

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 20 June 2023

10:00 am

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

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

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

John Tradewell
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services
12 June 2023

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2023** (Pages 1 - 4)
- 4. Integrated Performance – Performance and Finance Final Outturn Report, 2022/23** (Pages 5 - 62)

Report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.
- 5. Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report** (Pages 63 - 86)

Report of the Chairman of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6. Overview and Scrutiny Quarterly Update** (Pages 87 - 92)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services.
- 7. Draft Work Programme 2023-24** (Pages 93 - 104)

Report of the Chairman of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. **Climate Change Working Group - update**

(Pages 105 - 108)

Report of the Chairman of Climate Change Working Group.

9. **Appointment of Members to the Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group**

To appoint members to the MTFFS Working Group for 2023/24.

10. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Chairman to move:-

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

PART TWO

(All reports in this section are exempt)

Membership

Tina Clements	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
John Francis	Samantha Thompson (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Gill Heath (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))	Mike Wilcox (Chair)
Jeremy Oates	Mike Worthington
Kath Perry, MBE	Nigel Yates
Jeremy Pert	

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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Recording by Press and Public

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Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 9 May 2023

Present: Colin Greatorex (Chair)

Attendance

Tina Clements	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
John Francis	Samantha Thompson (Vice-Chair (Overview))
Gill Heath (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))	Mike Worthington
Kath Perry, MBE	Nigel Yates
Jeremy Pert	

Also in attendance: Cabinet Members: Councillors Mark Sutton, and Alan White.

Officers: John Tradewell, Catharine Mann, Nisha Gupta and Wendy Thompson

Apologies: Councillor Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

PART ONE

64. Declarations of Interest

None declared at the meeting.

65. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2023

Resolved: – That, subject to Cllr Spencer’s name being added to the list of members in attendance, the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. Corporate Delivery Plan 2023/24

The Leader of the Council introduced the Councils Corporate Delivery Plan for 2023/24 which supported the Strategic Plan for 2022-26. The Delivery Plan set out the key priorities and deliverables for the Council; included clear measures of success and would be monitored by the Committee alongside the Integrated performance report and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Individual objectives could be developed through Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committees if requested.

The main points raised by members were:

- The objectives were supported, and the Key performance measures, target dates and lead officer information welcomed.
- Highway improvements were subject to a transformation plan which included different ways of working. This would be considered at Prosperous O&S Committee.
- It was felt that realistic targets needed to be set, so as not to mislead the public.
- The plan was aspirational and concentrated on things that were within the power of the authority.
- The Climate Change Community Fund would still be available to members during 2023/24. More information would be sent to the committee.
- Renewables with strategic partners would be investigated.
- Tenancy farms; Carbon sequestration; solar panels and other innovation areas of work would be considered if appropriate.
- Permits for recycling centres would be looked at by the Prosperous O&S Committee.
- The use of local contractors, particularly through the Amey partnership would be investigated and reported back to members.
- An objective specifically on recruitment and retention of staff was welcomed. An example of developing potential staff was provided through a Social Work undergraduate course which enabled students to study at the County Council.
- Place marketing and levelling up money should be co-ordinated with the Districts/and Boroughs and should be referenced in the delivery plan.
- The numbers of volunteer hours referred under the 'tackle climate change, enhance our environment and make Staffordshire more sustainable' objective, didn't give a time period or indicate if this was an increase from the previous year.
- It was felt that the dates mentioned on the 'fix more roads and improve transport and digital connections' Highways performance objectives and the new ways of working didn't seem to match the allocation of funds to Amey.

Resolved:

- a) That the progress made in developing the draft Corporate Plan 2023/24 be noted.
- b) That the comments of the Committee as listed above be considered prior to the Plan being approved by Cabinet.
- c) That responses to the questions raised by members be circulate after the meeting.

67. Update on Progress Made Within Children and Families Directorate Following Cabinet Investment

The Cabinet Member for Children and Families introduced the report which had been requested by the Committee when they were considering the

Integrated Performance report. The Cabinet member explained that an extensive analysis of the workings of the Directorate had been carried out in an attempt to understand the overspend in the areas of Children in Care and the challenges within the SEND service. An extra £5.7m had been agreed for the directorate with a view to improve staffing and workloads which would lead to improvements in recruitment and retention. The agreed increase in funding had been through the MTFS Plans for 2023/24.

During the Committees questions and debate, the following points were established:

- Recruitment to posts was underway with many posts having been filled already.
- Outcomes would be closely monitored and performance against the increased budget would be monitored through the Committees quarterly performance reports.
- Another piece of work was underway into the increasing number of SEND children requiring EHC plans.
- Contact between local councillors and Childrens Centres seemed to have reduced since Covid. The attendance/invites to Family Improvement Boards would be checked.
- Face to face visits was a statutory requirement and was still taking place. Virtual follow up meetings were used, if appropriate.
- More detail of the use of the £5.7m was requested alongside the improvements made. It was explained that this would be available in the Quarter 3 performance report.

Resolved: That the report and update be noted.

68. Volunteering for Staffordshire County Council

The Cabinet member for Children and Families presented the report in the absence of the Cabinet member for Communities and Culture.

The report outlined the County Councils new approach to volunteering and set out the nine new volunteering principles. The principles were designed to ensure that all Council volunteers have a positive and consistent experience. The report and any feedback from this Committee would be considered by Cabinet in June 2023.

The Committee expressed the following views and comments:

- The principles and guidance for county council staff responsible for supporting or managing volunteers was welcomed.
- Key organisations worked with were Support Staffordshire and Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS).
- The need for guidance on the webpage for quick ad hoc groups to address issues such as one off clean ups, would be useful to support local initiatives.

- It was felt that barriers to volunteering were normally: Insurance; Risk assessments and; DBS checks. Assurance was given that these would be addressed and clear guidance provided on line.
- Following a question on whether community groups were audited, officers agreed to check with Support Staffordshire and respond directly to members.
- Members asked that the Communications plan include guidance for communities where English was not their first language.
- Internal communications would be looked at so that all volunteers were directed to an appropriate group so that no volunteer was missed.
- The number of volunteers had dropped post COVID and the Library service was cited as an example.
- Exit interview with retiring employees should be encouraged that they are aware of volunteering opportunities. This could include other public bodies and the private sector.

Resolved:

- a) That the report be noted.
- b) That the comments and suggestions from the Committee as listed above be referred to Council for consideration along with the Volunteering strategy.

69. Work Programme

The next meeting was scheduled for 20 June 2023 where the 2023/24 municipal year work programme would be discussed in detail.

Resolved: That the work programme be noted.

Chairman

Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 20 June 2023

Integrated Performance – Performance and Finance Final Outturn Report, 2022/23

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

- a. Committee Members note and challenge performance and advise of any further information and/or action required.

Report of Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance

Summary

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

- 1.This Integrated Performance Outturn Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council’s progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan, Delivery Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 2.We recommend that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

Report

Background

- 3.The Integrated Performance report is considered by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 June 2023

Integrated Performance – Performance and Finance Final Outturn Report, 2022/23



Cllr Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

“Creating the right conditions for businesses and our economy to grow and thrive while supporting our most vulnerable residents remain priorities for the county council.

“We know that many people still face challenges in dealing with the increased cost of living and we continue to do what we can to support them. Programmes such as the Household Support Fund which has provided over £15 million of financial assistance and the Sustainable Warmth

Competition which has installed energy saving measures in almost 900 homes are all providing valuable support. Through the Holiday Activities and Food Programme we’ve also helped thousands of families while the ‘Here to Help’ campaign has provided advice to over 24,000 visitors to the website.

“Alongside this, our supportive communities work is helping people to live independently with support from their families and local communities. The programme has seen the recruitment of 166 Community Champions and the creation of 26 community help points to date.

“Our work to support local businesses to start up, survive, and grow remains a priority, while our ‘We are Staffordshire’ campaign goes from strength to strength in promoting business and employment opportunities in the county. We also continue to invest in highways, enterprise centres and infrastructure including broadband which benefit both residents and businesses alike. Major investment projects at Chatterley Valley in Newcastle, i54 South Staffordshire and highways work at Pets at Home’s new headquarters in Stafford are all helping attract more jobs to the county.

“Work to tackle climate change and achieve net zero by 2050 is ongoing with the council already reducing its carbon emissions by 44% since declaring a climate change emergency in 2019. We do continue to face challenges in adult social care and children’s services including levels and complexity of demand in both areas. However, additional investment is helping ease the situation.”



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

“Significant progress has been made across the organisation during quarter 4 and during the year with departments delivering on key areas of work.

“We still face pressures from inflation across all council areas which we continue to monitor carefully. Challenges around recruitment and demand within children’s services also continue which we are trying to address within our longer-term plans. The final outturn position for the county council for the year is an overspend of £11.294m (1.9%). The quarter 3 forecast was an overspend of £11.635m.

“Like most local authorities, we still face financial challenges, but we are a well-run council and continue to keep our finances in as strong a position as possible. Well managed finances means we can continue to invest in our future, grow our economy and improve people’s lives.”

Report Summary

This Integrated Performance Report provides an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan, Delivery Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Recommendation

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.
- b. Note the final financial outturn and approve the planned contributions to reserves.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 June 2023

Integrated Performance – Performance and Finance Final Outturn Report, 2022/23

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

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.
- b. Note the final financial outturn and approve the planned contributions to reserves.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive & Director for Corporate Services and the Director of Finance

Reasons for Recommendations

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

Outturn Summary

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

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

Key highlights

- **Cost of living:** Supporting residents with cost of living, through programmes such as the Sustainable Warmth Competition, Household Support Fund, Holiday Activities and Food Programme and 'Here to Help' campaign for those in need.
- **Supportive Communities:** Delivering the programme, including recruitment of 166 Community Champions and increasing to 26 Community Help Points.
- **Highways:** Successfully delivering Highways Maintenance schemes, while also carrying out a significant programme of transformation.
- **Business support:** Delivering a dynamic business support offer for Staffordshire start-ups and scale-ups.
- **Waste:** 12 months of successfully managing HWRCs since transferring back under council control.
- **Climate Change:** Successful delivery of Climate Action Fund and shortlisted for MJ award for 'Innovation in Delivering Sustainability and Social Value'.
- **Supporting Families:** Achieved successful outcomes for families facing multiple challenges and maintained Earned Autonomy status.
- **Education:** 95.1% awarded their first choice primary school and 92.5% their first choice secondary school.
- **We are Staffordshire:** Successfully promoting the Staffordshire brand, including nomination for global 'Place brand of the year' award.

Key challenges

- **Children in Care:** Continued pressures across Children's services, including the rising cost, number and complexity of Child Protection & Children in Care, and ongoing placement pressures. Recruitment underway following investment.
- **SEND:** Increased demand for Education, Health and Care Plans. Capacity continues to be a challenge, however recruitment of additional Key Workers and Educational Psychologists is underway.
- **Adult Social Care Assessment Demand:** High level of Adult Social Care assessment demand, however recruitment to vacant posts and using additional temporary capacity continues.
- **Inflationary Pressures:** Continue to be monitored closely across the organisation, with the need for one-off resources to fund them.

1. Summary

This report provides an update on Quarter 4 activities for each service area, as well as an overview of performance for the year.

Significant progress has been made across the organisation during 2022/23, with inflation and cost of living pressures continuing to be responded to, whilst also delivering key programmes of work. Levels of demand have presented challenges, particularly in Children and Families and Adult Social Care, including responding to adult social care market pressures. There also continues to be areas of financial risk in Children and Families, with further details included within this report and its appendices.

The final outturn position is an overspend of £11.294m. The Quarter 3 forecast was an overspend of £11.635m.

2. Health and Care

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

3. Good progress has been made during 2022/23, despite challenges in relation to demand, capacity, and the adult social care market. Some of these pressures have eased with the announcement of the delayed implementation of Adult Social Care Reform to 2025.



4. In March 2023 there were 1,473 Care Act Assessments initiated; 5% lower than March 2022 but 17% higher than pre-Covid levels. Demand for Care Act Assessments increased in January 2023, which is not unusual due to winter pressures, and then reduced again during Quarter 4. Work continues to address this demand with recruitment continuing to take place and the use of additional temporary capacity, in addition to reviewing processes going forward. Despite the levels of demand, the council has continued to exceed its target throughout the year for completed Care Act Assessments within 28 days (see Appendix 1).

5. In March 2023 there were 1,368 Safeguarding contacts, which is the highest number since August 2022 (1,457). The increase in demand and a temporary reduction in staffing capacity led to a small increase in the number of people waiting, but this is being actively managed and remains below the agreed threshold.

6. The number of reviews of people receiving services for 12 months or more has increased each month since December 2022, and in March 2023, 86% of service users had received a review in the previous 12 months

representing the best performance in this area in recent years (see Appendix 1). There has been a particular improvement within Adult Learning Disability reviews, with 87.2% reviewed in March 2023 compared to 61.1% in March 2022.

7. Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLs) applications (where it is necessary to deprive a person of their liberty in a hospital or care home if they lack capacity to consent to their treatment and care) is a further area of demand impacting on resources. The council has 1,409 DoLs applications waiting to be completed at the end of March 2023, however the majority of these are low priority. Staffordshire is a large county and has a lot of care homes, meaning a high number of DoLS applications are received compared to other local authorities and demand is increasing. Just over half of referrals in the last 12 months are for people requiring a review – either to have it extended for a further period or where they have moved to a new provider.
8. Timeliness of sourcing for brokerage (helping individuals to arrange care) has continued to improve in recent months, with February (90%) and March 2023 (89%) recording the best performance over the last two years (see Appendix 1). March 2023 also recorded the highest ever number of referrals (1,236; a 53% increase compared to March 2022). The continued good performance in sourcing brokerage within timescales, against a backdrop of increased demand, has been due to an increase in resource, a review of the supported living process and improving market conditions during 2022/23.
9. Work has taken place during the year to increase capacity in the home care market. Capacity has increased for a number of reasons, including contracted providers increasing their workforce, and 'Trusted Assessor' schemes which enable providers to flag to the council when they can safely reduce a package which, if approved, means they have capacity to pick up additional care packages. The council's new brokerage portal has also been in place since December 2022 and enables improved visibility for providers to see what is available and make offers on packages.
10. The council continue to make as many contracted block booked beds live and in use as possible. Block booked beds contract for a fixed number of beds with guaranteed business once these beds are activated. They ensure timely access when required, as well as better value for money. As of 21st April 2023, 325 beds were contracted, of which 228 were live (in payment), and 97% were filled. Whilst the number live has increased, this remains lower than anticipated impacting on savings, which have needed to be met elsewhere.
11. Over the past 12 months, the Supportive Communities programme has made significant progress in helping people to live independently with

support from their families and local communities. The programme is helping residents get the information and guidance they need by expanding Community Help Points to 26 countywide, as well as further developing online information resources for residents. The council's network of Community Champions has also grown, with 166 champions now promoting local health initiatives through trusted voices across Newcastle-under-Lyme, Tamworth, and Burton-on-Trent. Supportive Communities is also helping the council to better understand the needs and priorities of its vulnerable adults and communities. An innovative 'citizens inquiry' programme has taken place in five local areas, talking with local communities about their priorities for staying healthy and how the council and communities can work together to overcome barriers to good health and wellbeing.

12. Staffordshire Warmer Homes programme enables the council to continue helping low-income households to upgrade energy inefficient homes. In Quarter 4, 325 measures were installed across 250 properties across the county through the Sustainable Warmth Competition. In total the overall programme has delivered 1,086 measures across 886 properties, with 90% increasing their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings by 1 or more band. All districts and boroughs are benefiting from the programme, with the highest number of properties receiving measures in Stafford (187), Tamworth (163) Cannock Chase (157) and East Staffordshire (144).

13. The Covid vaccination programme has remained strong in 2022/23, with 69% of those eligible having received their Autumn Booster when the programme finished on 12th February 2023. Just over 86% of the total eligible Staffordshire population have received their full primary doses, and Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent continue to be one of only two systems in the region to be above the national average for all cohorts.

14. From a finance perspective, within Health and Care, the final outturn position is a small saving of £0.026m.

15. Children and Families

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
AMBER	RED

16. The Children and Families service continues to build on progress made during the year. The service has faced ongoing challenges in relation to increasing demand and complexity of need, alongside workforce capacity and recruitment issues. There is also an overspend which is a result of use of agency staff and cost pressures within the Children's Social Care market.



17. The Placement team have developed a Placement Sufficiency Strategy and are working with the sector and the regional Strategic Commissioning Hub to seek to affect ways of working across the region to mitigate the rising costs within the external market. This is a priority area nationally as part of the care review 'Stable Homes Built on Love' and for the regional directors for children's services.
18. Children in Care demand has continued to rise with an increasing number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children coming into the authority's care (106), however the number of children returning home after coming into care is higher than anticipated for Staffordshire. Following the extra financial investment (£5.7m) approved in December 2022 for additional staffing to support increasing numbers of children in care, recruitment for additional capacity is now underway.
19. At the 31st March 2023, there were 1,385 children in the authority's care in Staffordshire, representing a slight increase compared to the previous quarter (1,372). This is a rate of 82 per 10,000; higher than the most recent national benchmark (70 per 10,000 - March 2022) but lower than the regional benchmark (88 per 10,000 - March 2022). The number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan at the end of the year is similar to levels seen earlier in the year with 717 subject of a plan (a rate of 42 per 10,000 in Staffordshire compared to the most recent benchmarks from March 2022 of 42 nationally and 43 regionally).
20. The number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) issued in time (within 20 weeks) in Staffordshire remains low. The rolling 12-month figure in Staffordshire to March 2023 is 34% compared to the most recent national benchmark of 58% (from 2021/22). Increasing demand and complexity continues to impact on timeliness, with recruitment of additional SEND Key Workers and Educational Psychologists now underway.
21. Progress has been made in taking forward the four key change programmes of work within Children & Families. The four programmes of work will focus on Children in Care, Children's Workforce, SEND Improvement and Embedding the C&F System with the aims of improving recruitment and retention, working with families to build resilience and offer support at the earliest possible opportunity, streamlining processes so they are more efficient and improving experience across the system.
22. At the end of the year, Staffordshire had achieved successful outcomes for 1,010 families through the Building Resilient Families and Communities programme since April 2022; exceeding the target (797) set by the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Recently the council became one of only two local authorities to successfully bid to lead on a peer support project. This involves coaching and supporting other councils to improve key aspects of their

children's system as part of their Supporting Families Programme delivery.

23. As part of the council's continuing commitment to support vulnerable residents, since its launch in 2021, the Household Support Fund (HSF) has provided over £15m of financial assistance directly to residents, with many stating the scheme has made a difference to their ability to cope with the rising cost of living. Round 3 of the programme, running during Quarter 3 and 4, provided almost 108,000 supermarket vouchers to children and young people and also provided vouchers to 8,556 households. Additionally, 3,189 households benefited from the Winter Warmth Scheme, with each household having received either top up credit on prepaid meters or credit paid directly to their energy supplier. The fund also purchased 18,109 slow cookers for households and 11,200 accompanying seasoning packs.

24. Further support has also been made available to Staffordshire's most vulnerable families through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, which continues to offer children and young people free activities and a healthy meal, over school holidays. Across the year the programme has offered over 80,000 places with a take-up rate of 60%, with over 2,000 individual children benefitting in each school term. The council's approach in delivering this programme to children with Special Education Needs was also recognised by the Department for Education (DfE) as good practice.

25. Since March 2022, over 950 Ukrainians have arrived in Staffordshire as part of the government's Homes for Ukraine Scheme, with over 540 of these still being hosted by a local sponsor. Following Cabinet's endorsement of the creation of a Resettlement Team in December 2022, two new senior roles have started and eight front-line practitioners are due to start imminently – allowing for a more person-centred and targeted approach to supporting refugees across Staffordshire.

26. Positively, 95.1% in Staffordshire were allocated their first choice of primary school (92.2% nationally last year) and 99.2% one of their top three (98.4% nationally last year). 92.5% were allocated their first choice of secondary school (83.5% nationally last year) and 97.8% one of their top three (93.8% nationally last year). Note that national comparators for 2023 are yet to be published.

27. In terms of the final outturn financial position for Children & Families, there is a forecast overspend of £11.948m.

28. Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

29. Considerable progress has been made across the service, including the area of Communities, despite inflationary pressures which have been experienced during 2022/23.



30. A key highlight for the year is 14 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) being managed back in-house over the last twelve months, with recycling operatives receiving a record number of compliments from visitors. Now the service is in the council's direct control it can be ensured that the only waste that ends in landfill has no alternative disposal option. Taking over the management and day-to-day running of the sites means the council can maintain the best service for residents, be sustainable and provide good value for money.

31. Progress has been made during 2022/23, with an aligned way forward with Stoke-on-Trent City Council in the development of a solution to waste disposal arrangements in the north of the county post 2025. A Cabinet Member Delegated Decision has been made to carry out procurement for a new management and operating contractor for 2025-2030.

32. The council has agreed a 5-year extension to their contract with its highways partner Amey from October 2024. This is to maintain and improve Staffordshire's major highways network for the benefit of residents, businesses and to support the growth of the county's economy.

33. The Highways Transformation Programme has also made significant progress during 2022/23. In Quarter 4, wider highways staff have been engaged and engagement sessions with Amey have also been taking place. The transformation has also continued to take place alongside maintaining a safe and secure highways network, with the successful completion of structural maintenance schemes at Rolleston (£1m), Essington (£0.95m), Burntwood (£0.326m) and Saredon (£0.38m) in Quarter 4. The council also carried out additional early season grass cuts in urban areas.

34. Throughout 2022/23 the council continued to support local businesses to start up and grow through its dynamic range of business support schemes. Between June 2020 and March 2023, the council has supported 549 individuals through the Staffordshire Start Up Programme. Of these, almost half (254) have started their own business. Get Started and Grow has supported 160 business owners who have been trading up to 5 years

with professional services support in marketing, finance or digital marketing, with the 'step-up' element launching in Quarter 3.

35. Additionally, 72 individuals have been approved for the 'My Own Boss' programme, which due to its success, has been extended into 2023/24. The Staffordshire Start-up Forum has also now launched, where partners from across the county meet monthly to discuss the start-up offer across Staffordshire, including what support is currently on offer, any gaps in provision and new projects that are launching.

36. Several key economic growth projects have continued to develop during 2022/23, including the Chatterley Valley Project in Newcastle-under-Lyme starting on site. The site could create up to 1,700 jobs and, when fully built out, release total business rates of more than £2.5m a year that will be wholly retained within the area. Work has also progressed well at i54, with the development of a Manufacturing and Headquarters Facility for the first end user of the i54 Western Extension commencing in March 2023. Other recent successes include the delivery of highway access works to unlock Pets at Home's new Headquarters which is expected to employ around 750 people.

37. The council's Community Learning Service has recently been rated 'Good' by Ofsted, with inspectors reporting that the curriculum was well-planned and provided meaningful content to learners. Working with 16 learning providers, the Community Learning Service provides a range of courses from family learning to employability, with thousands of people benefiting from the service every year. As of end of March 2023, take-up for adult learning was on track for the academic year, with 2,011 enrolments.

38. Following the approval of the annual Climate Change Action Plan and Annual Report last quarter, Staffordshire has continued to play its part in the global effort to reduce the impact of climate change and work to meet its net carbon zero target by 2050. The council has been shortlisted as a finalist in the national MJ Awards in the category of 'Innovation in Delivering Sustainability and Social Value', which recognises the council's commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and creating a sustainable environment. The winner will be announced in June 2023.

39. Latest performance information shows that the council's carbon emissions in 2021/22 were 28,152 tCO₂e; a slight reduction on the previous year (29,068 tCO₂e). Work is taking place to think more innovatively about how the council continues to reduce this. The council recently ran a composting campaign which resulted in 833 composting bins being sold in total, exceeding the target of 500, and potentially diverting 121,600kg of organic waste from landfill.

40. The final figures for the latest round of the Climate Action Fund have also been announced, with 72 applications resulting in funds issued to the community totalling £72,685, with over £200k awarded over the last three years. Successful applications will help reduce the carbon impact, improve air quality, reduce waste or improve the natural environment.
41. Working with Staffordshire's communities is a key part of the council's Strategic Plan 2022-26. Progress has been made throughout 2022/23 in developing this area of work and in February 2023, Cabinet approved the development of a new Communities Strategy and countywide engagement to support it. Work is now underway to plan the engagement and strategy process.
42. The council's 'Here to Help' campaign was launched in early October to help with the cost-of-living crisis and make sure people were aware of the support and advice available, focussing on areas such as money and debt, energy bills, food and essentials, help paying for childcare, staying well, staying warm and helping others. Up to the end of March 2023, over 24,000 people visited the web area, with over 40,000 page views.
43. Delivering a sustainable and vibrant library offer has continued to be a priority for the council in 2022/23, with the successful Summer Reading Challenge taking place and the introduction of the start-up information offer for those wishing to work for themselves in Staffordshire County Council Libraries. Work has also taken place to re-contract with the partners delivering Great Wyrley, Knutton, Loggerheads, Wilnecote and Brereton Community Managed libraries.
44. Construction has continued to progress in building the brand new £5.4m Staffordshire History Centre, which will extend the existing Staffordshire Record Office in Stafford, incorporating the William Salt Library. The project also has funding to deliver a four-year programme of activities enabling people to discover more about their family or local history. A new website will be developed, and key collections will be digitised to widen access. Throughout 2022/23, volunteers have given 3,942 hours in time, which equates to £78,850 in match funding towards the project.
45. The Trading Standards team continues to support businesses through safeguarding and compliance advice. The team's intervention throughout 2022/23 has prevented detriment to customers valued at over £15m.
46. From a finance perspective, within Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, the final outturn position is a forecast saving of £0.252m.

47. Corporate Services

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

48. Corporate Services has continued to provide vital support to the organisation in delivering on its priorities during 2022/23.

49. Significant progress has been made promoting the Staffordshire story and 'We are Staffordshire' place brand. During Quarter 4 the campaign 'A Place to Thrive' was launched to help market Staffordshire's quality of life offer, with four new videos and a prospectus. Throughout the year, four successful Ambassador Network events have also been held, and there are now over 175 Ambassadors in the Staffordshire Network. Recognising this excellent work, 'We are Staffordshire' was also shortlisted for two awards by the global place marketing organisation City Nation Place - including overall 'Place Brand of the Year'. A successful Staffordshire Day was also held at the House of Commons where a delegation of Staffordshire businesses and local leaders showcased the county as a great place to do business, work, learn and visit.

50. During 2022/23, the council aimed to raise £8 million through the sale of unused land and buildings to fund transformation of services and activity, in line with new Government regulation. By the end of March 2023, the council had completed sales of four surplus sites, delivering £2.475 million, with two of the anticipated sales delayed due to complexities and that will now form part of the 2023/24 delivery programme.

51. Work on the council's schools and corporate projects is ongoing. The 2023/24 Schools Capital Programme was approved by Cabinet and new primary schools at Deanslade in Lichfield and the relocation/expansion of St Leonard's Primary School to the former Kingston Centre in Stafford are on track for a September 2023 opening. This follows the successful delivery of the c.£8m schools maintenance programme during 2022/23 and the opening of new primary schools in Uttoxeter and Fradley in September 2022. Several corporate projects were delivered in 2022/23 including the relocation of Stafford Registrars and Coroners service, the completion of the Lichfield Day Centre refurbishment, the repurposing of the Chesterton Vision and the opening of the Shire Hall in October.

52. Digital continues to be fundamental to the way the council works as an organisation, as well as how it will interact with partners, citizens, and communities. Over the year significant progress has been made across multiple priorities, such as the purchasing of automation software for trialling in areas across Health & Care and Finance to free up capacity for

added-value activities. Work with district and borough councils began to explore what a new and innovative “Single Front Door” may look like across Staffordshire, with the aim of improving access and ease of use. The council has progressed several pilots in collaboration with Lichfield District Council, initially focussing on Customer Experience and Single Phone Number, with further pilots planned for 23/24. Furthermore, over the past year significant work has been undertaken to refresh the Digital Delivery Plan for 2023/24, which was approved in December 2022.

53.The council’s Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Capacity Building Framework continues to promote social action in local communities and build capacity in the voluntary and community sector. Between October and December 2022, 133 organisations were provided with development support such as help with planning, developing policies and safeguarding. An additional 47 children and young people’s VCSE organisations received specific development support for their area. Groups were also supported to access over £1.5m of additional funding, including the Armed Forces Reaching and Supporting Communities Fund and the council’s Community Champions grants scheme.

54.The council’s 2022 Community Fund’s applications had a total value of nearly £1m. Projects varied from small community activities to supporting community investment worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. Applications have been processed, and an end of year report will be brought to Full Council in July, highlighting performance information and next steps. The 2023 Community Fund recently opened in May.

55.In 2022, the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) initiated an Electoral Review of Staffordshire, due to the council’s changing electorate and the length of time since the last review. The first and second stages of the review have now been completed. The Council Size Submission to retain the current number of 62 councillors was agreed in principle by the LGCBE in December 2022, and the boundary changes proposed by the council approved at Full Council and submitted to the LGBCE on 20th March 2023. The LGBCE is expected to release their draft recommendations on 27th June.

56.Work to deliver the council’s internal People Strategy has progressed during 2022/23. This has included implementing a new Applicant Tracking System in October, which has received positive feedback and improved Time to Hire, by 14 days to an average of 32 days. The council also partnered with CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, to help shape a refreshed People Strategy for 2023-2027, which went live on 3rd April 2023. The strategy supports the council’s aim to be an excellent employer with a welcoming culture, that embraces the council’s vision and values.

57. There has been a continued focus on absence across the council to help teams improve their days lost. This includes working directly with those teams experiencing the highest days lost to understand the root causes for absence and proactively support them. Additionally, absence related surgeries have been provided to management teams to help them manage absence through their directorate absence improvement plans.

58. As such, long term absence has continued to reduce and as of March 2023 stood at 8.55 days lost per employee; this remains higher than the same point last year (8.31 days) but has improved from the previous quarter where performance was 8.65 days. Short-term absence has also reduced to 3.61 days lost per employee, showing improvement from both the same point last year (3.68 days) and the previous quarter (4.04). Almost half of the workforce has had no sickness absences over the last year (47.3%, 1,999 people), with a further 25.0% (1,057 employees) having been absent for 5 days or fewer.

59. In terms of the final outturn financial position for Corporate Services, there is a forecast saving of £0.1m.

60. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications of note in relation to this report, which is for information and discussion.

61. Resource and Value for Money Implications

Please see Finance Appendices.

62. Climate Change Implications

There are no direct climate change implications of note.

63. Link to Strategic Plan

Cross-cutting as the performance of the Corporate Delivery Plan represents the most significant activity that directly delivers against all areas of the strategic plan.

64. Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

Detailed scrutiny of the council's activity in relation to the various areas discussed in this report takes place at the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee or Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as appropriate.

65. Community Impact

This report represents a strategic summary of the county council's performance against key indicators, finances, and delivery of priorities. The individual projects and programmes are reported separately where specific decisions are required, and community impact assessments are completed where appropriate. As such there is no community impact presented with this report.

List of Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Integrated Performance – Performance and Finance Final Outturn Report, 2022/23
- Appendix 2 - Performance Dashboard
- Appendix 3 - Finance Outturn Summary
- Appendix 4 - Finance Outturn Detailed Report
- Appendix 5 - Corporate Checklist
- Appendix 6 - Revenue Final Outturn 2022/23
- Appendix 7 - Capital Final Outturn 2022/23
- Appendix 8 - Financial Health Indicators 2022/23
- Appendix 9 - Prudential Indicators

Contact Details

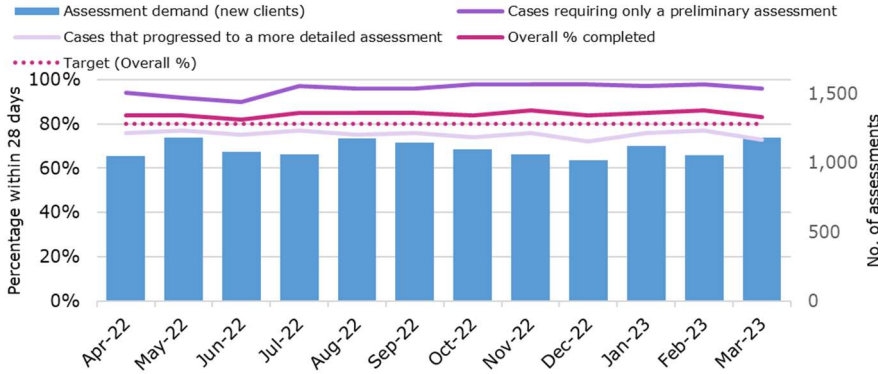
Report Author: Wendy Tompson
Job Title: Head of Policy and Insight
Telephone No.: 01785 854267
E-Mail Address: wendy.tompson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Report Author: Rachel Spain
Job Title: Chief Accountant
Telephone No.: 01785 854455
E-Mail Address: rachel.spain@staffordshire.gov.uk

Health & Care Dashboard

Adult Social Care and Safeguarding

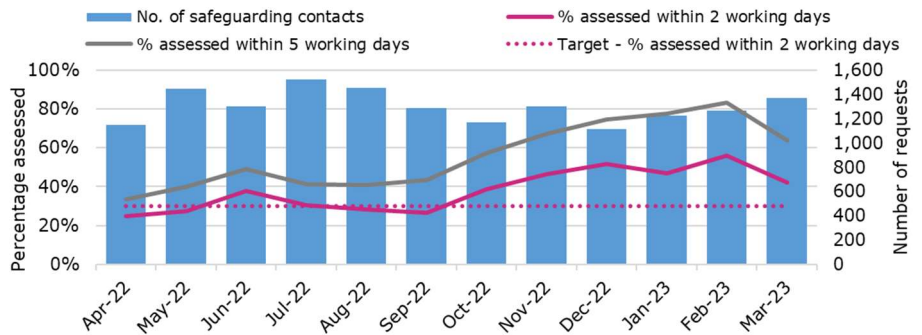
% of Care Act assessments of new clients completed in 28 days and number of requests received per month



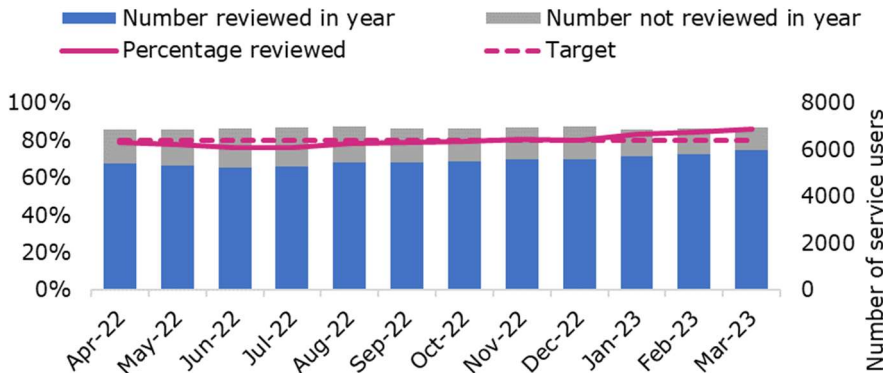
Performance remained above target in Quarter 4, despite an increase in demand. Where assessments are not completed in 28 days, this is usually because they are more complex. The council tracks these individually to ensure that progress is being made to determine appropriate care and support arrangements, and that any risks are being mitigated.

Demand has increased during Quarter 4. The increase in demand and a temporary reduction in staffing capacity led to a small increase in the numbers of people waiting, but this is being actively managed and remains below the agreed threshold. All contacts continue to be assessed to ensure that the highest risk cases are prioritised immediately.

% of safeguarding referrals assessed within 2 and 5 working days, and number of requests received per month



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

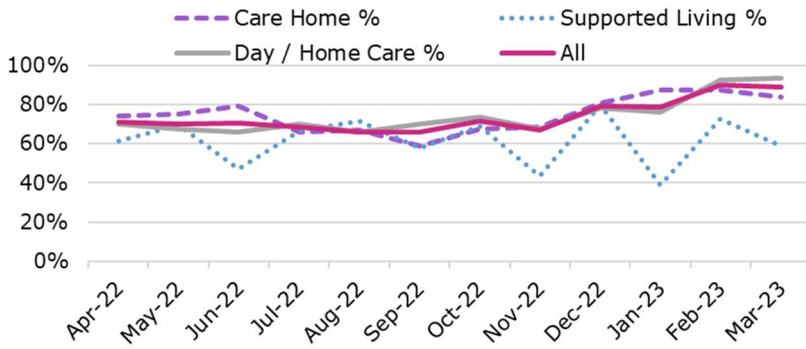


Performance has continued to improve during Quarter 4. Where people have not been reviewed within 12 months this may be because they were unavailable (for example in hospital) or because of insufficient capacity, which is being addressed. However if overall demand increases, resource may need to be diverted to higher priority work.

Health & Care Dashboard

Care Commissioning

% of brokerage sourced within agreed timescale by service type

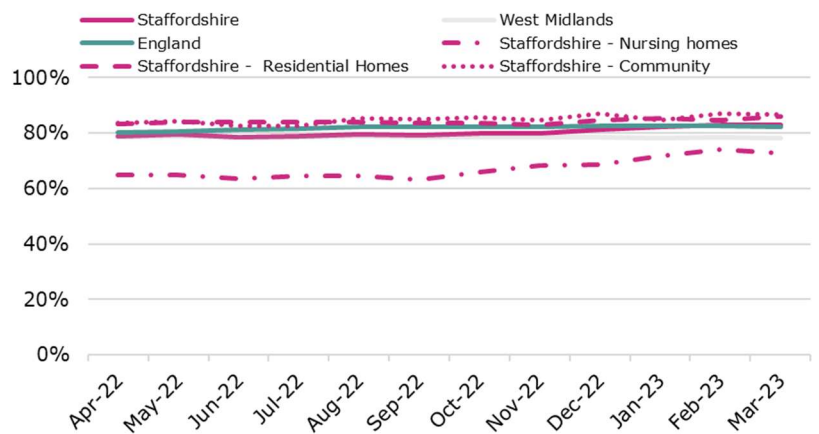


Overall brokerage referral timeliness has continued to improve in Quarter 4, despite increasing demand.

Source: SCC

There have been improvements in the Care Quality Commission assessment ratings of Staffordshire's registered locations during 2022/23 with the highest ratings this year recorded during Quarter 4. The council has made additional investment in its quality teams over the last financial year, which is having a direct impact on driving improvements in care services.

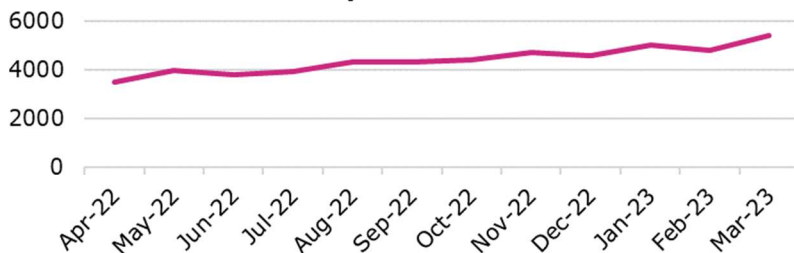
% of care providers with CQC ratings of Good or Outstanding by provider type



Source: SCC and Care Quality Commission

Public Health and Prevention

Number of people who have accessed resources promoting independent living and community support, including SCC digital resources and community help points



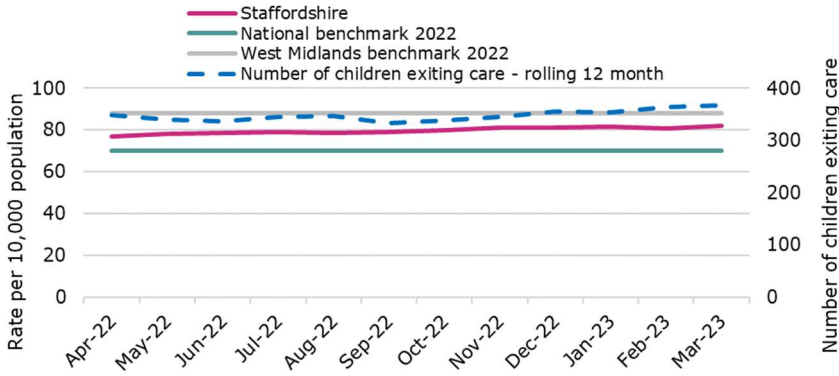
Of the 5,397 people who accessed resources in March 2023, 69% (3,723) were unique views of SCC adult social care webpages, 30% (1,641) were unique views of Staffordshire Connects adults homepage and 1% (33) were referred to Community Help Points.

n.b. There are limitations with this data; the actual number accessing digital resources is likely to be higher, as the chart only shows those users that have accepted the website analytics.

Children & Families Dashboard

Safeguarding

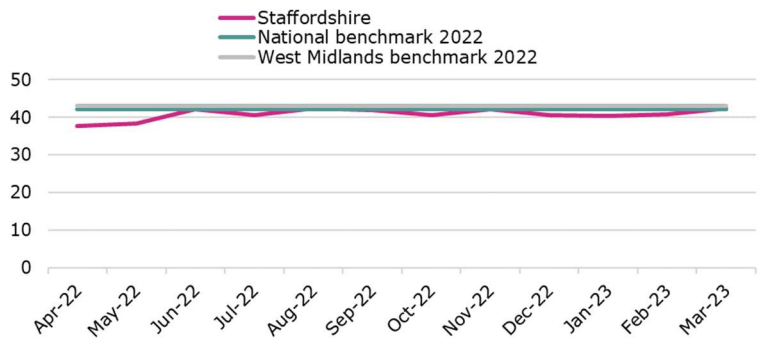
Rate of children in care (rate per 10,000 population) and number of children exiting care



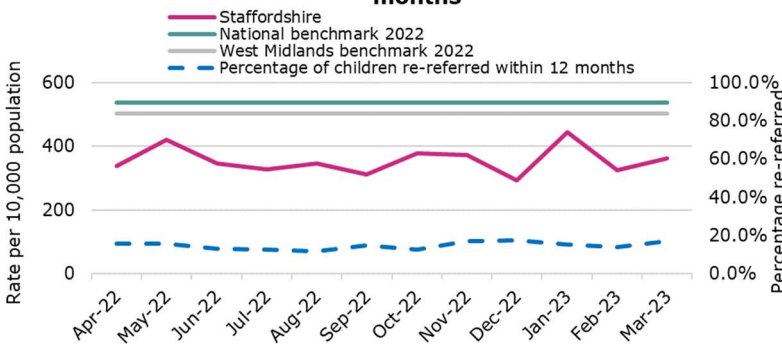
Staffordshire continues to experience increasing demand and complexity of need. Plans are now in place to reduce some of the staffing pressures and to strengthen recruitment and retention.

The number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan has remained relatively stable and in line with regional and national benchmarks.

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



Rate of children referred, rolling 12 month average (per 10,000 population), and % re-referred within 12 months



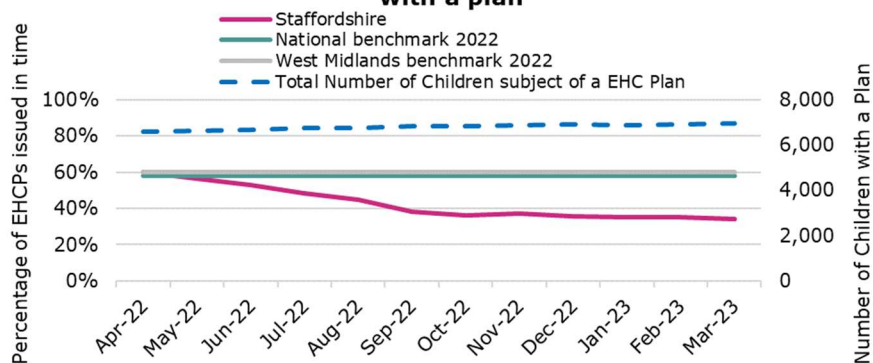
Referrals continue to remain below both national and regional benchmarks.

Source: SCC and Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

Children & Families Dashboard

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

% of Education, Health and Care Plans issued in time (12 month rolling avg), and total number of children with a plan



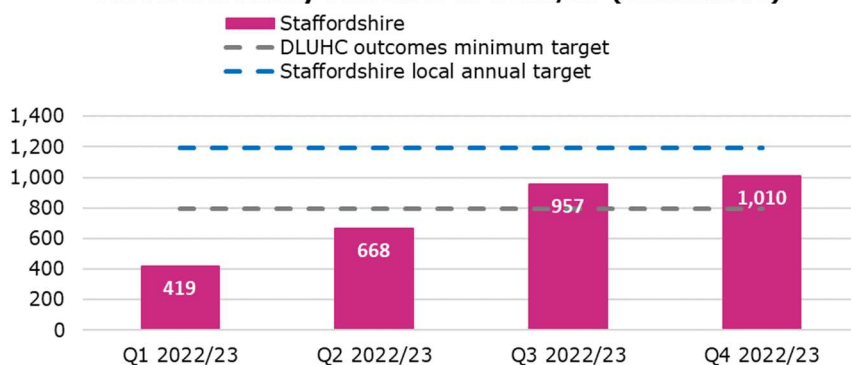
Increasing demand continues to impact on Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) timeliness. Up to March 2023, there were 6,949 children subject of a plan in total. Recruitment is underway to help mitigate this.

Source: SCC and Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

Supporting Families

There was a slowing of successful outcomes claimed in Quarter 4, but Staffordshire exceeded the annual target set by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), achieving sustained outcomes for 1,010 families against a target of 797.

Supporting Families Programme - Reported successful family outcomes in 2022/23 (Cumulative)

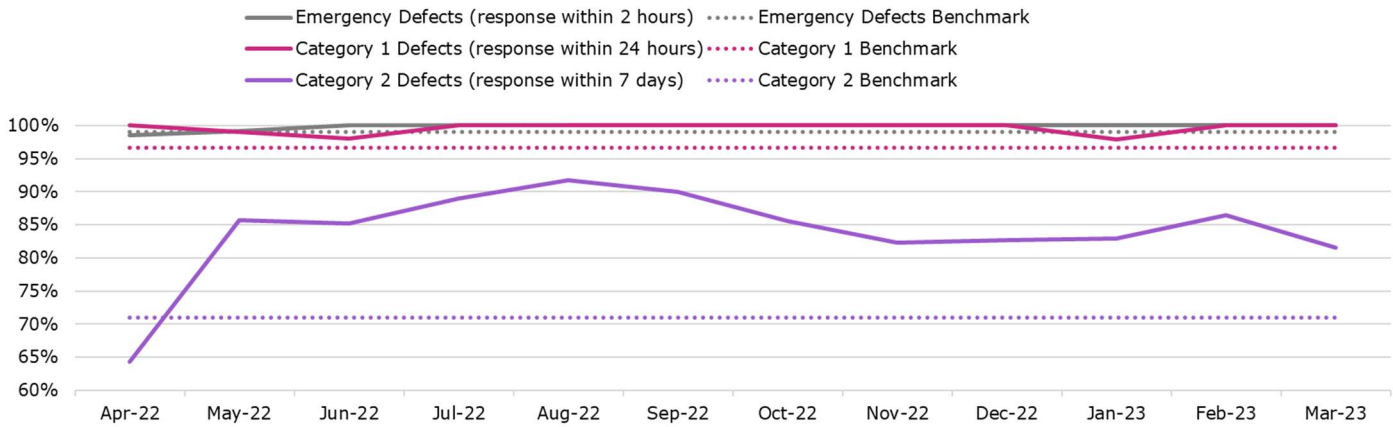


Source: SCC and Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities

Economy, Infrastructure & Skills Dashboard

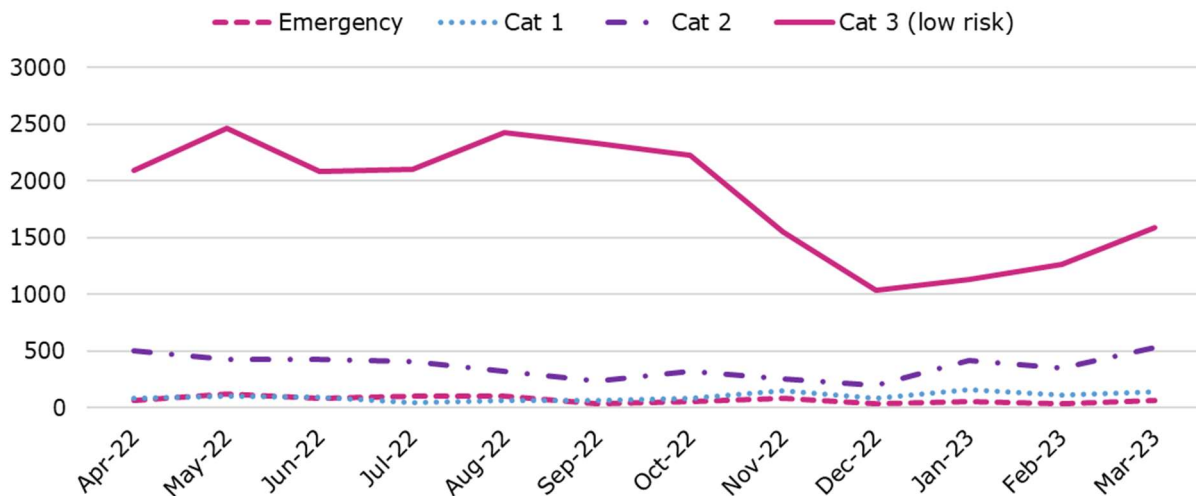
Highways

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



Staffordshire's performance continues to be above the benchmarks for all defect repairs.

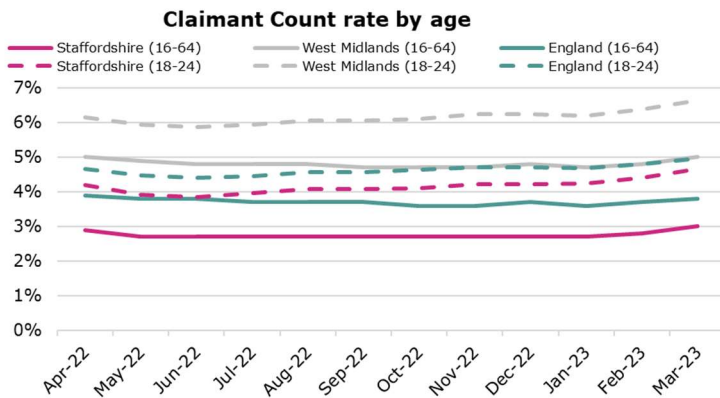
Total number of safety defects identified



This demand includes all defects identified on the highway in Staffordshire. The number identified each month can vary due to a number of factors. There are typically fewer annual and quarterly planned safety inspections carried out during the winter months (due to the weather conditions), which is likely to have contributed to the dip in the number of identified defects during Quarter 3, similar to previous years. This will continue to be monitored.

Economy, Infrastructure & Skills Dashboard

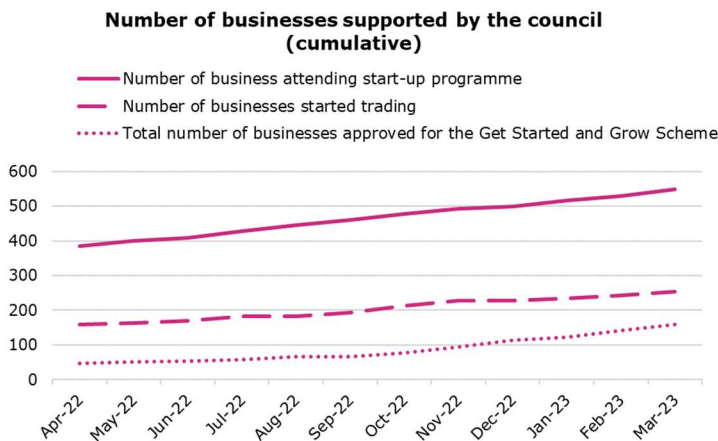
Employment



As of March 2023, there were 15,715 claimants in Staffordshire; an increase of 1,075 claimants compared with the figures reported in Quarter 3 (December 2022). These increases are in part due to continued seasonal effects and jobs created over the festive period ending, but this will continue to be monitored. Staffordshire Moorlands records the lowest rate (2.1%), and Tamworth records the highest at 3.7%, which is still just below the national position (3.8%).

Source: Office for National Statistics

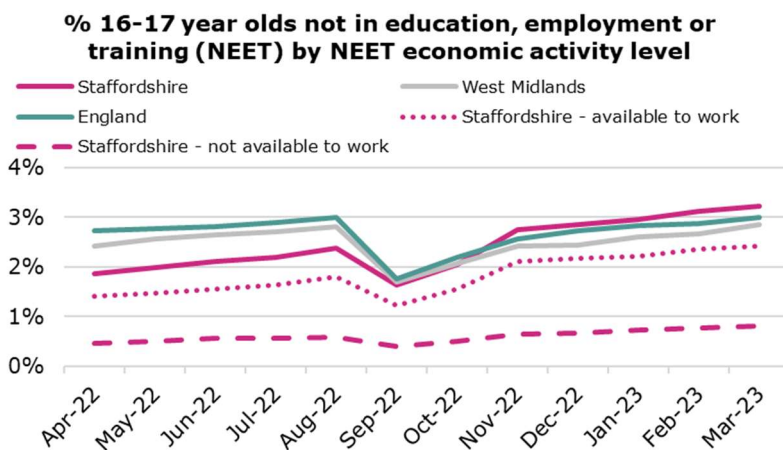
Business Support



The top two sectors for businesses attending the start-up programme continue to be 'Retail' and 'Services'. The 'Get Started' scheme expanded in Quarter 3 to include 'Step up' support for businesses aged 2-5 years.

Source: SCC

Skills

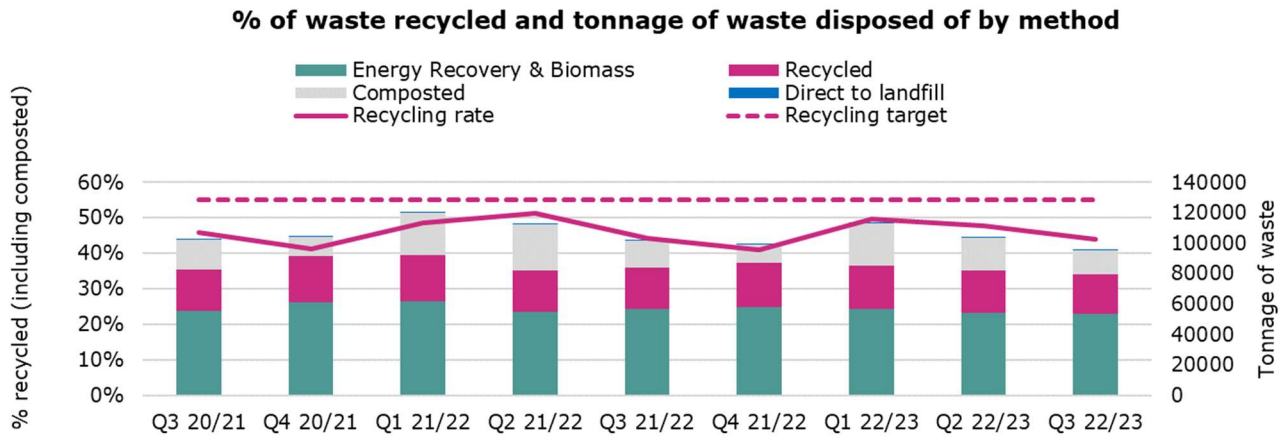


It is usual for there to be an increase in NEETs from September as young people leave school on 31 August and are then tracked. The local recent increase is partly due to the number of pupils not returning in Year 13 and an increase in work-based learning opportunities. To improve this measure, Entrust Skills and Employability are tracking young people who are NEET and working to re-engage them. This will continue to be monitored.

Source: National Client Caseload Information System

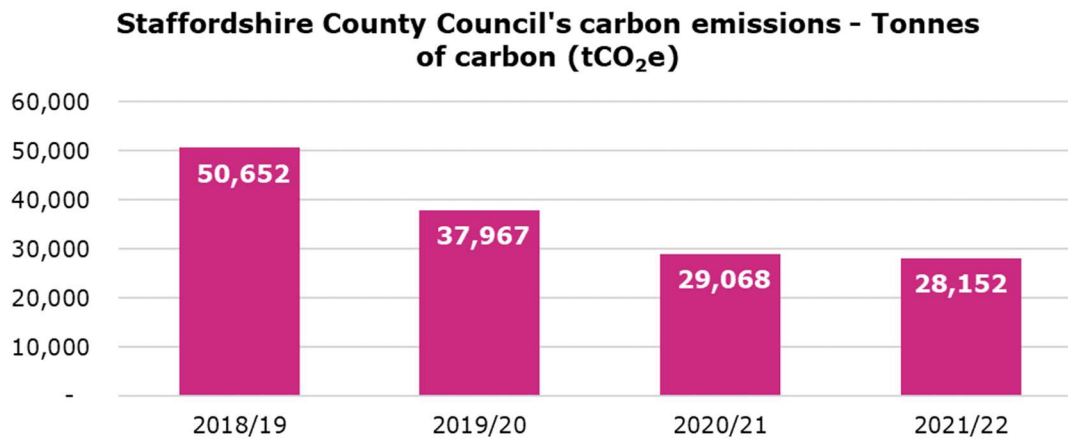
Economy, Infrastructure & Skills Dashboard

Climate Change and Waste



Staffordshire continues to send minimal waste directly to landfill.

Source: SCC



There was a slight reduction in carbon emissions in 2021/22, with work taking place to think more innovatively about how the council continues to reduce this. There has been a 44% reduction since declaring the climate change emergency.

Source: SCC

Corporate Services Dashboard

Finance

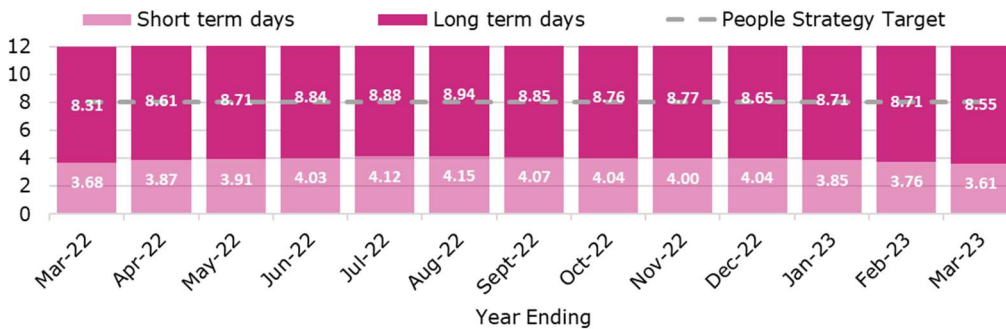
Revenue outturn forecast variance compared to the overall budget (target no more than +/- 2%)

Quarter 1, 22/23	Quarter 2, 22/23	Quarter 3, 22/23	Outturn, 22/23
0.61% (£4m overspend)	1.1% (£6.408m overspend)	1.97% (£11.635m overspend)	1.85% (£11.294m overspend)

A 1.85% overspend for the year is acceptable as it is within the council's Financial Health target of 2% variation on revenue budgets.

Staff Sickness Absence

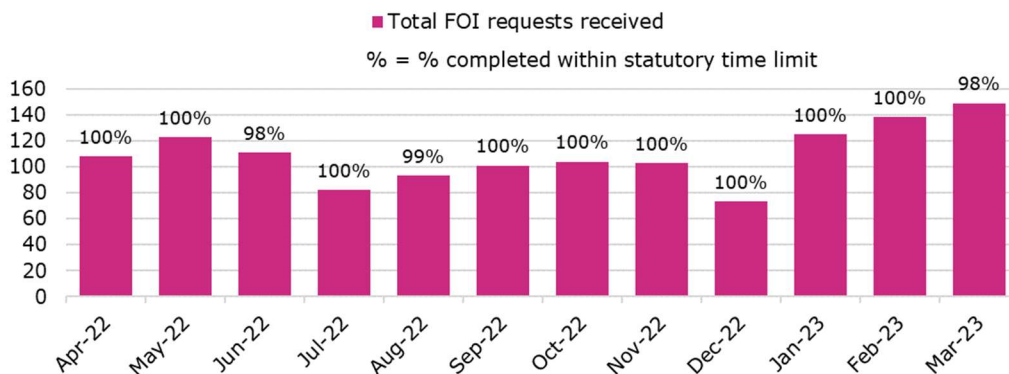
Average payroll days lost per employee



There is a continued focus on staff absence levels to help teams improve their days lost to sickness, including working with those service areas experiencing the highest absence levels and promoting best practice absence management.

Freedom of Information

Number of FOI requests and % completed within statutory time limit



Latest Financial Summary

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

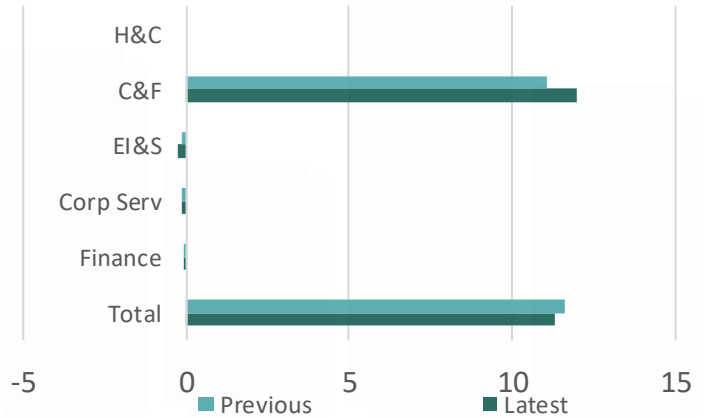
The graphs and charts are compiled using final outturn information.

This report presents the final position for both revenue and capital budgets at the end of the 2022/23 financial year. The final revenue position is an overspend of £11.294m across portfolio budgets (1.85%). This is within our Financial Health target of 2% variation on revenue budgets. The quarter 3 forecast was a overspend of £11.6m.

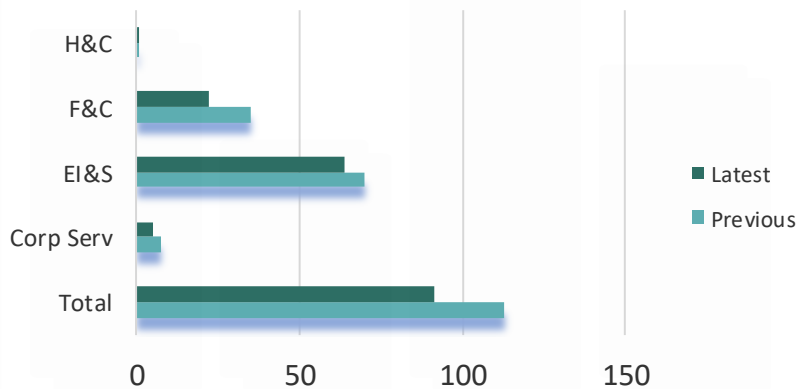
The capital outturn is £91.2m which represents continued investment in schools, highways and economic regeneration. The capital programme has been fully funded.

The County Council's financial situation can be set against a national backdrop of the retail price index being 13.5%, and the latest consumer price index is 8.9%. The Bank of England's interest base rate is 4.5% - the highest in almost 15 years. GDP is estimated to have decreased by 0.3% in the quarter to March 2023, after showing no growth in February.

Revenue Budget Variance



Capital Programme



Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

Report of the Director of Finance

County Council Financial Outturn

66. This report presents the final position for both revenue and capital budgets at the end of the 2022/23 financial year.
67. The final outturn position is an overspend of £11.294m. The quarter 3 forecast was an overspend of £11.635m.
68. This final outturn position reflects pressures reported during the year relating to inflation and increasing demand in Children’s Services. It also reflects the previously reported position relating to contributing to reserves to fund pressures and risks arising in future years. The Contingency budget has been fully spent this year, with amounts allocated to Children’s Services and to fund the pay award.
69. The capital programme shows total expenditure of £91.224m. This reflects our continued investment in school places, highways, and economic regeneration.
70. A detailed breakdown of the revenue position can be found in **Appendix 5** with the capital position shown in **Appendix 6**.
71. The following paragraphs contain a key financial summary of how each of the portfolio areas have performed during the year.
- 72. Health & Care** **£26,000 saving**
73. *Public Health & Prevention* *Breakeven*
74. Adults Public Health service has underspent by £2.181m which has been transferred to the Public Health reserve at the financial year end. Some of this funding is earmarked for projects in the new financial year including sexual health expansion project, oral health, detox programme and for the adults’ social worker pilot. The remainder will contribute to contingency against the risks that the Public Health ring fenced grant is reduced in future years.
75. The Sexual Health budgets have underspent by £0.452m. The main reasons for this position are a slight underspend on contracts of £80,000 along with a reduction in activity which has been lower than expected, particularly on out of area contracts.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

76. A project working with GPs on expanding sexual health programmes has been delayed, results in an additional underspend of £0.107m and this work is planned for delivery in the new financial year.
77. Healthy Communities budgets have underspent by £0.543m. There is an underspend of £73,000 against the core contract along with a reduction in Payment by Results contracts of £0.471m as the anticipated outcomes from the programme have not been delivered, resulting in a reduction in costs.
78. Funding of £0.189m was received late in the financial year for the adult's social worker pilot. Given the timing of the allocation, this has not been spent in year and expenditure has been planned for 2023/24.
79. There was a contingency budget of £0.749m held in Public Health, of which £0.193m was utilised for Supportive Communities expenditure, leaving a balance of £0.553m which has not been required.
80. There were also miscellaneous underspends of £0.137m across the services.
81. *Adult Social Care & Safeguarding* *Breakeven*
82. There were vacancies in the Adults Learning Disability Team (ALDT) throughout the year which led to a saving of £0.9m. The vacancies will be filled next year to ensure adequate capacity to complete assessments and reviews in a timely way.
83. Savings from staffing vacancies, and general expenditure budgets across Adult Social Work & Safeguarding, First Contact and Adults Social Care have resulted in savings of £1.256m. There was a £1.531m overspend for the Section 75 Agreement with the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT). This was due to the 2022/23 NHS pay award being higher than budgeted and some unbudgeted agency costs being incurred. The outturn is higher than previously forecast due to a further NHS pay deal being offered to NHS staff at the end of March in an attempt to settle the on going pay dispute. Other variances amount to a saving of £0.541m.
84. *In-House Provider Services*
85. Learning Disability In-House provider services ended the year underspent by £0.462. This is largely due to vacancies being held in the residential services during the restructure, savings made in the Complex Needs Service and savings on the training budget. In addition, there was a saving of £1.532m against the budget for the new Independence At Home (IAH) Service as this

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

only became operational in the final quarter of the year and it will take time for it to build up to full capacity. The balance has been allocated to reserves.

86. The saving position for In-House Provider Services has improved from a forecast of £1.656m at quarter 3 to an actual saving of £1.994m, an increase of £0.338m. In the quarter 3 report it was proposed that £3.405m would be contributed to reserves to mitigate pressures as set out below.
87. *Care Commissioning* *£26,000 saving*
88. The final outturn for the Older People's placement budget is a saving of £9.638m compared to the forecast of £6.096m reported at quarter 4. The improvement from the quarter 4 position has arisen mainly from additional client income. Contributions have increased by £3.575m mainly from nursing care and domiciliary care services.
89. The number of residential and nursing placements have increased throughout the year, however demand has been managed effectively and the rate of increase of placements has been maintained below the demand resulting from the growing older population. This has been offset to some degree by continuing price pressures, which have been exacerbated by the Government's Fair Cost of Care exercise. The saving target for Block Booked Beds was not delivered in full. However, additional block booked beds are being commissioned and existing capacity is monitored carefully to ensure effective utilisation. These factors have resulted in a final underspend on residential and nursing placements of £1.692m. Additional funding was built into the 2022/23 budget for home care for Older People, recognising the changing demography. Challenges with recruitment and retention have limited the rate at which providers can increase capacity, although this picked up in the second half of the year with a significant increase in home care volumes and a concomitant decrease in the number of people waiting for home care. This has resulted in a final underspend on home care of £3.697m, a slight improvement from the £3.590m previously reported. All other Older People's savings have been delivered in full.
90. The final position on Older People's client income is an over achievement against budget of £4.606m. This is an increase of £3.576m compared to the position at quarter 4. In particular, we have seen a significant increase in income from nursing placements in addition to increased client contributions from home care. Income levels for other services remained broadly in line with quarter 4.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

91. Other variances in the Older People budget resulted in an overspend of £0.357m.
92. The final outturn for the Physical Disabilities budget is a saving of £0.745m. This is an improvement from the £0.245m overspend reported at quarter 4. The main reason for this change is a lower number of service users in residential and nursing placements than planned, resulting in £0.907m reduction in costs. The final saving against Physical Disabilities residential and nursing placements budgets is £0.856m.
93. Other variances in the Physical Disabilities budget result in an overspend of £0.111m.
94. The Learning Disability placement budget has overspent by £0.611m. Residential and Supported Living placement costs rose during the year due to an increase in referrals which led to overspends against these budgets and there was also a growth in the cost of Direct Payments. These pressures were partially offset by additional health income and savings in Homecare, Day Opportunities and Replacement Care services. The Council reached a cost sharing agreement with NHS partners in respect of the placement costs of people discharged as part of the Transforming Care Partnership (TCP) which resulted in savings. The Learning Disability MTFs savings were also delivered in full.
95. The Mental Health budget was underspent by £0.1m with a small underspend on both the contracts and the placements budgets. This is better than forecast earlier in the year when overspends were reported. The improvement is largely due to additional NHS income in the final quarter of the year. There has however been growth in nursing and residential placements as well as an increase in the number of people benefitting from receiving a direct payment during the year. The placement budget was increased in recognition of the growth in placement costs during the last two years but there remains a risk of further increases in referrals following the Covid pandemic.
96. The Carers budget has underspent by £0.463m, the Advocacy budget by £0.188m and the Prisoners budget by £0.255m. Variances for these services have been forecast during the year and are due to lower activity than budgeted. There is a small overspend of £12,000 due to some additional temporary commissioning costs which is slightly less than previously forecast.
97. Other variances amount to a saving of £1.633m.
98. In previous reports a strategy of ensuring sufficient sums are contained in earmarked reserves to address pressures over the MTFs period has been

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

reported. These pressures are arising from activities involved in managing the care market, the significant impact of inflation on service delivery and demand led pressures in adults services. It was agreed to make suitable provision to reserves depending on the final outturn position. Sums have been transferred from Care Commissioning to reserves as follows –

- £5m has been added to the Corporate Inflation Reserve as a result of inflation and the Covid pandemic significantly increasing care providers cost which are reflected in the prices offered to the council.
- £19.173m will be added to the Health & Care Risk Reserve to mitigate the financial risk posed by the Adults Social Care Reforms and pressures associated with the care market including any pressures relating to the fee review exercise to determine 2023/24 fee rates. Although the funding reforms have been delayed until October 2023, adults social care assurance will produce additional costs not factored into the MTFs and the 'fair cost of care' policy is already exacerbating the increase in care providers' costs. Note that this was made possible in part by the use of Contain Outbreak Management Fund grant funding in line with conditions to fund a proportion of the 2022/23 fee uplift, recognising that the Council awarded a higher than usual uplift to support care providers with Covid related costs. The provision of reserves to lessen the risk around Adult Social Care Reforms is a short, non-recurrent measure and does not address the underlying and on-going impact. The Council, along with other stakeholders, will continue to lobby the Government to request that the reforms are fully funded.

99. *Covid Funding*

100. There has been £19.169m of Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) brought forward to 2022/23 and £9.465m has been spent in year resulting in a carry forward to 2023/24 (in line with grant conditions and guidance from UKHSA) of £9.704m. The quarter 4 COMF return has been submitted, setting out the planned spend for 2023/24 of £5.802m for purposes of Covid control and Covid recovery, including mitigating the impact of Covid on health and health inequalities in Staffordshire's population and highlighting that £3.902m will remain unspent at the end of the year. There is a risk that this will be clawed back at that time as it is not clear from recent guidance whether carry forward to future years will be permissible.

101. *Better Care Fund 2022/23*

102. Following discussions in February's Joint Commissioning Board (JCB), an amendment was made to the 2022/23 BCF plan to include an additional

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£11.6m of non-recurrent funding to improve and sustain health and social care services in Staffordshire.

103. This amendment was in line with permissions in the BCF guidance and was agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) chairs in line with their delegated approval, ICBs, SCC and West Midlands BCF manager. Subsequently, a further £0.5m of funding was identified by the ICB to contribute to the schemes listed in the table below, resulting in a total transfer value of £12.1m.

Expenditure by Service	£m
Home First Reablement	6.0
Home First growth / Additional Activity	1.9
Additional Beds to support closures due to Covid	2.6
Care Home Beds to support Discharge to Assess	1.6
Total	12.1

104. The council and the ICB are required to complete an end of year template to report on progress made in 2022/23 across the BCF schemes and the required metrics. The Adult Social Care Discharge Fund end of year information is required by 23rd May.
105. *Better Care Fund 2023/25*
106. The 2023/25 BCF Policy Framework and accompanying guidance was issued on 5th April 2023. This requires the submission of BCF plans by 28th June 2023, to include a narrative plan and an expenditure template, capacity and demand, as well as ambitions and delivery plans for BCF metrics, signed off by the HWB. Plans are expected to be assured by 8th September 2023.
107. Work has commenced on drafting the BCF plans for submission, the working assumption is that all existing BCF schemes will continue with relevant inflationary uplifts.
108. The March Health and Wellbeing board (HWB) have delegated authority to the HWB chairs to approve all plans. Cabinet approved on the 19th April for the Director of Health and Care to enter into a legal agreement under Section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 in order to implement the 2023/25 BCF plans once drafted and approved by the Council and the ICB. The ICB will require the Section 75 to be agreed through the ICB governance.

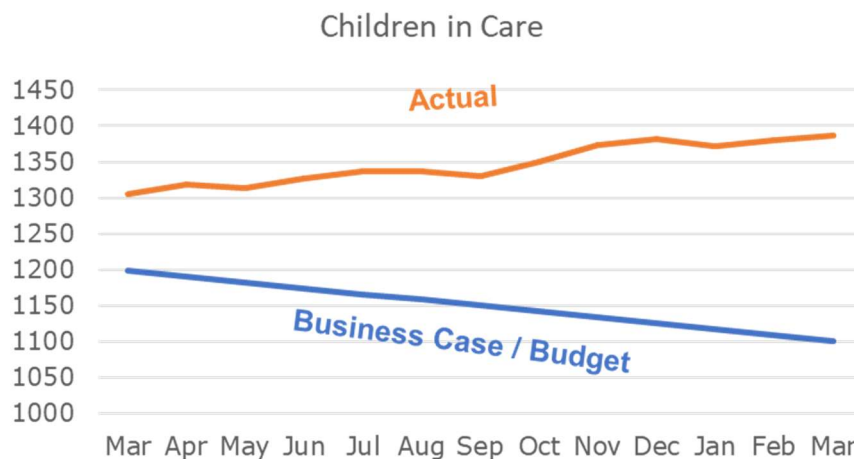
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109. Families & Communities **£11.948 overspend**

110. *Children’s Services* *£12.880m overspend*

111. The final outturn for Children’s Services is an overspend of £12.9m, which is £1m higher than previously forecast due to additional one off costs now prudently brought in for historic legal costs currently working through the court system.

112. The number of Children in Care (CiC) has increased from the start of the year, and, at the end of March stands at 1,387 (including 109 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), that has more than doubled in the last 6 months). This is significantly removed from the approved business case and underlying assumptions that make up the existing budget and MTFS.



113. The service continues to deliver on the transformation programme and to embed the new structure across our services. However progress has been hindered by continuing recruitment and retention problems. This has caused not only an over reliance on more expensive agency support for essential service delivery (leading to a forecast overspend of £2.9m across the District structure) but also some inconsistency of support and capacity. Proposals have been worked up to address these concerns and have been approved as part of the MTFS going forward.

114. There are mitigating savings of £0.2m due to additional UASC grant but also allowing for an anticipated increase in the required provision for bad debts of £0.5m and additional historic legal costs of £1m, there is an underlying overspend of £19.9m for Childrens Services.

115. As previously reported, an allocation of £6m has been provided from the Corporate Contingency budget and a further £1m earmarked from other one

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

off corporate resources towards the rising costs of inflation, reducing the overspend to £12.9m

116. *Children's Public Health* *Breakeven*

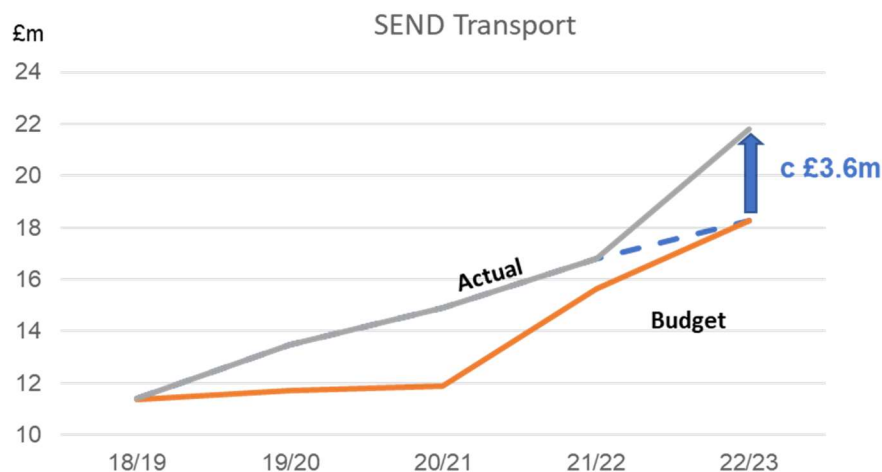
117. There is a saving of £0.164m for the service, as a ringfenced grant this balance has been transferred to reserves to be used for Public Health related services going forward.

118. This saving is mainly due to reduction in costs associated with smoking in pregnancy service and a reduction in demand, a saving on the 0-19 children's contract with MPFT and a saving against the breastfeeding service due to initial operational delays.

119. *Education Services* *£0.151m saving*

120. Education Services has a saving of £0.151m, which is no change from the position previously reported.

121. The most significant budget pressure within the service is SEND transport which is £3.6m overspent as a result of increasing demand due to the rise in Education and Health Care Plan's (EHCPs). This has been exacerbated by unprecedented rises in inflation, in particular fuel.



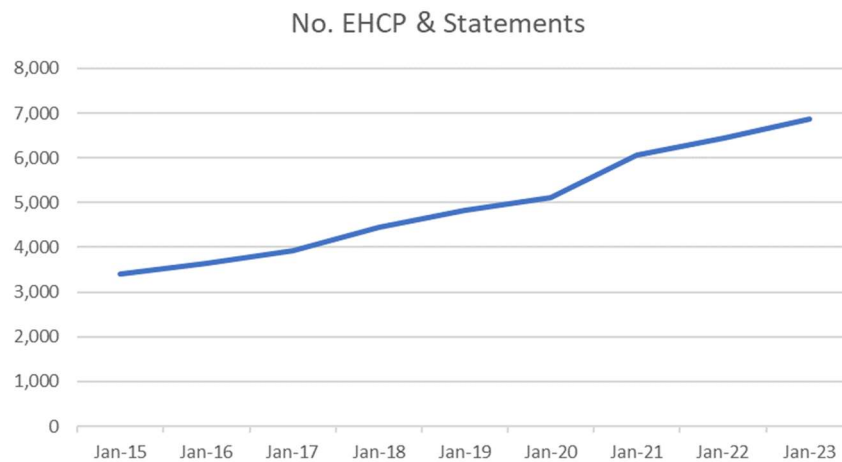
122. This pressure has been mitigated this year through other one-off contributions from Corporate Contingency and reserves, however there is a risk that, while significant additional resource has been provided in the MTFs for 2023/24, that continuing rises in demand and on going inflationary pressures could lead to further pressures going forward. A review of SEND transport is being implemented to identify any actions that may be taken to mitigate the existing demand and costs as far as possible.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

123. There are other small savings across the service, mainly historic teacher pension contributions, that lead to the overall saving of £0.1m.

124. *SEND High Needs Block* *£8.2m overspend*

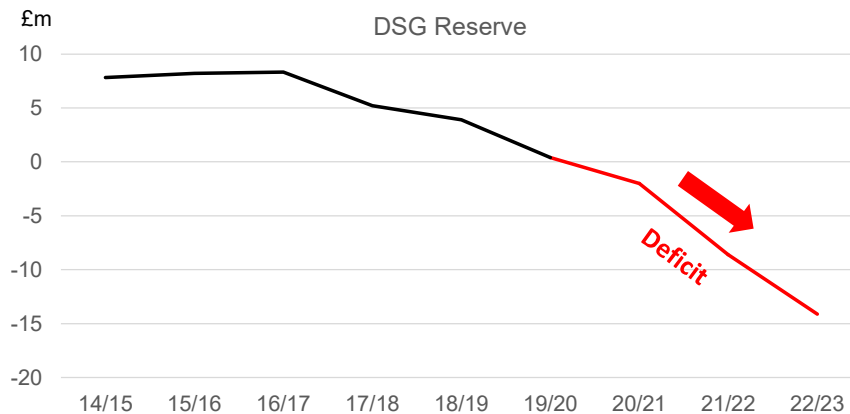
125. The High Needs Block is overspent by £9.1m and reflects continuing growing demand for SEND support. This is impacting across all areas but especially the Independent sector with numbers now double what they were just three years ago – and given the more expensive placement costs, this is by some way the largest budget pressure for the High Needs Block.



126. Staffordshire County Council is not alone in this difficult financial predicament, it is a position shared by the majority of Councils across the sector. The Government has put in place a 'statutory override' requiring that accumulated DSG deficits should remain ringfenced separate to the Councils other reserves and that this has been extended through to the end of 2025/26.

127. Accordingly, this overspend will be charged against the DSG reserve which at the end of 2021/22 was already £8.6m in deficit. Given the overspend in 2022/23, this deficit has increased to £14.2m after allowing for other transfers from the Early Years Block, Central Block and most significantly surplus growth fund contributions as approved by the school's forum. This is consistent with the forecast DSG deficit previously reported which concludes that the deficit could reach circa £80m by 2026/27.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn



128. *Wellbeing & Partnerships* **£0.768m saving**

129. The service has an outturn saving position of £0.8m. This is in line with the position previously reports and largely reflects the fact that existing staff were utilised to respond and administer the government funded Afghan resettlement 'Bridging Accommodation' programme and there are covered in the staffing budget.

130. There are also other small savings across the service totalling £0.1m as a result of one off staff vacancies and associated service running costs, most significantly within the Early Years service.

131. **Economy, Infrastructure & Skills** **£0.252m saving**

132. *Business & Enterprise* **£0.141m saving**

133. The outturn for the service is a saving of £0.141m, broadly in line with the forecasts at quarter 3 and 4. This includes a provision of £0.2m for future work around strategic corridors in the next few years. The main reason for this underspend is a slippage on Enterprise Centres projects and a saving on County Farms from temporary staff vacancies.

134. *Infrastructure & Highways* **£48,000 overspend**

135. The final position for the services is a small overspend, although there are various overspends and savings across the budget area. This is similar to the position reported at quarter 3 and 4.

136. A £0.2m saving on vacancies in the Community Infrastructure area is offset by an income budget pressure in the Highways Lab, pressure on the land charges budget within Sustainable Development and an increase of £50,000 to the bad debt provision in the Infrastructure & Highways area.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

137. The outturn position includes transferring the underspend of highways transformation monies into reserves to use on priority work in the early part of 2023/24. It also includes transferring the £0.7m balance from the additional revenue inflation allocation into 2023/24 to protect against further inflationary pressures that are expected in future years, as the situation around inflation and material supplies remains challenging.
138. *Transport, Connectivity & Waste* *£10,000 saving*
139. The outturn for Transport and Connectivity area is an overspend of £0.218m, this is a similar position reported at quarter 3 and 4.
140. This position includes making a provision of £0.720m in the Concessionary Fares budget to mitigate expected risks in this area in 2023/24. In October, we changed our payments to actual patronage levels rather than pre-pandemic. This was following Department for Transport (DfT) guidance, but future government directives could change again and the impact of the DfT toolkit remains unclear. It is also likely that any underspends due to this would need to be ring fenced to be used to support the bus network in future years.
141. In other budget areas within Transport, the effect of inflationary pressures of circa £600k (along with the rising fuel costs) has been felt. Terminated contracts that have had to be renewed at short notice are coming in at much higher costs which is contributing to the overall overspend position. These pressures will be monitored closely to understand the impact in future years.
142. The Sustainability and Waste area has finished the financial year with a saving of £0.228m. This includes the delivery of the £0.6m MTFs saving for Green Waste recycling credits.
143. There is a small overspend within the Woodfuels budget area. This business unit has been impacted by increased delivery costs due to the diesel price increase and an increase in raw material costs due to global availability of resources impacted by the raw in Ukraine.
144. The saving against the Waste budgets at the outturn is largely due to strong commercial management of available waste capacity and HWRC material off-takers. This is offset by a £1.025m provision for Hanford re-procurement costs expected in 2023/24 as well as a provision towards the required Waste to Resources (W2R) plant cost which is in response to changes in emissions legislations.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

145. *Skills* *£0.113m saving*
146. The service has a saving of £0.113m which is similar to the position reported at quarter 4. The main reasons for this saving are staff costs being recovered from projects such as Multiply, Staffordshire Means Back to Business and SEND Internships
147. *Culture, Rural & Safer Communities* *£0.136m saving*
148. The service has a saving of £0.136m which is a slightly improved position from that reported at quarter 4.
149. There is a saving of £78,000 for Culture & Communities due to savings in staffing structures and savings against the resources budget offset by the under-recovery of income post Covid. This position includes a £0.3m provision in the Libraries area for future refurbishment works and additional door counters that are required in 2023/24.
150. The Rural service has an overspend of £49,000 due to one-off tribunal and legal costs, post structure set up costs and an underachievement of income, offset slightly by staffing savings.
151. The Safer Communities service has a saving of £0.107m due to an agreed reduction in charges with Stoke-on-Trent City Council in the Coroners area.
152. *EI&S Business Support* *£0.1m overspend*
153. The service has an overspend of £0.1m which is broadly in line with the position reported at quarter 4. This overspend is due to an increase in the bad debts provision.
- 154. Corporate Services** **£0.128m saving**
155. The final outturn for the service is a small saving of £0.128m. This is similar to the quarter 4 forecast position of £0.117m.
156. There are a number of savings due to vacancies across Corporate Services along with additional income in Registrars due to the higher number of weddings that have been booked after all Covid restrictions were lifted. These have been offset by making provision for known commitments in 2023/24 around the Corporate File Plan and the Annual Leave Purchase Scheme. This also allows investment into the Business Support and wider Corporate Service areas.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

157. The outturn position includes the delivery of the £0.460m Property Rationalisation MTFS saving and an increase of £0.3m to the bad debt provision.
158. **Finance** **£38,000 saving**
159. Finance has moved out of Corporate Services and is its own stand-alone directorate. This directorate includes Corporate Finance, Decision Making Support, Accounting Services, Treasury and Pensions, Audit, and Adults and Children's Financial Services.
160. Finance has finished the 2022/23 financial year with a small underspend of £38,000. This includes one-off additional income of £0.1m for staff recharges to capital projects as well as small savings on salary budgets due to in year vacancies. The outturn position includes a provision for known commitments on the Adults and Childrens Financial Services Transformation programme.
161. **Centrally Controlled Items** **£0.210m saving**
162. Capital Financing £30,000 saving
163. As interest rates have risen during the year, this led to increased income from investments which were not included when the budget was set in February 2022. This additional income has been retained in reserves in order to fund investments in services in 2023/24 and future years.
164. Pooled Buildings and Insurances £0.412m Overspend
165. The outturn for Pooled Buildings is £0.412m overspent. This overspend was forecast and is a result of the increasing gas and energy prices that have continued to rise as a result of global events. The position on gas is £0.240m overspent which is lower than forecast previously largely because of a change in usage over the winter months. There is also a £0.710m overspend on the electricity budget offset by using £0.450m of remaining contingency budget in 2022/23, as prices continue to rise in this area. Finance are working closely with the service to forecast what might happen with energy prices in 2023/24 and future years, as they continue to be volatile.
166. The outturn for Landlords Repairs and Maintenance is break-even. This includes a provision of £0.850m for scheduled work that has slipped into 2023/24 as schemes funded from remaining Covid grants were prioritised.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

167. Nexus

168. Recruitment and retention problems have continued, affecting the ability to deliver the full volume contracted services which has impacted profitability, this has impacted particularly on delivery of reablement. This has also led to a reliance on agency staff which has increased the costs of the service. Steps are being taken to improve the profitability of Nexus in 2023/24 including delivery of new extra care and learning disability services.

169. Capital Outturn

170. Appendix 6 compares the final outturn for capital expenditure (£91.2m) to the forecast position at quarter 4 (£112.2m). In addition, the appendix also details how the Capital Programme has been financed. This includes the use of £18.4m of borrowing for 2022/23.

171. The key reasons for the change in the Capital Programme are set out in the following paragraphs:

172. Health & Care **Spend £42,000**

173. The final position is spend of £42,000, a reduction of £0.345m. This is mainly due to the Hawthorn House scheme being amended and reprofiled to minimise disruption to residents.

174. Families & Communities **Spend £22.107m**

175. *Vulnerable Children* *Spend £0.803m*

176. There has been an increase of £27,000 since the previous report. This is due to a slight increase in costs of In-House Residential Pilot scheme and In House Children's Home.

177. *Maintained Schools* *Spend £21.263m*

178. There has been a decrease of £9.2m for Schools Build and Expansion works mainly due to the rephasing of £5m unallocated basic needs funding into 2023/24 and beyond. There has also been slippage on a number of those approved programmes, most significantly – St. Leonards Primary School of £1m, Dean Slade of £0.6m, Henhurst Ridge of £0.5m, Scientia Reach 2 of £0.3m and Netherstowe High of £0.2m.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

179. There has been a decrease of £3.9m on Schools Maintenance and Conditions and special programmes, mainly due to rephasing £2.9m of unallocated funding into 2023/24. There has also been slippage across a number of projects including £0.1m for each of Five Ways Primary, Tillington Manor Primary, Tower View Primary, Blythe Bridge Primary and West Hill Primary.

180. Economy, Infrastructure & Skills **Spend £64.098m**

181. *Highways Schemes* *Spend £59.643m*

182. There has been a reduction of £4.382m since the quarter 4 report. This reduction is due to rephasing the budget for SWAR into 2023/24 totalling £0.751m, slippage of £1.8m on Carriageways investments, and Minor Carriageways slippage of £2.7m. There have been other movements for Traffic Signals, Integrated Transport and movements in budget for inflationary pressures.

183. *Economic Planning & Future Prosperity* *Spend £3.208m*

184. There has been a decrease of £0.751m since the previous report. This is due to rephasing and slippage on a number of projects including Kingswood Lakes Adoption, Forward Programme, Bericote, i54 Employment Site, i54 Western Extension, Chatterley Valley, Eastgate Regeneration and Newcastle Enterprise Centres. There has been a slight increase in costs on the A50 project, Tamworth Enterprise Quarter and Redhill.

185. Corporate Services **Spend £4.978m**

186. *Finance, Resources & ICT* *Spend £0.542m*

187. There has been an increase of £0.397m since the quarter 4 report. This is due to accelerated spend opportunities within Printer MFD and Data Centre Network refresh projects as well as PSN Core Switch replacement project, slightly offset by rephasing of Firewall appliances to 2023/24.

188. *Property* *Spend £3.784m*

189. There has been a reduction of £2.928m since the quarter 4 report. This is due to slippage into 2023/24 for the work ongoing on the refurbishment of Tamworth Library and the Shire Hall and the demolition of the Kingston Centre and Seabridge.

190. There have been some small increase in costs for the Outwards new scheme and Greenwood House.

Appendix 3 – County Council Financial Outturn

191. Financial Health & Prudential Indicators

192. **Appendix 7** sets out the final position against each of the approved Financial Health Indicators whilst **Appendix 8** sets out the final statutory Prudential Indicators.
193. **Appendix 7** provides an outturn performance against the key Financial Health Indicators approved as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process.
194. The level of outstanding sundry debt over 6 months old at 31st March 2023 is £19.047m, this exceeds the target of £14.7m by £4.347m. This is a decrease of £0.368m since quarter 3. The debt recovery process involves chasing by a range of methods with the eventual escalation to the external collection agent or to Legal for the possibility of a court decision to recover the debt.
195. There are 12 organisations which each owe in excess of £0.1m that is over 6 months old, totalling £3.078m. The top ten largest debtors are five Local Authorities (£1.458m), three commercial organisations (£0.945m) a central government department (£0.224m) and an Academy School (£0.181m). In addition to these 12 bodies there are a further 53 who have outstanding balances over 6 months old between £50,000 and £0.1m totalling £3.532m. The Debt Recovery team are proactively chasing payment of these large debts.

Debtor Type	2022/23 Target	31/12/2022	31/03/2023	Increase / (Decrease)
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Health Bodies & CCGs	3.900	1.936	0.341	(1.595)
Other Govt. and Public Bodies	2.000	2.220	2.289	0.069
Other General Debtors (Individuals & Commercial)	4.700	4.687	5.018	0.331
Health & Care Client Debt	4.100	10.572	11.399	0.827
TOTAL	14.700	19.415	19.047	(0.368)

Prudential Indicators

196. Appendix 8 provides the outturn performance against the Prudential Indicators approved as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process.
197. The County Council operated within the limits and Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management as set out in the County Council's Treasury Management practices. Further detail will be included within the Treasury Management Outturn report and the Prudential Indicators for 2023/24 will be monitored and reported at each quarterly monitoring report.

Appendix 4 – Corporate Checklist

Equalities implications:

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

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Resource and Value for money implications:

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

Risk implications:

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

Climate Change implications:

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

Health Impact Assessment and Community Impact Assessment screening:

Not required for this report.

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2022/23 Final Outturn

	Final	Final	Final
	Estimate	Outturn	Variation
	£m	£m	£m
Health and Care			
Public Health & Prevention	31.353	31.353	0.000
Public Health Ringfenced Grant	(31.090)	(31.090)	0.000
Adult Social Care & Safeguarding	40.410	40.410	0.000
Care Commissioning	217.593	217.567	(0.026)
Sub-total	258.266	258.240	(0.026)
Families and Communities			
Children's Services	119.405	132.285	12.880
Children's Public Health	10.151	10.151	0.000
Public Health Ringfenced Grant	(10.151)	(10.151)	0.000
Education Services	34.076	33.925	(0.151)
Wellbeing & Partnerships	7.814	7.046	(0.768)
Schools	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sub-total	161.295	173.256	11.961
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills			
Business & Enterprise	2.276	2.135	(0.141)
Infrastructure & Highways	33.411	33.459	0.048
Transport, Connectivity & Waste	43.053	43.043	(0.010)
Skills	2.686	2.573	(0.113)
Culture, Rural & Communities	12.494	12.358	(0.136)
El&S Business Support	1.143	1.243	0.100
Sub-total	95.063	94.811	(0.252)
Corporate Services	35.206	35.078	(0.128)
Finance	9.652	9.614	(0.038)
Trading Services	(0.955)	(0.955)	0.000
Total Portfolio Budgets	558.527	570.044	11.517
Centrally Controlled Items			
Interest on Balances & Debt Charges	32.980	32.937	(0.043)
Pooled Buildings and Insurances	17.167	16.987	(0.180)
Investment Fund	1.164	1.164	0.000
Contingency	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total Centrally Controlled	51.311	51.088	(0.223)
Grand Total	609.838	621.132	11.294

Final Capital Programme 2022/23

	Quarter 4 Forecast £m	Enhancements to Programme £m	Final Outturn £m
Health & Care			
Care and Independence	0.387	(0.345)	0.042
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>0.387</i>	<i>(0.345)</i>	<i>0.042</i>
Families & Communities			
Maintained Schools	34.474	(13.211)	21.263
Other non Schools	0.000	0.041	0.041
Vulnerable Children's Projects	0.776	0.027	0.803
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>35.250</i>	<i>(13.143)</i>	<i>22.107</i>
Economy, Infrastructure & Skills			
Economic Planning & Future Prosperity	3.959	(0.751)	3.208
Highways Schemes	64.025	(4.382)	59.643
Connectivity	0.279	(0.086)	0.193
Tourism & Rural County	0.769	(0.401)	0.368
Rural County	0.103	0.019	0.122
Waste & Sustainability Projects	0.568	(0.004)	0.564
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>69.703</i>	<i>(5.605)</i>	<i>64.098</i>
<i>Trading Services - County Fleet Care</i>	<i>0.579</i>	<i>0.072</i>	<i>0.651</i>
<i>Property</i>	<i>6.712</i>	<i>(3.265)</i>	<i>3.447</i>
<i>Finance, Resources & ICT</i>	<i>0.145</i>	<i>0.397</i>	<i>0.542</i>
Total Capital Programme	112.776	(21.889)	90.887
Asset Renewal			0.337
Capitalised Repairs and Maintenance			
Transformational spend			
Amount to be Financed after Capitalisation			91.224
Financed by:			
Borrowing			18.363
Government Grants			44.257
Capital Receipts			2.805
Revenue Contributions			2.143
S.106/ Voluntary contributions			23.656
			91.224

Financial Health Indicators

		Current Performance
<p>Level of General Reserves (annual indicator) Well managed organisations operate with an adequate level of general reserves taking into account the risks they face. We determine the actual level of reserves we require annually through a risk based approach. However, it is prudent to aim to hold a minimum level of general reserves.</p>		
<i>General reserves are maintained at a level of at least 2% of the council's current net revenue budget (Outturn – 8.6%, above target).</i>		
<p>Aged Debt (quarterly indicator) Organisations need to ensure that money owed to them is collected in a timely manner. This indicator shows how well we are managing to collect money owed to us.</p>		
<i>Level of outstanding general debtors more than 6 months old does not exceed £14.7m (Outturn – £19.0m, above target).</i>		
<p>Working Capital (annual indicator) It is essential that working capital is well managed. This indicator shows how well our debtors and creditors are being managed.</p>		
<i>Current debtors divided by current creditors should be in the acceptable range of 1 – 3 (Outturn 1.05, within target).</i>		
<p>Payments to suppliers (quarterly indicator) By paying suppliers quickly we are supporting the Staffordshire economy. It also means businesses are more likely to want to do business with us and offer us competitive rates which will improve our financial health in the medium term.</p>		
<i>At least 90% of invoices have been paid within 30 days of us receiving them during the last quarter (Outturn – 97.4%, on target).</i>		
<p>Financial Monitoring (quarterly indicator) Effective financial monitoring is essential in any organisation. Monitoring provides organisations with early information of potential issues enabling them to take corrective action to avoid future financial difficulties.</p>		
<i>Quarterly financial monitoring reports have been issued to Cabinet during the last 12 months</i>		
<i>The council's most recent revenue outturn forecast did not vary by more than +/-2% when compared to the overall revenue budget</i>		
<p>Financial Reporting (annual indicator) Preparing timely and accurate accounts is vital to demonstrate to interested parties that we have sound financial controls. They also provide detailed information which shows our overall financial health.</p>		
<i>The council's most recent Statement of Accounts were produced on time although the audit is not yet completed.</i>		
 Indicator not met	 Indicator not met by small margin	 Indicator met

Prudential Indicators 2022/23

Indicator	Estimate 2022/23	Outturn 2022/23
	£m	£m
External Debt – Authorised Limit for borrowing	662	459
External Debt – Authorised Limit for other liabilities	258	226
<i>Total</i>	<i>920</i>	<i>685</i>
External Debt – Operational Boundary for borrowing	515	459
External Debt – Operational Boundary for other liabilities	258	226
<i>Total</i>	<i>773</i>	<i>685</i>
External Debt - Loans	721.6	459
Interest Rate Exposures – Upper Limit (Fixed)	543	429
Interest Rate Exposures – Upper Limit (Variable)	(316)	(424)
Upper limit for total principal sums invested for longer than a year	195	30
Estimate of Capital Expenditure	106	91.2
Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	575.2	565.8
Gross Debt – External Loans (Should remain below CFR, except in the short term)	459	459
Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream – Financing Costs	38.9	42.5
Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream – Proportion of Net Revenue Stream - %	6.7%	7.3%

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 20 June 2023

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Consider and comment on the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 (Appendix 1).
- b. Refer the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-23 to Council on 20 July 2023.

Report of the Chairman of Corporate O&S Committee, Councillor Mike Wilcox

Summary

1. The draft Annual Report summarises scrutiny activity and outcomes for Overview and Scrutiny Committees during the municipal year 2022-23.

Link to Strategic Plan

2. Scrutiny activity and outcomes have a direct link to the Council's Strategic Plan and the four core principles which help shape all that we do.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

3. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee maintains oversight of the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes for Corporate, Health and Care, Prosperous and Safeguarding O&S committees.

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Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

2022-23



Chairman's Foreword

Welcome to Staffordshire County Council's Annual Scrutiny Report.

I am delighted to present this report describing the work of Overview and Scrutiny during 2022-23. It includes a wide range of information about the work elected members have undertaken over the past year; and most importantly the impact this has had. Overview and Scrutiny continues to play a vital role in Staffordshire County Council by holding decision makers to account; developing and reviewing policy; as well as considering how the Council is delivering on its commitments to the residents of Staffordshire. Over the past year, all Overview and Scrutiny Committees have welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Cabinet and Senior Officers as they lead the Council.

The Committees have sought to focus on the critical issues for the Council and provide constructive input in finding ways to improve outcomes for residents. A warm thank you goes to the Chairs and Vice Chairs for their contributions and support within the Committees over the past year. They continue to bring energy and enthusiasm to their roles.

I would like to give special mention to Cllr Colin Greatorex, former Chair of the Corporate O&S Committee for his diligence and hard work in ensuring that the work undertaken and completed under his leadership has added value and where appropriate made recommendations that have been taken forward by Cabinet and subsequently this Council for the good of all of its residents. I wish him well in his new role as Vice Chair of this Council.

I would also like to note my thanks to the wide range of officers who support all the Committees with particular thanks to our excellent team of Scrutiny and Support Officers. I look forward to my first year as Chairman working through Overview and Scrutiny to help ensure improved outcomes for all customers, residents, and businesses within Staffordshire.



Councillor Mike Wilcox

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs 2022-23



Councillor Colin Greatorex

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Jeremy Pert

Chairman of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Tina Clements

Chairman of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Bob Spencer

Chairman of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

This report provides a summary of Staffordshire Overview and Scrutiny Committees work during 2022-23. The overview and scrutiny function is an essential part of the Council's governance framework and is integral to decision making. It fulfils the statutory responsibility placed on local authorities to review and scrutinise decisions, performance, and policy of the Council and Partners.

We have four Overview and Scrutiny Committees which play a vital role in shaping and influencing services, policies and future plans which affect our business and our residents.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This is the Council's Principal Scrutiny Committee, responsible for the overall management and coordination of Overview and Scrutiny Committees as well as; overall performance; Strategic Corporate Planning; improvement and transformation; the Local Enterprise Partnership; and the Council's support services. It also deals with any Executive decisions that have been called in.

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This Committee is responsible for scrutiny of matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the Authority's area, including public health and adult social care, in accordance with regulations made under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance.

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth including highways infrastructure and connectivity and flood and water management, education, learning and skills.

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism.

How Scrutiny Makes a Difference

We align work programmes to the ambitions and delivery of the principles, priorities and outcomes of the Staffordshire Corporate Plan. We aim to share how this year scrutiny has reinforced the value and importance of challenge and the difference that holding to account or simply asking a question makes to decision making, to public services and for the residents of Staffordshire.

Holding a matter up to scrutiny raises awareness

Helps to develop relationships between services and partners, public and officers

Tells us why we do something; the way things work and how we perform

Invites people into the same space to hold an open and transparent discussion

Identifies good practice and share this more widely

Initiates 'the difficult conversation' between interested parties

Questions the issues, barriers or blockages

Monitors and maintains oversight of issues that impact on residents and businesses of Staffordshire

Makes comments and recommendations to decision makers based on evidence gathered

Scrutiny Activity in 2022-23

	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Activity	2022-23
	Number of Formal Committee Meetings	36
	Number of Final Reports*	100
	External Partners at Meetings	58
	Workshops	2
	Site Visits	1
	Working Groups and Inquiry Days (Completed)	3
	Working Groups and Inquiry Days (Ongoing)	5
	Informal planning meetings (including previews)	29

*Tables are provided to list all of the topics considered in Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings in 2022-23 (see Appendix 1).

How Has Scrutiny Added Value in 2022-23?

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Corporate Review Overview and Scrutiny Committees focus is on the principles in the corporate plan that build a strong organisation, keep Staffordshire strong and look to future proof services and resources.

During the municipal year the Committee has concentrated on the following key pieces of work:

Boundary Commission Review - The Committee kept a close eye on the process of the review and how the public; elected members; and district councils had been involved in the development of proposals prior to their submission to Council and then to the Boundary Commission.

Governance Review - At the request of the Committee a review of the governance arrangements of Local Authority Trading Companies and the external bodies members attend representing the Council, was undertaken. As a result, new governance standards and a company check list were introduced along with more officer support. In relation to outside bodies, a full review took place which resulted in several organisations being monitored and some not being re-appointed to.

Climate Change Annual Report (2022) and the Climate Change Action Plan - These documents summarised the Council's priority themes and the work undertaken to address climate change to date. The Committee also has small working group chaired by the Vice Chair to look at the Climate Change agenda.



The Committee considered regular Integrated Performance quarterly updates and finance performance were regularly considered. Specific consideration took place on the Children and Families transformation programme and additional funding allocated to address underperformance.

Changes to the **Entrust Contract** were considered at the Committee's October meeting. The Committee felt that the changes and performance of the team need to be monitored to ensure that efficiencies were being met without detriment to the service. An annual report was requested.

The Chair and Chief Executive of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) were invited to attend the Committee at their meeting on 17 January 2023 where they were held to account for delivery of the various outcomes included in their Annual Delivery Plan. Both Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire Districts and Borough Councils were also invited to attend as

observers and raise questions on the LEP's work. The way that bids were developed was questioned. Case studies, to help illustrate the process was requested for the next annual meeting.

Pre-decision scrutiny:

The **Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion policy** principles were considered and progress against the action plans was noted.



The **Empowering our Communities** strategy and draft delivery plan were considered by the Committee. 'Empowering our communities' was one of the four 'how we work' statements in the Strategic Plan and as such is at the heart of what the Council does. Several comments were made to the Cabinet for their consideration including the way that outcomes are measured and the results from the activities needed to be clear and would benefit from more detail such as the inclusion of costs and SMART measurements and timelines.

The **People Strategy** and its four pillars; priorities; key performance indicators and ways to monitor and assess the success of the strategy were considered.

The **Volunteering Policy** and a new approach to volunteering was discussed. The report set out the nine new volunteering principles which were designed to ensure that all Council volunteers have a positive and consistent experience. The report and feedback from the Committee, for example ways to remove barriers and ways of encouraging and capturing volunteers would be considered by Cabinet in June 2023.



The **Civil Contingencies Policy** was shared with the Committee. Members made a number of suggestions for additions to the policy such as a definition of 'Gold Command' and reference to Memorandum of understandings with districts to avoid duplication. Future updates would be considered by the Audit and Standards Committee.

The **Corporate Delivery Plan 2023/24** setting out the deliverable performance priorities and targets for each service area.



The Committee, through their annual **Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) working group**, had spent some considerable time scrutinising the Budget and making recommendations to the Cabinet. The Group had concentrated the Capital Programme; Assets; SEND transport; Children in Care and Highway/Capital improvements.

For more information on the work of the Committee, and to view reports and minutes, visit our webpages: [Committee details - Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee focus is to ensure scrutiny of the planning, provision and operation of health, public health, and care services in the Authority's area, to consider the risks to residents' health and to seek assurance that what is being done is appropriate for all residents of Staffordshire now and in the future. The meetings continued to be broadcast live to ensure openness and transparency.

Developing Healthier Communities:

The Committee held a Workshop for Members, officers and partners to come together to gain an understanding of the wider determinants of health and to talk about the roles of County and District Councils in developing healthier communities. The Workshop considered three key themes: Healthy Life, Healthy Place and Healthy People. The Committee made a number of recommendations to the Cabinet



Member for Health and Care, Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Integrated Care around Health impact assessments and the "Health in all policies" agenda. The Committee also recommended that the report be referred to the District and Borough Scrutiny Committees for Members to consider the content and recommendations within the report and to consider imbedding health in all we do in order to tackle health inequalities and improve health outcomes for Staffordshire residents.

Integrated Care Hubs Working Group:

The Committee established the Integrated Care Hubs Working Group in May 2022 to consider the proposed Integrated Care Hubs at Leek Moorlands District Hospital, Bradwell Hospital, Haywood Hospital and an undeveloped site in Longton. The Working Group included District and Borough Councillors from Staffordshire Moorlands and Newcastle Under Lyme and attended site visits and briefing meetings.

Since attending the site visits, the Working Group learned that there had been changes to the Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit which had resulted in NHS England setting capital spending limits for Foundation Trusts which therefore meant that Midlands Partnership University Foundation Trust were no longer able to access cash reserves which were held for the purpose of implementing the Hubs, instead a strategic outline case would need to be developed for each hub.

When the Committee received this update, they resolved to write to the Chief Executive of NHS England to request that since the project has an approved Decision-Making Business Case it be allowed to proceed.

Adult Social Care and Integrated Care System Workforce Planning:

The Committee received a report in October 2022 and a further update in March 2023 from Health and Care around Workforce Planning and the Staffordshire Social Care Workforce Strategy. The Committee were advised of the increased demand on care resources and the downward turn in the overall number of people employed in the sector in comparison to 2020/21.

The Committee agreed to hold a focussed session on social care education in colleges in relation to the proposed social care academy, they also agreed to seek the views of a sample of care providers on the Staffordshire Social Care Workforce Strategy.

The Committee also received a report from the ICS outlining the workforce challenges within the ICS. The Committee received assurances that health and care services were working together to address the workforce the challenges and to develop the future workforce.

Primary Care Access:

The Committee received two updates on Primary Care Access in July 2022 and November 2022. The Committee were advised that there had been a 5.8% increase in the number of appointments in General Practices since 2019. Workforce pressures were raised. There were 146 practices across Staffordshire, 129 had been rated good by the CQC. The Committee noted the ongoing plans for GP access to offer a universal service.

ICP Strategy:

The Committee received the Integrated Care Partnership Strategy in January 2023. The ICP is a partnership of senior leaders across health, Local Authorities, Voluntary Sector and other agencies to provide a strategy focusing on improving the overall health of the population. The Committee noted that the strategy was an overarching strategy across the whole of Staffordshire with a focus on people and communities. The Committee fed back their comments which fed into the strategy which has since been published.

NHS System Pressures:

The Committee received a report and presentation on the NHS System Pressures. The update provided context on the current pressures nationally and in Staffordshire. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had brought about unprecedented levels of ill health which had increased demand and pressures on urgent and emergency care, ambulance services, discharge and domiciliary care across the Country. The Committee noted workforce, demand and acuity of patients compared to pre-covid were the prevalent issues.



More information on the work of the Committee can be found at: [Committee details - Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's focus is on the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth including highways infrastructure and connectivity and flood and water management, education, learning and skills.

The Committee's work programme for 2022/23 continued to be aligned to the responsibilities of five Cabinet Members' and was therefore busy and wide-ranging. As a result, it was necessary for us to meet three extra times in addition to the seven calendared meetings fixed at the beginning of the year.



The Committee gave pre-decision scrutiny to various matters prior to their consideration by Cabinet including:- (i) the Authority's draft **Economic Strategy** (26 May 2022); (ii) **Special educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Capital funding for 2022-24** (29 September 2022); (iii) **Delivering a Future Vision for the Countryside Estate** (19 October 2022); the Authority's draft **Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy** (9 January 2023) and; **Staffordshire Sustainability Board Draft Communication Plan 2023** (9 January 2023).

In addition, a significant part of their work was linked to the County Council's Strategic Plan Priority Outcome No.1, "Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth"; and No. 2, "Live in thriving and sustainable communities", and the need to ensure on-going initiatives in these areas were progressing in-line with expectations and agreed timelines.

The Committee has continued to receive regular updates on progress with regard to the **Highways Transformation Programme** and the Authority's work to identify the most appropriate future delivery model for the Highways Maintenance Service. We gave our support to a 'Hybrid Mixed Economy' model to draw on the strengths of both in-house and externalised provision whilst minimising the inherent weaknesses in each. This new configuration involved changes to the contract with the County Council's existing Strategic Partner and Members were keen to emphasise the importance of prioritising quality and customer service over the previous 'do what we can with the resources available' approach. We also stressed the importance of 'local' Members' role in engaging with our communities, a consideration which has been taken on-board by the Cabinet Member in his work to implement the new arrangements.



Another area of focus has been the reconfiguration of the County's **Household Waste Recycling Centres**. This followed their previous comments on proposals to bring the service in-house with effect from 1 April 2023 and took account of the



Authority's climate change ambitions. At their meeting on 10 November 2022 and following a site inspection, the Committee evaluated the first six months of operation against key performance indicators and concluded that it was much improved when compared to previous years' operation and Shire comparators. The Committee also gave their views on the preferred option for a scheme of charging for Commercial (Trade) Waste (a non-statutory service) to increase income to the

Authority, prior to a period of public consultation. Following the comments made, charging has been implemented. However, a shortened application process has been introduced to make it easier for voluntary groups e.g. Scout Groups, Village Halls etc to access the HWRC network.

The Committee also included the following standing items in their Work Programme to take account of on-going matters and areas of concern: (i) **HS2 - Impact on Staffordshire** and; (ii) **Economic Recovery Renewal and Transformation**; (iii) **Staffordshire History Centre** and; (iv) **Digital Infrastructure**.

In response to a request from the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, we held an **Enquiry Day on Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE)** on 17 April 2023 to: (i) understand how the current CPE arrangements in Staffordshire work; (ii) learn of key performance data for the existing service and; (iii) inform the scope of work by a proposed CPE Working Group. At this event, Members raised various issues/point of concern and identified



potential key lines of enquiry including:- (i) consistency of enforcement across the County; (ii) scope for implementation of additional Traffic Regulation Orders for the management of Parking; (iii) additional powers available to the Highway Authority; (iv) potential for improved partnership working with District/Borough Councils and Staffordshire Police and; (v) how the approach to parking in the County could be improved to support both the Authority's climate ambitions and those relating to economic growth. Consequently, we have established a Working Group which will report its findings to Committee, so that it can make timely recommendations for consideration by Cabinet prior to their adoption of a new Parking Strategy in 2026.

At a meeting on 29 September 2022 the Committee were addressed by the organiser of a petition previously presented to County Council relating to the management of **Heavy Goods Vehicles on Cemetery Road, Silverdale**. Whilst this was in-line with the provisions of Section 4 of the County Council's constitution, it was particularly significant owing to it being the first time such a petition to the Authority had contained between 2500 and 5000 signatures triggering a report to Scrutiny and provided a valuable opportunity to engage directly with a local community.

Lastly, the Constitution enables the Committee to co-opt **Parent Governor Representatives (PGRs)** in accordance with the provisions of The Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998. The previous PGRs' four-year Term of Office expired in August 2022. Therefore, we have made arrangements for new Parent Governor Representatives to be appointed and commence their Term of Office from 2023/24 Municipal Year so that we can continue hold the Authority to account by consulting with and feeding back to parents on discussions and decisions relating to education.

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at: [Committee details - Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee's focus is on safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism.

Following the 2022 **Sexual Harassment in Schools** Inquiry Day, we received the **Executive Response** to the Inquiry Day report from the Cabinet Members for Education (and SEND) and for Children and Young People. All recommendations were accepted, with detail of the implementation timelines shared. Following this a joint letter was produced, in line with the recommendations, to the Science and Technology Minister in respect of the Online Safety Bill.



As part of our work planning in June 2021 we included the role of **Young Carers** in our 2021/22 work programme. We wanted to scrutinise the support given to Staffordshire young carers and consider the level of caring roles undertaken, seeking reassurance that these were not at a level that should be provided by social care. Following a presentation to the Committee a sub-group of four Members undertook to meet with Staffordshire young carers to hear first-hand about the support they received. The Sub-group produced a report and recommendations which included a proposal that Members become young carers service advocates, raising the profile of services available within schools and the benefits to both schools and their pupils in taking advantage of these services.

The Committee considered the following pre-decision scrutiny items:

In July the draft **Early Help Strategy**, which recognises that early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than a reactive approach to services.

Family Hubs in Staffordshire looked at how services could be better integrated around the needs of the family. Whilst we were disappointed that Staffordshire had not been successful in obtaining additional Government funding the Committee supported the family Hub initiative and will scrutinise its implementation and impact moving forward.

The **Recommissioning Arrangements for the Domestic Abuse Contract** - Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office (SCO) jointly commission Domestic Abuse (DA) services across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, with the SCO acting as lead commissioner. The current contract ends on 30 September 2023. To allow sufficient time for the procurement process, work was underway on the service recommissioning and the Committee raised comments and concerns to inform the recommissioning process.

Work programme items requested by the Committee this year include:

The final report from the **MacAlister Independent Review of Children's Social Care**, published on Monday 23rd May 2022, followed by the report from the National Panel into the deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson on 29th May 2022. The Government responded to the Care Review on the day of publication committing to producing an implementation strategy by the end of the year and moving forward with the development of a national children's social care framework. We await further detail on the Government implementation strategy.

The Committee scrutinised the **Children's Transformation six-month review** findings, considering the interdependencies of national pressures, and showing the key themes that had emerged and the plans being put in place to address these.

Following Staffordshire's Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) in 2022 we scrutinised the **Ofsted Focused Visit Improvement Action Plan**, considering the work undertaken in Staffordshire's arrangements for children subject to child in need and child protection planning, noting the work already completed and a timeframe for further areas of development.

The Committee had requested detail on the **Prevention of Future Deaths Report** prepared by the Chief Coroner following the **Fishmonger's Hall** terror attack on 29 November 2019. Whilst the terror attack had taken place in London, the attacker had been a resident of Stafford at that time. The Committee considered whether relevant lessons had been learnt and actions taken by appropriate agencies to prevent future similar events occurring and we welcomed the changes made in response to the Coroner's recommendations.

The **Prevent duty** is part of the Government's overall counter-terrorism strategy known as CONTEST. As a statutory duty of the County Council the Committee reassured themselves of the co-ordinating role the County Council undertakes and the governance structures around this process.

In July 2021 the Committee had considered arrangements for delivery of the new Regional Adoption Agency for Staffordshire County Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council, called the Together4Children Permanency Partnership. This had been developed in response to the Government's Regionalising Adoption agenda. The Committee scrutinised progress and impact of the **Regional Permanency Partnership and pilot project outcomes**, welcoming their work and the impact of the TESSA and Mockingbird projects.

We have continued to scrutinise progress with both the **Children's Transformation** and the **Adult Safeguarding Transformation** projects.

We are aware of the significant impact a permanent exclusion can have on an individual and considered a report to our April meeting on **Safeguarding of**

Permanently Excluded Pupils - We scrutinised the exclusion process and the Local Authorities role within this, including the role of the Education Inclusion Officers. We have requested further detail which will inform whether this remains on our work programme next year.

The Council has a statutory duty to manage **Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard (DoLS)** applications. As a Committee we last considered a report on DoLS applications in January 2022. At that time it had been expected that DoLS would have been replaced by new legislation and a new process called Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS) by October 2022. LPS would have reduced demand and time requirements that currently exist with DoLS, having less demand for specialist workforce. However, LPS has been delayed with no implementation date identified. Following our scrutiny in April this year we were reassured by the work undertaken to manage the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards applications.

The Committee receive a number of standard items annually. These include:

- **Customer Feedback and Complaints Service Annual reports** for both Children's and Adults Social Services.
- **Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB) Annual Report**, with the Committee requesting participation in hidden abuse training, and recommending that consideration of how more sophisticated data analysis could be used within the report and how online abuse could be highlighted in future annual reports.
- **Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board (SSCB) Annual Report**, requesting that the Chair of the SSCB Child Exploitation Task Group attend a future Safeguarding O&S meeting with the Independent SSCB Chairman to consider progress in tackling the issues raised. We also asked for further detail on work to tackle safeguarding concerns of teenage pregnancy and asked that the SSCB Independent Chairman take back to the Board the Committees concerns and suggestions around online abuse and the 5 Rights campaign.



More information on the work of the Committee can be found at: [Committee details - Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Staffordshire County Council](#)

What's Coming Up In 2023/24?

To find out more about Overview and Scrutiny work for 2023-24 visit: [Committee structure - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Effective Overview and Scrutiny should:

- Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge
- Amplify the voices and concerns of the public
- Be led by independent people who take responsibility for their role
- Drive improvement in public services

Statutory guidance for councils and combined authorities - Published 7 May 2019

Appendix 1: Items considered during the year 2022-23

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Climate Change Annual Report (2022) and the Draft Climate Change Action Plan.
- Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion action plan
- Quarterly Integrated Performance Reports
- Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
- Boundary Commission Review
- Governance Review
- Corporate Complaints annual report and LGSCO annual report
- Entrust - Review of changes
- Peoples Strategy
- Civil Contingencies
- Corporate delivery Plan
- Volunteering Policy

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Elective Recovery
- Changes to the Healthy Communities Service from April 2023
- ICS & ICB Updates
- Maternity Transformation
- Healthwatch intro to year 1 priorities, focal investigation topics
- The Families Health & Wellbeing service
- ICS Transformation - Georgy Bryan - Inpatient Mental Health Services
- RWT Acute Trust QA Performance update
- ICB performance
- Social Care performance
- The future of Supported Living Services in Staffordshire
- Clinical Policy Alignment
- Ockenden Report
- Public Health Dashboard
- ICH Implementation
- Draft Mental Health Strategy
- Mental Health Support teams in Schools Update
- CAMHS
- Social Care Workforce Update
- Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent ICB update on 2023/24 Operational Plan

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Rural Economic Strategy
- Highways Transformation Plan and Quarterly Progress Updates
- SEND Review: Right Support, Right Place, Right Time, Government Consultation on the SEND and Alternative Provision System in England
- Highways Transformation Programme - Three Strands Progress
- Ensuring HS2 Connectivity with Existing Classic Network and HS2 Impact on Staffordshire Update
- Flood Risk Management Strategy Updates
- Petition - Management of HGV's on Cemetery Road, Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme
- Schools White Paper
- SEND High Needs Capital Funding 2022-24
- Economic Strategy Delivery update
- Delivering a Future Vision for the Countryside Estate
- Staffordshire Libraries and Arts Service 2022-25
- Staffordshire Local Area SEND Re-visit Inspection & SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Six Month Review
- Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC's)- Forward Investment, Policy Review and Re-use
- Digital Infrastructure in Staffordshire Update
- Staffordshire Sustainability Board Communication Plan 2023
- Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy
- Request for Scrutiny Review - Civil Parking Enforcement in Staffordshire
- Staffordshire History Centre Update
- Staffordshire Community Learning Service's Annual Self-Assessment Report 2021/22
- Staffordshire Safer roads Partnership
- Staffordshire Local Transport Plan
- Household Waste Recycling Centres Outcome of Public Consultation and Policy Changes for 2023/24
- Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report 2021/22

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- Neglect
- Community Safety & the Outcomes of the Fishmonger Hall Inquiry
- Draft Early Help Strategy
- Customer Feedback & Complaints Service - Adult Social Services Annual Report 2020-21
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Service - Children's Social Services Annual Report 2020-20211
- Recommissioning Arrangements for the Domestic Abuse Contract
- Childrens Services Transformation Six Month Review
- Ofsted Focused Visit - Improvement Action Plan
- Independent Review of Children's Social Care (MacAlister Report)
- Report on the Action to Prevent Future Deaths Following the Inquests Arising from Deaths in the Fishmongers' Hall Terror Attack
- Prevent Activity
- Regional Permanency Partnership and Pilot Project Outcomes
- Young Carers
- Adult Safeguarding Transformation Project
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report (SSASPB) Annual Report 2021-22
- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board Annual Report 2021-22
- Safeguarding of Permanently Excluded Pupils
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 20 June 2023

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24 Update

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

- a. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023-24 update report.
- b. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and comment on the planned Work Programme 2023-24.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive & Director for Corporate Services John Tradewell

Summary

1. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are the overarching scrutiny body with responsibility for developing and agreeing the combined work programme for the Council's overview and scrutiny function. The work programme co-ordinates items scheduled at each of the Councils four overview and scrutiny committees.
2. Members are asked to consider the update on programme delivery 2022-23 and work planned by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees in 2023-24.

Background

3. The Local Government Act 2000 states that Councils operating executive arrangements must also make provision for the appointment of one or more overview and scrutiny committees. At their annual meeting on 18 May 2023, the County Council appointed the following committees:
 - Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
 - Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny
 - Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny
 - Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny

4. The Terms of Reference for each Overview and Scrutiny Committee can be viewed in [Section 7 of the County Councils Constitution](#).
5. At the start of the municipal year 2023-24, each committee develops work programmes of matters that fall within their Terms of Reference taking into account any outstanding items from previous years, as necessary. Members are requested to review the contents and timelines of the work programmes at each meeting to ensure they remain timely and relevant.
6. Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen hold regular Triangulation meetings with Executive Members, Directors, and where applicable senior officers from partner organisations, to discuss emerging matters, priorities and circumstances that might change decision making and scrutiny timelines.
7. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee also maintain oversight of the Joint Overview and Scrutiny work programme which details work items for all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
8. Scrutiny of the Joint Work Programme provides opportunity to identify cross-cutting matters (i.e., those which might fall under the Terms of Reference of more than one Committee) and provide a wider view of the subject matter and issue(s) involved to help focus on key lines of enquiry.

Current position

9. Overview and Scrutiny Committees completed their 2022-23 work programmes. The final quarter January – April 2023 activity is summarised in paragraph 11 and a forward look at scrutiny activity for the first quarter of the new Municipal Year 2023-24 is provided in paragraphs 14-17.
10. The four Overview and Scrutiny Committees will present draft work programmes to the first meeting of the committee this municipal year.
11. Quarter 4 2022-23: Activity
 - a) Thirteen Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings were held between 1 January 2023 and April 2023. Thirty-eight different topics were considered.
 - b) In support of formal meetings Member briefings and pre-meetings were arranged online, briefing papers circulated, and links to

further information to develop knowledge and awareness of specific issues have been circulated where appropriate.

12. To ensure the continuous development of the scrutiny function all Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet quarterly with the Scrutiny and Support Team to reflect on scrutiny process, develop working mechanisms and share good practice. At a meeting on 24 January 2023 the forum considered report content and process, responses to recommendations and member training. The forum met again on 22 May to consider the report process and monitoring and tracking mechanisms.

13. Scrutiny Member Training and Development:

- Local Government Association 'Scrutiny Essentials Training' took place on 25 May 2023. Eighteen members attended.
- District and Borough Scrutiny Representatives on Health and Care Committee training on 7 June 2023.
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny 'Health Scrutiny Training' is scheduled for Thursday 7 July 2023.

Work Programme Focus for Quarter 1

14. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a. 20 June 2023 meeting focus will be work programme planning; Appointment to MTFS work group; O&S Annual report; O&S quarterly work programme update; Climate Change working group update and scrutiny of the Integrated Performance Report Q4.
- b. 1 August 2023 meeting focus will be Integrated Performance Report Q1.
- c. 12 September 2023 meeting focus will be Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021-22 and O&S work programmes update Q1.
- d. 6 July, 7 August and 1 September 2023 have been reserved for any called in decisions.

15. Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a. 12 June 2023 meeting focus will be General Practice Access; NHS Dentistry Transition Plan and access to NHS Services; General Practice Estates and work programme planning.
- b. 24 July 2023 meeting will be ICB Operating Plan & 1st quarter performance; Systems Pressures UHNM, UHDB & WMAS lessons learnt from Winter Period; Elective pressures and ICS Workforce Plan.

- c. 31 July 2023 additional meeting: Adult Social Care Services
- d. 18 September 2023 meeting will scrutinise Mental Health update: MPFT and NCHFT.
- e. A workshop will be held in the summer to assess access to information on Adult Social Care.

16. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a. 7 June 2023 meeting focus will be scrutiny of Highways Transformation and Performance quarterly update; Staffordshire County Council's Economic Strategy; Digital Infrastructure in Staffordshire; and Planning for the Civil Parking enforcement enquiry day.
- b. 6 July 2023 meeting focus will be Staffordshire Bus Strategy; Highways and Transformation Functional Service Commissioning; SEND Strategy for Special Provision.
- c. 28 September 2023 focus of the meeting will be HS2 six-monthly update; Highways Transformation Progress and Performance update; and Staffordshire Employment and Skills Strategy.

17. Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a. 15 June 2023 meeting focus work programme planning. Pre-decision scrutiny will also take place on 'Living my Best Life', Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028;
- b. 27 July 2023 focuses on Customer feedback & Complaints Annual reports for Children's and Adult Social Care. It will also include impact reports on the PHSE co-ordinator role 12 months from its introduction.

18. Potential topics with cross remits:

Opportunity for members to consider any areas in the items proposed in Quarter 1 that may cross O&S committee remits and identify the lead committee to scrutinise or agree a joint meeting.

Link to Strategic Plan

19. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees' remits and work programmes are developed to ensure that scrutiny reinforces the value and importance of challenge, and they are aligned to the ambitions and delivery of the principles, priorities, and outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2022-2026.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

20. The Joint Work Programme will co-ordinate scrutiny activity between the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, identify matters for joint scrutiny or determine the lead committee for an issue, and take into account where and when scrutiny can add value and influence decision making.

Background Documents:

Link 1: Corporate O&S Committee Work Programme: [20 June 2023](#)

Link 2: Health and Care O&S Committee Work Programme: [12 June 2023](#)

Link 3: Prosperous O&S Committee Work Programme: [7 June 2023](#)

Link 4: Safeguarding O&S Committee Work Programme: [15 June 2023](#)

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Local Members Interest
N/A

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 20 June 2023

Work Programme Planning

Recommendation

- a. That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and agree an initial list of priorities to form the basis of their work programme for 2023/24.

Report of the Scrutiny and Support Officer

1. The scrutiny structures have been designed to ensure effective accountability for the delivery against the Council's key outcomes set out in Staffordshire County Council's Strategic Plan. The Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee remit is:
 - Holding the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources of the Council to account for achievement of the overall vision of a connected Staffordshire.
 - The Council's overall performance and approach to managing performance and Strategic Corporate Planning
 - The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy
 - The Council's on-going programme of improvement and transformation.
 - The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic priorities.
 - The Council as a commissioning organisation including how it uses customer insight to drive improvements in services.
2. In developing a work programme, the Committee is encouraged to identify issues that are a current priority for local people and communities and/or are a priority for the Council and partners. If a matter is a recurring issue for the people you collectively as Councillors represent, then the likelihood is that it is something the Committee should spend time on. The more relevant the issue is to local communities then the greater the likelihood of engaging those communities in the scrutiny process and of producing outcomes that will be visible to those communities. Members are encouraged to raise and discuss issues that should form the basis of the work programme and review these periodically throughout the year to ensure they remain relevant and will add value to what the Council and partners are doing.

Report

Background

3. The Committee should focus on corporate improvement.

Developing the Work Programme

4. This meeting is an opportunity for the Committee to begin to identify and prioritise what it wishes to scrutinise during the current municipal year. Officers and Cabinet Members will be present at the meeting to outline the County Council's responsibilities in relation to the Committees remit.

5. When agreeing matters for your work programme you are encouraged to ask the following questions:

- Is the matter of particular concern to local people?
- Is the issue an identified priority for the County Council or partners?
- Does the issue relate to an area of service with a trend in weak performance? For example, has this issue been identified by external auditors or inspectors?
- What difference could scrutiny make?
- What would happen if you did not look at this issue?

Matters Arising from Last Year's Work Programme

6. Areas that were highlighted for further work during the last municipal year are as follows, these have been added to the draft work programme for your approval:

- Climate Change Annual Report and Action Plan -24 October 2023;
- Entrust – Review of changes – 24 October 2023;
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan update – 18 December 2023;
- Local Enterprise Partnership – 16 January 2024;

Recurring Work Programme Items

Complaints Annual Report and Local Government Social Care Ombudsman - Trends in complaints are used to inform the Scrutiny Committee's work programme.

Integrated Performance Report - The Committee considers the performance and MTFs position on a quarterly basis.

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes – This is a quarterly report to ensure no duplication of items across the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Training and development

7. Training and development sessions will be run for Members as required. Members are invited to make any suggestions for development to the Chair or the Scrutiny and Support Officer.

Link to the Strategic Plan

8. The remits of the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committees link to the strategic priorities set out in the County Council Strategic Plan.

Implications

9. The County Council has a responsibility to undertake adequate Equality Impact Assessments to ensure services do not have a negative impact on any one section of the community and the scrutiny committees have a role in ensuring that this responsibility is fulfilled. Scrutiny as a function must also comply with the relevant legislation. When considering work programme items, especially when undertaking reviews of policy, the scrutiny committees must always consider whether their recommendations may impact differently on various individuals/sections of the community.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Draft Work Programme 2023/24

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WORK PROGRAMME

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2023/2024

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

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

- Page 97
- Holding the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources of the Council to account for achievement of the overall vision of a connected Staffordshire.
 - The Council's overall performance and approach to managing performance and Strategic Corporate Planning
 - The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy
 - The Council's on-going programme of improvement and transformation.
 - The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic priorities.
 - The Council as a commissioning organisation including how it uses customer insight to drive improvements in services.

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

Councillor Mike Wilcox

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
5 June 2023	Reserved for Call In		
20 June 2023	Work Programme Planning - Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon	Development of the work programme for 2023/24	
	Appointment of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Working Group Officers: Mandy Pattinson		
	O&S Annual report Officer: Deb Breedon		
Page 98	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes Overview and Scrutiny Chairman	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	
	Climate Change Working Group Update and member appointment Officer: Zach Simmister	To receive an update report	
	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 4 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon	Quarterly report.	
6 July 2023	Reserved for Call In		
1 August 2023	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 1	Quarterly report.	

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon		
7 August 2023 (2pm)	Reserved for Call In		
1 September 2023	Reserved for Call In		
12 September 2023	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes Overview and Scrutiny Chairman	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	
6 October 2023	1. Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021/22. 2. LGSCO Annual Report Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Kate Bullivant	Annual reports	
24 October 2023	Climate Change Annual report and action plan Member: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright	Pre decision scrutiny. Annual report	
	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 2 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Wendy Thompson	Regular quarterly report	
	Entrust – Review of changes Member: Mark Deaville	Requested at 25 October 2022 O&S to scrutinise changes and implications.	

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	Officers: Ian Turner		
6 November 2023	Reserved for Call In		
1 December 2023	Reserved for Call In		
18 December 2023	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan update (to include gender pay gap update) Member: Alan White Officers: S Getley/Kerry Dove	Requested at 25 October 2022 O&S to scrutinise changes and implications.	
5 January 2024	Reserved for Call In		
16 January 2024	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes Overview and Scrutiny Chairman	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	
	Scrutiny of the Local Enterprise Partnership (including governance arrangements).	Annual scrutiny.	
	MFTS 2022-2027 Working Group Report Chair of COSC - Cllr Greatorex Rob Salmon/Rachel Spain		
9 February 2024	Reserved for Call In		
26 February 2024	Quarterly Integrated Performance report (Quarter 3) Members: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Kerry Dove	Regular quarterly report	

Work Programme 2022/2023

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
8 March 2024	Reserved for Call In		
8 April 2024	Reserved for Call In		
9 April 2024			
29 April 2024	Reserved for Call In		

Items for Consideration or needing more detail- Work Programme 2022/2023

Suggested Item	Details (Background)	Proposed Date of Meeting
Leaders Board for Staffordshire	Raised by the Leader at triangulation – Officer Keith Luscombe/Chris Ebberley	Member involvement - TBC
BEST Transformation and the impact on the children's transformation	Raised at triangulation 08/11/22.	Discussion on appropriate time with Tracy Thorley. Very early stages of redesign – Report to committee for pre decision scrutiny

Standing Items 2022/2023

Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome

Briefing Notes / Updates / Visits 2022/2023

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome

Working Groups / Inquiry Days 2023/2024

MTFS Working Group 2022/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr M Wilcox (Chair) • Cllr B Peters • Cllr N Yates • Cllr J Pert • Cllr G Heath 	•	
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Briefing Notes / Updates / Visits 2022/2023

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr S Thompson • Cllr J Oates 		
Climate Change Working Group	Membership (confirm June 2023) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr S Thompson (Chair) • Cllr C Wileman • Cllr C Atkins • Cllr T Clements • Cllr J Pert • Cllr B Peters • Cllr D Smith 		

Membership – County Councillors 2022-23	Calendar of Committee Meetings – 2023-24
<p>Mike Wilcox (Chairman) Samantha Thompson (Vice Chairman - Overview) Gill Heath (Vice Chairman - Scrutiny) Charlotte Atkins Tina Clements Mike Davies John Francis Jeremy Oates Jeremy Pert Bernard Peters Kath Perry Bob Spencer Mike Worthington</p>	5 June 2023
	20 June 2023
	6 July 2023
	1 August 2023
	7 August 2023 (2pm)
	1 September 2023
	12 September 2023
	6 October 2023
	24 October 2023
	6 November 2023
	1 December 2023
	18 December 2023
	5 January 2024
	16 January 2024
	9 February 2024
	26 February 2024
	8 March 2024
8 April 2024	
9 April 2024	
29 April 2024	

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 20 June 2023

Climate Change Working Group – Update

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Receive the update report
- b. Confirm membership of the Climate Change Working Group 2023-24

Report of the Chairman of Climate Change Working Group, Councillor Samantha Thompson

Summary

1. The paper provides a brief background and an update of planned activity for the Climate Change Working Group (CCWG).

Background

2. The County Council declared a climate change emergency in 2019 and has since agreed the Climate Change Action Plan which is current to 2025. This committee considers the Climate Change Annual Report and the Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) as part of its work programme to maintain overview.
3. The Committee also established a working group to scrutinise specific matters arising from the CCAP. The working group has a focus on Staffordshire County Council's approach to addressing carbon reduction and to identify how it will achieve net zero by 2050.
4. 2022-23 Membership of the working group: Councillors Tina Clements, Jeremy Pert, Bernard Peters, David Smith, Samantha Thompson (Chair), Conor Wileman and Nigel Yates.
5. The Working Group provided an update to this committee on 22 October 2022, following which the Chairman met with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change and Lead Officers to identify one area of the action plan where scrutiny can add value.
6. They identified carbon sequestration and other potential offsetting projects as a specific area of challenge for Staffordshire County Council and recognised the need to promote the significance of tree planting.

Table: Extracts from the Climate Change Action Plan CCAP:

The Climate Change action plan

Carbon reduction CR-03 Research carbon sequestration and other potential offsetting projects. Outline options and make recommendations for sequestration and/or offset projects. Dec 2022

Natural Environment NE-01 Commission a study to determine the current sequestration / storage of carbon in natural habitats on SCC landholdings and the potential to increase it through tree planting and habitat enhancement. Review report outcomes and recommendations and produce business case to take forward. Dec 2022. **Progress** Oct 2022- Engage with consultants to produce a review of land/habitats in Staffordshire (including carbon impact, carbon storage benefits, potential opportunities, other benefits i.e. social and GIS data) to determine the current sequestration / storage of carbon in natural habitats on SCC landholdings and the potential to increase it through tree planting and habitat enhancement.

Programme Roadmap The Council has declared a commitment to be net carbon zero by 2050. Whilst our aspirations are high to reduce this as much as possible, we acknowledge we cannot reach net zero without some carbon sequestration or offsetting. This also forms a key role within the plan.

7. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change is invited to all working group meetings. This provides an essential link to the Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) which has continued to develop its role and strengthen its work programme since establishment in December 2021, working with District and Borough Councils and partners to support and inform the Climate Change Action Plans and Strategies across Staffordshire.

Next Steps

8. The Working Group (CCWG) last met in February 2023 to agree next steps and will commence evidence gathering on 28 June 2023 with an onsite meeting at Norbury Park Estate Forest and BiFOR research woodland which is set within the grounds of Norbury Park. Members will see and hear evidence relating to tree nurseries, skills required, best practice tree planting and scientific experiments taking place on site.
9. Evidence gathering during the review will include consideration of a commissioned report to provide context and data relating to SCC rural property portfolio, best practice and innovation in maintenance and planting of trees, sequestration the options to achieve carbon capture through tree planting or habitat restoration and carbon offsetting, and

members will participate in site visits and interviews with expert witnesses.

10. Invitations have been sent to the 2022-23 membership but will be amended should committee agree to change the membership of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Working Group.

Link to Strategic Plan

11. The information in this report has a direct link to the Council's Strategic Plan as Climate Change is one of the four core principles which help shape all that we do.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

12. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee maintain oversight of the Climate Change Action Plan. Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee has the remit to scrutinise Countryside and rural property portfolio.

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