

## **COUNCIL AGENDA**

### **To:- The Members of the Staffordshire County Council**

Notice is given that the meeting of the Staffordshire County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford at 10:00 on Thursday 18 May 2023 to deal with the matters set out on the agenda.

John Henderson  
Chief Executive  
10 May 2023



## **AGENDA**

(**Note:** The meeting will begin with prayers)

### **PART ONE**

#### **General Housekeeping and Declaring an Interest**

1. **Election of the Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year**
2. **Apologies for absence (if any)**
3. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**
4. **Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meetings held on 16 March and 13 April 2023** (Pages 5 - 28)
5. **Election of the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year**
6. **Chairman's Correspondence**

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

7. **Statement of the Leader of the Council** (Pages 29 - 36)

The Leader will inform the Council about his work and his plans for the Council, and will give an overview of decisions taken by the Cabinet (and Portfolio Holders) since the previous meeting of the Council

8. **Staffordshire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee - The Code of Joint Working - Local Authorities** (Pages 37 - 48)

Report of the Chairman of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

9. **Annual Report of the Audit and Standards Committee 2022/23** (Pages 49 - 58)

Report of the Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee

10. **Committee Membership (to be circulated at the meeting)**

To consider the appointment of the members to Committees on the nomination of Group Leaders.

11. **Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels (to be circulated at the meeting)**

12. **Appointment of members to Outside Bodies 2023/24 (to be circulated at the meeting)**

13. **Questions**

Questions to be asked by Members of the County Council of the Leader of the Council, a Cabinet Member, or a Chairman of a Committee. The question will be answered by the relevant Member and the Member asking the question may then ask a follow up question which will also be answered

#### 14. **Petitions**

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

#### 15. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman of the Council will move the following motion so that the County Council can consider confidential business in private:-

“That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below”.

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### **PART TWO**

(All reports in this section are on pink paper)

## **Note for Members of the Press and Public**

### **Filming of Meetings**

Staffordshire County Council is defined as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. The County Council has agreed that Public meetings should be the subject of live web transmission 'webcasting'. Fixed cameras are located within meeting room for this purpose.

The webcast will be live on the County Council's website and recorded for subsequent play-back for 12 months. The recording will also be uploaded to YouTube. By entering the meeting room and using the seats around the meeting tables you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for the purpose of webcasting.

If you have privacy concerns about the webcast or do not wish to have your image captured then please contact the Member and Democratic Services officer named at the top right of the agenda.

### **Recording by Press and Public**

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.



## NOTICES FOR COUNCILLORS

### 1. Questions

- 1.1. Questions must be addressed to the Chairman, or to the Leader of the Council or to a Portfolio Holder or to the Chairman of a Committee. Notice in writing of any question must be emailed to the office of the Director of Corporate Services ([michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk)) by no later than 1:00 pm on the third working day preceding the Council Meeting i.e. **by not later than 1:00 pm on Monday, 15 May 2023**. All questions and answers will be circulated around the Chamber before the commencement of the meeting.
- 1.2. Questions may be addressed to the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council, any Cabinet Member or a Committee Chairman. The Leader of the Council may refer questions asked of them to the relevant Cabinet Member if they consider it appropriate.
- 1.3. Each Member may submit a maximum of one question each, however only the first 15 questions received by the Director of Corporate Services before the deadline will be dealt with at the meeting. All other questions will receive a written answer.
- 1.4. Questions and written responses will be circulated to all members at the start of each meeting and will be made available online to accompany the webcast but will not be read out at the meeting.
- 1.5. Each questioner will be entitled to ask one supplementary question on their question/answer and the time limit for supplementary questions and answers will be at the sole discretion of the Chairman.

### 2. Notices of Motion

- 2.1. A Notice of Motion must reach, by email, the Director for Corporate Services ([michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk)) nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 8 May 2023**. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Paragraph 11 of Section 12 of the Constitution.  
**NB. Notices of Motion for the County Council meeting on 20 July 2023 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 10 July 2023.**

## RULES OF DEBATE

### 3. Speaking at Council Meetings

- 3.1. Councillors shall conduct debate politely and with due respect for others.
- 3.2. Councillors shall not use foul or offensive language.

3.3. As far as is possible, Members should use notes for reference where necessary but should avoid reading directly from a script. This will assist with engagement in debate and the ability of the microphones to pick up the sound.

#### **4. Content and Length of Speeches**

4.1. Subject to Paragraph 4.2 below, no Member may speak for more than five minutes during debates by the Council unless the Chairman gives an extension.

4.2. When the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members nominated by the Leader or Committee Chairmen propose reports to the Council they may speak for up to ten minutes. Members who have been nominated by the Leaders of minority political groups as spokesmen on a report discussed by the Council may also speak for up to ten minutes.

4.3. Members will confine their speeches to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or a point of order. No Member may question another Member's motives or use offensive expressions to any Member of the Council or Officer.

4.4. The Chairman may call the attention of the Council to continued irrelevancy and tedious repetition or any breach of order by a Member and may direct them to discontinue their speech. If the Member continues to disregard the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may ask them to retire for the remainder of the sitting. Should a Member refuse to retire the Chairman may order their removal from the meeting.

4.5. The Council operates a 'traffic light' system for speeches. During any speech, the amber light will come on notifying the speaker that they have 60 seconds left.

4.6. Where a Local Member is presenting a petition, they may speak for a maximum of two minutes. The amber light will come on for the final 30 seconds.

4.7. If there is serious disorder or persistent disregard of the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may, without prejudice to any other powers which they have, direct that the Meeting be suspended for such period as they consider desirable.

## GUIDANCE ON DECLARING DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AT MEETINGS - WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY

### DEFINITION OF WHAT IS A DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

A 'Disclosable Pecuniary Interest' is an interest of yourself or interest known to the Member of relatives and close associates within the following descriptions:

SUBJECT	DESCRIPTION
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from Staffordshire County Council) made or provided within the relevant period in respect of any expenses incurred by you or your partner in connection with you carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between you or your partner (or a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest) and Staffordshire County Council- (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of Staffordshire County Council
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of Staffordshire County Council for a month or longer
Corporate Tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) (a) the landlord is Staffordshire County Council and (b) the tenant is a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where- (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of Staffordshire County Council; and (b) either-  (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or  (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class

You are also required to declare a pecuniary interest if an issue being considered at a meeting where you're present affects your or your partner's personal well being or financial position to a greater extent than it affects that of a member of the general public.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?**

If you also have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest you must notify the Chairman of that interest and withdraw from the room when the matter is being discussed.

An example of what you should say

*"I have a disclosable pecuniary interest in item number..... on the agenda. The interest is ..... I shall leave the room when that matter is being discussed"*

### **DECLARING INTERESTS AT FULL COUNCIL**

The Code of Conduct only requires that disclosable pecuniary interests are declared where the matter to which the interest relates is being considered. Some items will be mentioned in the papers for Full Council but are not actually being considered by Full Council. In particular, some items are mentioned in the Leader's Statement as having been dealt with in Cabinet but are not actually mentioned or discussed at full Council. In such circumstances the Monitoring Officer's advice to members is that there is no need to declare an interest unless the particular matter is mentioned or discussed. As a general rule, members only need to declare an interest at full Council in the following circumstances:

- Where a matter is before the Council for a decision and/or
- Where the matter in which the member has an interest is specifically mentioned or discussed at the Council meeting.



**Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 16 March 2023**

**Attendance**

Jak Abrahams	Philip Hudson	Bob Spencer
Arshad Afsar	Syed Hussain	Mike Sutherland
Charlotte Atkins	Graham Hutton	Mark Sutton
Philip Atkins, OBE	Thomas Jay	Stephen Sweeney
Tina Clements	Julia Jessel	Simon Tagg
Richard Cox	Jason Jones	Samantha Thompson
Mike Davies	Peter Kruskonjic	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mark Deaville	Tom Loughbrough-Rudd	Ross Ward
Janet Eagland	Johnny McMahon	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Paul Northcott	Philip White
Alex Farrell	Jeremy Oates	Conor Wileman
Keith Flunder	Gillian Pardesi	Bernard Williams
John Francis	Ian Parry	David Williams
Philippa Haden	Bernard Peters	Mark Winnington
Gill Heath	Jonathan Price	Mike Worthington
Phil Hewitt	Robert Pritchard	Nigel Yates
Jill Hood	David Smith	
Derrick Huckfield	Paul Snape (Chairman)	

Apologies for absence: Gill Burnett, Colin Greatorex, Kath Perry, MBE, Jeremy Pert, Janice Silvester-Hall, Mike Wilcox, Ian Wilkes and Victoria Wilson

**PART ONE**

**49. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**50. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 February 2023**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 9 February 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**51. Chairman's Correspondence**

**By-election – Watling South (Tamworth)**

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman welcomed Alex Farrell to the Chamber and congratulated him on his recent election as the County

Councillor representing the Watling South (Tamworth) County Electoral Division.

## **52. Statement of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council presented a Statement outlining his recent work since the previous meeting of the Council.

### **Staffordshire Means Back to Business – Oral Update**

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Councillor Philip White informed Members that the Government had recently granted permission for JCB's hydrogen-powered backhoe loaders to be used on UK roads; and the publication of the Council's Economic Strategy which detailed the Council's economic priorities in the coming years. Councillor Winnington also welcomed the recent news about JCB's hydrogen-powered backhoe loaders and he also spoke about trialling new technologies to repair pot-holes.

Councillor Hussain referred to those families on low incomes and how the potential loss of Universal Credit could be an impediment to seeking employment, especially in those sectors where pay was low. In response, Councillor Alan White indicated that the Council routinely lobbied the Government on such issues.

Councillor Hussain also referred to the Government's proposals for eight new Investment Zones and the need for the Council to lobby with a view to securing one of the Investment Zones in Staffordshire. In response, Councillor Alan White indicated that, under the current criteria, it was unlikely that the Council would qualify for an Investment Zones in Staffordshire.

### **Diversity and Inclusion – Progress Update**

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Councillor Charlotte Atkins concerning the gender pay gap and the need for the Council to make employment opportunities available to encourage a more diverse workforce, Councillor Alan White referred to the Council's new People Strategy and added that the Council had an "open door" policy and was taking steps to strengthen its approach to diversity and inclusion. He also indicated that the Council would continue to look to work with community leaders (as it had done during the Covid pandemic) to improve accessibility for all sectors of the community.

### **Empowering Our Communities**

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Councillor Northcote spoke about the importance of empowering communities within the County and the need to build on this work, including through the Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association.

Councillor Hussain referred to the important role played by Community Centres, many of which were struggling with rising costs, and the need for the Council to support them.

Councillor Sutherland spoke about the Members' Community Fund and how the initiative had provided valuable support to local communities.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins enquired as to how the County Council intended to build capacity at parish and town council level. In response, Councillor Sutton indicated that he would ask Councillor Wilson to let her have a detailed reply.

Councillor Alan White expressed his thanks to Parish Councillors and other voluntary groups for the work that they do in Staffordshire.

### **Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2022/23**

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Councillor Parry gave a brief overview of the Council's performance in delivering against its Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan and added that, although the majority of indicators were "green", there were some areas of concern, particularly across Childrens' services.

### **Conflict in Ukraine**

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Councillor Charlotte Atkins referred to the Council's work in helping to support Ukrainian refugees to find jobs and she expressed the hope that this work would be extended to support refugees from other countries. In response, Councillor Alan White indicated that he had recently had a meeting with the Home Secretary concerning the impact of asylum seekers in Staffordshire and the need to increase the speed of the application process for those seeking asylum.

Councillor Farrell and Councillor Cox informed the Council of the some of the work taking place in Tamworth and Lichfield to support Ukrainian refugees.

Councillor Hutton referred to the difference between those people who were displaced from their homes and who one day would return (as was the case for most Ukrainian refuges) and those who were seeking asylum status.

Councillor Sutton spoke about the Council's Homes for Ukraine scheme and indicated that around 500 Staffordshire residents had opened-up their

homes to Ukrainian refugees. He added that this work had been supported by the Council's resettlement team.

Councillor Alan White thanked Members for their comments and indicated that there was not a quick solution to the conflict in Ukraine and that the United Kingdom would need to have an enduring commitment to those Ukrainians finding refuge on our shores. He also expressed his thanks to those communities in Staffordshire who were supporting the refugees from Ukraine.

### **Highways Investment**

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Councillor Yates welcomed the investment by the Council in its highways and spoke about the need for local Members to work with their local town and parish councils when developing priorities for inclusion in the Highways and Transport Divisional Programme.

Councillor Hudson spoke about the need for local residents to report potholes through the "My Staffs app"; the priority areas for highway improvement/repair in Uttoxeter; and the need to update working practices when repairing potholes. Councillor Jay also referred to the need for monitoring to ensure the quality of repairs which were undertaken.

Councillors Afsar, Peters and Wileman expressed their thanks for the Council's additional funding to support pothole repairs and spoke about the priorities for highway improvement/repairs in Burton.

Councillor Francis enquired as to the impact on the highway improvement schemes which were being funded as part of the construction of HS2 following the recent announcement of the suspension of HS2 construction works for two years. In response, Councillor David Williams indicated that civil works were to continue and it was the construction of new infrastructure which was being suspended.

Councillor Flunder referred to the petition he presented at the Council meeting in February seeking the installation of a traffic light controlled pedestrian crossing in Endon and indicated that he was pleased to hear that highway officers had arranged a meeting to consider the request.

Councillor Hussain enquired as to whether consideration could be given to increase Divisional Highway Programme funding.

Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about how highway defects were categorised and where priority was given to repairs. He also indicated that parish councils had powers to fund certain highway works.

In response to a question from Councillor Philip Atkins, Councillor David Williams confirmed that the JCB Pothole Pro machine had been on trial with the County Council. Councillor Winnington enquired as to whether the machine was hydrogen powered similar to JCB's new backhoe loaders.

Councillor Hutton expressed his thanks to the Council's Highways Team for the work they do and also indicated that consideration needed to be given to tree maintenance as he was receiving an increasing amount of correspondence from constituents about this issue. In response, Councillor David Williams indicated that the County Council spent over £1m per annum in maintaining trees.

Councillor Parry informed Members that the Cabinet, at its meeting on 15 March, approved the Highways and Transport Programme 2023/24 under which, over the next two financial years, the County Council was to invest an additional £30M to support its commitment to fix more roads. The Programme would also see a total of over £50 million invested in a range of major projects, vital local improvements, and general road maintenance.

Councillor Alan White spoke about the Council's financial commitment to its highways network since 2021 and also how the Council was reliant on local residents to identify and report issues.

### **Armed Forces Covenant**

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Councillors Clements, Hudson, Cox, Tagg and Eagland welcomed the announcement that the Staffordshire's Leaders Board had joined together to pledge support for the armed forces communities by re-signing the Armed Forces Covenant. They also paid tribute to the work of the Armed Forces.

Councillor Alan White indicated that he was delighted to sign the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the County Council (and as a former member of the Armed Forces) and he also encouraged all Members to visit the National Memorial Arboretum near Alrewas and to reflect on the sacrifices made by servicemen and women.

### **New History Centre**

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Councillors Trowbridge and Francis welcomed the commencement of the work to build the new history centre in Stafford. Councillor Sutton added that the work would include the creation of additional storage to provide capacity for an additional 55 years of archives.

Councillor Alan White spoke about other investments planned for Stafford including the redevelopment of the Market Square.

## **Staffordshire Day**

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Councillors Oates and Clements referred to the activities planned in Tamworth as part of Staffordshire Day.

## **School Places**

(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Councillor Yates spoke about the lack of SEND provision in Biddulph and Councillor Hudson expressed similar concerns about provision in the Uttoxeter area. In response, Councillor Price indicated that the Council was currently undertaking a review of its SEND provision.

Councillor Hudson indicated that he wished to dispel the myth which was circulating about a shortage of school places in Uttoxeter and he referred to the construction of a new First School at Bramshall Meadows and the capacity to extend two of the middle schools in the area.

Councillor Philip White paid tribute to the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) following the recent announcement that, this year, 92.5% of parents were allocated their first choice of secondary school for their children.

In response to comments made by Councillor Eagland concerning a SEND case she had become involved in where the child had been allocated a place at a school three miles away from their home, Councillor Price indicated that he would be happy to discuss this matter with her outside of the meeting.

## **New Chapter for Business Start-Ups**

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Councillor Philip Atkins referred to the difficulties which could be encountered when starting-up a new business owing to the complexity of regulations and added that this needed to be considered as part of the support the Council provides to new businesses.

Councillor Yates paid tribute to the free 1-2-1 support which was available to those starting-up a new business.

Councillor Francis informed the Council that the Stafford Business Innovation Centre was to close in April.

Councillor Sutherland spoke about the success of the Enterprise Centre in Rugeley which was now fully occupied.

Councillor Philip White added that Staffordshire was a great place to start a business, partly as a result of the County Council working in partnership with the business sector and the District/Borough Councils, and also for the wrap around support that was available to start-ups.

**Resolved** – That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

### **53. Recommendations to the Council**

#### **(a) Staffordshire Electoral Review - Staffordshire Boundary Proposals**

The Council was informed that in March 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) initiated an Electoral Review of Staffordshire. The rationale for undertaking an Electoral Review was both due to our changing population which had led to electoral inequality, and the length of time since the last review in 2012.

There were two key stages to an Electoral Review:

- Stage 1 – which considers the Council Size
- Stage 2 – which considers division arrangements

Stage 1 commenced in June 2022 and was completed in November 2022.

Stage 2 was a consultation led and conducted by the LGBCE. The County Council and other interested parties, including members of the public, had 12 weeks to submit their initial proposals for new Division arrangements. These proposals would need to include where the boundaries lie between Divisions, the number of elected members for each Division, and the names of Divisions.

During the preparation of the Council's division proposals, there had been a range of opportunities for elected members to input and shape the formulation of the proposals. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had also provided scrutiny and oversight of the process.

Staffordshire's division proposals needed to be submitted to the LGBCE by 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023. The Commission would then have a further 12 weeks to analyse all the representations made and produce their draft recommendations. It was expected that their draft recommendations would be published on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023. The Council would then have eight weeks to respond to the draft recommendations, prior to final recommendations being produced in November 2023.

Councillor Smith indicated that he found some of the Council's proposals difficult to support, particularly the one which would see an urban area in

Lichfield become part of his Division which was predominantly rural. Mr Worthington added that he also had concerns about the proposals for his Division.

In response, Councillors Huckfield, Winnington and Philip Atkins indicated that the Council's proposals would be considered by the Boundary Commission, along with other submissions, and it would be for the Commission to make the final decision.

Councillor Alan White indicated that the process for coming up with the Council's proposals to the Commission would not satisfy all Members of the Council and that any Member was able to submit their own proposals for consideration. He also paid tribute to Katie Marshall who had supported Members in compiling the Council's submission to the Commission.

**Resolved** – (a) That the progress made to date on the County's Electoral Review be noted.

(b) That the proposals for Staffordshire's boundary changes be agreed:

- i. Requests a single member per division review
- ii. Review the boundary changes proposed
- iii. Removal of one elected member in Tamworth
- iv. Addition of one elected member in East Staffordshire

(c) That the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services be authorised to finalise the proposals prior to submitting to the Boundary Commission.

### **(b) Members' Allowances Scheme - Independent Remuneration Panel Report**

Members were informed that the County Council was required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on its Members' Allowances Scheme. Any decision on the nature and level of allowances was a matter for the Full Council, but the Council must have regard to any recommendations submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel before establishing or amending the Members' Allowances Scheme. The Panel met each year to consider the recommendations to be made to the Council in respect of the level and nature of the forthcoming year's allowances.

Members received the Independent Remuneration Panel's report of March 2023, including recommendations on the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24. As part of their deliberations and in response to feedback from Members of the Council, the Panel proposed that:



- (i) the allowance for the Chairmen of the Council is frozen for the next four years.
- (ii) to reduce the allowance awarded to the Vice-Chairman of the Council so that it equates to 35% of the amount awarded to the Chairman (in line with all other Chair/VC proportions as recommended and agreed in last year's report).
- (iii) the Members' Allowance Scheme within the Council's Constitution be amended to include rules regarding use of toll roads by elected Members.

As part of their deliberations, and in response to feedback from Members of the Council, the Panel have proposed to review next year travel and subsistence allowances paid to elected members, basic allowance for Members to compare how SCC fares with other local authorities after the pay award has been settled and SRAs of Cabinet Members and Chairpersons of Regulatory Committees.

Two of the serving members of the IRP had completed their four-year term. It was therefore proposed that the Audit and Standards Committee be requested to convene a Special Panel for the purpose of recruitment of new Independent Remuneration Panel Members.

Councillor Alan White extended his thanks to the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the work that they do. He also explained that, each year, the allowance paid to Members increased in line with the percentage pay award agreed for staff. In October 2022, employers agreed with the unions a pay increase to local government officers of £1925. At the request of the IRP, analysis was undertaken on what the £1925 pay award would be in percentage terms when using the average pay of staff which was found to equate to 3.49%. It was therefore proposed that pay increase on the basic allowance for Members be set at 3.49%.

Councillor Alan White also referred to the proposals to freeze the allowance paid to the Chairmen of the Council for the next four years and to reduce the allowance awarded to the Vice-Chairman of the Council so that it equated to 35% of the amount awarded to the Chairman so as to move towards the average of the 12 "nearest neighbour" benchmarked authorities. He explained that he was of the view that it would not be appropriate to move the Chairman's and Vice-Chairman's remuneration to the average for the benchmark group without also looking to move the allowance paid to all Members to the average. For this reason, he was unable to support the Panel's proposals relating to the remuneration to be paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council and therefore wished to withdraw the proposals in this respect.

**Recommend** – That (a) the Independent Remuneration Panel report be received.

(b) That the following recommendation be agreed:

- (i) the Members' Allowance Scheme within the Council's Constitution be amended to include rules regarding use of toll roads by elected members.

(c) That the following recommendations be withdrawn:

- (ii) the allowance for the Chairmen of the Council is frozen for the next four years.
- (iii) to reduce the allowance awarded to the Vice-Chairman of the Council so that it equates to 35% of the amount awarded to the Chairman (in line with all other Chair/VC proportions as recommended and agreed in last year's report).

(d) The Independent Remuneration Panel be requested to:

- (i) Review Travel and Subsistence allowances paid to elected members.
- (ii) Review basic allowance for members to compare how SCC fares with other local authorities after the pay award has been settled.
- (iii) Review SRAs of Cabinet Members and Chairpersons of Regulatory Committees.

(e) That the Audit and Standards Committee convene a Special Panel for the purpose of recruitment of new Independent Remuneration Panel Members.

### **(b) Pay Policy Statement 2023/24**

The Council were informed that it was a legal requirement of the Localism Act 2011 for the County Council to have a Pay Policy statement which must be published annually before 31 March. Amongst other matters, the Statement must set out the authority's policies for the financial year relating to:

- (a) The remuneration of its chief officers,
- (b) The remuneration of its lowest-paid employees, and
- (c) The relationship between –
  - (i) the remuneration of its chief officers, and
  - (ii) the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers.

The Council received the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24.

**RESOLVED** – That the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 (as set out in Annex A to the report) be approved.

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

In response to a question from Councillor Charlotte Atkins concerning difficulties for the Police in accessing CCTV data held by other organisations such as local authorities, Councillor Cox indicated that he would raise the issue with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be received.

**55. Questions**

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

**Question**

In Perrycrofts Division there is a stretch of road that carries a huge amount of Tamworth's daily traffic. The road, known as Upper Gungate, frequently suffers from potholes due to the volume of daily traffic. The road has just had more temporary repairs to address the latest batch of potholes. Can I ask the authority to consider this stretch of road for a complete resurface as soon as funding becomes available?

**Reply**

Yesterday, 15 March 2023, Cabinet approved the annual Highways and Transport capital programme for 2023/24.

As part of that decision Cabinet announced an additional £30m of capital investment in local road maintenance will be made over the next two years, together with provisional list of priority locations for maintenance treatment.

Amongst that list of priorities £900k is allocated for structural maintenance and resurfacing of both A513 and B5493, Upper Gungate and Aldergate in Tamworth.

Precise details of the extent and timing of these works will be available shortly once the design is complete and co-ordination with any nearby local developments, planned upgrades to private utility infrastructure and any other local events has been confirmed.

Councillor Hood asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

During the construction of the Stone Railhead, HS2 intends to use Pirehill Lane as a Haul Road for up to 42 HGV's a day carrying heavy loads to its Yarlet embankment satellite compound. In the immediate area there are two first schools, a middle school and three nurseries where families are told road safety is a priority and are encouraged to walk their children to school helping reduce their carbon footprint. It is a heavily populated residential area leading to the Eccleshall Road which is heavily congested, added traffic will be a hazard to the surrounding area and its users. Air quality will soon deteriorate with queueing traffic and will threaten the environment and health of residents. Could the Leader intervene and persuade HS2 to find an alternative route?

### **Reply**

Pirehill Lane was identified as a lorry route by HS2 Ltd in the Environmental Statement, which was published when the High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) Bill was deposited with Parliament in July 2017. During the Bill phase, all proposed lorry routes were reviewed and scrutinised by officers and the Council supported local communities and individuals with their petitions to Parliament. The Bill secured Royal Assent and became an Act in February 2021. The Act provides limited grounds for the Council to refuse a lorry route, these being: road safety; amenity; free flow of traffic; and historic environment. In addition, there must be a viable alternative route available.

Officer discussions with HS2 Ltd have highlighted that the current Pirehill Lane proposal is not suitable. It is recognised however that a lorry route is required for construction works in the local area that will enable a haul road to the A34 near Yarlet to be constructed.

Officers will continue to engage HS2 Ltd and the main works contractor (once appointed) on detailed matters relating to lorry routes in this area. The Council will advocate for the local community and urge HS2 Ltd and its contractors to find the best solution within the constraints of the Act.

Following the Government's announcement on 9 March that construction on HS2 Phase 2a will be rephased by 2 years, the Council is seeking urgent clarification on the implications to the main works Schedule 17 lorry route approval process and timescales.

### **Supplementary Question**

I feel that this Council is waiving a white flag to HS2. There are two viable alternative routes available. In 2017 this Council said that the use of Pirehill Lane was unacceptable. I ask that this Council and the Leader make sure that Pirehill Lane is not used as a route for the HGVs; and when clarification is given on Schedule 17 lorry routes, if it goes to planning, I will have your support, and the Council's support, to calling it in?

### **Reply**

To say that we have raised a white flag to HS2 completely misjudges the work we have done over the past 13 years. We continue to work hard to make sure that HS2, and indeed their contractors, do the minimum damage to the County while they are working here. We understand the impact of HS2; the idea that this Authority would raise the white flag is not something we would even countenance. We will be supporting you in your efforts to ensure that HS2 doesn't do any unnecessary damage in your division.

Councillor Yates asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

I am very concerned about the increase in fly tipping incidents around my division, invariably these are small quantities of building debris, including bricks, concrete, and plaster.

Can you please confirm the annual gross and nett proceeds for these charges imposed at my local recycling centre (Bemersley Road), so that I can undertake a cost versus benefit calculation taking into account fly tipping management charges incurred at Staffordshire Moorlands District Council?

### **Reply**

The 14 Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Staffordshire network provides a valuable service to residents to enable the recycling of some 42 different household material streams.

Since November 2016 the HWRC service has allowed residents to deposit non-household waste (which is a non-statutory function) for a modest fee which contributes to actual disposal costs. A report was considered by the relevant scrutiny committee in 2018 which evidenced that the introduction of charges had had no material impact on fly tipping activity in Staffordshire.

In addition, with the exception of the Biddulph HWRC, commercial waste is accepted at all other Staffordshire HWRC's for a fee to cover disposal costs. It should be noted that this is also a non-statutory function. Numerous commercially operated waste sites are also available in Staffordshire for the disposal of commercial waste.

Fly tipping is an illegal activity and is monitored by District and Borough Councils. We have had no reports of an increase in fly tipping in the Staffordshire Moorlands District Council area, but we are always willing to work with District/Borough Councils to prevent illegal fly tipping activity.

### **Supplementary Question**

My question asked for a value and your reply fails to address that. May I ask you to answer my question.

### **Reply**

As it says in the response, with the exception of the Biddulph HWRC, commercial waste is accepted at all other Staffordshire HWRC's for a fee to cover disposal costs. But I will share one figure with Councillor Yates, Staffordshire Moorlands have received a grant of £32,000 from the fly-tipping intervention grant which will help to tackle fly-tipping across the Moorlands.

Councillor Pardesi asked the following question of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

The Government is keen to get people, who have been inactive, back to work after the pandemic to fill job vacancies. Has the County Council had difficulty filling job vacancies? If so, in which roles? Which employment incentives are most likely to encourage people back to work in Staffordshire?

### **Reply**

Like many other local authorities and large employers across the country, Staffordshire County Council experiences regular staff turnover, which is partly reflected in the number of recruitment adverts we place as an organisation.

There has been considerable effort over the last 18 months to create a more distinctive profile for the County Council reflecting it's status as a modern and forward looking employer with the introduction of

**'WeRecruit'** our new applicant tracking system and our revamped careers website.

Over the last year the County Council has placed 956 adverts and advertised more than 1500 positions, and, whilst some of these positions will have been filled by internal candidates, we have appointed almost 750 new starters.

Since the launch of the 'WeRecruit' platform on 31<sup>st</sup> October, from a total of 211 appointments, 63 (or around 30%) were taken by internal applicants, with around 70% of recent appointments taken by new starters.

We currently average around 10 applicants per vacancy although find it difficult to recruit to certain roles such as social workers and lawyers, in common with many other local authorities.

Focusing in particular on lawyers, we operate in an exceptionally competitive market place where the private sector is often able to offer higher remuneration, and more recently than in the past, can now compete with the County Council around a flexible work offer.

Working with the People Services team our Legal Services team has developed '**Brand Legal**' using feedback we had received that we had not always highlighted the exciting scope of services and work available within a local authority legal service.

This alongside modernisation of job descriptions will enable us to facilitate options for staff to transfer more easily between legal disciplines which will promote individual development and make us more resilient to changing demands from our client base.

Ensuring that we are competitive within the wider recruitment market is crucial to ensuring we are properly resource. Using market rates wider intelligence we are creating talent pools in conjunction with our People Services team and we have had great success in recently appointing a number of Educational Psychologists and a substantial number of Social Workers over the past 12 months.

We strongly believe in growing our own people and looking to the future, we are working with People Services to design relevant apprenticeship plan and job descriptions to open up pathways for new entrants to the County Council. For example in our legal services team we take students from further education and support them, in five to six years, to qualify as lawyers.

This approach to growing our own will help us in ensuring that we are able to recruit the very best talent available, including from those cohorts who have traditionally not had university as an option that they feel is open to them.

Through our Open Door programme, we continue to successfully encourage people who are out of work into the labour market through structured 12 week voluntary placements many of which are within the County Council, giving people the confidence and skills they need to enter the world of work. In the two full delivery years of pre-pandemic Open Door delivery (2018-20) the Council supported 136 candidates with 31 (23%) gaining employment. Following the pandemic, the Open Door programme has seen 39 candidate starts since April 2022 and with 8 of these gaining full-time employment and the interest in the programme continues to grow.

Our structured approach to training and development helps us to retain our staff and grow their skills and rising through the business. We're seeing a positive increase in the number of people who are likely to recommend SCC as an employer, with our Net Promoter Score increasing from +11 in Q4 of 2021/22 to +19 in Q1 of 2022/23 which is considered a good score.

The top positive themes arising from the most recent eNPS results indicate that employees value the support and encouragement they receive from their line manager and senior manager; that the workplace is a friendly and warming environment, and that the council has a very positive culture.

In addition, the January 23 SMART survey demonstrated a direct positive connection between smart working and our ability to recruit and retain people as it enables us to draw from a much wider pool of people. Flexibility in our work offer is considered a highly attractive feature of working for the council.

Staffordshire as a whole, performs better than many areas in terms of Economic Inactivity rates which in the latest data (October 2021 to September 2022) stood at 16.3% of the working age population compared to 21.2% in England.

Similarly our Employment Rate (81.0%) and Unemployment Rates (3.3%) from the same data series are also better than the England averages.

Recognising the link between job vacancies and activities to bring people back into work, our new Staffordshire Jobs & Careers brokerage service is now fully live and currently staffed by a team of 6 dedicated Employment Brokers. This service is designed to match local people with employer



vacancies, to fill jobs and provide people with the jobs and careers they need. It is responsible for the management and delivery of free recruitment and support services to businesses, supporting Staffordshire residents into work. The team is now ready to help with tailored support and practical help. Their job is to help put together and support clients with a bespoke package of support for the right job, career, and training path for them, working with and alongside our partners.

The Staffordshire Jobs & Careers service website is a comprehensive single point that provides information on jobs, training, and career opportunities all in one place. The website has become quickly established since launching in November 2022 and it is currently promoting around 12,000 job vacancies and continues to grow in usage with 6,546 website engagement activities doubling during January 2023 to February 2023, resulting in 10,620 page views.

The brokerage service also supports wider government programmes such as DWP's Plan for Jobs, and it will also target the linking of opportunities with key employment sites such as the West Midlands Railfreight Interchange in South Staffordshire, HS2, i54 Western Extension and recent investments such as the Pets at Home Distribution Centre in Stafford.

The County Council, supported by the 8 District and Borough Councils, invested £6.9m on the 'Staffordshire Means Back to Business' programme that supported businesses and residents through the pandemic. This programme delivered: 418 new Apprentices, 321 companies supported with free training, 187 businesses supported through the business start-up/step up programmes, 28 start-up loans made, and 13,500 students received training in starting a business.

Other factors which can influence economic inactivity include the cost of childcare, meaning that some low-income families can find themselves worse off in work, and also delays in NHS waiting lists, exacerbating health conditions among the population and potentially removing people further from the labour market. These are of course national issues, but we should note their potential impact on local economic activity.

### **Supplementary Question**

Why have the issues in delays in health care and support with childcare been pushed to the last paragraph of the answer to my question? As I see it, no matter how much we advertise how much we make ourselves an attractive employer, surely it is money wasted if we do not quickly address the fundamental reasons as to why people are not applying for jobs in the first place? And the initiatives around childcare, for example, announced by the Chancellor yesterday are, as we know, not overnight fixes.

## **Reply**

In terms of your views on the response that has been given, I would be happy to discuss those areas which you have highlighted with you further, and indeed with colleagues, to see what further information we could supply you with.

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

## **Question**

What assessment has the County Council made of the financial viability of the private nursery education provision in Staffordshire? Is the new nursery education funding rate of £4.52 per hour sufficient to meet the escalating costs of nurseries delivering up to 30 hours a week for three and four year olds in Staffordshire? What support is the County Council offering the sector?

## **Reply**

The County Council currently has not carried out any financial viability, this is because a national study of all early education funded childcare was conducted to establish the national funding formula. In addition the scale of this study due to the complexity of the market for example, there are differing provider types with significantly differing overhead costs would be extremely challenging.

We do however meet with the Early Education Reference Group and the sector more broadly. We understand that the sector is facing rising costs which mean that the hourly rate they receive through the early education entitlements can feel lower.

- Living wage increases
- General inflation
- Energy and food prices
- Rent increases
- Increase in cost of consumables
- Reduction in private income as parent requirements change
- Recruitment and retention issues

The Local Authority has to operate within a National Funding Formula. We are mandated to pass out a minimum of 95% funding for 3- and 4-year-olds to settings. In recognition of the increased costs identified by the sector above the County Council has ensured a budgeted funding pass-

through rate of 96.2% to providers of the 3- and 4-year-old allocation. Staffordshire however is a low funded authority and therefore this may still feel insufficient to local providers and we are raising this issue with the Department for Education both regionally and nationally and via the LGA.

In addition any early years provider who claims early education funding is able to request support visits from one of our Sufficiency and Market Development Officers. The team provide advice and guidance bespoke to the setting context regarding matters such as:

- Marketing and promotion
- Sustainability
- Recruitment and Retention
- Setting up new childcare
- Early Years Entitlements
- Suitability of premises
- Governance
- Staffing
- Leadership and Management
- Accessing funding such as EYPP and DAF

We would like to offer any setting who is struggling this support so please tell them to get in touch if they are facing challenges.

### **Supplementary Question**

It is good to see in the budget that, at long last, the Government has recognised the importance of childcare. My concern is, with that announcement, did we get any sought of idea that the national formula for funded places was going to go up as it needs to get closer to the real cost of delivering a quality childcare provision?

### **Reply**

To support delivery, the Government is also going to provide an extra £2.4m in 2023/24 for an uplift in the funding rate. The Government is also going to change the staff ratio to match that in Scotland, from one career to four children to one career to five children. There will also be an increase to support those on Universal Credit and the national pathfinder scheme for wraparound childcare in England to stimulate the market. But, of course, the devil will be in the detail and officers are already working on that and are in conversation with the DfE. I hope that once officers start to work with DfE and understand the detail, we will be in a better position to understand exactly what the offer will be for parents and their children across Staffordshire.

Councillor Hussain asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Care whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

What additional steps can be taken in the area of social care to assist care workers in establishing an effective career path and feeling satisfied at work?

### **Reply**

On 18 January Cabinet endorsed the Staffordshire Social Care Workforce Strategy. This has been co-produced by the Council, NHS, Local Economic Partnership, Skills for Care, local providers and other partners. This sets out how we will develop a more resilient care sector that enables more effective recruitment and retention by:

- a. Improving the usage of updated data and intelligence as a shared resource to support the social care workforce.
- b. Promoting available resources to providers more effectively and engage with providers who need the most support to use those resources.
- c. Developing an improved journey into work
- d. Implementing a co-ordinated partnership approach to learning and development
- e. Improving the positive recognition of social care as a valued career
- f. Increasing the level of capability to use digital and technology innovations.
- g. Supporting improved practice across the sector in recruitment and business continuity planning
- h. Seeking to reduce travel costs where possible across the partnership.

To improve the positive recognition of social care as a valued career we intend to:

- a. Develop and implement support networks for key leadership roles, supported by partners across the health and care system.
- b. Identify and progress reductions in bureaucracy where this does not adversely affect safe and effective care.
- c. Across local and national networks, make the case for promoting social care as a valued career, and for a fair and sustainable funding approach for the sector.

### **Supplementary Question**

Would you agree that better pay and better working hours elsewhere is the main impediment to recruitment and retention in the care sector?

## Reply

Certainly it is one of the factors but, actually, when we compiled this strategy and worked with partners, providers and people working within the industry, pay was certainly a factor but, actually, many of them derived huge personal satisfaction and loved doing the job. I think that working within social care/health care, we all need money to pay our bills, but you need to have that desire to work with people and help people – that was an extremely strong message that came through. This Strategy recognises that, as an employer, we have got to be very proactive, and we have made our recruitment process far quicker. There is also the factor of providing people with a career path and supporting them through that; and I would recommend to everybody to read this Strategy which sets out our journey.

Councillor Afsar asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture whose reply is set out below the question:-

## Question

Outdoor walking and hiking in various streets, hills and open spaces are effective activities for the fight against obesity, isolation and mental health illnesses. What more can the County Council do to make these activities more popular with residents?

## Reply

SCC is collaborating with a range of agencies (including Together Active) to develop partnership approaches in each of the districts and boroughs that focus on healthy eating and physical activity – known as **Better Health Staffordshire**, more information can be found here: [Better Health Staffordshire - Staffordshire County Council](#)

This is a relatively new initiative that is designed to operate over the long term – while there are no quick fix solutions, there is a huge range of opportunities across the county to encourage people to be more active. The plan is to work in partnership with those people who understand their communities best to maximise current facilities (leisure centres etc.) and resources (green spaces etc.) – not least by raising awareness of what is available and motivating people to take part by making activities easier to access and more enjoyable.

The **Environment & Countryside Service** promote access to Staffordshire's countryside estate of approximately 6000 acres of [country parks, open spaces and greenways](#), together with a [public rights of way](#) network of approximately 2500 miles. A series of [country trails and](#)

[promoted routes](#) are available to encourage use of the path network which include a series of circular walks centred on the Staffordshire Way.

SCC are the Lead Authority for the [Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#) partnership (AONB) **Cannock Chase AONB**. We promote walks for people to get out and about to explore the AONB, as part of our forthcoming 'Walking Cannock Chase' series. Partners provide activities for the local community and visitors to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. For example, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles with Chase Fit in Cannock Chase District and the Friends of Cannock Chase provide a programme of guided walks.

The AONB is a partner with the **Wayfinding Project** led by Together Active, seeking to improve access for residents of North Hednesford to Cannock Chase, particularly those with health conditions and disabilities.

Our **Libraries & Arts** team promote local history walks from some libraries and are currently working with the AONB to develop information packs for children to encourage families to access Cannock Chase for well-being.

To encourage residents to access the outdoors, our activities are promoted via a range of communication channels: e.g. website, e-newsletters and social media. However, we will continue to work with our partners and our communications team to raise awareness of activities which promote healthy lifestyles.

## **56. Petitions**

There were no petitions on this occasion.

**Chairman**

**Minutes of the Extraordinary County Council Meeting held  
on 13 April 2023**

**Attendance**

Charlotte Atkins	Philip Hudson	Bob Spencer
Philip Atkins, OBE	Graham Hutton	Mike Sutherland
Gill Burnett	Peter Kruskonjic	Mark Sutton
Tina Clements	Tom Loughbrough-Rudd	Stephen Sweeney
Richard Cox	Johnny McMahon	Simon Tagg
Mike Davies	Paul Northcott	Samantha Thompson
Mark Deaville	Kath Perry, MBE	Carolyn Trowbridge
Janet Eagland	Jeremy Pert	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Bernard Peters	Philip White
Alex Farrell	Jonathan Price	Bernard Williams
Keith Flunder	Robert Pritchard	David Williams
John Francis	James Salisbury	Victoria Wilson
Philippa Haden	Janice Silvester-Hall	Mark Winnington
Phil Hewitt	David Smith	Nigel Yates
Derrick Huckfield	Paul Snape (Chairman)	

Apologies for absence: Colin Greatorex, Gill Heath, Syed Hussain, Julia Jessel, Jill Waring, Mike Wilcox and Conor Wileman.

**PART ONE**

**57. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**58. Exclusion of the Public**

**Exclusion of the Public**

**RESOLVED** - That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 indicated below.

**PART TWO**

**59. Appointment of New Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service  
(Exemption paragraph 1)**

The Council considered the recommendations of the Special Committee set up to appoint a successor to John Henderson who was to retire from his Position of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service with the Authority.

Councillor Alan White gave Members a brief overview of the selection process which he explained had been extensive, thorough and robust. He concluded by indicating that, at its meeting on 27 March 2023, the Special Committee had resolved that it be recommended to the County Council that Patrick Flaherty (currently Chief Executive at the London Borough of Harrow), be offered the position of Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service with the County Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Hutton as to why Mr Flaherty had applied for the post after spending less than 12 months as the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Harrow, the Chairman indicated that Mr Flaherty was originally from Staffordshire and wished to return.

Following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED** - That the appointment of Patrick Flaherty, the recommended candidate, as the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service of the County Council be approved and that the Committee offer the appointment to that candidate on the terms and conditions agreed by them, to commence on a date to be agreed with that candidate by the Assistant Director for People Services (in consultation with the Chairman and Leader of the Council).

**Chairman**



## Statement of the Leader of the Council

### 1. Staffordshire Means Back to Business – Oral Update

The Cabinet have received an oral report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills giving an update on “Staffordshire Means Back to Business” activity including the following matters:

- This month saw an increase of 910 claimants, which is at least partly likely to be due to continued seasonal effects and jobs created over the festive period coming to an end. The total number of claimants in the county now stands at 15,715, or 3%, one of the lowest rates in the West Midlands and lower than the average for England of 3.8% of the working age population. The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 165 claimants to a total of 2,920 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit has increased this month from 4.4% to 4.7%, although this remains lower than the national rate of 5%.
- Since 2010, around 42,000 additional new jobs have been created in the county. This has of course been one of the main reasons why we have seen record low levels of unemployment and remained resilient to the recent global economic events. One of our main growth sectors over the last couple of decades has been the logistics industry, with around 11,000 new jobs created in this sector alone and which now accounts for around 29,000 of jobs within the county.
- The new Pets at Home distribution centre in Stafford will open shortly, creating over 750 new jobs, whilst construction on the West Midlands Interchange site will progress this year and will ultimately create 8,500 new jobs in South Staffordshire.
- The recent Logistics Roundtable was attended by some of major players in the industry, including the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, and was an opportunity for us to discuss how we can work together on some of main opportunities and challenges facing the sector, particularly existing and emerging skills needs and the shift to greater use of technology that will support the creation of more highly skilled, highly paid jobs within the sector.
- One of our local SMEs, CocoonFMS, based in Lichfield, has recently been successful in securing £129,000 from the first round of the Freight Innovation Fund in partnership with the major logistics employer Simarco. This will help to create a digital calculator to provide automated management of port costs and shipping expenses,

providing more accurate invoice information to users, reducing delays and improving the planning of deliveries.

- Through our Economic Growth Programme, we also continue to support the development of employment sites across the county. i54 South Staffordshire is one of our flagship employment sites and work to develop two plots in preparation for new occupiers at the site is underway. One of these plots is on the existing site, with the other being on the Western Extension, which will support the creation of a further 1,000 jobs when fully occupied.
- Excellent progress is also being made at the Chatterley Valley West site in Newcastle-under-Lyme where the first development plots are nearing completion, highway access works are due to commence in May and a detailed planning application for the first 75,000 square foot speculative unit is being considered.
- At the Branston Locks site in Burton upon Trent, around 300 houses have now been built, alongside the completion of the first phase of industrial units, 2 of which are occupied by Werner ladders and Syncreon logistics.
- The Shire Hall in Stafford, which we opened last summer following an extensive £2 million refurbishment of the building, has already proved hugely successful and is now home to 15 companies across a range of sectors, with only a few of the units now remaining.

*(Cabinet 19 April 2023)*

## **2. Capital Programme for Schools 2023/24**

The Cabinet have approved the Schools Capital Programme 2023/24. The Programme will see more than £43 million spent on maintaining and improving Staffordshire schools to ensure Staffordshire children can learn in surroundings that enhance their education and give them the best possible start in life.

The money will also see more schools benefitting from our decarbonisation programme by replacing inefficient systems, and more pupils with SEND benefitting from improvements in the existing provision they receive.

The programme will also provides for two new primary schools to be built. These are a new primary school to go with the new housing development at Burleyfields in Stafford, and another to the south of Shortbutts Lane in Lichfield to accommodate new homes being built there.

*(Cabinet – 15 March 2023)*

### **3. Highways and Transport Programme 2023/24**

The Cabinet have approved the Highways and Transport capital investment proposals.

Under the proposals, over the next two financial years the County Council is to invest an additional £30M to support its commitment to fix more roads. This year will see a total of over £50 million invested in a range of major projects, vital local improvements, and general road maintenance. The additional investment being made by the County Council will enable five major road reconstruction schemes at key locations into our towns, the resurfacing of nine junctions/roundabouts, an extra 275,000 sq. m of preventative surface treatments and £1M of additional work to repair highway drainage.

The Council has also been successful in securing £19.8M through the Levelling Up Fund for improvements to roads and bus and cycling routes in Staffordshire that will see investment in environmentally friendly buses and active travel between Stafford and Cannock, as well as significant investment around the A38 Branston interchange in Burton upon Trent.

*(Cabinet – 15 March 2023)*

### **4. Pothole Funding**

A good, connected road network is important for this council, for our residents and our business.

On top of the additional £30m this county council is investing in our highways in the next two years, we are also pleased to be receiving more than £4m from the national pothole fund.

While any additional national funding is welcome, we continue, along with other local authorities, to make it clear to Government that investment in long-term maintenance in our roads is necessary.

### **5. Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028**

The County Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have jointly developed a final draft of a new Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 titled 'Good Mental Health in Staffordshire'. This replaces the previous Mental Health Strategy 'Mental Health is Everybody's Business'.

The Strategy takes into account recent national policy changes, the impact of the Covid pandemic on people's mental health, and related local strategies and plans to improve mental health and wellbeing and mental health services. The strategy sets out six main outcomes:

- Everyone can look after their own mental wellbeing and find support in their communities when they need it.
- People have access to services when needed.
- A timely response to crises.
- There is equal access to support to improve mental wellbeing and services to manage mental health problems.
- People with severe mental illness are supported to live in the community and have good quality, integrated care.
- More integrated, good quality services for young people that focus on achieving independence in adulthood.

The Cabinet have approved the Strategy and the Health and the Wellbeing Board will monitor delivery of the associated action plan.

*(Cabinet – 15 March 2023)*

## **6. Our People Strategy 2023 and Beyond**

The Cabinet have approved the refreshed People Strategy for 2023 – 2027. This refreshed Strategy builds on the work undertaken to date and provides a planned approach to ensuring the Council’s workforce is ready to meet the key challenges the authority faces over the next four years. The strategy sets out 23 commitments under four pillars to shape a culture that supports delivery of the council’s Strategic Plan, inspires innovation, and allows the organisation to perform at its best for the people of Staffordshire.

The four pillars are:

- Attracting and keeping talented people.
- Promoting a positive work environment.
- Developing skills for now and the future.
- Developing leaders for now and the future.

*(Cabinet – 15 March 2023)*

## **7. Staffordshire County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

The County Council has a duty to develop, maintain, apply and monitor the implementation of a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy as Lead Local Flood Authority. The Cabinet have approved a revision of the Council’s previous Local Flood Risk Management Strategy so as to take account of lessons and learning that have taken place and to reflect national and regional changes in guidance.

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy sets out roles and responsibilities for flood risk management, and establishes our policies, our

objectives and our actions to manage flood risk. Progress on the implementation of the Strategy will be monitored by the Council's officers and reported regularly to the Cabinet Member and as required through Scrutiny and Cabinet.

*(Cabinet – 15 March 2023)*

## **8. Staffordshire Better Care Fund 2022 - 2024**

The Cabinet have received an update on the Staffordshire Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan for 2022-23 together with a summary of arrangements for development of the BCF Plan for 2023-24.

The Cabinet noted that, progress over the past year included a new social care workforce strategy, helping to support the recruitment and retention of home care staff by offsetting some cost pressures; improving the quality of care on offer in our care homes; and supporting home-first discharge to improve outcomes for people leaving hospital.

They were also informed that the 2023/24 BCF Policy Framework had not yet been published and it was the current working assumption that all existing schemes would continue with relevant inflationary uplifts in order to maintain essential health and care services and that therefore most of the funding would follow on from previous years. The Health and Well-being Board had delegated final approval of the Staffordshire BCF Plans for 2023-24 to the Chairs, including the Cabinet Member for Health and Care.

*(Cabinet 19 April 2023)*

## **9. Staffordshire Day and Coronation**

The month of May saw us celebrate Staffordshire Day and then King Charles III's Coronation.

Events were held across the county to mark the two events and on the additional Bank Holiday Monday, the spotlight was very much on volunteering as part of the Big Help Out.

This is an annual event, which this year was brought forward to tie in with the Coronation.

In Staffordshire, we are hugely fortunate to have a fantastic network of voluntary community groups.

This is a sector which we continue to support and invest in and they "repay" this funding several times over in the contribution they make to this county and our local communities.

## **10. Staffordshire's Quality of Life**

Of course, all of us in this chamber know what an amazing county Staffordshire is to live or work.

Great transport links, good employment and learning opportunities, affordable housing compared to many areas and an outstanding rural backdrop.

For too long, we have probably been one of the country's best kept secrets. However, as part of our wider We Are Staffordshire work we are now proudly saying come and join us, come and live here, come and set up your business come and visit us.

Launched on Staffordshire Day, our **A Place to Thrive** Campaign highlights why so many more people are choosing the county as their home.

## **11. UKREiiF**

Our recent visit to UKREiiF built on this, when we were able to showcase more than £1bn worth of investment opportunities across the county.

The wide-ranging investment offer by the council and partners was presented to more than 6,000 delegates at the UK Real Estate Infrastructure and Investment (UKREiiF) Conference, an event which brings together local and regional public sector organisations with Government, investors, funders, developers, housebuilders and more.

## **12. Recruitment**

As well as investment in Staffordshire, we are also keen to both keep and attract the best staff we can across all our services.

This is particularly key in both children's and adults' care, traditionally a difficult recruitment area.

People have told us that, of course, salaries are important, but it is also the value they bring and the way they are valued which are hugely important, something which was again evident in feedback from a recent event.

That is why our new social care workforce strategy, which has been developed by not just the council, but the NHS and other public sector and private partners aims to put staff and their goals and aspirations at the heart of care across Staffordshire.

## **13. And Finally**

Following an extraordinary meeting of this council, Pat Flaherty, the current Chief Executive of the London Borough of Harrow, was appointed as the new Chief Executive of this council.

Pat, who was born and raised in Staffordshire, will be joining the council on July 10.

Of course, that means we will also soon be saying farewell to our current Chief Executive, John Henderson.

John's final day at the council will be on July 7, which this means this will be his last appearance at Full Council.

John has been with the county council for eight years and has been a huge presence, both at the council and in developing relationships with partners and government.

He will undoubtedly be sorely missed, but I am sure you will join me today in thanking John, who also made Staffordshire his home, for the contribution he has made and the legacy he will leave.

We wish John all the best for next chapter in his life and career.





## County Council - Thursday 18 May 2023

### Code of Joint Working Arrangements with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny

#### Recommendation(s) / Action(s) Required

- a. That the County Council approve the revised Code of Joint Working Arrangements (Joint Code) with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny.
- b. That the constitution be amended to include the following wording:
  - a. The Council has agreed a Code of Joint Working between the District/ Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council in relation to Overview and Scrutiny of health matters.
  - b. In accordance with the agreed code:
    - i. the County Council shall discharge the overview and scrutiny function under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance including the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.
    - ii. the [*Borough/District*] Chairman of the [*relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee*] Committee will be appointed to Staffordshire County Council's Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
    - iii. the County Council is entitled to appoint one of its members to the [*relevant Borough/District Overview & Scrutiny Committee*] in relation to health matters.

#### Report of John Tradewell, Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services.

#### Summary

1. The Code of Joint Working Arrangements with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny has been reviewed and refreshed to develop the health scrutiny function across Staffordshire and to foster good relationships with District and Borough Council scrutiny committees and Health Partners.

2. The County Council is being asked to approve the revised Code of Joint Working Arrangements with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny.

## **Report**

### **Background**

3. The statutory responsibility for Health Scrutiny lies with Staffordshire County Council as the social care authority, the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers health, adult social care, and public health matters. Scrutiny of wider determinants of health falls within the District/ Borough scrutiny function.
4. The Joint Code was first introduced in 2003 to provide guidance to County and District/Borough Scrutiny processes. In essence, matters that had a Staffordshire wide theme be scrutinised by the County, whilst the local District/Borough scrutiny arrangements were intended to deal with matters that had a local theme.
5. The Joint Code was updated in 2015 in response to Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013, implications of the Francis Report, and the changes to the structure of the Health Service. This was to ensure health matters were being scrutinised in the right forum and to avoid duplication. The Joint Code was signed by District/ Borough Leaders in 2015.
6. The Health and Care Act 2022 has introduced the Integrated Care System and new ways of working. Existing regulations from 2014 on health scrutiny remain in force for the time being but there will be new powers for the Secretary of State to intervene in local health services from July 2023. Around this, the role and functions of health scrutiny will be changing, and it is important to prepare for these changes. It is therefore timely to refresh working arrangements and re-launch the Joint Code.
7. The Chairman, District / Borough Chairmen and support officers refer to the Joint Code to determine the method for scrutiny of any item that is of interest to both County and District/Boroughs:
  - Countywide issues are considered by the County (e.g. System Pressures)
  - Local issues may be considered by the Districts/Boroughs (e.g. Cannock MIU) by mutual agreement.

- Joint scrutiny (e.g. Walleys Quarry or Integrated Care Hubs in North Staffordshire) considered by the County and one or more Districts/Boroughs.
  - All Staffordshire Member Webinars (e.g. GP access) County, District/ Boroughs and Parish Councils.
8. The Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has 21 members: 13 County Council and 8 District and Borough representatives (The Chairman of each District Committee with the remit for Health and Wellbeing).
9. District/ Borough Committee structures, remits and support staff have changed considerably since 2015. The Health Scrutiny Officers Group (HSOG) has been refreshed and the Terms of Reference forms part of the revised Joint Code.
10. The Health Scrutiny Officer Group, the Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Chairman and the Overview and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice Chairs Forum were all consulted when drafting the revised Joint Code.
11. The Leaders of the County Council, District and Borough Councils have now endorsed the code at the Staffordshire Leaders Board and the Monitoring Officer has written to the District and Borough Councils to include the following within their respective Constitutions to ensure consistency:
- a. The Council has agreed a Code of Joint Working between the District/ Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council in relation to Overview and Scrutiny of health matters.
  - b. In accordance with the agreed code:
    - iv. the County Council shall discharge the overview and scrutiny function under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance including the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.
    - v. the [*Borough/District*] Chairman of the [*relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee*] Committee will be appointed to Staffordshire County Council's Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
    - vi. the County Council is entitled to appoint one of its members to the [*relevant Borough/District Overview & Scrutiny Committee*] in relation to health matters.

## **List of Background Documents/Appendices:**

12. Code of Joint Working Arrangements with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny.

## **Contact Details**

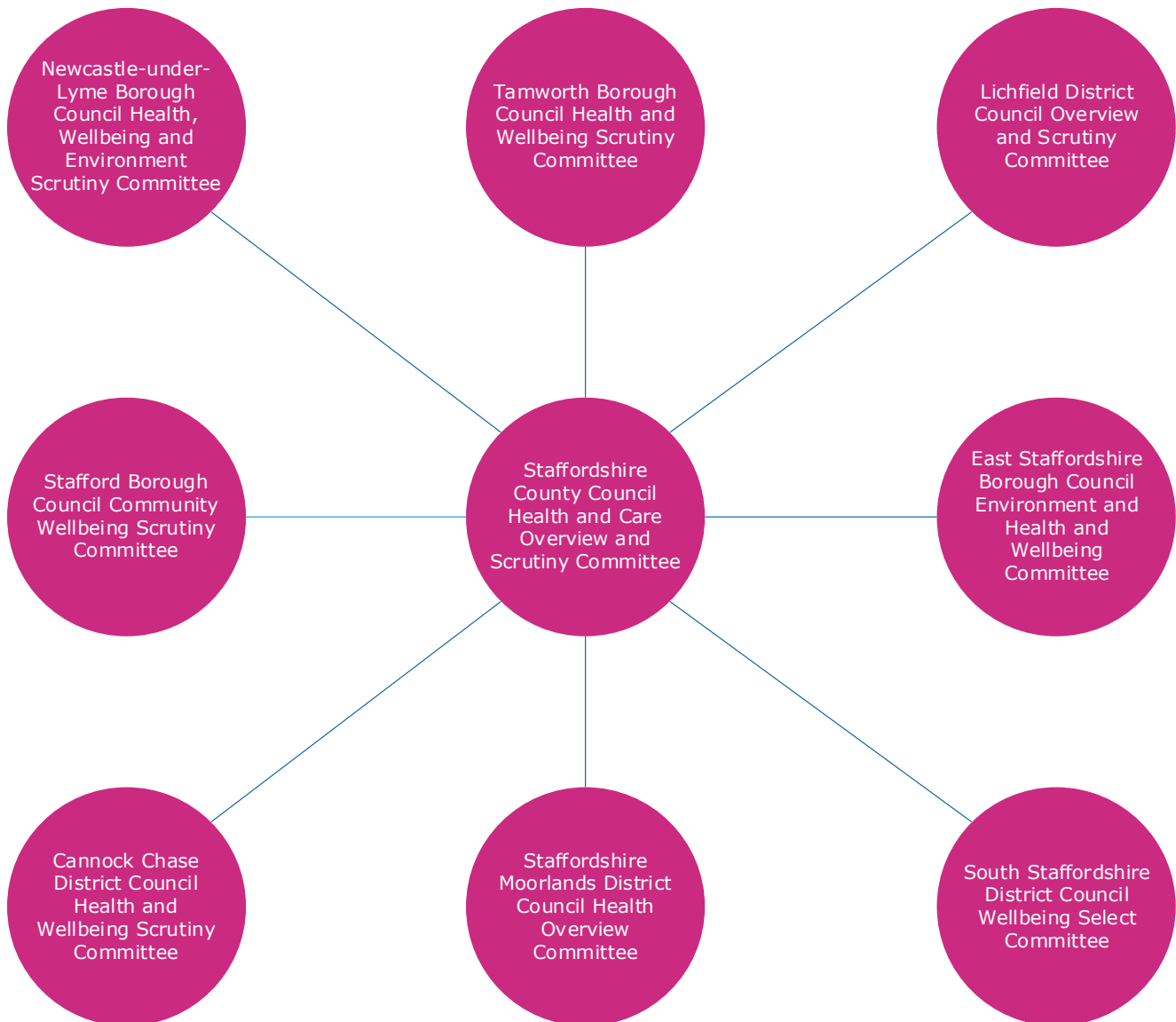
<b>Report Author:</b>	Zach Simister
<b>Job Title:</b>	Scrutiny & Support Officer
<b>Telephone No.:</b>	01785 276901
<b>E-Mail Address:</b>	<a href="mailto:zachary.simister@staffordshire.gov.uk">zachary.simister@staffordshire.gov.uk</a>

# **Staffordshire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Code of Joint Working – Local Authorities

## 1. Background

- 1.1 The Health and Social Care Act 2001 (“the Act”), as amended by the National Health Service Act 2006, provides local authorities with social services functions and powers to undertake scrutiny of health matters as detailed in the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 (The Regulations).
- 1.2 The remit of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be found in Staffordshire County Councils constitution.
- 1.3 The County Council and the eight District/Borough Councils in the county agreed to operate joint working arrangements for health scrutiny in 2003 (amended in 2014).



## 2. General Principles

- 2.1 The Health and Social Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee carries out Health Scrutiny activity in Staffordshire on the basis of the following working principles (and meeting statutory requirements where applicable):
- a. **Scope of Health Scrutiny** - The intended outcome of health scrutiny activity is the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the people of Staffordshire. The Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee (HCOSC) may review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision, and operation of health services in its area.
  - b. **Co-operation** - The authorities involved must be willing to share knowledge, respond to requests for information, initiatives and reports as appropriate. The County and District Councils will work together and mutually agree who will scrutinise each topic to ensure that nothing is overlooked and to avoid duplication of effort.
  - c. **Accountability** - The process of health scrutiny will be open and transparent. The HCOSC cannot delegate its statutory power to Districts/ Boroughs (paragraph 1.1).
  - d. **Code ownership** - The document will be owned by the County Council and will be reviewed annually in partnership with District and Boroughs.

## 3. Governance

- 3.1 Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
- a. The **County Council** will lead on matters that can best be dealt with at a county wide level.
  - b. 21 Members appointed annually: 13 County Councillors and a councillor from each District/ Borough (8) (see point 3.3a).
  - c. The District/Borough Councillor can nominate a substitute if they are unable to attend a meeting. The County Council should be notified prior to the meeting and the substitute will have full voting rights.
  - d. The **County Council may ask a lead District / Borough Council** to carry out scrutiny of an issue, which the County Council believes can be best dealt with at a district level which is specific to their geographical area. This may be singly or jointly with other District/Borough Councils. The capacity of committees and partners



to carry out scrutiny activity should be taken into consideration when planning scrutiny of an issue.

- e. **District and Borough Councils may ask the County Council** to carry out scrutiny of an issue that is of a strategic nature or is county-wide.

### 3.2 District and Borough Committees:

- a. Each District and Borough Committee operates in line with their terms of reference in their constitutions. As per 3.1 d The HCOSC may ask it to consider:
  - i. Locality specific commissioning proposals that solely affect health and wellbeing activities within that district/ borough, whoever they are provided for;
  - ii. matters which have been agreed with the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
  - iii. District/Borough services that interface with planning for and providing health services - for example, but not exclusively, housing, leisure and environmental health service; and relevant locality specific partnerships

### 3.3 Appointment of representatives:

- a. The Chair from each District/ Borough Scrutiny Committee which holds the remit for Health and Wellbeing matters will be appointed to the HCOSC and will have full voting rights. Their role is to:
  - i. Provide updates from their relevant Committee to the HCOSC.
  - ii. Report back on any issue which the HCOSC has requested the relevant Committee to scrutinise.
- b. One County Councillor will be appointed to each District/Borough Committee with full voting rights on the respective Committee. The appointment will be made by the County Council annually. The representative will provide updates from HCOSC to the District/Borough Committee.

### 3.4 Health Scrutiny Officers Group:

- a. The terms of reference is appended to this code.





## Appendix 1 – FAQs

### **1. Why does the County Council scrutinise the big issues such as the ICS Transformation Programme and ambulance waiting times? Borough/Districts also want to look at how these issues affect services in our area and our residents.**

*The Transformation Programme covers services across Staffordshire County. The joint code ensures that representatives from all 8 District Councils have a seat on the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee to raise local issues and that a representative from the County Committee has a seat on the District Committees to report back to District Councils on matters discussed. Any specific questions can be channelled through the local representatives on the committee.*

### **2. Should Borough/District Councils invite NHS providers to their meeting to scrutinise a particular issue?**

*Largely no unless the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed with the Borough/District Council that it should be the lead authority for scrutiny. The reason for this is to avoid NHS providers attending 8 Borough/District Council meetings, Staffordshire Council has the responsibility for health scrutiny under the Health and Social Care Act and to avoid duplication of effort.*

### **3. Can a Borough/District Council scrutinise the performance of a local GP surgery?**

*The performance of a GP Surgery does not fall under the scrutiny remit. GPs are commissioned under contract by the ICS and the quality management of their contract is through NHS England. There are other ways for local members to discuss concerns about local surgeries directly with the ICS, but a public scrutiny meeting is not the appropriate forum.*

### **4. Can a Borough/District Council scrutinise access to GP surgeries in their area?**

*The Primary Access Plan is a countywide plan and includes access to GP surgeries. This is scrutinised by the Staffordshire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Representatives from District and Borough Councils have equal opportunity to question witnesses about progress of actions in the plan to improve access to GP surgeries across the region.*



**5. Can a Borough/District Council scrutinise issues such as NHS Dentistry provision?**

*The provision of NHS Dentistry is a countywide contract, currently led by NHS England, this will change in April 2023 when the ICS takes on the contractual role. This should be looked at in a strategic nature by the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee.*

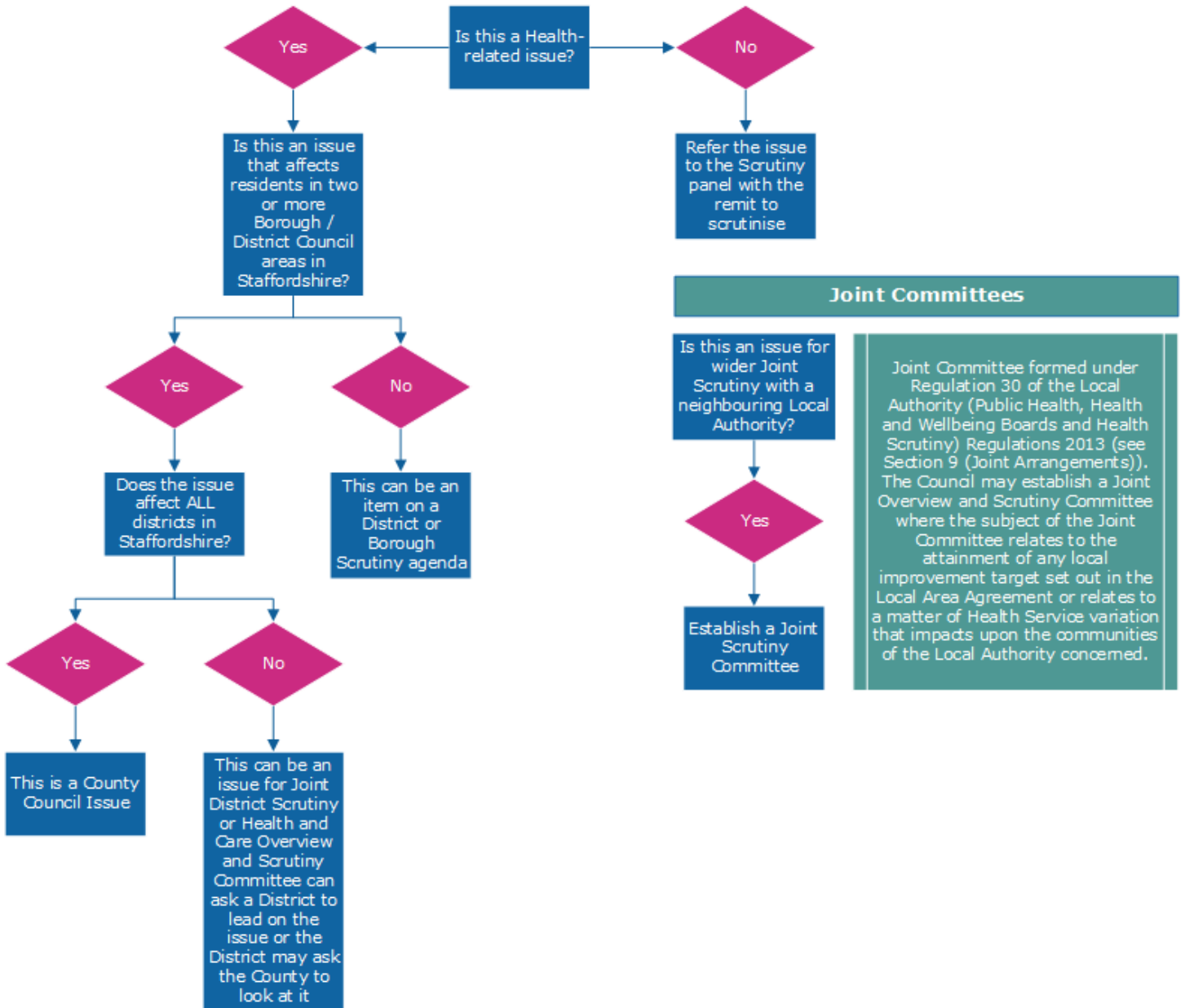
**6. What should a Borough/District Council do if their Committee wants to scrutinise a health issue that was the responsibility of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee?**

*The Borough/ District Member appointed to the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (i.e. the chairman of the Borough/District committee) should bring the matter to the attention to the Chairman of the Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee under the terms of this Joint Code of Working.*



## Appendix 2 – Joint Code of Working with Districts and Boroughs

Plan for where scrutiny of an issue takes place, as determined by the County Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman in consultation with the relevant Committee Members and agreed by the Committee in the Work Programme.



## Appendix 3 – Health Scrutiny Officers Group

### Terms of Reference

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 The Health Scrutiny Officers Group (HSOG) has been formed to support the Staffordshire County Council Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HCOSC) and District and Borough Scrutiny arrangements.

#### 2. Membership

2.1 The membership will consist of:

- a. Officer representatives from Staffordshire County Council
- b. At least one officer representative from each District / Borough

2.2 Other advisers and partners may be invited to the Group on an ongoing or ad-hoc basis as appropriate.

#### 3. Terms of Reference

3.1 The main aims of the Group is to mutually support the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Health and Wellbeing function in achieving its aims and objectives.

3.2 The group may:

- a. Put forward items of business to the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- b. Inform the process of work programme planning and delivery;
- c. Discuss and report on matters of note on health and care across Staffordshire; and
- d. Establish an appropriate mechanism to carry out the scrutiny function and consider the scrutiny arrangements at Districts and Boroughs.

#### 4. Ways of Working

4.1 The Group will meet twice annually as a minimum. Meetings will be organised and administered by the County Council. Meetings will be chaired by the County Council.



## **County Council Meeting - Thursday 18 May 2023**

### **Annual Report of the Audit & Standards Committee 2022/23**

#### **Recommendation**

I recommend that:

- a. That the Council consider and approve the contents of the Annual Report of the Audit & Standards Committee for 2022/23.

#### **Local Member Interest**

N/A

#### **Report of the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee**

### **Report**

#### **Background**

1. A key part of the Audit & Standards Committee's role is to report to Full Council on the Committee's findings, conclusions, and recommendations; on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control frameworks; internal and external audit functions and financial reporting arrangements. In addition, the Audit & Standards Committee should report to Council where they have added value, improved, or promoted the control environment and performance in relation to its Terms of Reference and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose and functions. This report is produced annually to fulfil the above requirement.
2. Governance in and of the public sector remains high profile with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) supporting good practice in local government. The Code of Corporate Governance is reviewed annually in line with the best practice issued by CIPFA and SOLACE; together with an Annual Governance Statement, again produced in line with best practice and legislative requirements. Being well managed and well governed are important attributes in helping to improve performance and in reducing the risk of failure to achieve the Council's strategic objectives and providing good service to Staffordshire residents.

3. Staffordshire County Council has an Audit & Standards Committee, originally established in 2005, with the key objectives to maintain and improve governance procedures. The Committee is a key component of the Council's corporate governance framework and a major source of assurance of the Council's arrangements for managing risk, maintaining an effective control environment, and reporting on both internal and external audit functions and financial and non-financial performance.
4. The benefits to the Council of operating an effective Audit & Standards Committee are:
  - Maintaining public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting.
  - Reinforcing the importance and independence of internal and external audit and any other similar review process; for example, reviewing and approving the Annual Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement.
  - Providing a sharp focus on the results of the work of the internal audit service where limited assurance reports are issued and control weakness have been identified through special investigations and potential fraud instances.
  - Assisting the co-ordination of sources of assurance across the control framework i.e. information governance and health & safety management.
  - Raising awareness within the Council of the need for governance, internal control, and the implementation of audit recommendations.
  - Providing assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management arrangements and reducing the risk of illegal or improper acts.
5. The Committee continues to have a professional and arm's length relationship with EY, the Council's external auditors, who attend all meetings of the Committee to offer their advice where needed.
6. The Committee undertakes a substantial range of activities and works closely with both internal and external auditors and the Director for Corporate Services and the Director of Finance (s151 Officer) in achieving the Council's aims and objectives. A detailed annual forward plan is produced and reported to each meeting of the Committee to ensure that key tasks are considered and completed to meet required timescales.

7. During 2022/23 the Audit & Standards Committee met six times and in line regulatory requirements and best practice outline within the CIPFA publication – Audit Committees: practical guidance for local authorities and police. Agendas have been set to ensure that the areas outlined in the Committees terms of reference are covered, together with any additional items requested by Members. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022 extended the dates for certain public and local bodies to publish and make available for inspection their annual accounts and supporting documents. These regulations apply only in relation to the annual accounts relating to the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.
8. At the 21 March 2023 meeting Members received a presentation on new CIPFA guidance for the assessment of the effectiveness and influence of Audit Committees. In addition to setting out the core functions, key features and expected role of an Audit Committee, updates in the Guidance included calls for greater focus on the ethical framework, recognition of the wide range of partnerships and collaborations entered into by Councils and the appointment of Independent Members on Audit Committees. Specific information was provided on the self-assessment of good practice and the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of the Committee. It was agreed that the key actions for 2022/23 were:
  - a self-assessment exercise using the CIPFA guidance be conducted at a members' Workshop on 23 May 2023
  - the Committee reviews its Terms of Reference,
  - considers the recruitment of Independent Members,
  - clarifies its role in the governance arrangements of partnerships.

## **Internal Audit**

9. The Audit & Standards Committee approved the Internal Audit Plan and Strategy at its 5 July 2022 meeting and a progress update report against the approved Internal Audit Plan was also presented to the Committee in December 2022. Scrutiny of the proposed plan provides Members with the opportunity to challenge and influence the areas scheduled for review by Internal Audit to ensure audit resources are deployed to the areas of greatest risk. The top risk areas for 2022/23 were identified as:
  - Social Care Reform – including the Build Back Better Project and Adult Social Care Pathway - Strength Based Care.
  - Childrens' and Families Transformation including the new District Model and Panel & Decision-Making Arrangements.

- Climate Change – Project & Programme Management & the Climate Change Action Fund.
  - Cyber Assurance – including Cyber Security Strategy; Major Incident Management; SaaS Procurement and Monitoring; and Threat & Vulnerability Management.
  - Delivering Good Governance: Culture, Values & Behaviours Governance Review.
  - Entrust Future Contract Arrangements.
  - Digital Strategy & Transformation – including the Customer Journey Project & the EDRMS SharePoint Project.
  - Contain Outbreak Management Fund - Grant Verification.
  - Recruitment Applicant Tracking System.
  - SEND Strategy Implementation Plan.
  - Highways Transformation programme – including project support & Asset Management & Inspection Services.
  - Mental Health Act - Section 117.
10. As part of the Internal Audit Outturn Report for 2021/22, presented to the Committee in July 2022 an “Adequate Assurance” opinion was given on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s governance, risk, and control framework, i.e., the control environment. Furthermore, during 2022/23 Internal Audit continued to support the Council’s response and recovery work relating to the COVID pandemic including a review of the contact tracing system and the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) programme. Despite this additional call on Internal Audit’s resources, the Team maintained its work on key corporate transformation projects by continuing to provide a project assurance role in a number of areas including Council’s new applicant tracking system, the new occupational health system, the implementation of SharePoint and EDRMS and Microsoft 365 as well project support for the Highways transformation programme, Household Waste recycling centres and the Residential Care - Net to Gross Project within the Adults and Children’s Financial Services.
11. The Internal Audit Charter is reviewed and approved annually by the Committee; the latest version was approved at the March 2023 meeting. Included within the document are the reporting guidelines which determine those audit reports that are considered in full, by the Committee. Given that on average approximately 100 + reviews are performed annually, those reports that contain a limited assurance opinion, classed as a top high-risk review or the result of a special investigation are reported in full. Operational Management attended to provide details of how the agreed recommendations contained in the reports had been implemented since finalisation.



During 2022/23 the Committee considered the following final audit reports:

- Joint Funding and Billing CCG's Continuing Healthcare – progress on the implementation of recommendations.
  - Infrastructure + Asset Data Management
  - Agency Staffing Contracts Review – progress of the implementation of recommendations
  - SEND Accelerated Progress Plan
  - Internal Audit Review – Nexxus
  - Company Governance
  - Cyber Security Strategy
  - Community Climate Action Fund
12. A number of risk areas were identified, and Members requested further progress updates to the Committee in year to ensure that the actions identified had been fully implemented as agreed. The scheduling of these were incorporated into the Forward Plan. These progress updates are also supplemented with the periodic reporting on the implementation of past audit recommendations, the last update given to Members of the Committee in December 2022.
13. Members received the results of the Internal Audit five yearly External Quality Assessment to evaluate compliance of the service with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) on 21 March 2023 meeting. CIPFA had been commissioned to carry out the assessment and had done so via a combination of actions including reviewing documentation and a sample of completed audits, surveys and interviews with key stakeholders (including South Staffordshire Council as an external customer' of the service) and reviewing the annual self-assessments carried out by the service, also following the PSIAS.
14. The assessment had found that the Internal Audit Service 'Generally Conforms' (highest rating available) to the standards with no recommendations for improvement and only one advisory action for management. This was the highest rating available under the process.

### **Counter Fraud Work**

15. The Audit & Standards Committee has received during the year various reports and updates in relation to the Council's local response to fraud. The Counter Fraud Plan was approved annually by the Committee at the 5 July 2022 meeting, which formally sets out the Council's counter fraud activities to be conducted in-year. Progress

against this plan was also provided to the Committee at its December 2022 meeting.

16. During 2022/23 the Audit & Standards Committee has received the investigation report relating to the pre-paid card false transactions review. In addition, an update on the latest National Fraud Initiative 2022 data-matching exercise was also given to Members of the Committee on 1st November 2022.
17. A full and comprehensive report on all the Council's counter fraud activities for the year is included in the Internal Audit Outturn Report which is presented at the July meeting each year.

### **Governance and Risk Management**

18. The annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance was undertaken in July 2022. This is a key document in the governance framework and depicts how the Council operates and manages its governance processes. The basis of this document is the CIPFA/Solace document 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016'.
19. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2021/22 was approved by the Committee at the 13 December 2022 meeting. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022 were published in June 2022 and extended the reporting deadline for the 2021/22 accounts to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. The main governance issues raised in the AGS related to the changes being made to the SEND service as well as the Children's operating system, the constant presence of cyber security risks and the need to prepare for the potential request for decision making documentation to be submitted to the UK Covid-19 Inquiry. Also, other key actions taken forward into 2022/23 included the importance of remaining vigilant over supply chain failure for key services; as well as the need to ensure that audit recommendations are actioned to improve the Council's control environment.
20. The Council's Draft Statement of Accounts (SoA) for 2021/22 were also reported to the Committee at its December 2022 meeting following a comprehensive presentation and training session provided by the Corporate Finance Manager prior to the SoA being approved.
21. The Annual Code of Conduct for Members report on the Management of Complaints was presented to the 5 July 2022 meeting. The report referred to eleven complaints/alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members during the period June 2021 and June 2022. It was confirmed that eight complaints received had been concluded

with no breaches of the code of conduct. The remaining three were awaiting a decision, which will be reported as part of the 2022/23 report.

22. At the 5 July 22 meeting the Committee approved the appointment of five members to the Standards Panel namely Cllrs P Haden, G Hutton, C Trowbridge, B Williams, and M Worthington.
23. Also, the Annual Report on Information Governance was presented at the 26 April 2022 Committee meeting. The report considered the County Council's compliance with legislation on Information Governance, particularly in relation to access to data and information, and the use of investigatory powers. Compliance was monitored by a range of national bodies. Specific reference was made to cyber security risks and the increased focus on training for officers and members given the current international circumstances. In addition, user authentication requirements were being strengthened. It was reported that homeworking by County Council staff had initially increased the need for attention to security issues, but this had since levelled out with an audit of cyber security giving assurance that appropriate measures were in place.
24. Members also received the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Performance 2021/22 Annual Report at the 1 November 2022 Committee meeting. The key conclusions noted were:
  - The report provided an indication that health and safety performance was maintained and continued to be managed whilst also responding to the risks and challenges that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic presented. Good progress was made in development and projects whilst resources for activities such as audits remained impacted.
  - The work completed during 2022/23 will continue to focus on post Covid-19 recovery, and colleague wellbeing.
  - Learning from the serious incident at the Isabel Trail has been taken forward into Highway maintenance planning and practice. A wider council Tree Strategy is being developed.

## **External Audit**

25. The External Auditor, Ernst Young presented their "Report to those Charged with Governance ISA 260 – Audit Results 2020/21" reports for both the Council and the Pension Fund, at the 14 December 2021 meeting. These reports contained the draft opinions for both the Financial Statements and the Value

for Money requirement. At the 5 July 2022 meeting the Director of Finance reported his concerns at delays in the external auditors' completion of the Councils accounts for 2020/2021 and the submission of an External Audit Plan for 2021/22.

Resourcing issues amongst the audit sector nationally were acknowledged, however, the Committee remained concerned at the effect of delays on the efficiency of the County Council. The Committee received an update from the External Auditor at the 20 September 2022 meeting regarding the elements of work outstanding and impact of the issue surrounding Local Authority accounting practices for Highways Infrastructure Assets which were being reviewed nationally, with final guidance being prepared by CIPFA. It was unclear at that point when the clarification would be provided and the effect on individual audits was unknown.

26. Confirmation was provided by the External Auditor at the 13 December 2022 meeting that following the release of the CIPFA Guidance on accounting practices for Infrastructure Assets, the accounts would need to be updated. A further update on this matter was provided to the 21 March 2023 meeting where the External Auditor confirmed that the Council's updated information on Infrastructure Assets accounting had been received and once reviewed by his Team, the Audit would be completed. This situation will continue to be closely monitored by the Audit and Standards Committee.
27. At the 21 March 2023, the External Auditor submitted the proposed External Audit Plan for 2021/22, for approval. Reporting on the strategy for the Audit, each of the risks and areas of focus for the 2021/22 audit was detailed, explaining the reasoning behind the selection of each. The approach to be adopted in reviewing how the council used its resources to achieve Value for Money, the Materiality to be applied during the audit (i.e., the monetary level over which misstatements would be deemed to influence economic decisions) was outlined. Together with the scope and timescale for the audit, the staff involved and fees to be charged. The proposed plan was subsequently approved.
28. A report was submitted to the 21 March 2023 meeting which outlined that as previously authorised by the Committee on 14 December 2021, the Council had opted into the sector led procurement process, administered by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) for the selection of an external auditor of the 5-year period commencing April 2023. The procurement process had resulted in KPMG being

appointed for the County Council. It is anticipated that there would be a significant increase in the audit scale fee set against the background of the national difficulties outlined within various sector reports including the Redmond Review.

### **Equalities Implications**

29. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

### **Legal Implications**

30. Whilst there are no direct legal implications arising from this report, the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022 require specifically that a relevant body must 'undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance'.

### **Resource and Value for Money Implications**

31. The net budget of the Internal Audit Section in 2022/23 was £1,027,510.

### **Risk Implications**

32. Internal Audit examines objectively, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient, and effective use of resources.

### **Climate Change Implications**

33. There are no direct implications arising from this report.

### **List of Background Documents/Appendices**

- 2022/23 Audit & Standards Committee Agenda Papers and Minutes.

### **Contact Details**

**Assistant Director:** Lisa Andrews, Head of Internal Audit & Adults & Children's Financial Services

**Report Author:** Lisa Andrews  
**Job Title:** Head of Internal Audit & Financial Services  
**Telephone No.:** 01785 276402  
**E-Mail Address:** [Lisa.Andrews@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lisa.Andrews@staffordshire.gov.uk)

