stage. The third option to invest £15.5m was the preferred option and considered a good start, it would add to the base allocation and enable improvements to be made. Plans would be adjusted accordingly. first step now with a review point in December
g	Risk of section 144 notice: The County Treasurer gave assurance that SCC was not considering a section 144 notice but advised of the process for information.
h	Council Tax: Council Tax limits per Spending Review (2% + 1%). The Council tax increases less than planned but offset by taxbase growth.

Community Impact Assessment – MTFS

41. A high-level overarching CIA on the MTFS - a cumulative assessment of impact which identifies key issues and includes plans for mitigation - has recently been updated to consider additional savings proposals, key Covid-19 impacts and reflects the refreshed CIA priorities for the upcoming year.

Implications

42. Resources and Value for Money - Consideration of the MTFS, annual budget and Council Tax, inevitably means that this review focused on the allocation of the County Council's resources. Considering the value for money delivered by services was a central theme of the evidence gathering process. Many of our conclusions and recommendations are focused on ensuring that the County Council is achieving value for money.

43. Equalities and Legalities - Determining priorities is central to the MTFS and budget setting process, and we were conscious in our review that this means some services are identified as being a lower priority than others. Any decision to significantly change or reduce a service based on its priority level will need to be taken into account the impact on various groups (equality impact assessment). There are no specific legal implications to the report.

44. Risk - Our conclusions and recommendations draw attention to some of the key risks to the successful delivery of the MTFS. We considered the relationship between risk management and financial management and asked questions about the main financial risks to the authority and how these might be mitigated during the course of our work.

45. Climate Change - Taking action to reduce the County Council's Carbon Emissions has the potential to have a positive impact on the budget both in terms of avoiding financial penalties from Central Government and in terms of reducing energy costs. This is an issue which the Cabinet must continue to work on.

Acknowledgements

46. We would like to thank the following officers who supported the Working Group:

Rachel Spain	Corporate Finance Manager
Nick Pountney	Scrutiny and Support Manager
Carol Bloxham	Scrutiny and Support Officer

The Working Group would like to thank the Members and officers who participated in the budget interviews.

**County Councillor Colin Greatorex
Chairman of the MTF Working Group
Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee
January 2022**

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List of Appendices/Background Papers

Presentation: Strategic Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022 -27

WORK PROGRAMME – 2021/2022

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the Council's principal overview and scrutiny committee. It is responsible for co-ordinating and approving the scrutiny work programmes, overseeing the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and ensuring coherence of approach to cross cutting policy themes. The committee also has a key role in challenging progress around the Council's ambitions of running the business well.

The Committee also scrutinises those areas of the County Council's activity focused on corporate improvement. Its remit covers:

- Holding the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources of the Council to account for achievement of the overall vision of a connected Staffordshire.
- The Council's overall performance and approach to managing performance and Strategic Corporate Planning
- The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- The Council's on-going programme of improvement and transformation.
- The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic priorities
- The Council as a commissioning organisation including how it uses customer insight to drive improvements in services

We review our work programme regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the challenges facing local communities, the Council and its partners.

County Councillor Colin Greatorex

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

If you would like to know more about our work programme or how to raise issues for potential inclusion on a work programme then, please contact Mandy Pattinson - Scrutiny and Support Officer – mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
10 June 2021	<p>Introduction to the Committee and Work Programme Planning</p> <p>Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Nick Pountney</p> <p>SEND Working Group report</p>		<p>Items added to the WP for development</p> <p>RESOLVED : That if the outcomes from further review were positive then the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee continue to maintain oversight, however if the review was negative then Corporate Overview and Scrutiny would investigate</p>
2 July 2021 Cancelled			Reserved for Call In
29 July 2021	<p>Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 1 2020/21</p> <p>Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon</p> <p>Appointment of the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group</p> <p>Officers: Carol Bloxham/Nick Pountney</p>		<p>Further report on Climate Change</p> <p>Appointed (See end of WP for list of members)</p>
6 August 2021 Cancelled			Reserved for Call in
7 September 2021	<p>Climate Change Annual Report and Action Plan 2</p> <p>Member: Simon Tagg Officer: Clive Thomson</p>		<p>RESOLVED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) That the Climate Change Annual Report (2021) and the progress that has been made to date be noted and the comments made by the Committee, be included in the report taken forward. b) That the draft Climate Change Action Plan 2 (CCAP 2) be noted and referred to formal Cabinet for approval in October 2021. c) That the Committee establish a small Working Group on Climate Change – Chaired by the Vice Chair for Overview, Councillor Wileman. The Membership of the Working Group to come from this Committee.

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
1 October 2021 Cancelled			Reserved for Call In
5 October 2021	Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2020/21 Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Kate Bullivant		Noted
	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2021/22 Overview and Scrutiny Chairman		Noted
8 November 2021 Cancelled			Reserved for Call In
8 November 2021	Performance Management Workshop		
16 November 2021	Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 2 2020/21 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Kerry Dove		Noted - further report in March 2022
	Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan Member: Alan White Officers: Sarah Getley/Kerry Dove		<p>RESOLVED;</p> <p>(a) That the report be received and noted;</p> <p>(b) That owing to the late publication of the Report, any further questions, comments and suggestions on the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan be forwarded to the Leader (or Director of Corporate Services) by no later than 23 November 2021 to enable consideration of the matter by Cabinet at their meeting on 15 December 2021.</p> <p>(c) That consideration be given to the feasibility of promoting the Authority's Principles and Objectives through their external commissioning processes and careers advise role.</p> <p>(d) That relevant KPIs for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion be included in the performance monitoring process and future update reports to the Committee.</p>
	VCSE capacity building recommission Member: Victoria Wilson Officers: John Tradewell/Kerry Dove		<p>RESOLVED - (a) That the report be received and noted.</p> <p>(b) That the proposals to recommission Voluntary,</p>

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
			<p>Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) Capacity Building support for Staffordshire from 31 July 2022, as set out in the draft Cabinet Report to their meeting on 15 December 2021, be supported.</p> <p>(b) That the draft Cabinet report be updated to reflect the above-mentioned discussion and various issues raised by the Committee as priority areas for attention by the new Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise Capacity Building framework contract provider.</p>
	<p>Impact of COVID-19 on SCC Communities, Economy and Organisation and Recovery Progress - Update October 2021 and Way Forward</p> <p>Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Deborah Sullivan</p>		<p>RESOLVED</p> <p>(a) That the report be received and noted.</p> <p>(b) That the Authority's approach to leadership and influencing and monitoring the recovery process, be endorsed.</p>
6 January 2022 1.30pm	Call-in Burton Town Deal – Burton Library Move		Cabinet decision agreed.
6 January 2022 3.30 pm	<p>Scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership</p> <p>Member - Lucy Sefton</p>		<p>District and City members invited.</p> <p>RESOLVED – (a) That the report be received and noted.</p> <p>(b) That the good performance of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership in delivering their objectives during 2020/21 be welcomed.</p> <p>(c) That the uncertainty regarding the future of Local Enterprise Partnerships, nationally, be noted and that future developments relating to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, in this respect, be monitored closely.</p> <p>(d) That the future delivery of economic growth and prosperity in Staffordshire through partnership working arrangements continue to be scrutinised, as appropriate.</p>
7 January 2022	Moved to 6 January		Reserved for Call In.

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
20 January 2022	<p>Request for merger of coroner's service Pre-decision Lead member: Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture Lead director: Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities Trish Caldwell</p> <p>Development of the Strategic Plan Member: Alan White Officer: John Tradewell Kerry Dove</p> <p>MFTS 2022-2027 Working Group Report Chair of COSC - Cllr Greatorex Rob Salmon</p>		
4 February 2022			Reserved for Call In
4 March 2022			Reserved for Call In
29 March 2022	<p>Quarterly Integrated Performance report (Quarter 3) Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Kerry Dove</p> <p>Climate Change Working Group Update</p>		
5 April 2022			Reserved for Call In
To be developed and programmed into the 2022/23 work programme.			
NB. Items discussed at a triangulation meeting (Leader Cabinet member, Officers and Chair and Vice 21/12/22)			
TBC	Equal Opportunities		Diversity and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan considered at 16 Nov 21 meeting – update report – Suggest schedule for June 2022.
TBC	Governance and control of arm's length companies/partners. E.g. Nexus/Entrust/AMEY.		Consider the 3 partnerships individually. 1. AMEY – contract ends in 2024. COSC to consider possible new contracts/options.

Date of Meeting	Topic	Link to Council's Strategic Priorities	Background/Outcome
	Particularly in light of Robin Hood Energy/Nottingham City Council.		<p>2. Entrust – contract until the end of 2023. Scrutiny input requested prior to decision – options, performance etc.</p> <p>3. Nexus - Governance and management arrangements – Is there a conflict of interest for board members? Should there be an extension to the range of services provided? What is the risk? Cabinet decision due soon. Pre decision scrutiny requested.</p> <p>What is the accumulative risks to the organisation?</p>
Pending	Digital Strategy Member: Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Kerry Dove		Pending – to consider when there is a change or review
Data Sharing			How do we share data with others, in an effective and timely way. What is stopping the sharing and what can we do to be more effective. During the Pandemic, networks became better at sharing information – can we build on this? June 2022?
People Strategy (to include Recruitment, Smart Working/Future Office)	People Strategy (to include Recruitment, Smart Working/Future Office)		To be refreshed in June 2022. Pre decision scrutiny?
Capacity to draft bids	Capacity to draft bids		Where do the opportunities come from, are we ready to compile and bid for funding?

Items for Consideration for the Work Programme

Suggested item	Link to the Council's Commissioning Plans	Background	Possible Option
Networks – E.g. Leaders group/CE groups/LGA - how is the information shared?		<p>Discussed at Chairs/Vice Chairs meeting 07/10/20.</p> <p>Link to networking, sharing information during covid etc.</p>	Part of information sharing report (data sharing) Possible June 2022?

Working Groups

MTFS 2021/22	Appointment of Members 2021	<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr C Greatorex (Chair) • Cllr B Peters • Cllr J Salisbury • Cllr C Atkins • Cllr J Pert • Cllr G Heath • Cllr S Thompson • Cllr J Oates 	<p>2 September 2021 1 October 2021 5 October 2021 19 October 2021 29 October 2021 3 November 2021 25 November 2021 30 November 2021 5 January 2022 - Draft report 20 January 2022 COSC</p>
Climate Change Working Group		<p>Membership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Conor Wileman (Chair) • Cllr C Atkins • Cllr T Clements • Cllr J Pert • Cllr B Peters 	<p>17 November 7 January – scoping meeting Information gathering – Jan- March (dates tbc) Update to COSC 29 March</p>

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Membership - County Councillors	Calendar of Committee Meetings
<p>Colin Greatorex (Chairman) Conor Wileman (Vice Chairman - Overview) Gill Heath (Vice Chairman - Scrutiny)</p> <p>Charlotte Atkins Tina Clements Mike Davies Jeremy Oates Jeremy Pert Bernard Peters James Salisbury Bob Spencer Samantha Thompson Mike Worthington</p>	<p>COSC</p> <p>10 June 2021 29 July 2021 7 September 2021 5 October 2021 16 November 2021 3 December 2021 CANCELLED 6 January 2022 - Call-in Burton Library move 6 January 2022 - LEP joint with Stoke on Trent 20 January 2022 29 March 2022</p> <p>Reserved for call-in</p> <p>2 July 2021 CANCELLED 6 August 2021 CANCELLED 1 October 2021 CANCELLED 8 November 2021 CANCELLED 7 January 2022 Moved to 6th January 4 February 2022 reserved for call-in 5 April 2022 reserved for call-in</p>

