

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Monday 18 December 2023

**10:00**

Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: <https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

John Tradewell  
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services  
8 December 2023

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### **Agenda**

1. **Apologies**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2023** (Pages 5 - 10)
4. **People Strategy: 2023 – 2027 Update on Progress** (Pages 11 - 58)  
Report of the Leader of the Council.
5. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan update** (Pages 59 - 108)  
Report of the Leader of the Council.
6. **Medium Term Financial Scrutiny - Draft Working Group Report** (Pages 109 - 138)
7. **Work Programme** (Pages 139 - 150)
8. **Exclusion of the Public**  
The Chairman to move:

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

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## **Part Two**

(All reports in this section are exempt)

<b>Membership</b>	
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 6 November 2023**

Present: Mike Wilcox (Chair)

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

**Also in attendance:** Jonathan Price, Simon Tagg and Alan White

**Apologies:** Bob Spencer and Cabinet Members Ian Parry and Mark Deaville.

**Part One**

**19. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**20. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023**

It was noted that Councillor Heath was present at the meeting and that in Minute 16 paragraph 2, the spelling of 'process' should be corrected.

**Resolved:** – That subject to the amendments listed above, the minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**21. Integrated Performance report – quarter 2**

The Leader of the Council introduced the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 2 2023/24 which summarised the Councils performance and financial position against the Strategic and Delivery Plans.

The report detailed the main challenges facing each of the four service areas, notably Children in Care, SEND, Adult Social Care demand and Highway performance. The report also detailed the forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1%) compared to the quarter 1 forecast overspend of £9.5m (1.39%).

The main issues discussed at the meeting were:

- The timeliness of sourcing social care brokerage was acknowledged as being the best performance for 3 years. The impact of this benefited clients and partner organisations.
- It was felt that the quality of the data was more informative, but the tolerance on some of the graph axis's could be changed so that it started at a number closer to the actual e.g. started at 90 if the data started at 94 and not zero. This would make the data more visible.
- There had been addition funding for Educational psychologists, with 7 new posts now filled. It was hoped that this would help to improve the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) delays.
- It was suggested that more narrative could be included on the unemployment section as this was a successful area.
- However, youth unemployment showed a gap of 2%. It was hoped that the changes to the LEP could help to focus efforts on specific areas.
- The full list of schemes which had applied for covid funding as well as the successful ones was requested.
- Early intervention with families would hopefully identify and support children with additional needs, which may lead to reduced need for support in later years.
- Preventative highway maintenance, such as gully clearing was priority to ensure that avoidable damage to roads was reduced.
- A Chatterley Valley slippage update would be sent to Councillor Yates directly.
- A piece of work was taking place on Special school places; demand; SEND transport; and working with mainstream schools. A report would be considered by Cabinet within the near future. Members were reminded that Cabinet had recently considered a report entitled "SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Enhanced Assess-Plan, Review Pathway, Strategy for Special Provision and the Staffordshire Children and Young People's Framework" which addressed some of the committees concerns and this would be sent to members for information.
- Ofsted had been lobbied to look at SEND provision and inclusiveness as part of their inspection regime.
- School SENCO's qualifications and workload was highlighted as an area which was being worked on with schools to see if any support could be offered.
- High Needs Block funding needed to be addressed by Central Government.
- The family network pilot results would be reported to Safeguarding O&S Committee in due course.
- Disabled Facility Grants need a more sophisticated approach to distribution throughout the county.
- County council members needed to interact with their Highway managers to ensure that local issues are being appropriately addressed.

- Safeguarding contacts (paragraph 6 of the report) and the temporary extra resource to review its pathways was noted.
- Extra resources provided to carryout Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DOLS) orders was in place awaiting changes in legislation which will see new arrangements replacing DOLS.
- Volunteers provided a huge benefit to the social care offer and were much appreciated. A financial cost could not be estimated at the present time.
- The financial impact of the new online financial self-assessment portal, as mentioned in Paragraph 41 of the report, was requested.
- The Committee felt that Economic trends in the County were doing well.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the Quarter 2 2023/24 Integrated Performance Report be noted.
- b) The tolerance on graph axis's should be changed, wherever practical, so that it starts at a number closer to the actual e.g. started at 90 if the data started at 94 and not zero.
- c) That the following information be provided to the committee:
  - The full list of schemes which had applied for covid funding as well as the successful ones.
  - A copy of the Cabinet (20/09/23) report entitled "SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Enhanced Assess-Plan, Review Pathway, Strategy for Special Provision and the Staffordshire Children and Young People's Framework".
  - The financial impact of the new online financial self-assessment portal, as mentioned in Paragraph 41 of the report.
- d) An update on the Chatterley valley scheme slippage be sent to Councillor Yates directly.

**22. Entrust – Review of Changes**

The Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters had sent his apologies to the meeting. The Cabinet Member for Education and the Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets presented the report.

The Committee was informed that the Entrust contract had been reviewed when it had reached the halfway point in its term. Due to a number of changes both to the service and the economy, the contract would now be reviewed every 3 years. Some services had come back into the provision of the council.

The Committee felt that the performance indicators appeared to be process lead, were not challenging and did not measure expected outcomes. It was suggested that a three-year development target would

be useful and the Committee was invited to help formulate this.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the update be noted.
- b) That the Committee hold an informal meeting to discuss the possible future targets for the service.

### **23. Climate change annual report and action plan**

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change introduced the Climate Change Annual Report and Action Plan. The documents would be considered by the Cabinet on 15 November 2023.

A short presentation was provided to the Committee.

The following comments were made by the Committee on the Annual Report:

- The plan showed ambition and built on last year's plan. It demonstrated vision and direction of travel.
- There was a need for the council to bring together partners and develop guidance and approaches to help standardize delivery. It was felt that this was one of the Councils key roles in tackling climate change. Examples where this would be beneficial were given as:
  - planning legislation/guidance on solar panel farms and housing developments.
  - Influencing policy so that housing developers invest in properties prior to sale, requiring the buyer to then retrofit new technologies.
  - EV charging in both remote and urban settings.
  - Centralise knowledge and best practice.
  - Drainage.
  - Waste collection.
- HVO and hydrogen as fuels for fleet vehicles needed more development.
- The council needed to act as a consortium with partners to achieve greater savings and benefits through sharing infrastructure and services.
- The Members Climate Action Fund was valued by some members



and increasing the fund was suggested.

- There needed to be a mechanism for ensuring that all of the Members Climate Action Fund is spent, and that District and Borough councils be encouraged to identify similar funding could really show commitment to local communities who want to develop schemes.

The Committee currently had a working group which was looking at Climate Change. Their report was due to be considered later on this agenda.

It was reported that the Communications strategy and waste reduction were both areas which were being looked at.

The Committee looked forward to reviewing progress in the 2023/24 Climate Change Annual Report along with the action plan and reviewing the results of the recent Climate change consultation at a future meeting.

**Resolved:**

- a) That the update be noted.
- b) That the Committee receive an update in 12 months time.
- c) That the comments made by the Committee, listed above, be reported to the Cabinet on 15 November 2023.

**24. Climate Change Working Group - Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation for Net Zero**

The Chair of the Working Group, Councillor Thompson and the Scrutiny and Support Manager gave a short presentation summarising the findings and recommendations of the group.

The report would be referred to Cabinet for consideration and a response received within two months.

**Resolved:** That the draft report and the following recommendations to Cabinet be approved:

- a) That the Cabinet be requested to consider the amount of carbon sequestration that can be achieved on SCC land to mitigate residual carbon emissions from SCC's carbon footprint that will be present in 2050.
- b) That the Cabinet undertake to develop a delivery model to plant a Staffordshire Forest, not only to mitigate our carbon emissions but also to realise the wider benefits of woodland creation, such as, green economy, rural diversification, rural employment, tourism growth, landscape protection, biodiversity enhancement and provision of a local timber resource. To do this explore the wider

- benefits and partnership opportunities with organisations like Forestry Commission and National Forest Company (FC/NFC).
- c) That the Cabinet take advantage of Forestry Commission Funding identified by the working group which is available until March 2024 and apply for the planning, funding, establishing, growing and management of Woodlands at the earliest opportunity.
  - d) That Cabinet consider how to progress planning for tree planting, woodland creation and to shape the concept model to plant a Staffordshire Forest, we recommend:
    - i. Identify land in the SCC rural portfolio that sits within the Forestry Commission low sensitivity areas of Staffordshire and
    - ii. Complete an options appraisal for a given area of land use change, exploring options through agricultural diversification, woodland creation, and other alternatives to include financial value through carbon sequestration.
    - iii. All benefits to be identified to give a balanced financial appraisal over a timeframe 2030-2070.
  - e) That Cabinet be requested to consider cessation of disposal of Council owned land /Country farms on the asset disposal list until it has been considered for inclusion in the concept model.
  - f) That the Leader and Cabinet Members be requested to engage with the District and Borough Councils at the Leaders Board and Sustainability Board to consider the concept model for a Staffordshire Forest, to invest in woodlands as a way to tackle the dual crisis of climate change and biodiversity, and how woodlands offer multiple sustainable benefits (social, environmental, and economic) to Staffordshire residents and businesses.

## **25. Work Programme**

The Chair informed members that the MTFs working group would be concluding its work shortly and would report to Committee on 18 December.

An additional meeting had been arranged for 8 March 2024 in order to consider the Corporate Plan.

**Resolved:** That the Work Programme be noted.

**Chair**

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday 18 December 2023**

### **People Strategy 2023 – 2027 Update on Progress**

#### **Recommendation(s)**

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Note the progress made against the Year 1 and 2 priorities of Our People Strategy 2023 – 2027.

#### **Local Member Interest:**

N/A.

### **Report of the Leader of the Council**

#### **Summary**

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the progress that has and continues to be made against Our People Strategy 2023 – 2027. The Committee is asked to note the considerable progress against the year 1 & 2 action plan. People Services continue to work towards the plan as well as embedding activity that has recently been launched.

#### **Report**

##### **Background**

2. Our refreshed people strategy was launched in April 2023 after being developed in consultation with our people, managers, and leaders from across the council. Their feedback helped us to enhance and build a reflective and ambitious strategy to support the council through the uncertainty and challenges we face over the next four years.
3. The two-year workplan for People Services allow effective resource planning, but with the flexibility to reassess and amend plans at regular intervals.
4. Our year 1 priorities are:
  - a. Develop and launch “how we lead and work around here” standards to set clear expectations for our workforce, to build the right culture and approach to achieve our ambitions. **Completed.**

- b. Improving recruitment in a competitive market by raising our profile and promoting our employment offer. This is essential to ensure we have the right people to deliver against our strategic plan and make a positive difference for the people of Staffordshire. **Significant impact achieved.**
  - c. Design and introduce a core leadership and management offer. This will help managers and leaders to innovate, focus on communities and deliver on our ambitions. **In progress.**
  - d. Support leaders to workforce plan and identify opportunities for talent/key skill collaboration within and outside the organisation. Effective collaboration results in different and innovative approaches which can maximise success. **In progress.**
  - e. Support development of innovation toolkits and an idea submission process. Helping to achieve engagement across the organisation towards an innovation culture. **Completed.**
  - f. Embed personal responsibility in learning and development. **In progress.**
  - g. Give managers the skills and capability to prevent and manage absence and support wellbeing. **Significant impact achieved.**
5. Following evaluation of the changing internal organisational needs, some of the year 2 priorities have been brought forward to ensure those needs are met:
- a. Improving and transforming our onboarding and induction processes of WeWelcome, Mandatory Training with a potentially new Learning Platform for employees. **In progress.**
  - b. Beginning the development and improvement of tools for our managers and leaders to create effective teams by managing change well. **In progress.**
  - c. Refreshing our policies and procedures to support our ambitions. **In progress.**
  - d. Improving time to hire rates and candidate experience through the transformation of issued contracts. **Significant impact achieved.**
6. The shift in these priorities have meant that delivery of core Leadership and Management offer has been moved to later in 2024 to enable greater consultation, market research and detailed business cases to be developed to ensure it meets the needs of the organisation. Some enabling products are being developed alongside this work so that managers have tools required for their operational roles.

## Overview of current activity by Pillar

7. Key projects and activities have been identified which will deliver the outcomes of the strategy. These are detailed below against the four pillars of the strategy that contribute to the 1–2-year plan.

### **Pillar - Attracting and keeping talented people.**

8. One of the key areas of improvement and focus for our recruitment team has been to enhance the infrastructure to ensure more efficient and effective recruitment processes.

9. Through the implementation of state-of-the-art technology, streamlined workflows, and a robust Applicant Tracking System 'WeRecruit', our team has been able to significantly reduce the time and effort required for recruitment activities. This not only improves the experience for both candidates and hiring managers but also enhances the overall reputation of the County Council as an employer of choice.

a. Since the launch of WeRecruit, we have registered over 15,600 new candidates, receiving over 21,200 applications.

b. Average applications per advert currently standing at 22.4 an increase by over 6 compared to the average at the end of 22/23.

c. We have increased the number of male applications from 26.9% to 31.6% and increased LGBTQ applications from 6.8% to 7.9%.

d. Increase in the number of under 30 applicants from 17.8% to 20.5%.

e. Increase in applications from ethnic minority groups from 18.1% to 33%.

f. Filled 1077 positions over 12 months – 89.75 average per month. 68% have been filled by external applicants 32% by internal applicants. New starters reporting a positive experience of the Recruitment process average score 8.4/10.

g. We have also seen a decrease in time to hire from 49.3 to 43.8 days. Voluntary turnover is currently 6.8% from 8.4% in 2022/23, and retention after 1 year is up from 77.6% in 22/23 to 83.1%

h. We have introduced a monthly Integrated reporting suite through power BI, which can also be broken down into Directorate and subsidiary business units. This enables to the team to monitor performance and provide targeted support to managers as required.

## Careers Website and Brand Ambassadors

10. In line with our People Strategy, the key driver to attract and retain exceptional talent is our Careers Website, known as the "shop window" of our organisation. The new Careers Website has now been launched with a refreshed look incorporating the Employer Branding and 20 Brand Ambassadors representing a diverse group of employees representing the communities within Staffordshire, with roles and career pathways from across the organisation featured in Brand Ambassador videos and content.
11. As the main marketing platform for external candidates the current website was identified as underperforming with only **2%** of individuals coming through the website applying for jobs at Staffordshire County Council. Developing a new website provided the opportunity to incorporate the Employer Branding and make it more engaging and accessible. There was also opportunity to refresh and design a number of new materials for recruitment events, which will also follow the same branding, look, and feel of the website.
12. The improvements to our career website have been informed by extensive research, both internally and externally, which identified several key themes that prospective employees value in a career's website:
  - a. **Understanding Benefits and Flexibility:** Candidates want comprehensive information about the benefits and flexibility we offer, recognising the importance of work-life balance and employee well-being.
  - b. **Authentic Insights:** Prospective employees seek to hear from real individuals within the organisation to gain a genuine understanding of our workplace culture and atmosphere.
  - c. **Clarity of Purpose:** Candidates value clarity about the roles they would undertake within the organisation, emphasizing the significance of understanding their contributions.
  - d. **EDI Commitment:** It is essential for our careers website to effectively communicate our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Prospective employees desire a clear demonstration of our dedication to creating an inclusive workplace.
  - e. **Representation and Diversity:** Candidates wish to see authentic representations of our diverse workforce, allowing them to envision themselves as part of our organisation.
13. Collaborating closely with the Communications and Digital Teams, we have aligned the design of the website with our brand identity while ensuring a seamless user experience. A 'mobile first' design approach

is being adopted, recognising that an increasing 70% of users access careers sites through mobile devices. Additionally, we are prioritising accessibility to offer a consistent experience for all users, irrespective of their background or abilities.

14. Our redesigned careers website is not merely an informative platform but a strategic tool for attracting top talent. By addressing these key themes and aligning the website with our brand and accessibility principles, we aim to establish a compelling and authentic digital presence that resonates with the informed, discerning candidates of today. This evolution of our career's website will play a pivotal role in our ongoing efforts to attract and engage the right talent, reinforcing our status as an employer of choice.

### **Candidate and Hiring Manager Surveys**

15. To continually improve our resourcing services, we have launched a survey for candidates and hiring managers. The insights gathered will guide our efficiency with results anticipated in February 24. We aim to maintain an overall satisfaction score of 8.5/10 and a net promotor score of 65/100.

### **Contracts**

16. To improve our first-time fill and time to hire rates, along with improving the onboarding experience and first impressions of the organisation, the current employee contracts are undergoing a review and rationalisation from the current provision of 70 reducing to an aspirational 20 contract templates. Consultation has also taken place with a number of workers forums to ensure language and provision is suitable and consideration of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion requirements. Currently in discussions with procurement for the development of eSignatures as part of the new process. Potential options include distribution to new hires through WeRecruit ATS. There is an ambition that this will be completed and launched by March 2024.

### **Green Car Scheme**

17. New electric & hybrid lease car scheme has been launched to develop the employee benefits offer and support our sustainability agenda. This scheme offers employees the option to lease electric & hybrid cars, after the first twelve months we have 52 cars on the scheme.

### **Pay structure benchmark.**

18. We have undertaken a benchmark exercise to understand how our pay structure compares against the public and private sector market. This has allowed us to understand that our pay is at the median of the public sector market and for us to consider the future of the pay structure and wider job and organisational design.

### **National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP)**

19. We currently have two graduates who have just moved into their second year of the 2-year programme and one graduate who has recently joined us for the 2023 / 2025 cohort.

### **Vacancy Data Cleanse**

20. A strategic review of all vacancies has commenced to ensure all current vacancies are required and aligned to service budgets. This will then allow better workforce planning and management activity.

### **Networks with schools and Universities**

21. Connections have been made with our local schools and Universities; we have attended 17 career fairs in the last 12 months to raise our employer profile.

### **Apprenticeships**

22. During August 2022 – July 2023 the number of apprenticeships who have started has doubled compared to previous year from 65 to 126.

### **Coming Soon**

#### **Digital ID checks**

23. We will build on the functionality and efficiency of WeRecruit and bring further improvements to our recruitment offering by introducing Digital ID checks in January 2024. With a digital ID and right to work checks platform, the entire process will be streamlined and automated. It will eliminate the need for manual paperwork and reduce the time and effort required for verification, leading to quicker and more efficient onboarding of new employees.



### **Exit and stay interviews.**

24. A corporate approach to exit and stay interviews is being investigated ready for implementation during 2024. This will replace the local arrangements in some services who currently have exit interviews to assist retention insights.

### **Reward & Recognition**

25. Following an employee engagement survey in 2023 we will be reviewing the long service award and wider corporate recognition in 2024. Results of the survey are being used by the Directorates to inform local recognition activity. The Reward Team are continuing to consider what new corporate benefits could be launched in the future as well as considering how we develop local benefits within Staffordshire.

### **Employee Benefits**

26. The uptake in our reward and benefits platform Vivup, continues to increase from the initial target of 27% in the first six months, which was achieved following launch in December 2021. Employee registration now currently sits at 66% in quarter two of 2023.

### **New Innovation Awards**

27. To support the Innovation and Creativity Programme a new awards scheme is being designed and will be launching in 2024.

### **Work Experience**

28. To support managers who require a work experience candidate guidance document will be created along with a dedicated page on SharePoint. Many business areas hosted work experience opportunities during the summer term. This work will support significant increase in 2024.

## **Pillar - Promoting a positive working environment.**

### **How we Work**

29. We launched our 'How we work' document in October 2023, which helps to put our values into action. Since the launch the site has been viewed by over 500 individuals from across the council.

## **SMART Working Guide**

30. A new guide has been created to reflect our continued approach to smart working. The smart guide offers guiding principles on the What, When How and Why within a flexible framework, alongside some practical tools. There are activities and templates within the smart guide that support reflection on current practices and guidance to support with the creation of team charters. Since the launch in October 2023 the new smart page and guide have had visits over 1000 times which is a **447%** increase on visits and viewers from the previous month.

## **WellMe**

31. Our wellbeing offer has been enhanced with additional tools and support across all four themes. A health and wellbeing calendar of events covering topics such as Menopause, Eating healthy on a budget, Burn out and Bounce Back, Thriving in a Hybrid World runs throughout the year. 60 Domestic abuse champions have been trained to support this critical issue. Our financial wellbeing offer has been enhanced to implement Salary Advance to allow employees access to their pay as its earned. The offer includes a wide range of support to help with the impact of the cost of living. We have also completed NPS surveys of our ThinkWell (89) and Physio (84) support achieving excellent feedback outcomes. ThinkWell is accessed by 8% of our people and physio by 5% of our people.

## **We Talk Toolkit**

32. The refreshed We talk toolkit was launched in November 2023 to ensure our leaders and managers have the necessary tools and skills to manage their staff. The 6 aims of We Talk toolkit are:
- a. Connect to the Organisation
  - b. Clarify Expectations
  - c. Check in Regularly.
  - d. Give and Receive Feedback
  - e. Build the Team
  - f. Resolve Issues Early

## **Post Covid 19 Syndrome**

33. A support offer has been developed which is designed to support affected colleagues across the council.

## **Trauma Preparedness Training and Professional Resilience Pilot**

34. This support is being offered to colleagues in Children & Families to equip them with the knowledge and skills and support our people after

a traumatic event. This support seeks to minimise the risk of people experiencing long-term psychological harm and addressing prevention and quick identification of when further support is needed.

### **WeResolve mediation service**

35. A new mediation service has been launched to support managers to resolve workplace issues quickly. Managers and employees can refer to the service via the Advice and Guidance team, who will triage the matter and ensure it is appropriate to proceed for mediation or offer advice on other options to resolve issues informally.

### **ASK People Services**

36. This product has resulted in a decrease in time to resolve queries by 0.5 days compared to 2022 when it launched.

### **People Policies Reimagined**

37. Since the launch of the five key people policies of Disciplinary, Capability, Resolving Grievances, Anti Bullying and Harassment, absence, and an Appeals procedure, further policies have been updated including Flexible Working, Whistleblowing and Fostering Friendly.

### **Absence Reduction Plans**

38. Following the introduction of the revised policy and supporting toolkits, we have a targeted programme of interventions including weekly absence reports, absence hotspot reviews, regular absence advice surgeries for managers to provide training and support, continued focus on return-to-work completions, Assistant Director absence deep dive meetings and a new occupational health referral process and guidance. Absence has reduced by 1.76 days in last 12 months. Occupational Health appointments have been delivered within 6.9 days calendar days following referral. 90% of reports with managers the same day. Occupational Health Net Promotor Score 50 achieved.

### **Coming Soon**

#### **New Health and Safety System Digital Modules**

39. Three modules being implemented over next 3 years. Workstation Assessments being implemented in February 2024. The system has been designed and is currently undergoing user acceptance testing. This will reduce management activity and streamline processes whilst improving governance.

### **H&C Absence Pilot**

40. The Health, Safety & Wellbeing Service has developed a business case which has been approved to implement additional occupational health activities to target absence reduction of both long- and short-term absence in Health & Care. We aim to launch this new approach in January 2024.

### **Revised Alcohol and Drug Misuse Policy**

41. A revised Alcohol and Drugs Misuse Policy is under development for launch early in 2024. This Policy will be supported by new testing provider contract.

### **WeResolve**

42. The next stage of development of the service is to provide training and support for managers to give them the confidence and skills to facilitate difficult conversations and resolve matters early to prevent matters escalating to formal procedures.

### **People Policies**

43. More policies and processes are now being updated to reflect our People Strategy, values and contribute to promoting a positive working environment. Whilst we continue to work through reimagining our remaining policies we are now at a point where we can start to review the embedding of the big five policies as the first tranche were launched in September 2022.

### **Managing Change Well**

44. A project group is working together to improve our policies, procedures, and processes to improve the change experience for the business and for our employees. This includes developing toolkits and support mechanisms for managers.

### **Health Care Cash Plans**

45. Launching Spring 2024 are Health Care Cash Plans to support employees to purchase through their pay access to an insurance policy to meet the cost of routine healthcare such as dental for them and/or their family to support health and wellbeing.

## **Pillar Developing skills for now and in the future.**

### **We Welcome**

46. We have embedded our new induction approach to help colleagues in their first few critical months to feel safe, happy, and confident. With an NPS score currently standing at 54. The programme supports them in three ways:
- g. A warm welcome to the organisation and your team
  - h. An understanding of the organisation
  - i. Providing a way to hit the ground running.

### **Mandatory Training Manager**

47. Dashboards providing managers with clear overview on completion rates for current mandatory training have been introduced. Compliance has improved on completion rates for Mandatory Training up to 62.8% with monthly improvements being seen.

### **Innovation and Creativity Programme**

48. We are establishing a taskforce of 45 colleagues who will champion creativity and innovation across the County Council. We have launched ACE Idea campaign and held workshops for staff to ignite engagement and develop skills. To date 15 members of the taskforce have undertaken the training, four of which have become facilitators supporting the first Staffordshire Innovation Challenge, with others being used to facilitate Senior Leadership conferences and service away days and activities. The second cohort of 15 representing all directorates have begun their training with the third and final cohort commencing their training in April 2024.

### **Innovation Toolkit Pilot**

49. A toolkit of resources have been developed to provide staff with information and guidance on creativity and innovation techniques. The toolkit was used as a test pilot with the Staffordshire Innovation Challenge and by the attendees of the Let's Get Ace events. Both the toolkit and events have been well received with 75% of attendees at the Let's Get Ace events accessing the toolkit, with an overall satisfaction of the learning experience as 4/5.

### **Love Learning Campaign**

50. A 12-month campaign of learning designed to put some excitement and energy into what and how we learn. Every month will focus on a key

theme that is important to us as an organisation, with themes being drawn from our work, the people strategy, and the wider strategic plan. Ultimately creating a learning buzz and embedding a self-directed learning culture. Since launch there have been over **1000** visits to the Love Learning site, **9 live learning** sessions held in October with **5 Live** session in November with plans developed to the end of the year and into 2024.

## **Coming Soon**

### **Mandatory Training**

51. A full review of Mandatory Training is currently underway following the release of the new Manager dashboards in August 2023. The plan and way forward for Mandatory Training will be presented to SLT in December 2023 and implemented throughout 2024.

### **Learning Hub Review**

52. Our learning management system and digital learning content contracts will be re procured at the end of 2024 to maximise the offer and ensure value for money.

### **Refreshed approach for Apprenticeships & Early Careers**

53. We are working with the LGA to assist us to consider how best to utilise the Apprentice Levy as part of a wider Early Careers Strategy.

## **Pillar - Developing leaders for now and in the future**

### **Employee Net Promotor Score (eNPS)**

54. Our employee engagement tool (eNPS) shows us that between the period January 2022 to July 2023 more employees would recommend SCC to their friends and family as a place to work, positively impacting on our ability to retain and attract talented people. In the most recent wave culture, wider leadership and management support have become the largest topic of advocacy. The directorates have all made positive progress in their own areas and are using data from the eNPS to inform service-based activity and their People Strategy Directorate Delivery Plans. ENPS Score up from 11 to 26 in 18 months across SCC.

### **How we Lead**

55. 'How we Lead' principles were launched in October 2023 to show leadership in action across 4 key themes:

- a. We Deliver Results
- b. We Drive Innovation
- c. We Empower and Support
- d. We Are Role Models

56. These will form the basis of a leadership development programme in 2024.

### **Leadership Conference on Creativity and Innovation**

57. The May 2023 Senior Leadership Conference created the launch platform for our Creativity and Innovation programme. Led by Dr Mark Batey a leading expert approach to innovation activity and provide leaders with skills and awareness they can use immediately and build further on.

### **Coming Soon**

#### **Management Development and Leadership Development**

58. A new management development and leadership development programme is being scoped for agreement and launch in 2024.

#### **Workforce Planning**

59. Work has commenced to identify and shape tools that will assist managers to effectively workforce plan.

### **People Strategy Directorate Delivery Plans**

60. Each directorate is working towards its own Directorate Delivery Plan. This enables the wider workforce to engage in the People Strategy and for the directorates to focus on particular areas of challenge for their own areas as well as incorporating feedback from employees in those teams. Where they exist, the employee voice groups are working with colleagues to ensure that the plans are relevant and meaningful for all colleagues.

### **Link to Strategic Plan**

61. Our Strategic Plan sets out our ambitions for our communities and our People Strategy mirrors these ambitions for our people.

### **Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity**

62. None identified.

## **Community Impact**

63. A Community Impact Assessment was completed when we developed the People Strategy, and this has been kept under review and no additions or changes have been required to date.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – People Strategy 2023 – 2027

Appendix 2 – Community Impact Assessment – People Strategy.

## **Contact Details**

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# Our People Strategy

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With pride. With purpose. With you.  
**2023-2027 and beyond.**

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# Introduction



**Sarah Getley**  
Assistant Director  
for People

Our People Strategy has helped us to grow and develop as a council. Our achievements over the last few years have provided us with a fantastic platform to build on. The strategy has helped us to lead our people well during unprecedented times, during which colleagues have shown resilience and strength to achieve amazing outcomes for the people of Staffordshire. We are proud of all that we have achieved together.

Our smart working agenda has changed our culture for the better and has given our people the confidence to do things differently, make bold decisions and modernise the way we work.

## Our future challenges

As we move into the future, the nature of the challenges we face and how we respond will be very different. Having leaders that can bring innovation and encourage collaboration will be important to address these challenges. It's essential that we look up and out for innovative ideas to deliver change in challenging times. We must keep and build on the agility we showed during the pandemic.

The people delivering outcomes for Staffordshire are wider than the people we directly employ. They are also made up of volunteers, commissioned adult and children social care providers, maintained schools and academies and the employees of our partners. We need to make sure we share our People Strategy with stakeholders and partners and explore how we innovate and collaborate for better outcomes.



# People Services achievements

Our refreshed People Strategy builds on our journey so far.

You can see some of our biggest achievements on this page.

This provides us with an excellent platform to build on, embedding our vision and values.

We will continue to make sure that we develop our people and bring in new people who are able to realise their potential, supporting the delivery of effective and efficient services to the people of Staffordshire.

The COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on our people and the way in which we work. It showed how well our people respond and adapt to new challenges, but also presented an opportunity to re-shape the way we work.



# Directorate achievements and ongoing activity

Our People Strategy has also been brought to life through the work that each directorate has delivered. This has looked and felt different in each business area to reflect the needs of our people.

This page highlights some of the great work that our people have collectively achieved.

Some of this work continues and each directorate is committed to building on this to make Staffordshire a great place to work.



# How our People Strategy connects

We have a clear and compelling vision for Staffordshire. Our Strategic Plan sets out our ambitions for our communities and our People Strategy mirrors these ambitions for our people. The People Strategy supports our council's aim to be an excellent employer with a welcoming culture, in which people live and breathe our vision and values. This strategy is for you and about you.

## We want to:

- **Build a workplace where our people can be their best and demonstrate our values through everything they do.**
- **Create a workforce which has personal and collective resilience, by putting wellbeing at the heart of everything we do.**
- **Be well led with visible and trusted leadership that empowers and inspires people to succeed.**
- **Create an energy behind our Strategic Plan so that our people understand and know how to deliver on our key priorities.**
- **Empower our people to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the people of Staffordshire.**

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

## Outcomes

Everyone in Staffordshire will:



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



Live in thriving and sustainable communities



Be healthier and independent for longer

## Priorities



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



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



Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence



Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections



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

## How we work



Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other



Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered



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



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

**Pledge:** Live within our means and deliver value for money

More than 70% of our people live in Staffordshire

# Our people

Understanding the make-up of our people helps us to plan for the future.

## We know:

- Our workforce is large and across a diverse range of roles with low turnover in most areas. Clear directorate workforce planning helps us to be agile and responsive to emerging needs.
- That due to our ageing workforce, we need to have succession plans in place to grow our talent and support knowledge transfer.
- That investment in apprenticeship recruitment and early career opportunities will develop new talent.
- Our risk areas in terms of recruitment and retention of key professions and have plans in place to address these risks.
- How to tackle the main causes of ill-health and how to use our excellent wellbeing services to support our people.
- The main causes of absence and have targeted interventions to address these areas.
- By making our reward and recruitment processes more inclusive we can improve our gender pay gap.
- Building a diverse and inclusive environment, reflective of the people of Staffordshire will enhance creativity and result in better outcomes.





# Our values

## Our values define us

We all share a common purpose of public service to the people of Staffordshire.

Our values support our Strategic Plan and vision and are at the heart of everything we do.

Our people are **A C E** and unique, which is why we want to make sure we lead them well and provide the benefits and wellbeing support they need.

Our people have different roles, different things that motivate them, different learning needs and will be at different stages of their career journey. But our values unite us to achieve amazing things.

## Ambitious

We are ambitious for our communities and the people of Staffordshire

## Courageous

We recognise our challenges and are prepared to make courageous decisions

## Empowering

We empower and support our people by giving them the opportunity to do their jobs well



# Attracting and keeping talented people

We are an organisation with big ambitions so we need talented people. We want our people to have a positive experience at work, and to feel engaged with their team and our vision, so that they want to go the extra mile. We need to have people who want to build their future with us, feel they belong and can make a difference.

We must also be able to attract new talent who can bring fresh ideas. To achieve this we will create attractive, meaningful roles that provide opportunities for career progression. We need to be ahead of the curve in planning our workforce for the future and take steps to ensure we have a continual supply of skilled people, who live our values and provide excellent public service.

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## We will:

1. Find creative ways to attract and retain talented people who share our values.
2. Plan for the future to make sure we have the right talent, in the right place and at the right time, to deliver our ambitions.
3. Deliver a great candidate experience through a quick and effective recruitment process and induction.
4. Develop a reward and benefits offer that is valued by our people and is competitive and attractive in the market.
5. Create innovative career opportunities for our people and to attract our future talent.
6. Recognise and celebrate the achievements of our people.

## What success will look like, high level impact:

- Quick and efficient recruitment process that is competitive in the marketplace.
- Increased retention rate during the first year of employment.
- Our people profile is reflective of the people of Staffordshire.
- Increase in the uptake of our reward and benefits offer.





# Promoting a positive work environment

We want our people to enjoy coming to work. We want them to feel challenged and appreciated for what they do and make a positive difference. This will include living our values, enabling wellbeing and challenging others to do the same. Creating diverse, dynamic teams and embracing smart working will foster a culture of innovation.

Our environment will encourage people to perform at their best, to come up with new ideas and support each other as we evolve. We will create opportunities for people to connect and make sure their voices are heard, to create an environment of trust, inclusivity and transparency.

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## We will:

1. Foster a feeling of belonging, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into what we do.
2. Create a culture of trust, collaboration and ambition, through open discussions and good conversations with each other, external partners and trade union colleagues.
3. Offer wellbeing services to support our people to manage their physical health, mental health, financial and social wellbeing.
4. Optimise attendance and productivity with effective people processes and management support.
5. Manage change well.
6. Make good health and safety management decisions in which risks are managed sensibly and proportionately, so all our people are safe and well.
7. Train and support our managers to manage and achieve early resolution of people related matters.

## What success will look like, high level impact:

- Welcoming and positive organisational culture.
- High performing teams.
- Well managed absence supported by wellbeing services.
- Strong people management skills to seek early resolution.

# Developing skills for now and the future

We have highly skilled and committed people, but our role is changing and many of us will need new skills in the future. We will support our people to take accountability for their own personal development, so they can improve their skills for now and the future.

This will mean better opportunities for our people, so they can perform well in their roles and pursue exciting careers in the public sector. We will create an environment where our people embrace learning as part of their everyday activity.

## We will:

- 1. Motivate our people to identify and develop their future skill needs and build learning into everyday work to support performance and growth.**
- 2. Embed a communities mindset so that our people have the knowledge and skills to empower and enable communities.**
- 3. Facilitate teams to be high performing, innovative, agile, resilient and change ready.**
- 4. Enable our people to grow, move forward and develop their career opportunities with us.**
- 5. Make sure that our people have mandatory training that is essential for safe and effective delivery of services.**

## What success will look like, high level impact:

- A learning 'buzz' around the organisation.
- Our people have the training needed to do their jobs well.
- High performing teams that deliver outcomes for the people of Staffordshire.



# Developing leaders for now and the future

Our leaders are not just people in senior positions, they are at all levels across the council. Leaders have a significant part to play in our success and in championing our vision and values.

Our challenge is to lead in an increasingly complex and challenging environment. To succeed, we need to help our leaders to be engaged, optimistic and resilient, so they can navigate the future. Our leaders will have a clear sense of purpose and possess the skills to lead transformational change whilst keeping their teams happy, healthy and productive.

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## We will:

1. Create a culture where leaders feel confident to operate and lead in an ambiguous environment, think differently, take informed risks and be accountable for themselves and others.
2. Promote visible, values led and inclusive leadership at all levels.
3. Support leaders to design effective services, make sound decisions and manage change well.
4. Focus on identifying leadership talent for the future.
5. Invest in developing the skills of our leaders and future leaders.

## What success will look like, high level impact:

- Leadership is appreciated and valued.
- Our leaders are confident to lead the organisation in a complex environment.
- Leaders achieve high performance and effective outcomes.
- Our future leaders are identified, developed and ready to move us forward.
- Our people are skilfully led, and change is managed well.

# People Strategy Year 1–2 Plan

## Attracting and keeping talented people

- Compete in complex recruitment market by raising our profile and promoting our employment offer.\*
- Improve our first time fill and time to hire rates.\*
- Further develop our early careers offer.
- Develop and learn from exit and stay interviews.
- Use our applicant tracking system to build a great candidate and onboarding experience.
- Develop our pay and benefits offer to compete with market conditions.
- Develop 'grow our own' opportunities for critical skill gaps.
- Refresh our recognition arrangements.

## Promoting a positive working environment

- Develop and launch 'how we lead and work around here' guides.\*
- Give managers the skills and capability to prevent and manage absence and support wellbeing.\*
- Enhance our wellbeing services further to improve our people resilience and reduce cost of living impacts.
- Review and revise our health, safety and wellbeing audit process.
- Introduce new MYH&S System modules to improve performance and simplify processes.
- Build on and develop WeResolve to reduce formal case management.
- Refresh more people policies to support our ambitions.
- Embrace and evolve our smart working culture.
- Improve the speed of response to issues raised by our people.

## Developing skills for now and the future

- Embed a personal responsibility approach to learning and development.\*
- Support development of innovation toolkits and idea submission process.\*
- Set up talent and skill exchange processes.
- Build on and embed WeTalk.
- Improve mandatory training.
- Embed WeWelcome – our new approach to induction.
- Evolve the Learning Hub offer and share insights.

## Developing leaders for now and the future

- Design and introduce a core leadership and management development offer.\*
- Support leaders to workforce plan and identify opportunities for talent/key skill collaboration within and outside the organisation.\*
- Provide the tools and development for leaders to create effective teams and manage change well.
- Identify future leaders and invest in their development.
- Give managers and leaders the tools to support progression of our talented people and ensure effective knowledge transfer.
- Implement learning from our employer Net Promoter Score (eNPS) surveys.

\*Year 1 priorities

# Our People Strategy

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With pride. With purpose. With you.  
**2023-2027 and beyond.**



# Community Impact Assessment

People Strategy 2023 - 2027 and beyond

Author: Becky Lee Head of Health, Safety & Wellbeing

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> Oct 2022 - Reviewed November 2023

This is the County Council's Community Impact Assessment (CIA) policy providing both guidance and templates to help you to carry out your assessment. It is split into three sections as follows:

- Section 1    CIA Guidance
- Section 2    The CIA Template
- Section 3    Submitting your CIA

## Section 1: The CIA Guide

### What is a CIA?

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is at the heart of everything we do as a Council. A CIA is a helpful tool that we use to assess the impact of our work on our communities, in line with our commitment to equality. By completing a thorough CIA we are able to ensure that we minimise potential negative consequences for everybody.

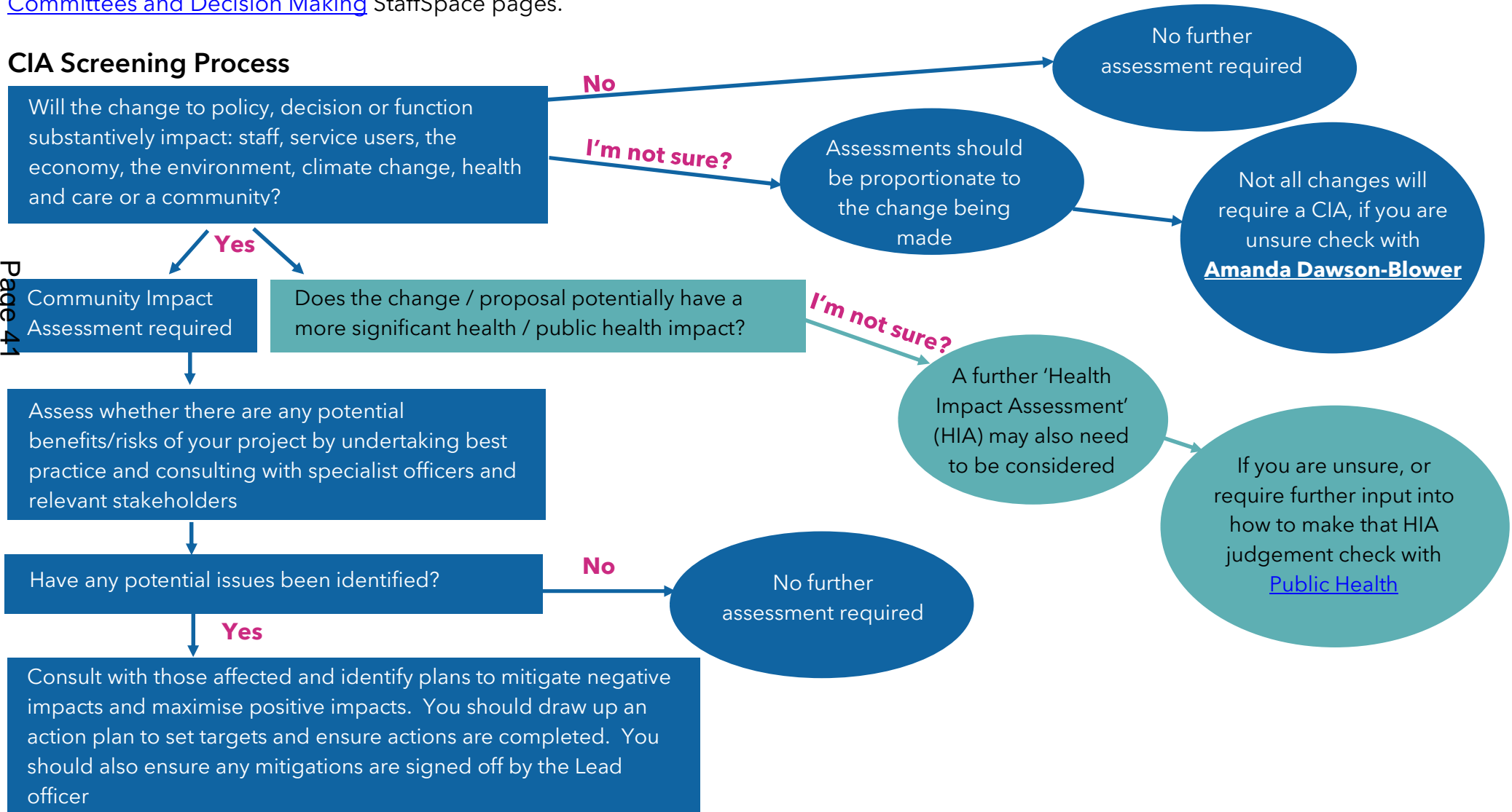
### When do I need to undertake a CIA?

Generally, changes to services, policies and strategies we deliver, and commission, will require an assessment to measure their impact upon communities and their environment. Assessments should be proportionate to the change being made. Not all changes will require an assessment, if you are unsure you can check with [Amanda Dawson-Blower](#), who will also be able to provide you with support to undertake your CIA if required.



Most Cabinet reports will require a CIA and key information from your assessment should inform your recommendations within the report. For more information about the County Council's decision-making processes and to access the Cabinet report template, visit the [Committees and Decision Making](#) StaffSpace pages.

### CIA Screening Process



## Key steps to consider:

- **Read the guidance** before you start! We also have a [CIA Learning Hub module](#) with tools and resources to support you too.
  - If your project involves processing **personal data** in a different way, contact [infogov@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:infogov@staffordshire.gov.uk).
  - It is important to **undertake your CIA early**, during the planning stage of your project, it is a tool to help inform your decision and should not be undertaken after you have made your decision. It is therefore important to ensure adequate lead-in time to undertake necessary data gathering and analysis.
  - Undertaking **research and engagement** will provide you with an evidence base to identify actions that will either lessen the risk or maximise the benefits. The assessment will also help you to identify mitigating factors whereby risks may be balanced out to an extent by the benefits. Again, you should take a proportionate approach to the amount of research and engagement you undertake.
- Involve other people** - they may have some creative solutions for enhancing positive and reducing negative impacts! A project team will provide different expertise and if your project relates to a specific location involve the relevant [Strategic Delivery Manager](#).
- **Complete the CIA Template** - The templates below in section 2 set out what is required to complete the various key sections of your CIA. The template enables you to record which groups of people will potentially be most affected by your project (utilising the data gathering/analysis undertaken earlier), what the benefits and/or risks may be and how you will mitigate any potential risks.
  - **Provisional assessments** - At the initial stages, you may not have all the evidence you need so you can conduct a provisional assessment. However, you must put in plans to gather the required information so that a full assessment can be completed.
  - **Submit your CIA** - Section 4 sets out how to submit your CIA and also contains a checklist of actions that should be completed before submission - it will be useful to familiarise yourself with this checklist before beginning your assessment.

## Section 2: The CIA Template

Important points to note when completing the template:

- The CIA is split into a number of different categories - you don't have to fill in all of them, just those that are relevant to your project
- When your assessment is complete, delete the sections not applicable
- Ensure you only include relevant information to keep the forms as succinct as possible

### Page 48 Equality Assessment

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

In this section you should consider whether your proposal will impact upon any of the following protected characteristics. Your assessment should also consider where different protected characteristics (e.g. age and gender, or gender and ethnicity) could interact with each other, and any impact this may have for potential inequalities. This will help ensure changes/new practices highlight all opportunities to be inclusive by design (i.e. considering benefits and/or risks and any necessary mitigation).

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<b>Age</b> - older and younger people <b>The age profile of the Council shows that over 72% of our workforce is over 40 and 47% over 50 with a small cohort of staff under the age of 20. We have an ageing workforce and need to work, attract and retain more young people through</b>	People Strategy is supportive of our people of all ages. Apprenticeships are increasing as are other	Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the	Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p><b>consistent talent management, our apprenticeship and graduate programme and succession planning</b></p>	<p>early career opportunities.</p>	<p>refreshed People Strategy</p> <p>Good succession planning needed to manage risk of ageing workforce</p>	
<p><b>Disability</b> - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.</p> <p><b>Of employees who have reported whether they have a disability, 7% have reported yes, and 93% no or not stated. This is broadly reflective of the general population of Staffordshire. Approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem. Our highest reason for sickness absence is stress and mental health reasons.</b></p>	<p>People Strategy is supportive of our people regardless of disability and the positive work environment pillar commitments support building mental health awareness and further enhancing wellbeing support. The foundation also ensures that inclusivity for all is a key objective. EDI is also foundation within our People Policies</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p> <p>People Services/Managers aware of workplace support for mental Health MindKind and ThinkWell.</p> <p>ThinkWell has specialist providers who can support.</p> <p>The network of mental health first aiders</p>

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>The foundations blocks in the People Strategy make clear links to the mental health support available.</p>		
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b> - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another.</p> <p><b>The council does not keep data on Gender reassignment.</b></p>	<p>People Strategy is supportive of our people that are on the journey or completed gender reassignment.</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p>
<p><b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b> - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work</p> <p><b>40% are married</b> <b>27% not shared this information</b> <b>33% Other</b></p>	<p>People Strategy is supportive of our people no matter their marital status</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p>

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p><b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b> - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers</p> <p><b>2.5% of our people take maternity or paternity leave per annum</b></p>	<p>People Strategy is supportive of our people during any period of authorised leave.</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements.</p>
<p><b>Race</b> - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins</p> <p><b>7% of our people identify as BAME and 77% white British with the rest not stating.</b></p> <p><b>Overall there is little ethnic diversity across Staffordshire with the population being predominantly White British. Data from the 2011 Census suggests that local concentrations of minority ethnic population are mainly within Burton in East Staffordshire, with the single largest minority group in these areas being Pakistani.</b></p>	<p>People Strategy applies to our people without discrimination or disadvantage regardless of any protected characteristic.</p> <p>One of the foundations of the strategy is Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.</p> <p>The pillar on promoting a positive work environment covers inclusivity</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p> <p>Black Workers Group approached as part of implementation.</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p>

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>The how we work section on leadership and our people also incorporated valuing diversity and being inclusive of others</p> <p>Helps promote the importance of EDI principles</p>		
<p><b>Religion or Belief</b> - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered</p> <p><b>33% Cristian and 5% other religions. High proportion did not compete this data in their MYHR personal information.</b></p>	<p>People Strategy is supportive of our people of all communities and religions.</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p>
<p><b>Sex</b> - men or women</p> <p><b>The Council employs a higher percentage of women (76%) than men (24%)</b></p> <p><b>Our mean Gender pay gap is 9.7%</b></p> <p><b>Our Median Gender Pay gap is 13.7%, which has reduced.</b></p>	<p>People Strategy supportive of our people regardless of gender or sexuality</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p>

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p><b>Sexual orientation</b> - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes</p> <p><b>Our people report that 2.3% of them are LGBTQ+</b></p>	<p>People Strategy is supportive of our people regardless of gender or sexuality</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Detailed implementation plan together with clear monitoring arrangements</p>

## Workforce Assessment

**\*\*This section only needs to be undertaken if your proposal affects SCC staff\*\***

Key considerations:

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



<p><b>Who will be affected</b> - consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage &amp; civil partnership, pregnancy &amp; maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation</p>	<p><b>Benefits</b></p>	<p><b>Risks</b></p>	<p><b>Mitigations / Recommendations</b></p>
<p>73 % of our people live in Staffordshire.</p> <p>64% are full time and 35% part time 1% casual hours.</p> <p>94% permanent.</p> <p>We do use agency workers to support critical role gaps. The People Strategy considers Agency Workers as part of our people whilst with the organisation.</p> <p>Our people are important to the delivery of services and the People Strategy is about our people and investing in them and with them</p> <p><b>See above table for EDI data against the protected characteristics.</b></p>	<p>The People Strategy will benefit all our people and has been developed with them.</p>	<p>Managed by engagement with diverse range of our people in the development and launch of the refreshed People Strategy</p>	<p>Effective communication and engagement plan to ensure that all our people made aware of the new People Strategy and how they can engage with it and live our values</p>

## ➤ Health, Well-being and Social Care Assessment

A key priority within our Strategic Plan is to 'Encourage good health and well-being, resilience and independence'. This section should therefore be used to identify the impact of the proposal on delivery of this priority.

Key considerations:

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

If the proposal potentially has a more significant impact on health and wellbeing (of individuals or communities), where applicable, **a further 'Health Impact Assessment' may need to be considered.** Please contact [Public Health](#) to discuss or for further advice and guidance on completing a 'Health Impact Assessment'.

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Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Mental Health	Council is commitment to mental health awareness and has detailed MindKind support including access to early intervention support	None identified	WellMe Wellbeing Strategy

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	and network of mental health first aiders		
Healthy Lifestyles	Health and Wellbeing of our people is a key component of our people strategy and Staffordshire offers a wide range of wellbeing support covering physical health, mental health, financial wellbeing and social wellbeing.	None identified	WellMe Wellbeing Strategy
Safeguarding	Relevant People Policies and Health, safety and Wellbeing	None identified	HR Policies and Procedures

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	arrangements cover safeguarding		

### ➤ Communities Assessment

Use this section to identify the impact of the proposal on communities.

Key considerations:

- Determine whether your proposal will provide opportunities to strengthen community capacity to create safer and stronger communities and provide opportunities for volunteering.  
 Consider the different localities and communities your proposal may impact, identifying any communities that could be more adversely impacted than others. For example, rural communities, or the Armed Forces community (ensuring consideration of the Armed Forces Act 2021, and due regard to help improve access to public services) etc.
- Engage with [Strategic Delivery Managers](#) (SDMs) - they have a great deal of knowledge about their relevant localities and will be key to providing insight and expertise.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Volunteering	Volunteer workforce considered as effective part of our people strategy	None identified	N/A

## ➤ Economic Assessment

A key priority within our Strategic Plan is to *'Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better paid jobs'*. This section should therefore be used to identify the impact of the proposal on delivery of this priority.

Key considerations:

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

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Poverty and Income	Financial Wellbeing Offer and Cost Living Support	None identified	N/A
Access to jobs/ Good quality jobs	Over 70% of our people live in Staffordshire  SMART Working assists flexibility  Broad range jobs with development opportunities	None identified	N/A

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	Growing Apprenticeships and other early career opportunities		

### ➤ Climate Change Assessment

A key priority within our Strategic Plan is to 'Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable'. This section should therefore be used to identify the impact of the proposal on delivery of this priority.

Key considerations:

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Our mission is to 'Make Staffordshire Sustainable', and we have made a commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 across every aspect of our service provision and estate. Our [Climate Change StaffSpace page](#) sets out our plans to achieve this which will help you to consider the impact of your proposal on Climate Change and how it helps us to achieve our vision of "net zero".

- If the project has some negative aspects with this strategic goal in mind, then you should demonstrate how this is to be mitigated.
- It would also be useful if there could be a carbon impact (tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e), attributed to the completion of the entire project.
- Any carbon saving that can be attributed to the proposal, should also be explained and quantified.
- It is essential that you complete the [Climate Change Learning Hub module](#) before completing this assessment.
- If there are no climate change implications arising as a result of the project, you can provide background to show this has been considered.

- Please contact the Sustainability and Climate Change Team at [sustainability@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:sustainability@staffordshire.gov.uk) for further advice and guidance.

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Smart Working	SMART Working agenda is allowing our people to reduce their personal carbon footprint.	None identified	N/A

## Environment Assessment

Use this section to identify the impact of the proposal on the physical environment. How does the proposal support the utilisation and maintenance of Staffordshire's built and natural environments, thereby improving health and wellbeing and strengthening community assets?

Key considerations:

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

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Environmental aspects of work	Projects that form part of the people strategy will consider any environmental impacts.	None identified	Ensure considered in project development





## Section 3: Submitting your CIA

Prior to submitting your Community Impact Assessment (CIA), please ensure that the below actions have been completed, to reassure yourself / SLT / Cabinet that the CIA process has been undertaken appropriately.

- The project supports the Council's [Strategic Plan](#) and [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)
- The aims, objectives and outcomes of the project have been clearly identified and it is clear what the decision is or what decision is being requested
- For decisions going to Cabinet, the CIA findings are reflected in the Cabinet Report and potential impacts are clearly identified and mitigated for (where possible)
- The appropriate evidence has been used to inform the CIA and decision - engagement / consultation, data, research, local knowledge
- The appropriate people have been involved to provide knowledge and expertise to inform the CIA / decision. *In addition, and where appropriate, consideration of a further HIA has also taken place informed by Public Health colleagues*
- The CIA evidences how the Council has considered its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010, the Armed Forces Act 2021, and how it has considered the impacts of any change on people with protected characteristics and our Armed Forces community

### Next Steps:

- When you are satisfied you have completed the above actions, the CIA needs to be approved as appropriate - depending on the size of your project, this could be your manager, project lead or SLT
- If your CIA is going to Cabinet, it should be submitted as part of the Cabinet papers
- You should also submit your CIA to [amanda.dawson-blower@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:amanda.dawson-blower@staffordshire.gov.uk)



## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Monday, 18 December 2023**

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Principles, Objectives and Action Plan update**

#### **Recommendation(s)**

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Note the progress of the Council's work to further strengthen its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including delivery of the action plan.
- b. Note the Council's Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce profile as reported in April 2023.
- c. Provide comments and feedback on the emerging priorities for 2024/25 as part of the Council's continued commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

#### **Local Member Interest:**

N/A

#### **Report of the Leader of the Council**

#### **Summary**

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

1. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are being asked to:
  - a. Consider progress undertaken in the last 12 months to deliver against the Council's equality, diversity and inclusion principles, objectives, and action plan.
  - b. Note the Council's Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce profile as reported in April 2023.
  - c. Comment and feedback on the emerging priorities for 2024/25.

2. This feedback will be used to inform future work to further strengthen the Council's delivery of equality, diversity, and inclusion, which will be taken to Cabinet for discussion in February 2024.

## **Report**

### **Background**

3. Everyone having the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy, is at the core of the Council's vision. The Council's ongoing work to deliver against its agreed equality, diversity and inclusion principles and objectives continues to further strengthen the Council's approach to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion both within the organisation and across Staffordshire.
4. The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to show that they are advancing the equalities agenda under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Specific requirements on Councils include publishing at least one Equality Objective every four years, as well as key information through the annual Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce Profile on 1st April each year, to demonstrate how they will eliminate discrimination and advance equality.
5. As previously reported to the Committee, a great deal of work was undertaken during 2021 to review the Council's approach to delivering against the Public Sector Equality Duty. It was recognised that equality considerations are embedded across the organisation with a strong corporate focus on responding to, and addressing the Gender Pay Gap, together with improving collection and analysis of the workforce profile data. Key information through the Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce Profile is published annually on 1<sup>st</sup> April. A range of other activities and initiatives were also identified as having a significant impact on tackling inequalities both within the Council and wider communities across Staffordshire.
6. It was however acknowledged that more could be done to strengthen the Council's approach. Therefore, in December 2021 Cabinet agreed to adopt a new set of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles and objectives, along with an associated action plan.
7. Progress against the delivery plan was reported to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny in December 2022 and Cabinet in February 2023. In response to feedback the EDI action plan was strengthened to include more comprehensive review dates for the strategies in place. The action plan can be reviewed at Appendix 1.

## **Principles and Objectives 2021-2023**

8. It is proposed that the Principles and Objectives that were agreed in 2021 remain current and that we continue to work towards these in the next twelve months.

9. Principles:

- a. Staffordshire is a place where there is equality of opportunity for all, regardless of circumstances.
- b. Staffordshire County Council is an inclusive and diverse employer, where our people feel they have the opportunity to succeed and progress.
- c. Staffordshire County Council develops and delivers services that are inclusive and accessible to all.

10. Objectives:

- a. Review and strengthen our recruitment and retention processes and practices.
- b. Review and strengthen our EDI training offer to employees.
- c. Strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities on EDI issues.
- d. Raise awareness of and celebrate diversity.

## **Year 2 Review 2023/2024**

11. During the last twelve months we have continued the work to meet our principles and objectives. Of the 22 core EDI deliverables within the current action plan, a recent performance assessment confirms that 6 have been completed and 13 are ongoing, with 3 priority deliverables identified for the remainder of this year and next year.

12. This section summarises our in-year key highlights and achievements across the organisation.

- a. A new **Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile** report was published on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, detailing our data and the steps we are taking to develop a more diverse and inclusive workforce, and in turn, improving our gender pay gap. The latest report can be viewed at Appendix 2 and will be refreshed on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.
- b. The new **Translation and Interpretation** contract, based on a one-stop shop delivery model, that enables officers to access telephone, video, face-to-face interpretation and written translation services, continues to work well. Periodic reviews and performance monitoring

takes place ensuring our services are accessible to all our communities. The service has helped support people arriving from Ukraine and Afghanistan to resettle in Staffordshire by enabling the Council to carry out safe and well visits and to signpost to and provide information, advice and guidance. During the last 12 months, the contract has fulfilled 1,044 service requests and has supported with the provision of 26 different languages.

- c. The Council's **Community Impact Assessment (CIA)** policy forms a critical component of our decision-making processes. Key developments include the inclusion of the Armed Forces community as a key group to consider when undertaking CIAs, to ensure they are treated fairly and face no disadvantage when accessing services. In addition, joint work has taken place with Public Health to promote the completion of Health Impact Assessments within the CIA process, and a review of our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) CIA was also carried out to ensure consideration of cumulative impacts of key MTFS savings proposals on communities, places, and our most vulnerable residents.
- d. A range of **communications activities**, promoting key dates and events, has taken place throughout the year to celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion. Activities aligned to this include signposting colleagues to further information and opportunities to get involved.
- e. A new **equality, diversity and inclusion mandatory e-learning module** for our staff is being commissioned, alongside an e-product to support hiring managers to deliver inclusive and accessible recruitment. These will launch in 2024 and deliver an improved learner experience, supported with the latest information and guidance for all staff. To date in 2023, 1121 members of staff have completed the current e-learning which is an increase from 667 in 2022. This increase has been partially due to the launch of our mandatory training dashboard which means managers can see their direct and indirect reports mandatory training progress and following the launch of the new product, future training numbers will be monitored, and communications targeted as appropriate.
- f. **Staff Network Guidance** has been developed and launched on StaffSpace to support staff to set-up and manage employee groups. The guidance sets out what staff networks are, key things to consider when establishing a network, together with resources such as case studies and templates to provide further support.
- g. EDI is an important factor throughout the **refreshed 2023 –2027 People Strategy** and is specifically highlighted within the promoting

a positive working environment pillar, which states that 'we will foster a feeling of belonging, embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into what we do'.

- h. Following the launch of an **inclusive and representative employer brand** in 2021, recent recruitment campaigns are promoting the Council as an attractive and inclusive employer with the aim of reaching more diverse candidates.
- i. Implementation of an **Applicant Tracking System ('WeRecruit')**, which has significantly reduced the time and effort required for recruitment activities. This not only improves the experience for both candidates and hiring managers, but also enhances the overall reputation of the Council as an employer of choice. Since the launch of WeRecruit, there has been:
  - i. Over 15,600 registered new candidates, receiving over 21,200 applications.
  - ii. Average applications per advert currently standing at 22.4 an increase by over 6 compared to the average at the end of 22/23.
  - iii. An increase in the number of male applications from 26.9% to 31.6% and increased LGBTQ applications from 6.8% to 7.9%. Increase in the number of under 30 applicants from 17.8% to 20.5%.
  - iv. Filled 1077 positions over 12 months – 89.75 average per month. 68% have been filled by external applicants 32% by internal applicants. New starters reporting a positive experience of the Recruitment process average score 8.4/10.
  - v. A decrease in the time to hire from 49.3 to 43.8 days. Voluntary turnover is currently 6.8% from 8.4% in 2022/23, and retention after 1 year is up from 77.6% in 22/23 to 83.1%.
- j. In line with our People Strategy, the key driver to attract and retain exceptional talent is our **careers website**, known as the "shop window" of our organisation. The improvements to our career website have been informed by extensive research, both internally and externally, which identified several key themes that prospective employees value in a career's website:
  - i. **Understanding Benefits and Flexibility:** Candidates want comprehensive information about the benefits and flexibility we offer, recognising the importance of work-life balance and employee well-being.
  - ii. **Authentic Insights:** Prospective employees seek to hear from real individuals within the organisation to gain a genuine understanding of our workplace culture and atmosphere.
  - iii. **Clarity of Purpose:** Candidates value clarity about the roles they would undertake within the organisation, emphasizing the significance of understanding their contributions.

- iv. **EDI Commitment:** It is essential for our careers website to effectively communicate our commitment to EDI. Prospective employees desire a clear demonstration of our dedication to creating an inclusive workplace.
  - v. **Representation and Diversity:** Candidates wish to see authentic representations of our diverse workforce, allowing them to envision themselves as part of our organisation.
13. The evolution of our careers website will play a pivotal role in our ongoing efforts to attract and engage the right talent, reinforcing our status as an employer of choice.
- a. A '**Directory of Opportunities**' for care leavers is being developed to increase exciting opportunities such as work experience, taster days, apprenticeships, and employment within the Council to enhance their long-term engagement with education, training, and employment. The aspiration is that every directorate will offer something to a care leaver. The aim of the 'directory of opportunities' is to have one document which sets out what support our care leavers can expect to receive and what opportunities there are within the Council.
  - b. The Council has offered the County Solicitor up to support the mentoring programme of the **Law Society's Diversity Access Scheme** which is designed to address key barriers to the solicitors' profession faced by those from less advantaged backgrounds. This offer also includes the Council having a presence on the Law Society Diversity and Inclusion working group.
  - c. Continued to achieve good levels of diversity across our **Apprentice** population when compared with the wider SCC workforce. This is helping to ensure that we are providing nationally recognised qualifications to people from diverse or under-represented backgrounds.
  - d. Following the implementation of an **Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy** in September 2022, there has been a small number of cases raised under this policy in the first year, as this policy continues to be embedded.
  - e. As an employer we are responsible under the Equality Act 2010 to make '**reasonable adjustments**' to ensure that any substantial disadvantage to our employees is avoided. It is also important that we support all our employees to be the best they can be and enable people to easily access adjustments where this will support them to carry out their role. A multidisciplinary team including People Services, ICT and



Health and Safety colleagues, are reviewing, and improving our processes and associated guidance for managers and people who need to access adjustments.

- f. **Supported job seekers facing barriers to employment** to secure work experience placements enabling progression into paid work through the Council's Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Brokerage Team. Open Door Staffordshire is an employability programme that provides job seekers, furthest from the labour market, with structured work experience within SCC and external organisations to provide employability and work ethic skills as a stepping stone towards employment. Since its launch in 2010, over 2,000 candidates with significant challenges to employment have been supported to ensure a successful placement and many to achieve successful paid employment. Staffordshire Jobs and Careers have strong relationships with many partners, businesses, and local authorities to support Staffordshire residents into paid employment including: DWP, Ex-Service personnel, custodial establishments, Care sector, homeless, SEND, young people and Careers, and many more.
- g. As part of the drugs, alcohol and complex needs agenda, a **Co-Production Group** has been established, which includes people with lived experience (mainly members of the local recovery communities). The group is designed to ensure wider participation of people in the strategic decision-making process and contributing to a long-term shift towards more meaningful engagement with communities. One of the issues the group will be supporting over the next few months concerns drug-related deaths that are disproportionately high among women.
- h. The **Staffordshire Social Care Workforce Strategy** has committed to the recruitment and retention of a social care workforce that is representative of the local population. This involves recruiting an inclusive workforce that is representative of the diversity of the local population, including those in senior roles. The approach has been aligned to the NHS 'Leadership for a collaborative and inclusive future'. The partnership will promote 'recruitment best practice', review the training and support needs of our workforce and consider the provision of training, as appropriate, and co-ordinate and support with targeted recruitment campaigns.
- i. Over the last year Health and Care have launched two new joint strategies with the Integrated Care Board (ICB): 'Living my Best Life': Joint Strategy for Disabled and Neurodivergent people in Staffordshire 2023-2028 and Good Mental Health in Staffordshire 2023-2028. In developing both strategies, around 1100 people responded to our surveys and around 130 people met virtually or in person, in focus

groups, and at engagement events to share their thoughts on what our priorities should be for disabled and neurodivergent people, for people with mental health problems, and for helping people to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing. Responses were provided from across the County, all gender, sexual orientation, ethnic groups, and people with lived experience, carers, communities and people working in health and social care. All the feedback has been incorporated in to both the final strategies and the associated action plans to support the delivery of the strategy outcomes. Both strategies recognise the inequalities some groups of people experience and seek to identify outcomes and actions that will help to address those and achieve greater equality for everyone in Staffordshire.

- j. Over the last year Health and Care have been working with EI&S with the aim of improving the numbers of people with disabilities in Staffordshire in employment. In particular we recognised that we wanted to increase the numbers of people with a learning disability, who adult social care work with, to gain employment or valuable work experience. An **employment broker** was recruited early in 2023 to help develop a supported employment offer for disabled people in Staffordshire, working with the social care workforce, employers, partners and disabled people to create more equal job opportunities. In addition to working with a number of disabled people to find employment, the specialist employment broker will be helping the Council to develop more inclusive recruitment to ensure adjustments are provided for neurodiverse applicants, increasing awareness of Access to Work, developing links with supported internships and travel training initiatives to enable more people to access work.
- k. **Staffordshire's Co-Production Promise** for the children and family's system has been launched, as well as the creation of a toolkit to support those people responsible for providing services to enable them to do co-production well. This has given us a common understanding of how we work together to share responsibility for providing support, sharing power by working with those receiving that support at every step, so that the help provided is as good as it can be and makes life better. Staffordshire Council for Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) led on this work with the content of the Promise co-produced by local children, young people, parents, carers, adults, and professionals from across the system.
- l. A senior 'sponsor' has been identified to participate and represent the Council in the Integrated Care System **Workforce Race Equality Standard Champions programme**. The programme is designed to support meaningful and lasting change to race equality within the systems workforce. Participants will gain a deep understanding of

WRES, acquire tools to drive change, and thrive in diverse settings, with mandatory training modules and a strong support structure, enabling sponsors to elevate their role as a 'WRES Champion' to be a catalyst for empowerment and change.

- m. In addition, the Council is also engaging in the Integrated Care System **Reciprocal Mentoring for Inclusion Scheme** which will involve a series of five training dates/modules being delivered over an 18-month period to allow mentoring partnerships to meet and flourish. The objectives of the scheme are to:
- i. Further the ICS's goal to delivering meaningful and lasting change to race equality within our workforce through the fostering of good relations in a safe environment between senior leaders and staff members who do not share the same protected characteristic of ethnicity and heritage.
  - ii. Increase confidence among colleagues in talking about race.
  - iii. Create a greater understanding of shared lived experiences.
  - iv. Support in the development of allies.
  - v. Enhance the understanding of accountability for race equity.
  - vi. Influence career development opportunities for under-represented groups.
- n. **Staffordshire Highways Strategic Partnership** As the Council's strategic partner Amey have developed a wide range of EDI initiatives, programmes and affinity groups that are available and benefit the Staffordshire Highways workforce, including:
- i. Women in leadership - promoting fairness and opportunity for women in the workforce.
  - ii. Multi-cultural leadership and Multi-cultural network – supporting black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups.
  - iii. Wellbeing network – promoting physical/mental wellbeing, supported by our network of Wellbeing Ambassadors and Mental Health First Aiders
  - iv. Inclusion network – supporting diversity/inclusion in our business via our network of Inclusion Ambassadors
  - v. Neurodiversity network – supporting neurological differences in our employees, such as autism, Asperger's syndrome and learning difficulties etc.
  - vi. PRIDE network – supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans individuals.
  - vii. Armed Forces network, supporting services leavers and veterans.
  - viii. STEM Ambassador network – allowing staff to inspire young people to pursue engineering careers and STEM fields.
14. Since the partnership between SCC and Amey was formed in October 2014 the following EDI highlights have been made:

- a. Working with the Council Amey have developed a 12-week paid work experience placement for care leavers - Three care leavers joined the first cohort with one going on to be offered a full-time permanent position.
- b. 58 individuals who were facing barriers to employment have been assisted with training and experience opportunities; and
- c. 40 individuals have been supported through the 'open door' programme, with 28 securing full-time employment; and
- d. Working with the Council Amey hosted its first 'journey to work' event in April 2022, followed by two further Staffordshire events in 2023 and now rolled out nationally. Journey to work provides those furthest from the labour market with the job search skills and support they need to secure employment. At the first Staffordshire event 18% of attendees were offered jobs on the day, 36% percent were offered interviews and temporary jobs and 14% were offered jobs after the event. A case study sharing good this practise was delivered to the national ADEPT autumn conference in 2022.

### Looking Ahead to 2024/25

15. Reflecting on work undertaken during 2023/24, there is opportunity to build on existing work to date, to further strengthen the Council's approach to the delivery of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
16. Set out below are a number of proposed areas of focus for 2024/25:
  - a. The **LGA Equality Framework for Local Government** (EFLG) will be utilised as a tool to informally self-assess the Council's progress on strengthening our approach to EDI. The results will inform the development of a refreshed action plan and set of strategic principles and objectives for 2024/25.
  - b. Continue to improve the **recording of protected characteristics** in MyHR, which will in turn improve the accuracy of our workforce profile and enabling the targeted recruitment and improvement of employment policies that will enhance the diversity of our workforce and reduce the gender pay gap.
  - c. Equality, diversity and inclusion will continue to be a prominent thread throughout the **new People Strategy 2023-27** and will be an integral consideration to the design and delivery of people and culture related activities. During the roll-out of the new strategy in 2024, People Services will continue to encourage everyone to play a role in its delivery, promoting inclusion across the organisation.

- d. Further development of **recruitment and employment policies**, demonstrating a strong organisational commitment to EDI, will provide the Council with a significant competitive advantage in an increasingly challenging talent market.
- e. In January 2024 we will be incorporating **Digital ID Checks** into our recruitment process. As part of our commitment to enhance the security, speed up background checks and streamline our hiring process, this innovative verification method will offer a reliable way to confirm the identities of our potential hires. We will be using a WME procured platform which is government approved and will maintain data security and privacy.
- f. Embed a **new equality, diversity and inclusion mandatory e-learning programme** across the organisation, including an on-going campaign to increase completion of the mandatory training following its launch. This includes supporting colleagues without digital access to complete the mandatory training. These colleagues will be provided with a new printed brochure containing the key information they need to be aware of with respect to EDI in the workplace.
- g. In addition, we will develop new digital products for the **We Welcome induction** process to help describe what inclusion means at SCC and provide updated self-access resources and materials to help colleagues understand how they can create more inclusive teams and working environments.
- h. Engage and collaborate with a range of staff groups to inform the development of a new **workforce led communications approach** and set of activities for 2024, promoting key dates and events that celebrate diversity.
- i. Continued work to ensure **apprenticeships** provide nationally recognised work-based qualifications to people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds, via a new and holistic apprenticeship strategy that will help us create earlier career and entry level opportunities.
- j. We are currently developing our new **management development** offer for 2023-27. This provides an opportunity to incorporate content to support our EDI ambitions and to ensure managers understand their role in creating an inclusive and positive working environment for all colleagues.
- k. Our new **How we Work and How we Lead** documents have recently launched. These principles were created following extensive

consultation across SCC and provide an articulation of how we can work and lead in service of our values and to deliver the very best for Staffordshire. As we embed and further adopt these principles, they will help to ensure we are working inclusively and being mindful of EDI in all that we do.

- l. **Love learning** campaign – as part of the 12-month Love Learning campaign we have dedicated a month in Q1 of 2024 to focus on EDI. This month will bring to life several key areas within EDI, promoting and embedding them through a variety of learning initiatives that are designed to appeal to as many people as possible. This includes a focus on understanding neurodiversity, mixed cultures in the workplace, microaggressions and a diversity book club. We will also be working with colleagues across the organisation to highlight some of the great work that is being undertaken in the directorates and to bring new and relevant topics in ED&I to the fore during the learning campaign.
- m. We will take the learning from the Integrated Care System Workforce **Race Equality Standard Champions programme and Reciprocal Mentoring Scheme for Inclusion** to further develop and explore the opportunity for other joint programmes of work or opportunities to align our ambitions.
- n. **Staffordshire Highways Strategic Partnership** will sustain and further develop EDI opportunities, building a new plan for 2024-29, including:
  - i. Continue to work with the Social Care Leavers Team to provide opportunities for vulnerable and looked after children.
  - ii. Continue to work with 'open door' providing opportunities for those facing barriers to employment; and
  - iii. Each year run at least 2 'journey to work' events around Staffordshire providing rewarding career opportunities in highways and infrastructure for local people.
- o. The work on access to **reasonable adjustments** for people to support them in their role will continue in 2024/25, with the aim of improving processes and guidance. As part of this work a review of accessibility tools, support and training will take place to agree standardised solutions as far as possible including a review of Microsoft accessibility aids that integrate well and simplify the support and maintenance of such software.

## **Delivery and Governance**

17. The officer Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group within Corporate Services continues to meet, which brings together lead senior officers, to co-ordinate, collaborate and monitor progress against the EDI action plan. In November 2023, this group was expanded to include representatives from across each Directorate area, to ensure a cross organisation approach to diversity and inclusion. Refreshed terms of reference have also been agreed in line with refreshed membership.
18. The EDI action plan is overseen by the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services.
19. This area of work also features as a key deliverable within the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan, with progress routinely reported on a quarterly basis through the Integrated Performance Management process. In addition, Cabinet and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is provided with an annual monitoring report that evidences progress against the action plan and wider equalities work for further oversight and scrutiny.

## **Link to Strategic Plan**

20. The Council's commitment to promote EDI is a core part of our Strategic Plan and one of the four 'How We Work' statements. Therefore, ongoing work to deliver equality, diversity, and inclusion, and ensure diversity of our workforce, is key to the delivery of all strategic priorities.

## **Community Impact**

21. The Council's Community Impact Assessment policy ensures the impact of our most vulnerable groups, including consideration of protected characteristics, is taken into account as part of strategy development and in its decision-making processes. Good practice guidance and e-training, ensuring we are meeting equalities duties, is available to all staff on the Council's Learning Hub.

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

- Appendix 1 – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2022/2023
- Appendix 2 – Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile Report March 2023

## Contact Details

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## Appendix 1 - Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan (2022/2023)

People Strategy: Keeping and Attracting Talented People			
Objective: Review and strengthen our recruitment and retention processes and practices			
EDI Objectives 2022/23	Key Actions	By when	Measures of Success
<p><b>1.1</b> Measure and assess the impact of our new employer brand to ensure it represents the Council as an inclusive employer, that values diversity and provides equality of opportunity for all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roll out the Employer Brand proposition</li> <li>• Embed employer brand through a range of communications activity that promotes the county council as a diverse employer</li> <li>• EDI Steering Group representative on the Applicant Tracking System project stakeholder group</li> <li>• Monitor diversity of workforce via the annual workforce profile report</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>Launched the employer brand and Applicant Tracking System by November 2022 – delivered</p> <p>Successfully delivered communications</p> <p>Recruited a more diverse range of candidates, evidenced by annual workforce profile trends – Review end of December 2023</p>
<p><b>1.2</b> Maximise the use of diverse channels to advertise and promote our employment opportunities, to ensure they reach a wide variety of audiences, including those from under-represented and minority groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of wider diverse employment promotion opportunities</li> <li>• Pilot and embed any new recruitment channels in our recruitment process</li> <li>• Monitor diversity of workforce via the annual workforce profile report</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>New promotion opportunities identified and embedded in the Council’s recruitment approaches</p>
<p><b>1.3</b> Ensure our recruitment processes and procedures provide an equitable, inclusive, and accessible experience for all candidates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop clear processes and procedures, as part of the Applicant Tracking System project, with diversity and inclusion built in at every stage of candidate journey</li> <li>• Ensure a robust and consistent process is in place to capture new hires onboarding experiences</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>At least 80% of candidates considered the recruitment process to be Good or Excellent – end or 2023/24</p> <p>At least 80% of new hires ‘Agree’ that they have had a positive onboarding experience by end of 2023/24</p>
<p><b>1.4</b> Embed a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and discrimination and provide a policy framework to enable inclusive practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy, as part of the Big 5 Policies project</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>Policy launched and timely communications delivered</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launch and promote new policy across the organisation, through a range of internal communication activities</li> <li>• Develop clear approach to measure its impact, including identifying any relevant benchmarks</li> </ul>		Bullying and discrimination incidences and issues reduced – Review end of 2023/24
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**People Strategy: Promoting a Positive Working Environment**  
Objective: Strengthen our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities on diversity, including raising awareness of and celebrating diversity

EDI Objectives 2022/23	Key Actions	By when	Measures of Success
<b>2.1</b> Deliver a range of communications and staff engagement activities that highlight and celebrate our diversity and signpost important dates and events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a range of communications during 2023 that celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion</li> <li>• Engage key workforce groups to shape the development of future activities that promote key dates and events and encourage self-led activities by the workforce</li> <li>• Consider the potential delivery of an EDI campaign</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>Effective delivery of key communications, aligned with key dates</p> <p>Future communications informed by key workforce</p>
<b>2.2</b> Develop high quality EDI intranet pages to highlight our work and achievements in this area and provide colleagues with repository of stories, information, contacts, and toolkits to enable self-directed learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresh of current EDI web pages to strengthen and update content</li> <li>• Continue to evolve EDI intranet pages utilising best practice and engaging with key workforce groups to create a jointly developed suite of up to date and relevant EDI pages</li> <li>• Monitor and evaluate impact of new EDI intranet pages</li> </ul>	Complete	<p>Increase in number accessing EDI intranet pages</p> <p>Positive feedback on impact of supporting guidance and materials</p>
<b>2.3</b> Gather and explore insights regularly through conversation events, staff forums, surveys, and informal channels, so that we hear from a variety of people in a variety of ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyse data and use this to inform strategy development and future planning</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Insights directly inform EDI action planning

<p><b>2.4</b> Develop a blueprint and toolkit to enable colleagues to set up and manage staff forum groups in a consistent way</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of good practice to inform toolkit development</li> <li>• Produce first draft toolkit, for feedback from the EDI Steering Group and consultees</li> <li>• Launch and communicate final toolkit on EDI StaffSpace</li> <li>• Ongoing provision of corporate advice and support in the establishment of new staff forums, as required</li> </ul>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Staff forum groups are active and positively contributing to the Council's plans</p>
<p><b>2.5</b> Review and produce community engagement guidance and toolkit, using learning and working alongside the Public Health Community Champions programme to help shape our services to meet diverse needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review national and local examples of community engagement good practice and approaches, including working with Public Health to use the learning of Community Champions</li> <li>• Develop draft toolkit, guidance and supporting materials informed by learning and engagement of key stakeholders</li> <li>• Test and shape first draft with key stakeholders</li> <li>• Refine and secure sign off through appropriate governance channels</li> <li>• Launch and embed across the organisation</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Principles and guidance successfully tested and developed with key staff and relevant partners</p> <p>Guidance on delivering effective engagement and how to access support is available and accessible for all staff.</p> <p>Unique visits to web pages and positive feedback on use of guidance and toolkit in engagement activities – review September 2023</p>
<p><b>2.6</b> Improve the completion of protected characteristic data by staff, to better understand the profile of our workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce plan of activity to improve completion of data</li> <li>• Promotion of data input pages on MyHR – new tile and banner on landing page</li> <li>• Targeted emails to leaders reinforcing the importance of employee self completion</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Increase in staff protected characteristic data is held within MyHR</p> <p>Reduced number of opt outs</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore opportunity to gather and migrate this data at application stage, via the Applicant Tracking System project</li> <li>• Explore option to opt-out of declaring sensitive information</li> </ul>		
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**People Strategy: Developing Skills for Now and the Future**  
Objective: Review and strengthen our diversity and inclusion training offer to employees

EDI Objectives 2022/23	Key Actions	By when	Measures of Success
<b>3.1</b> Provide meaningful work experience opportunities to people from diverse / under-represented groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure demographics of Open-Door candidates is captured and monitored</li> <li>• Early Careers programme opportunities are expanded to reach diverse and under-represented groups (e.g. Enterprise Adviser volunteers, Jobs and Careers newsletters and internet)</li> <li>• Ensure Open Door and wider Employment Brokerage scheme pathways are accessible and inclusive for both applicants and successful candidates (e.g. Open Door website, relationship with external organisations etc)</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Aligned with existing programme measures
<b>3.2</b> Use apprenticeships to provide nationally recognised work-based qualifications to people from diverse / under-represented backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an Apprenticeship Strategy, ensuring nationally recognised work-based qualifications are available to people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds</li> <li>• Support the implementation of the Strategy by working with the Stakeholder Consultation Group to provide clear guidance on EDI related goals and measures (e.g. capturing details of the</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Increase in number of diverse and under-represented groups participating in nationally recognised work-based qualifications

	characteristics and diversity profile of applicants)		
3.3 Publish an ED&I development offer that includes a range of products to suit different learning styles, audiences and situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the specification for a new EDI mandatory training module and a module for hiring managers on providing accessible and inclusive recruitment</li> <li>Continue to develop internal and external resources, to support self-directed and team led learning</li> <li>Build in a feedback channel to understand the impact of the development offer</li> <li>Respond to and complete the EDI Training Audit action</li> <li>Commission a new product(s) to support recruiters, and review impact following launch</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>New product commissioned and fully implemented</p> <p>Number of mandatory EDI learning module completions</p> <p>Positive feedback on impact of supporting guidance and materials e.g. on candidate experience of the recruitment process</p>

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**People Strategy: Developing Leaders for Now and the Future**  
 Objective: Review and strengthen our diversity and inclusion training offer to employees

EDI Objectives 2022/23	Key Actions	By when	Measures of Success
4.1 Provide a reciprocal mentorship scheme to enable colleagues from different backgrounds, grades, and levels of experience to share, learn and grow together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore linkages with the System Wide EDI Forum mentoring programme, to ensure the Council can put forward candidates for the initial programme</li> <li>Promote the scheme internally</li> </ul>	Delayed	<p>Introduction of new scheme</p> <p>Participation of staff</p>
4.2 Ensure the Council has a profile in system level / regional EDI forums and networks to ensure we are linked into the latest thinking and approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Council's EDI Steering Group and possible Black Workers Forum representation on system level EDI forums</li> <li>Develop and ensure a regular communication mechanism is in place between the EDI Steering Group and system level EDI forums</li> </ul>	Delayed	Outputs and learning informing future EDI goals and approach for 2023-24 onwards

Respond to Audit Actions			
EDI Objectives 2022/23	Key Actions	By when	Measures of Success
EDI item added to organisation risk register	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share draft with EDI Steering Group for consideration</li> <li>Ensure final suggested risk wording, shaped by the EDI Steering Group, is passed back for entry into the new risk system</li> </ul>	Ongoing	<p>EDI risks included in the Risk Register</p> <p>Regular monitoring of the EDI risks</p>
Review and expand the EDI plan to provide more detail and ensure objectives are SMART, meaningful and include interdependencies (and also develop measures / KPIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agree format of EDI delivery plan</li> <li>Identify leads, interdependencies, inputs, outcomes and success measures for each action</li> <li>Monitor progress and written progress update report to Cabinet in December 2022</li> </ul>	Complete	<p>EDI delivery plan developed and approved by the EDI Steering Group</p> <p>Regular monitoring of the EDI delivery plan</p> <p>Consider key issues and future development opportunities</p>
Undertake light touch assessment against EFLG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess EDI delivery plan against LGA EFLG</li> <li>Review Delivery Plan</li> </ul>	Delayed	To follow 'Review and expansion of EDI delivery plan'
Develop and agree Terms of Reference for EDI steering group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek comment from EDI Steering Group members</li> <li>Sign-off Terms of Reference</li> </ul>	Complete	Terms of reference developed and adopted by the EDI Steering Group
Reference the Council's values and behaviours in Code of Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EDI Steering Group to consider options as part of the development of the 2023/24 plan.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	
Ensure CIAs consider intersectional protected characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of existing CIA guidance and supporting materials to understand any gaps</li> <li>Refine and publish tweaked CIA guidance and supporting materials</li> </ul>	Complete	CIA guidance updated to incorporate this in April 2022

Develop measures and KPIs for the objectives in the EDI delivery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conversations with delivery leads identify key measures of success</li><li>• Alignment of key measures with any existing plans</li></ul>	Complete	Success measures developed and monitored by the EDI Steering Group
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# Equality Duty & Gender Pay Gap

March 2023



# Equality Duty

# Introduction

Staffordshire County Council is proud of the diversity of the county, and recognises that promoting equality and inclusion will improve public services for everyone. The Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people. As part of this Act, the public sector equality duty requires the Council to show how it is meeting its responsibilities as an employer, including a requirement to publish information on its workforce, broken down by protected characteristics, which are:

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

This report forms part of the Council's response to that duty, and provides workforce data which will help us to understand the effectiveness of our own employment policies and processes in promoting equality.

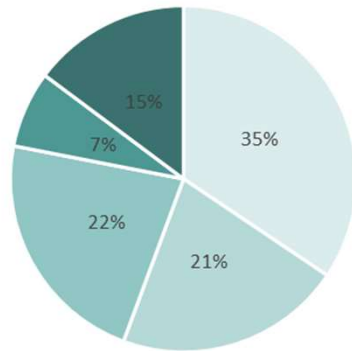
All figures for the 2022-2023 financial year are taken as at 01/01/2023.



# Overview

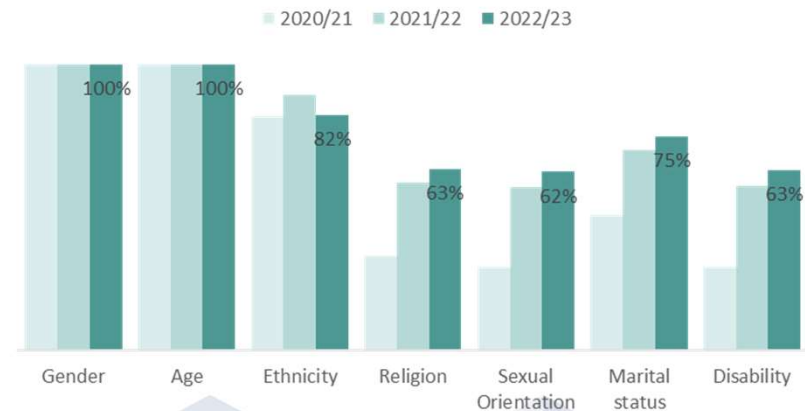
- The structure of the Council has changed over the last year, with a number of staff transferring in from other employers, and a new Directorate being created. As at the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023, SCC employed people in 4,226 contracts across 5 directorates, *Finance* being the smallest, and *Children and Families* being the largest.
- Further progress has been made over the last year in improving the completeness of our equalities data, particularly for Religion, Sexual Orientation and Disability.

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- Children and Families
- Corporate Services
- Economy, Infrastructure and Skills
- Finance
- Health and Care

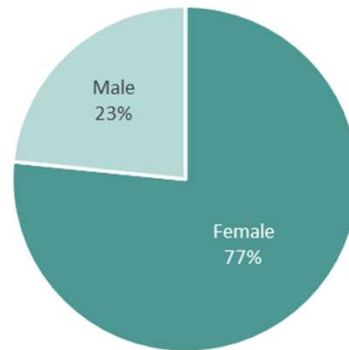
Completion rates by characteristic



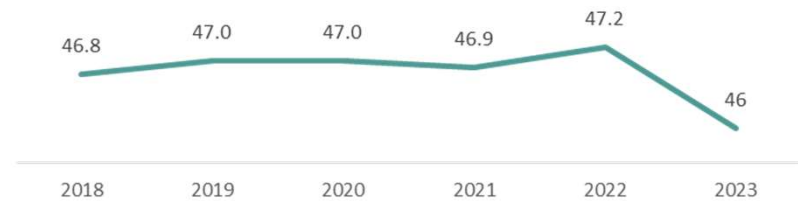
- Please note that although the Council works with a number of partner organisations to deliver its services, particularly in the adult social care sector, the figures in this report only cover those people directly employed by SCC

## Protected characteristics – Age and Sex

- Staffordshire County Council has always had a predominantly female workforce; as at January 2023, 77% of the workforce was female.
- The distribution of workers by age group has been consistent year-on-year, but does vary between genders; there are higher proportions of females in the 30-59 age groups, whereas the male workforce has higher proportions of staff in the 60+ age range

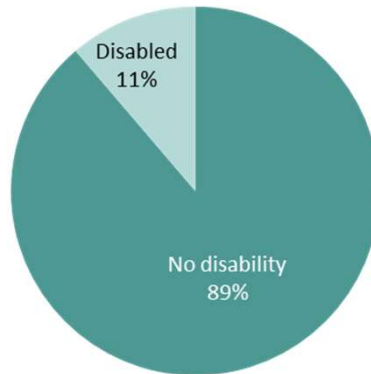


- The County Council's age profile has remained stable since 2009, and currently 28% of staff are aged 39 or under, 25% are aged 40-49, 32% are aged 50-59, and the remaining 14% are aged 60 or over
- The average age of the workforce has fallen over the last year to 46, although the male workforce continues to average 2-3 years older than the female workforce



## Protected characteristics – Disability and Religion

- Disability information is now held for 63% of staff – 2,657 people, which represents an increase of 10% from last year
- 299 people indicated that they have a disability, equivalent to 11% of the ‘known’ workforce and 7% of the workforce as a whole



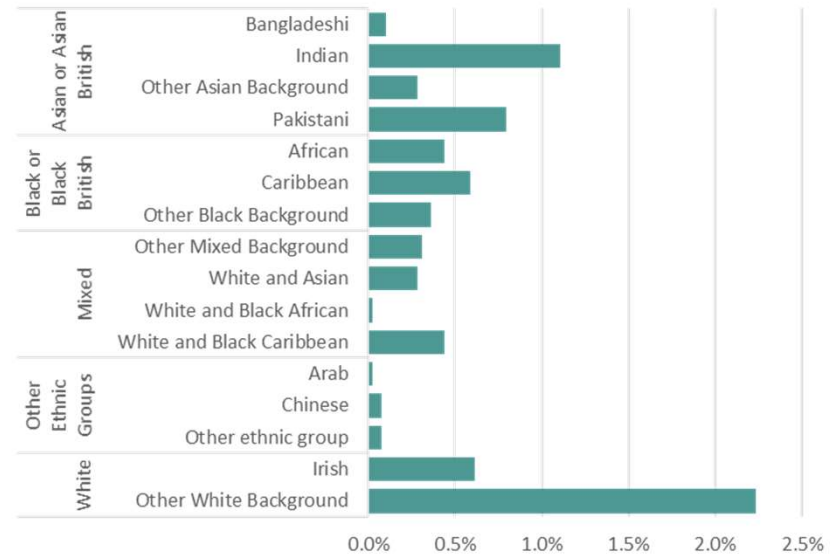
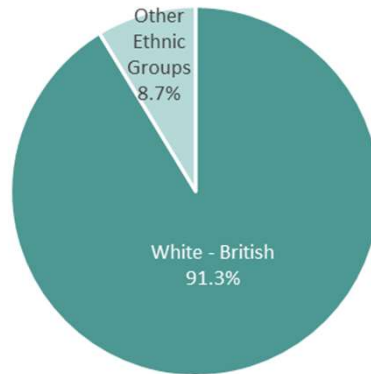
- Information on religion or belief is now held for 63% of staff – 2,672 people - which represents an increase of 8% from last year



- Christianity is the commonly cited religion, accounting for 53% of the ‘known’ workforce and 34% of the workforce as a whole.
- Staff citing ‘no religion’ account for a further 38% of the ‘known’ workforce and 24% of the workforce as a whole.
- Although recorded individually, the remaining responses have been grouped as ‘Other’ for ease of presentation; this group includes Islam, Sikhism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism, but Agnostic is the most populous response

# Protected characteristics – Ethnicity

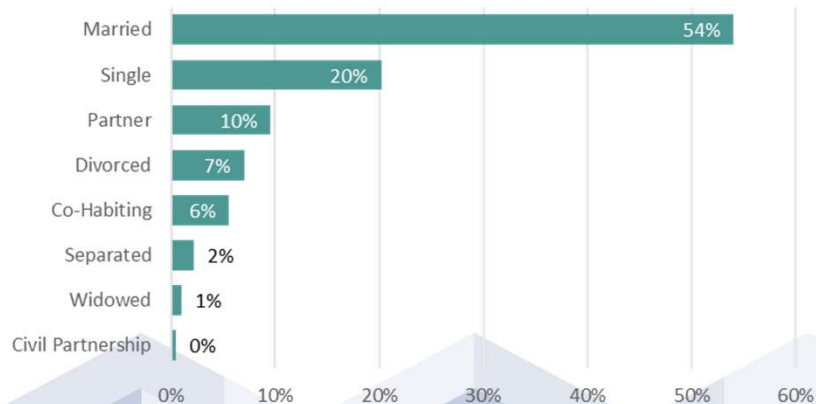
- Ethnicity information is now held for 82% of staff – 3,471 people. Although the number of records held is virtually unchanged from last year, the larger workforce means that in real terms this represents a fall of 8%
- 8.7% of the known workforce are from ethnic backgrounds other than White – British, within which Other White Background is the most populous group, followed by Asian or Asian British - Indian



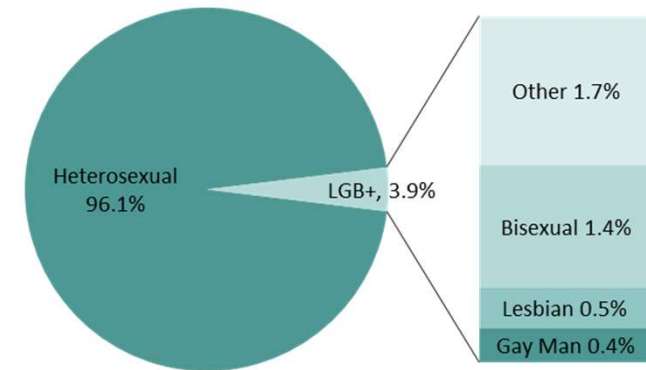
- Previous analysis against data from the 2011 Census has shown that our workforce is broadly representative of the wider Staffordshire population, and this will be refreshed as more detailed information from the 2021 census becomes available

## Protected characteristics – Marital Status & Sexual Orientation

- Information on marriage and civil partnerships is now held for 75% of staff – 3,160 people. This represents an increase of 7% from last year
- The current figures remain broadly in line with those from previous years, although the proportion of staff recorded as *Married* has again fallen slightly, while those for *Single* and *Co-Habiting* have both increased



- Information on sexual orientation is now held for 62% of staff – 2,635 people - which represents an increase of 10% from last year

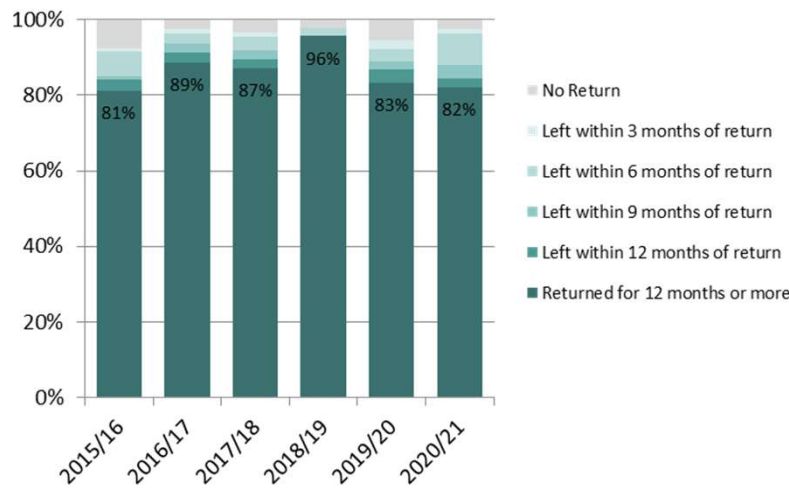


- The number and proportion of staff recorded as gay, lesbian, bisexual or other has increased from last year, but remain less diverse than we would expect to see based on estimates for the UK population as a whole



## Protected characteristics – Pregnancy & Gender Reassignment

- The proportion of staff returning from maternity leave for 12 months or more has been consistently high, averaging 86% across the last six years.



- A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if they are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.
- The Council currently has too few employees with this characteristic recorded to be able to publish figures whilst maintaining their confidentiality

# Gender Pay Gap

Reporting date – 31 March 2022

## Introduction

Staffordshire County Council, as a public sector employer of more than 250 employees, is required to report on its gender pay gap in line with 'The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017' for workers in scope.

The gender pay gap differs from equal pay. Equal pay deals with the pay differences between men and women undertaking the same or similar jobs considered equal value. It is unlawful to pay people differently who perform the same (or similar) duties because they are male or female. The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between men and women's average earnings; it allows organisations to be transparent about gender pay differences and to take positive action to address them.

As stipulated in the legislation we are required to publish the following gender pay data:

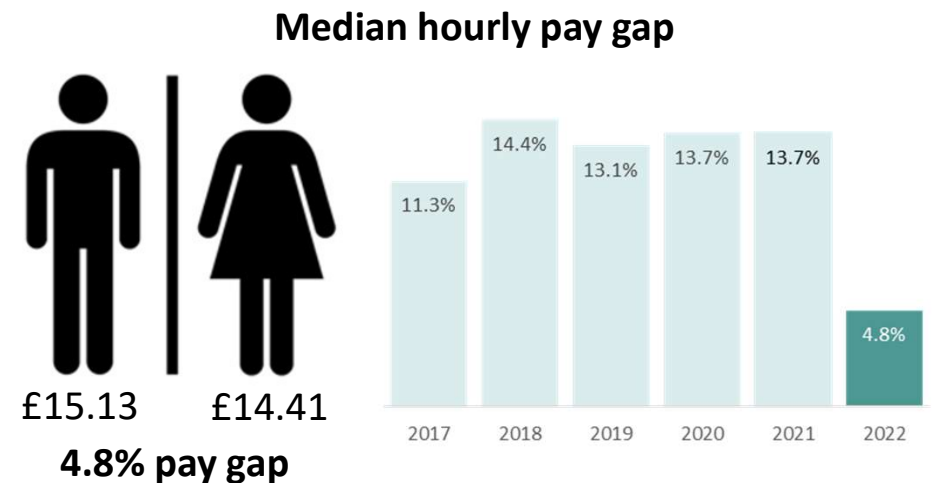
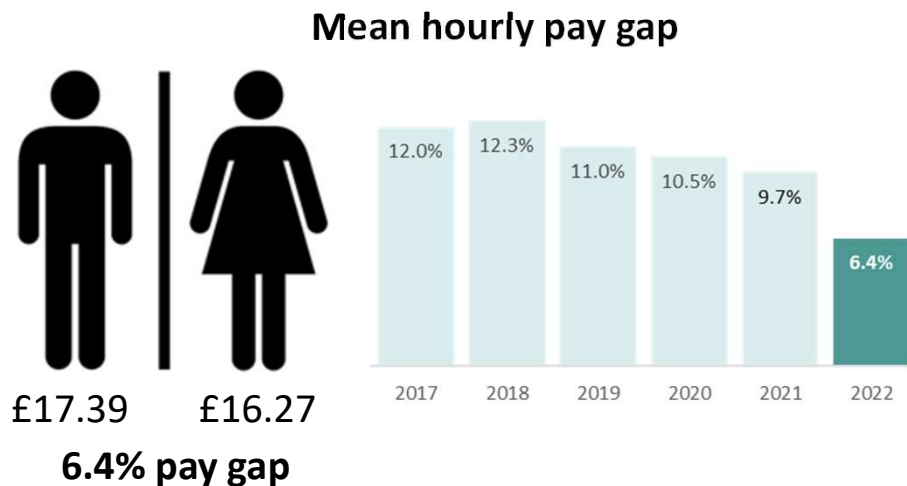
- ✓ Gender pay gap (mean and median values)
- ✓ Gender bonus gap (mean and median values)
- ✓ Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses
- ✓ Proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure.

The deadline for this years Gender Pay Gap Report publication is 30th March 2023, and salary data will be based on the snapshot date of 31st March 2022. Bonus data will include all bonus payments made in the 12 months up to and including the snapshot date of 31st March 2022. Full pay employees and casual workers in post at the snapshot date are included in the figures.

## Gender pay gap – average hourly rates

- Our mean gender pay gap has continued to reduce and now stands at 6.4%, while the median gender pay gap has fallen significantly to 4.8%. Both measures remain significantly lower than national and public sector benchmarks\*

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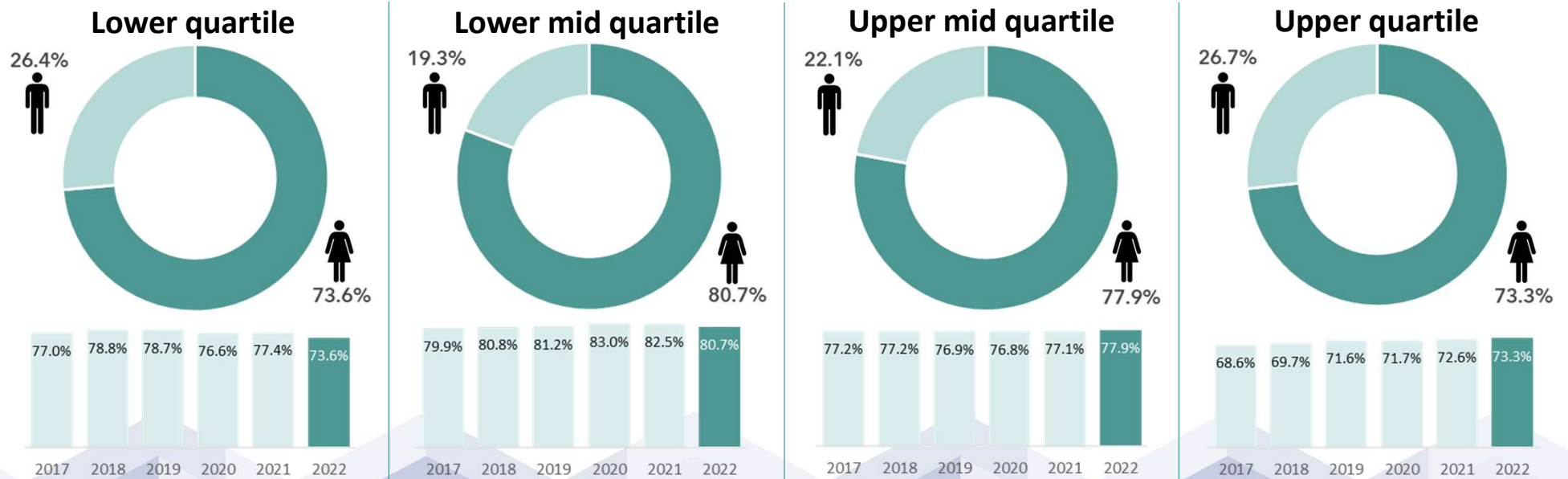
- Our bonus pay gap is now zero, with no staff receiving bonus payments in the last 12 months

\*Figures from ONS (ASHE 2022) Overall 13.9% mean/14.9% median, Public sector 13.6% mean/15.9% median, Private sector 16.7% mean/19.6% median

# Gender pay gap – workforce quartiles

- 76.4% of our workforce are female, but their distribution throughout the pay quartiles does vary. The number of female staff in the lower mid quartile is disproportionately high, whereas the number in the upper quartile is disproportionately low; this percentage has increased year-on-year and is one of the key drivers in reducing our pay gap.

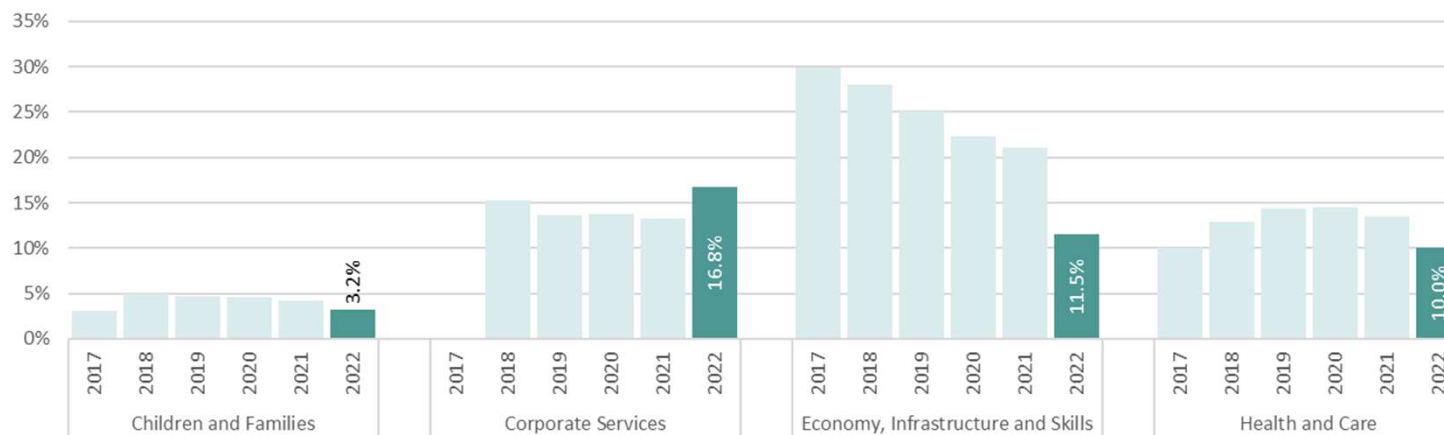
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- Changes in our workforce over the last year have had a positive effect on this balance. There is an increase in males in the lower and lower mid quartiles and therefore reductions in the proportion of females, and further increases of females in the upper mid and upper quartiles.

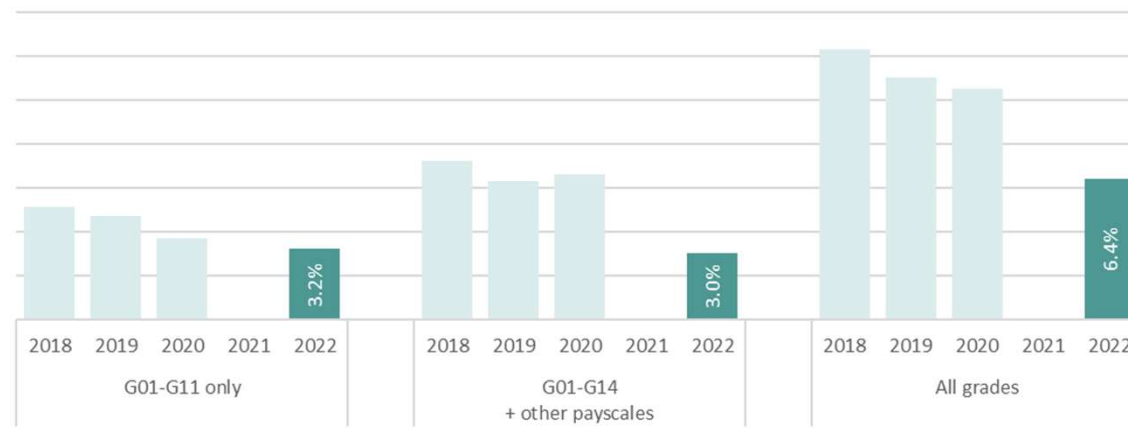
## Gender pay gap by directorate

- Changes in our organisational structure have had significant impacts on the mean pay gaps of the individual directorates: the transfer of business support in Children’s Social Care to Corporate Services has increased the pay gap in Corporate and reduced it in Children & Families, the TUPE transfer of HWRC staff has significantly reduced the gap in Economy Infrastructure & Skills, whilst the gap in Health & Care has continued to narrow



## Gender pay gap by grade

- Previous work to understand our gender pay gap has shown that the gap is relatively narrow for employees within grades 1 to 11, then increases as more senior employees are included
- This year's data shows a median pay gap of 3.0% up to and including G14 – the improvement here being largely due to the HWRC TUPE - increasing to 6.4% when the 50 employees at G15 and above are included
- It is also worth noting that the pay gap amongst employees at G15 and above is 13.6%, despite 28 of the 50 roles being occupied by women



## Understanding our Pay Gap

Since the first gender pay gap publication in March 2018 we have undertaken significant analysis to understand the reasons for our pay gap and have identified the following:

- ✓ Our pay gap fluctuates during the year and is susceptible to change.
- ✓ The make-up of our workforce impacts on reducing our pay gap.
- ✓ There is a greater proportion of women than men in part time lower paid jobs.
- ✓ We have very few part time employees within managerial roles and within the upper pay quartile.
- ✓ There are gender imbalances across the organisation by job category.
- ✓ Historical societal factors which we can not control and which may take some years to see change.





# Our equality, diversity and gender pay gap commitments

Senior managers and political leaders within the Council are committed to taking steps to achieve greater equality, diversity & inclusion and in turn, reduce our gender pay gap. Actions include:

- ✓ Developing our People Strategy to support a more diverse workforce and to create a positive working environment which embodies our values and ensures we provide an inclusive and accessible working environment.
- ✓ Improving our workforce data collection and creating a diversity workforce profile to; identify trends, drive improvements and monitor our progress.
- ✓ Developing and implementing our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy and action plan
- ✓ Facilitating the set up of employee forums to enable colleagues from different backgrounds to share their experiences of working at SCC and to help us make positive improvements to our working environment.
- ✓ Continuing to develop our Smart Working and Digital agenda, to increase the opportunities for employees to work flexibly where possible, increase the choice of working environment and help balance busy work and home lives.
- ✓ Making pay and reward processes more transparent using our job evaluation framework.
- ✓ Reviewing all of our People Policies with the principle that they will be inclusive, supportive and consider employee wellbeing.
- ✓ Reviewing our recruitment practices and technology to ensure they are truly inclusive which will ensure we attract and retain diverse talent and become an employer of choice.
- ✓ Participating in ongoing local initiatives such as Women in Leadership, Menopause at Work and the New Parent Mentoring Scheme.
- ✓ Ensuring that managers have the skills to lead, inspire and develop their teams ensuring everyone has the opportunity to grow through our management and leadership development programme.
- ✓ Developing our apprenticeship strategy and considering how we can increase underrepresented groups within particular jobs.



# Community Impact Assessment

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Progress Update

Author: Wendy Tompson, Head of Policy and Insight

Date: 15 February 2023

➤ **Equality Assessment**

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Page 100</p> <p><b>Cross-cutting</b> – Impacts that affect all or multiple protected characteristics</p>	<p>Strengthening the Council’s approach to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion will have positive impacts on people with protected characteristics, both within the organisation and across Staffordshire. This includes work that the County Council undertakes to deliver against its Equalities duties, together with a range of initiatives and activities that are set out within the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) delivery plan, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strengthening our employment promotion and recruitment processes to enable a more diverse workforce</li> <li>- strengthening our approach to engaging</li> </ul>	<p>Delivery of the EDI delivery plan within agreed timescales, to positively impact on all or multiple protected characteristics could be impacted by resource challenges</p>	<p>Delivery and governance processes, along with key resource, have been agreed to ensure monitoring of progress against the EDI delivery plan is undertaken. In addition, EDI progress is routinely reported through the Council’s Corporate Integrated Performance Management process quarterly, and through Cabinet and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee annually.</p>

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>and collaborating with our workforce and communities on diversity to raise awareness and enable shared shaping of policies and services, and</p> <p>- strengthening our training offer to employees.</p>		
<p><b>Age</b> - older and younger people</p>	<p>See cross-cutting benefits identified in first row above.</p>	<p>See cross-cutting risks identified in first row above.</p>	<p>See cross-cutting mitigations / recommendations identified in first row above.</p>
<p><b>Disability</b> - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.</p>			
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b> - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another</p>			
<p><b>Marriage &amp; Civil Partnership</b> - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work</p>			
<p><b>Pregnancy &amp; Maternity</b> - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers</p>			

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p><b>Race</b> - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins</p>			
<p><b>Religion or Belief</b> - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered</p>			
<p><b>Sexual orientation</b> - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes</p>			
<p><b>Sex</b> - men or women</p>	<p>In addition to the cross-cutting benefits identified above, the County Council is undertaking significant analysis to understand and reduce its gender pay gap.</p> <p>There is no difference between the pay of men and women employed in the same or equivalent roles due to our job evaluation mechanism which ensures equal pay, however, there is a difference between the average hourly pay of</p>	<p>See cross-cutting risks identified in first row above.</p>	<p>See cross-cutting mitigations / recommendations identified in first row above.</p>

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	men and women across our entire workforce and steps are being taken to reduce this.		

➤ **Workforce Assessment**

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
All protected characteristics	Further strengthening the Council's approach to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion will have positive impacts on our workforce. This includes work that the County Council undertakes to deliver against its Equalities duties, together with a range of initiatives and activities that are set out within the EDI delivery plan. With further detail	In addition to risks identified in the first row above in the Equalities Assessment, there is a risk that if staff are not informed and fully engaged, it may result in a lack of awareness and further engagement in EDI activities/initiatives.	In addition to the mitigations / recommendations identified in the first row above in the Equalities Assessment, a range of communication activities and campaigns are to be undertaken as part of the EDI delivery plan, to maximise awareness raising and engagement.

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>in the EDI delivery plan, these include, providing the workforce with toolkits, information, advice and guidance and training, together with comms to celebrate diversity, all of which are and will continue to have a positive impact on tackling inequalities and promoting diversity and inclusion within the organisation.</p>		

➤ **Health, Well-being and Social Care Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Work to strengthen the Council's approach to EDI includes broad cross-cutting actions/activity relating to health and well-being.</p>	<p>Further strengthening the EDI approach, and helping to promote diversity and inclusion with a view to also</p>	<p>See cross-cutting risks identified in first row above of the Equalities Assessment.</p>	<p>See cross-cutting mitigations / recommendations identified in first row above of the Equalities Assessment.</p>



Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>reducing inequalities across Staffordshire has potential to have a positive impact upon people's health and well-being. For example, the shared shaping of policies and services with communities will link with wider work, such as ensuring that all people have full and equal access to opportunities that enable them to lead healthy lives, limiting avoidable health inequalities and disparities.</p>		

➤ **Communities Assessment**

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Work to strengthen the Council's approach to EDI includes broad cross-cutting actions/activity that will reduce inequalities and engage and empower</p>	<p>Strengthening the Council's approach to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion will have positive impacts on our communities. This</p>	<p>See cross-cutting risks identified in first row above of the Equalities Assessment.</p>	<p>See cross-cutting mitigations / recommendations identified in first row above of the Equalities Assessment.</p>

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>communities to ensure everyone has the opportunity to prosper and be healthy and happy.</p>	<p>includes work that the County Council undertakes to deliver against its Equalities duties, together with a range of initiatives and activities that are set out within the EDI delivery plan. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- enhancing our employment promotion and recruitment processes to achieve more diverse candidates</li> <li>- improving quality and reach of engagement activity and</li> <li>- expanding the reach of our work experience/apprenticeship opportunities.</li> </ul>		

➤ **Economic Assessment**

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Work to strengthen the Council's approach to EDI includes broad cross-cutting actions/activity that will improve the diversity of the workforce and enable Staffordshire residents to improve their skills and qualifications	Further strengthening our recruitment and retention processes to promote diversity and inclusion will benefit both the organisation, its workforce and people across Staffordshire by promoting the County Council as a 'go to' inclusive employer, bringing different perspectives and experiences to the organisation and providing opportunities for the workforce and Staffordshire residents to improve their skills.	See cross-cutting risks identified in first row above of the Equalities Assessment.	See cross-cutting mitigations / recommendations identified in first row above of the Equalities Assessment.

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➤ **Climate Change Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<b>No climate change impacts have been identified</b>			

➤ **Environment Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<b>No environmental impacts have been identified</b>			

## **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday 18 December 2023**

# **Report of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Working Group**

### **Recommendation(s)**

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Consider and approve the report of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Working Group (Appendix 1).
- b. Authorise the Chairman to finalise the final report subject to amendments made at the meeting.
- c. Refer the report to Cabinet at its meeting 24 January 2024, to be considered as part of the draft budget setting process and request Cabinet to provide an executive response to the recommendations within two months of receipt of the report.

### **Local Member Interest:**

N/A

### **Report of Councillor Wilcox, Chairman of the MTFS Working Group**

### **Summary**

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

The Committee is being asked to consider the MTFS 2024-29 Working Group report and recommendations and refer the final report to Cabinet to inform the draft budget process and when considering the draft budget at its meeting on 24 January 2024.

### **Background**

1. The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the development of the County Council's MTFS and the annual budget and council tax setting process.
2. The work of scrutiny helps to ensure that the Council develops a good and balanced budget, which is in line with the Council's aims and objectives and is used as a base to determine spending. As part of the Committee's Work Programme Planning for 2023/24, Members agreed to set up a Working Group to undertake this work.

3. The attached report sets out the work this Committee's Working Group has undertaken between August 2023 and November 2023; and details the evidence gathered, main messages and recommendations to Cabinet.

### **Next Steps**

4. Any amendments to the report which are requested by Members will be made and the report provided to the Chair for final approval.
5. The report will be circulated to Members of the Cabinet.
6. Cabinet on 24th January 2024 will recommend the Budget & MTFS to Council.
7. Council 8th February will consider and approve Budget & MTFS.

### **Link to Strategic Plan**

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

### **Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity**

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.

- a. Quarterly Integrated Performance Report - [Agenda for Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Monday 6th November 2023, 10:00am - Staffordshire County Council](#)
- b. The impact of investment in Children's Services - [Agenda for Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 14th September 2023, 10:00am - Staffordshire County Council](#)
- c. Quarterly monitoring on highways progress in transformation and performance; [Agenda for Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 28th September 2023, 10:00am - Staffordshire County Council](#)
- d. SEND Accelerated Plan - [Agenda for Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Thursday 6th July 2023, 10:00am - Staffordshire County Council](#)

## List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Report of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Working Group (2024-29)

## Contact Details

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# Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029

Report of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)  
Working Group

December 2023



## **CIPFA Financial Scrutiny Practice Guide (2020)**

Scrutiny is a critical part of the overall governance framework. Effective financial scrutiny is one of the few ways that councils can assure themselves that their budget is robust and sustainable, and that it intelligently takes into account the needs of residents.

Scrutiny can provide an independent perspective, drawing directly on the insights of local people, and can challenge assumptions and preconceptions. It can also provide a mechanism to ensure buy-in – or at least understanding – of the tough choices that councils are now making.



## Chairman's Foreword

Staffordshire County Council, in common with many local authorities and other publicly funded bodies, faces a significant financial challenge to set a balanced budget, affected by increasing costs, increased demand for services and other pressures.

We are mindful of the Council's vision and the pledge: 'to deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means.' There remains to be uncertainty when preparing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including the level of funding, inflation and interest rates and the increasing demand on social care. The largest proportion of the revenue budget continues to be allocated to the care sector. The aim must continue to be to live within our means and set reasonable expectations in line with the current year.

It is important to take a residents' view when considering the MTFS and preparing the report and recommendations to Cabinet. Increasing inflationary pressures and increasing demand in some services this year mean that expenditure plans would exceed resources. Resources can be allocated through one-off funding from reserves to ensure services are maintained for residents and that the figures will balance.

I would like to thank all the elected members and officers who presented to the MTFS Working Group.

I would also wish to personally thank all the cross-party members of the group who have studied and scrutinised various reports as part of this process, culminating in key recommendations that appear within this report, and which will be presented to the Cabinet.

I would also like to thank both Rachel Spain (Chief Accountant, Corporate Finance Unit) and Deb Breedon (Scrutiny and Support Manager) for their guidance and support in the writing of this report.

It has been a real privilege for me to have chaired this working group.



Councillor Mike Wilcox

Chair of the MTFS Working Group

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## Membership of the MTFS Working Group

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Councillor Mike Wilcox  
Chair of the MTFS Working Group

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Councillor Jeremy Pert

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Councillor Gill Heath

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Councillor Bernard Peters

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Councillor Samantha Thompson

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Councillor Nigel Yates

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## Context

### Medium Term Financial Strategy

1. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy MTFS is a five-year projection of expenditure plans and the resources available to fund those plans. It is the cornerstone of the Council's overall strategy to set a good and balanced budget and the planning framework for major decisions on future services, pay and jobs.
2. The MTFS is agreed in advance of setting the budget for the coming year, unless there are major changes to the figures which require urgent consideration. It is a living model which helps manage the finances and is updated regularly for new circumstances and assumptions.
3. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors the current budget quarterly to shine a spotlight on issues and check that Cabinet has identified pressures and adjusted the finances accordingly.
4. Each year, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee establishes a MTFS Working Group to look at the financial position and planned spend for the next five years to inform the annual budget setting process. The approach to identifying assumptions and making reasonable (not optimistic or pessimistic) assumptions for the next five years is important. Confidence in the model must be assured not assumed.
5. This report presents the process, findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the working group.

## Scope of the review

6. To scope this work, we considered an overview of the current MTFS position 2023-24 and the changes since February 2023. Evidence was also provided about the MTFS assumptions for 2024-25, the approved MTFS, the pressures on the short and medium-term plan, the risks to setting a balanced budget, the approach to address the risks and the use of general balances and reserves in the context of stability.
7. The working group agreed to review key areas of concern that had been highlighted during questioning and to look at assumptions made and plans to mitigate risk.

### Schedule of meetings

Focus	Evidence
30 August 2023 Scene setting current MTFS position and scoping session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Integrated Performance Report Q1 2023-24</u> to Cabinet 19 July 2023</li> </ul>	Chief Accountant
13 September 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22/23 Outturn: Underspends</li> <li>• Tracking 2022-23 MTFS recommendations and outcomes</li> </ul>	Chief Accountant
27 September 2023 Scene setting and evidence gathering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block (HNB)</li> </ul>	Assistant Director for Education Strategy & Improvement Head of SEND
4 October 2023 Interview with the Cabinet Member Education (and SEND) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block (HNB)</li> </ul>	Cabinet Member Education (& SEND) Assistant Director for Education Strategy & Improvement
25 October 2023 Evidence and interview with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resource and the Director of Finance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Based Budget Setting and Investment Programme approach</li> <li>• Update on Q2 performance</li> </ul>	Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Director of Finance
15 November 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of findings</li> <li>• Draft recommendations</li> </ul>	Chief Accountant
4 December 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalise report</li> </ul>	Working Group
18 December 2023 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Overview and Scrutiny</li> </ul>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8. Last year, the working group gained a greater understanding of how the MTFS ensures the Council's financial stability and makes best use of its resources, at a time when inflation was rising and interest rates going up. It made recommendations



relating to three key areas, (i) Capital Programme and Assets, (ii) Reserves and (iii) SEND Transport.

9. We reviewed progress against these recommendations and found SEND Transport continues to be a challenge and that actions are progressing. Further questions raised about asset disposal and SEND Transport.
10. The Announcement of the Provisional Settlement is expected from the Secretary of State, late in December. The impact of the settlement on the draft budget will be considered and reported to Cabinet on 24 January 2024.

#### Scene setting - Current MTFS Position 2023-28

11. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy MTFS 2023-28 has been monitored and adjusted through the financial year. Staffordshire County Council has set a balanced budget for 2023/24, with a balanced MTFS period and £6.7m of headroom in 2024/25.
12. There are external factors that have impacted on progress to deliver services and transformation, and there is a need to challenge the robustness of assumptions made which may impact on the balanced position. In addition, there are a number of other local authorities who are experiencing financial difficulties, some to the extent of issuing S114 notices. Whilst Staffordshire is not in this situation, this external context makes the Working Group's scrutiny of the MTFS even more important and the recommendations more valuable as a result.
13. The current position was considered using recent financial information and a risk-based approach. Quarterly integrated performance monitoring is scrutinised and reported to Cabinet. We considered evidence of services which are struggling to keep spending within budget and priorities for 2024-29 MTFS. The risk-based assessment included all services, not just those with the largest budgets.
  - Social Care Market: there is capacity to meet demand.
  - Children in Care remains a pressure, showing as overspend.
  - SEND (Education) remains a pressure, showing as overspend.
  - Social Care reform: has been postponed and the position will be monitored.
  - Funding reviews/ spending reviews: these figures are not yet known.
  - Single year settlement: Announcement of one year settlement in December 2023, multiple year settlement would be better.
  - Inflation: continues to have impact but the Council is also getting a good rate on investments.

#### Areas of focus:

14. Underspend in services in 2023-24 we indicated a need to look in more depth to understand why there had been underspend in some areas and if there was evidence to demonstrate that objectives had been met or if there was more to do, and to align work with the strategic plan.

Progress on Actions 2022-23 recommendations:

- Assets Disposal Strategy check that sufficient priority was given to achieving capital receipts, if the economic situation meant that the full value of land was not being received and if so whether sufficient consideration was given to retention of land assets to assist the climate change agenda, i.e., tree planting, biodiversity and providing revenue through tourism.
  - SEND Transport Further evidence was requested to establish why this remains a pressure and the progress made to reduce number of single occupancy taxi's and rationalise routes.
15. MTFS Pressures – We understand that it is not always possible to control the numbers and demand on a service, but wanted to check how confident we could be in the assumptions made in the MTFS. It is prudent to consider the efficiency of a service and the workforce delivering services (numbers and demographic), also to monitor transformation of services in Children and SEND (Education). Additional funding had been allocated for demand pressures and inflation in 2022/23.
16. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) - The forecast of DSG deficit in the MTFS period is a major concern and we indicated that DSG High Needs Block in Staffordshire should be a priority for the work group to consider the approach to unmitigated deficit.
17. Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and the cumulative underspend in some District and Borough Councils was suggested for scrutiny but it was explained that although £10m DFG passed through SCC it was determined by District and Borough Councils and would not be a focus of this working group.
18. Benchmarking had been undertaken by MTFS working group in 2022 evidence gathering which had enabled members to contrast other ways of working to inform the recommendations. This year the working group focus is to challenge the robustness of the budget process and to carry out checks and balances on assumptions and mitigation proposals.

## Evidence gathering and findings

Focus on 22/23 Outturn - Underspends

22/23 Outturn:	Underspends	(% savings of budget)
Wellbeing & Partnerships	£0.768m saving	(9.83%)
Business & Enterprise	£0.141m saving	(6.20%)
Skills	£0.113m saving	(4.21%)
EI&S Business Support	£0.1m saving	(8.75%)

19. Evidence was provided to outline circumstances for underspends.

### Wellbeing and Partnerships

20. The service has an outturn saving position of £768,000. This reflects the fact that existing staff were utilised to respond and administer the government funded Afghan resettlement 'Bridging Accommodation' programme and these are covered in the staffing budget. This resulted in some work being delayed and then some annual leave being bought back or carried forward, due to the urgent nature of the work. The forecast for 23/24 Q2 Wellbeing & Partnerships is an underspend of £118,000 which is 1.4% of the budget.

21. We were satisfied that this was a one-off fund provided for a specific event. The underspend would not have to be paid back and would be used to offset overspends elsewhere.

### Business and Enterprise

22. There were some temporary vacancies that arose during the year, as well as one-off income to the Farms budgets and to the Regen team (back dated officer costs recovered from the A50 scheme). There were funding surpluses related to ERDF funding, which has now ended, and slippage on the Kingswood Lakeside Road adoption costs. Most of these items were only identified at Q4 or outturn and were included in quarterly reporting as they arose.

23. Any areas of underspend that were expected to be ongoing have been reviewed in 23/24 alongside the need to make provision for pressures arising related to the ending of ERDF funding and SBEN membership fees, and revenue costs related to i54. A new post is being created which is being financed partly by the creation of a vacancy factor which will reduce the likelihood of underspends in the future related to temporary vacancies. Where new service provision/activity has been proposed it has been argued that existing budgets have enough flexibility to allow for an element of over-programming which will make the budgets work harder and reduce the likelihood of underspends at year end in the future.

24. We were satisfied that could not have been foreseen and was identified through quarterly monitoring.

## Skills

25. There was some additional funding from government funded programmes, such as Multiply and SEND Internships. Both were new schemes in 22/23 and we did not understand the full budget implications until Q3 when the underspend was reported. There was also income being generated from Data entry work provided to Community Learning providers, which was also new for 22/23. While these income streams are expected to continue in 23/24 they have been identified in the current forecast, and the funding has been earmarked for the continuation of the Ignite Student Start up scheme. The underspend forecast at Q2 relates to temporary vacancies and is 3% of the budget currently.
26. We were satisfied that this was a one-off situation, identified through quarterly monitoring.

## EI&S Business Support

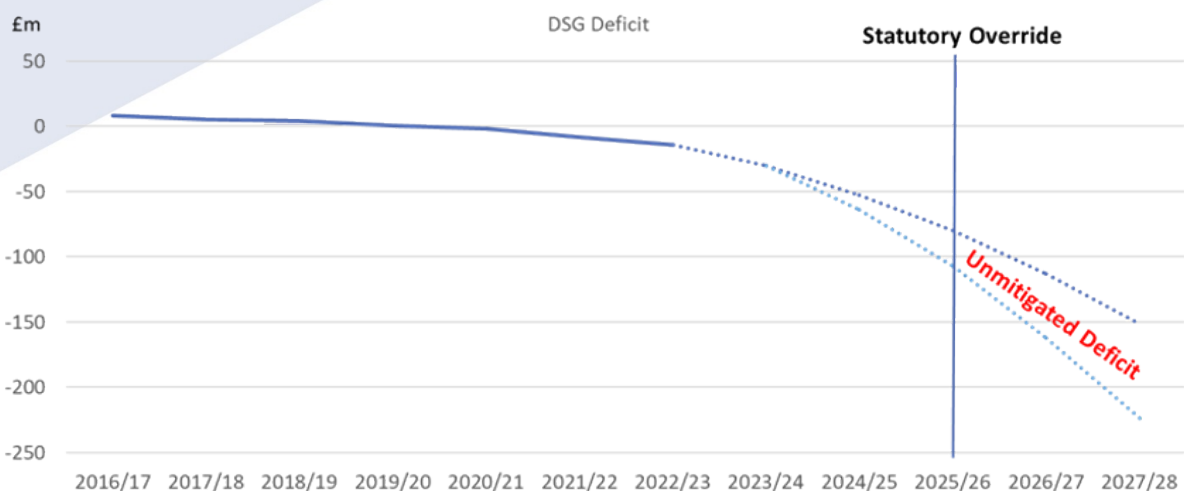
27. The overspend in this area came about because of a review of bad debts, and this pressure was first identified at Q3. In 22/23 a requirement for an increase in the bad debts provision in EI&S created an overspend. However, across the EI&S budget there was a net underspend, so this was an affordable cost. We don't have the information to forecast the change to our bad debts provision until Q3 so this is something that will always mean variances developing later in the financial year in this area. The forecast at Q2 for this service is a very small (£5,000) underspend.
28. We were satisfied this came about because of a review of bad debts and was effectively monitored.
29. We are satisfied that the underspend areas identified in the final outturn 2022/23 were all due to one off circumstance and were not likely to repeat in the next budget period. It was recognised that the budget is set for a period of time and that things will happen after the budget is agreed. It did highlight the need to adequately look at all risks before setting the budget and to monitor.

## Focus on Assets Disposal Strategy

30. A list of disposable assets was provided detailing site, estate value, cost of sale, current position, anticipated year of delivery and district/area of site.
31. We highlighted the need to check that sufficient priority was being given to achieving capital receipts, if the economic situation meant that the full value of land was not being received and if so whether sufficient consideration was given to retention of land assets to assist the climate change agenda, i.e. tree planting, biodiversity and providing revenue through tourism.
32. We referred scrutiny of the list of disposable assets and questions raised by the working group to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider in its work programme.

Focus on Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block (HNB)

33. The Education Green Paper was published on 29 March 2022, it made changes to the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and alternative provision (AP) system in England. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) provides funding for all LEA schools, Early years, and High Needs Block (SEND).
34. Academies receive DSG direct from Government and Staffordshire County Council (SCC) funding reduces. All SEND provision is funded from ringfenced DSG money (High Needs Block). Academies receive funding for their SEND requirements from SCC's DSG allocation.
35. Across the Country academies and special schools funding requirement has far outweighed the grant that schools receive, and many Local Authorities have not cleared the backlog, the national DSG deficit is between £2.6 - £3.6 billion. The Government has put in place a 'statutory override' requiring accumulated DSG deficits remain ringfenced separate to the Council's other reserves, this has been extended to the end of 2025/26. If not extended further, many LA's will face bankruptcy, if the accumulated DSG deficit exceeds the amount held in reserves.
36. The risk of the statutory override being removed is a problem. Staffordshire would not qualify for the 'Safety Valve' agreement. Work was ongoing to predict future SEND numbers and activities and actions were planned. There would still be a deficit with measures being put in place and there is a significant risk that savings will not be achieved in full.
37. The projected deficit position in Staffordshire relates to the High Needs Block (SEND), it is a significant risk to setting a balanced budget in future years.



38. The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSC) as at 1 April 2023 is in deficit by £14.2m. This is expected to increase to c£32m in deficit at the end of the current financial year, given the latest forecast overspend in High Needs for 2023/24 c£20m and forecast to increase to c£120-150 million by end of 2027/28 because the funding is not enough to repay the deficit and meet the growing demand. The statutory override

means that SCC reserves or income is not required at this stage to address the deficit and SCC can only monitor and report it. A deficit repayment plan has been set up following a government visit.

39. It is important to acknowledge the current difficult situation for local government finance, with Nottingham Council becoming the latest in a succession of local authorities to issue a section 114 notice.

#### Focus on Deficit Management Plan

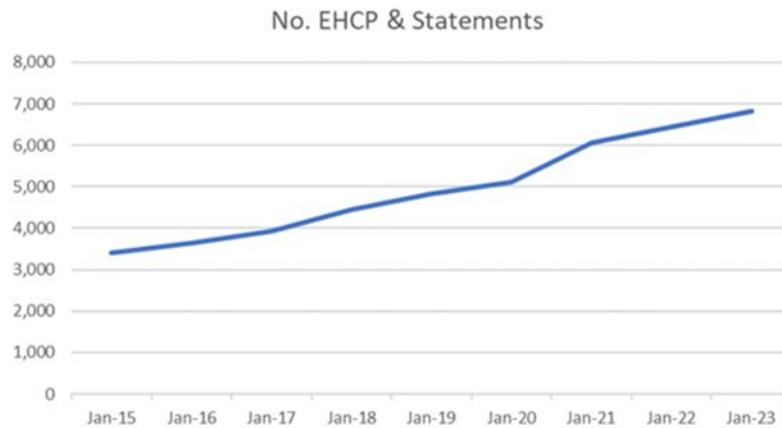
40. The Council's Deficit Management Plan (DMP) aims to mitigate, as far as possible, the accumulated DSG deficit over the next four years. It is unlikely that the existing gap can be bridged completely without additional Government support. The deficit plan has identified savings as part of a wider package of proposals targeted to reduce costs by 27/28. Anticipated financial savings will increase gradually over the time and, over the next four years 2024/25 – 2027/28, are forecast to deliver c £34m cash reductions.
41. We welcome the Deficit Management Plan (DMP) which is based on the Council's SEND Strategy and Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) and that appropriate measures were being put in place with Staffordshire Enhanced District Inclusion Support Teams (SEDIS) and Enhanced Assess-Plan-Do-Review (EAPDR) block. We are assured that work with the APP and SEND strategy is linked to the HNB funding and aims to stabilise the system. We further noted that the DMP would not address the accumulated deficit and that the Department of Education recognised SCC's plan as best practice.
42. We understand that the measures aim to develop a more inclusive system where more Children and Young People (CYP) with Special Education needs and disability (SEND) access mainstream education - wherever possible within their local community - and if appropriate with specialist support. We are assured that this will provide for a more sustainable model, with better outcomes for CYP and reduce reliance on the non-maintained and independent sector. We understand, however, that parents perception may need to change for them to accept the long term benefits to their children remaining within the mainstream education system.
43. SEDIS supports the school to support the child to remain in mainstream school. Special school places are for children with special needs not for children with moderate learning needs. Members considered that the benefits of children remaining in mainstream school is that children would be with peers of their own age and better social skills with the right support.
44. SEDIS puts a team around the young person, a concern was that that additional teachers could not be put in place to support existing teachers in schools. Members noted that the teacher role was difficult but were assured that support from educational psychologists was available and the enhanced model to assess, plan and review support around the child was in place.

45. All state funded schools and academies had processes in place, early intervention, outreach, and in-reach work in an inclusion support model. The schools have governor bodies who determine admissions. The LA asks the governor body to encourage inclusiveness. The education banding tool is the system to determine funding. We wish to stress the importance of inclusivity within all schools, including academies, and look to ensure the number of children with ECHP's is fair and proportionate to schools irrespective of academy status.
46. We understand this will take time to impact and, in order to limit the extent of the accumulated deficit arising over the next few years, the DMP also includes a range of interventions and policy reviews that will provide for additional resource / reduce costs in the short and medium term.
47. We highlight the Deficit reduction plan as a major risk to setting a balanced budget in future years and emphasise the needs to monitor closely all aspects of the plan.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m	2028/29 £m
Children & Families Pressures					
Children in Care Placements	8.700	7.600	6.100	5.000	2.400
SEND Transport:					
Inflationary pressures	0.647	1.127	1.634	1.925	2.435
Underlying overspend 23/24	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.800	2.800
Demand pressures	1.500	3.100	5.000	7.300	9.500
Deficit reduction plan - agreed actions	0.000	-0.600	-1.400	-2.500	-3.200
Deficit reduction plan - savings target	-1.500	-2.500	-3.600	-4.800	-6.300
School days changes	0.300	0.090	-0.030	0.300	-1.390
Total Childrens & Families	12.447	11.617	10.504	10.025	6.245

#### Focus on Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

48. An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is a document used in England to outline a child or young person's special educational needs (SEN) and the provision that should be made to meet those needs.
49. We understand that meeting the child's needs before an EHCP is triggered is a priority to reduce assessment requests and welcome the strategy as a good mitigation against risk and note the success in appointing educational psychologists to work with children earlier.
50. The number of assessment requests for EHCPs has doubled in the last eight years, and this demand is linked to the change in societal knowledge, people are more aware and in more recent times the impact of COVID years and investment in early years has identified a greater number of children who require support. The finance attached to EHCPs is important to schools to support the child.
51. There are currently 7260 EHCPs in place, 2000 (28%) of which are female and 72% male. There is a rise in female secondary sector EHCPs relating to social emotional health, particularly in autism and a specialist girl's provision is being considered in Staffordshire.



52. The Local Authority has a legal duty to consider all requests for assessment to determine if a child or young person up to the age of 25 who might have additional need and if they might need additional resources. Members found that this threshold for assessment is too broad and lacks definition, and although the Council says no to 53% of EHCPs following assessment often the decision is appealed by parents at tribunal. Almost 33% applications have been turned down at tribunal. It was established that it is important to have earlier intervention and support at an early stage may avert the need for an EHCP.
53. We welcome that the Council is doing all it can to develop pre-statutory (pre- EHCP) provision by enhancing support in mainstream schools SEND support without the need for an EHCP.
54. We endorse meeting the needs of the child in mainstream education, the practice to work with parents who may not agree with mainstream education and the process for parents to appeal, but that 33% of appeals were difficult to challenge. We were assured that work was ongoing with SENCOs to provide early support and prevent the need to escalate children to EHCP's and we feel there is a need for the Council to better understand how the £3.4 million is currently being used by schools to do this. We suggest that exclusions data may reveal where there may be an unmet need.
55. We note that there needs to be an inclusive SEN policy in schools but that not all schools are as inclusive as they could be. A correlation may be seen between schools with high reserves and low levels of EHCPs and the Cabinet Member may wish to identify those schools who are not including a proportionate number of children with EHCPs based on need within their area.
56. We welcome that early intervention strategies can potentially reduce the number of Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) overall and, importantly, a greater proportion of children educated within their local school setting. This will reduce the dependency on 'independent' provision which we anticipate to gradually stabilise and then reduce over the next few years.

Focus on Deficit Management Plan (DMP) spend profile



57. The DMP aims to address the balance: We can support SEND pupils in mainstream schools which would reduce the current reliance on independent school places. We want to change so that children can be educated locally and not transported all over the County. Children were assessed for all kinds of placement to find what was right for them.

#### Independent Placements:

58. The cost for independent provision is increasing year on year, in the main this is due to increasing overheads and the fees are increasing. There are currently 136 pupils in independent school placements, the average cost is £57k per place (but one placement is 180k). The challenge is not just about new attendees, the challenge is all placement fees are increasing. LA can pay all of education funding, majority of parents pay fees, LA pays special needs funding.

59. Many pupils in independent schools have more complex needs, however there is growing pressure from parents who choose independent schools. On average the independent schools are three times the cost of special school provision. Some independent school pupils could be in mainstream provision with the right support in place. SCC schools can meet the pupils needs but parents' challenge and tribunals are sensitive to the parent/child case rather than the LA.

60. The LA pays for top up fees not the independent school fees. In independent special schools the LA would pay the fees and these can be £60-70k, these are children with a variety of special needs. Scale of the challenge – there had been significant change to re-calculate top up funding. As Government funding slows down demand for provision does not. There has been drift to the top end of funding from £5m to £7m.

61. Where it was considered a child's needs could be met in a LA special school they would be challenged. It was confirmed that the LA is not subsidising independent special schools, the costs for independent special schools were rising with a 5% uplift each year.

#### Special School placements

62. We have provision in special schools, the challenge is not to create more provision but to support more children in mainstream school system where there is a viable option to meet the child's needs.

63. The priority is to meet the child's needs and protect the public purse.

64. We highlight the need to closely monitor delivery of the actions in the DMP, which links the work within the APP and SEND strategy to the HNB funding. The Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) is in place to drive deep and wide systems change to mitigate the financial risk and is critical to setting a balanced budget in the MTF period.

	2024/25 £m	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m	2027/28 £m
<b>Reduce / Reprofile EHCPs to increase mainstream provision and reduce Independent provision</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>18.6</b>
Review non-statutory provision	0.9	2.3	2.8	2.8
Alternative funding / partner contributions	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
0.5% funding switch (from Schools block to High Needs)	3.4	3.5	3.6	3.7
	6.0	10.8	17.5	25.9

65. We are disappointed that Schools Forum on 8 November 2023 has resolved not to approve the transfer of 0.5% (c £3.4 m) funding from the schools block for high needs in 2024/25 given the continuing SEND demand, and growing deficit. This forms a key part of the Council's DMP. It repeats previous years requests to the Schools Forum, which consists predominantly of Headteachers who are unlikely to change their position. Last year the Council submitted a disapplication request for the block transfer which was not supported by the Secretary of State for Education because Schools Forum had not approved it, an application for judicial review was unlikely to change the decision.

#### Focus on SEND Transport

66. We referred to the 2022-23 MTFs working group recommendations relating to SEND Transport and would encourage more pace to move the SEND transport review forward. We welcome:

- the report on school transport and Q routes software to consider single route taxi journeys to reduce costs and that Q routes is being implemented in a number of schools which has resulted in fewer school routes.
- that urgent work is undertaken to review all single occupancy journeys and subject to individual need and ability combine routes to reduce the number across the county.
- the focus on educating CYP locally to reduce SEND transport costs and training for SEND key workers to support parents getting children to school and where possible use of Personal Travel Assistance Budgets (PTABs).
- Staffordshire residents name local schools first on the schools admission form to secure local school places.
- We look forward to hear the outcomes of consultant report on use of Council owned vehicles in SEND Transport.

#### Focus on Risk Based Budget Setting

67. The MTFs (Medium Term Financial Strategy) Working Group welcome the presentation and early sight of the draft MTFs 2024-29 which highlighted the position as at February 2023 and the risks in planning the five year strategy when yearly settlements and unknown funding make longer term financial planning difficult. It was acknowledged that major funding streams can be estimated reasonably accurately but that the next spending review (25/26 onwards) could be a major risk to the balanced position.

68. Spending pressures: The spending pressures identified before mitigations/ use of grant amount add up to approximately £33m to be funded in the five year MTFS period.

69. We are mindful of the many unknown factors, pressures and risks when drafting the MTFS 2024-29. We understand that the Council is in a reasonably good place for the next two years and there is a reasonable understanding of grants and other factors but feel there is a need to be more cautious for the remainder of the five year period and keep a close eye on the risks and external factors. The MTFS planning assumptions seem optimistic about some factors in the current climate including delivery of all savings and programmers, rate of inflation, estimated funding levels and the DSG override remaining in place.

70. The Mitigations:

- Existing MTFS savings programmes must be delivered.
- DSG Deficit reduction plan to be revised.
- SEND Transport volume/demand increases to be managed.
- Allocate balance of social care grant.
- Interest on cash balances to offset inflationary pressures.
- Reduced contingency level in line with the risk assessment.
- Targeted use of reserves to smooth out fluctuations in inflation impact and general funding profile.

71. The Risks:

- Funding Reviews
- Spending Review 2025 – particularly re: Social Care Grants continuing
- Adult Social Care Market (capacity to meet demand, recruitment and retention, focus on FCoC)
- Adult Social Care & Safeguarding, Liberty Protection Safeguards
- Social Care Reform
- Social Care Client System Contract
- Our Children in Care – numbers and cost of children in care
- SEND Transport
- High Needs Block spending exceeding funding
- Levelling up/bidding approach
- On-going reductions in DfT highways capital funding
- Inflation

72. We are acutely aware from the evidence presented that the use of reserves to balance the budget is not sustainable beyond the current MTFS period and that whilst use of reserves is net nil over the 5 year period, beyond 2028/29 there needs to be consideration of savings and transformation of current service delivery to manage those pressures emerging.

Draft MTFS 2024-29 Summary:

73. We welcomed the openness of discussion and the summary from the Leader and The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources:

- Still much uncertainty.
- Maintaining a balanced five-year MTFS.
- The use of reserves during the MTFS period is affordable. Continued use of reserves beyond the MTFS period is not sustainable.
- Longer term planning will require the consideration of a savings programme.
- Many risks – also drives the requirement to consider a savings programme for future years.
- Transformation of service delivery is essential – start the thinking now.
- Delivery of key programmes (children's, SEND Transport, DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) Deficit reduction) is essential.
- Scope for some targeted investments.

#### Investment Programme

74. We welcome the Investment Programme Approach, the policy criteria, the principles/rules, and the priorities considered by Cabinet and endorse the targeted priorities and approach for investment of funds proposed in the draft MTFS 2024-29.

## Conclusions

75. We welcome the draft MTFS as a starting position on a long journey ahead and highlight the following comments and conclusions of the working group on the evidence presented for Cabinet to take into consideration in advance of determining the MTFS 2024-29:

- Members felt the draft MTFS is optimistic when there is uncertainty of the governments funding and growing demands on services. There is a high risk of assumptions not being met. It calls for close monitoring and delivery of the savings programme, transformation programmes, and services must remain in their budgets.
- There is no Plan B to factor in a different approach should some mitigations not be delivered, or if another emergency such as the COVID pandemic or financial crisis emerges as reserves cannot be used on an ongoing basis. It would be prudent to have a back-up plan should something unforeseen occur.
- Many of the unknowns are outside the Councils reach. What are the areas that this Council influence and things that we can do to ensure the transformations are achieved within the timeframe.
- We want to have confidence about the assumptions and to have assurance that all have options been considered using a combination of factors and scenarios.
- To assume LAC (currently 1271 excluding UASC) will reduce to circa 979 by 28/29 needs further evidence, 23% reduction seems unrealistic.
- Use of reserves to balance the budget is not sustainable beyond the current MTFS period.
- Has Climate Change/ de-carbonisation/flood defence been factored into the strategy and investments.
- ASC reform has not achieved national consensus, once achieved it can move forward which will require both SCC and ICS to gain consensus.
- We made recommendations last year relating to SEND Transport and want assurance that there is sufficient capacity in the team to move actions forward to reduce SEND Transport costs. There is no sense of pace on SEND transport.
- Is there a need to lobby MPs on change of Government policy on EHCPs/SEND Transport; to clarify and strengthen guidance in relation to providing support and resource. Lobbying the Chairs of the LGA and CCN would also support this.
- Children's transformation – Can we be assured that things are progressing to deliver it. What are the KPI's and is performance being monitored.
- We welcome the DMP and work to offer earlier support for parent and children in early care.
- There is some breathing space to target investments effectively.

Further evidence gathered to inform recommendations

76. We asked to see the five-year trend data for budget and outturn on two key areas of focus in the draft MTFS, Children's Services and SEND Transport. This being to

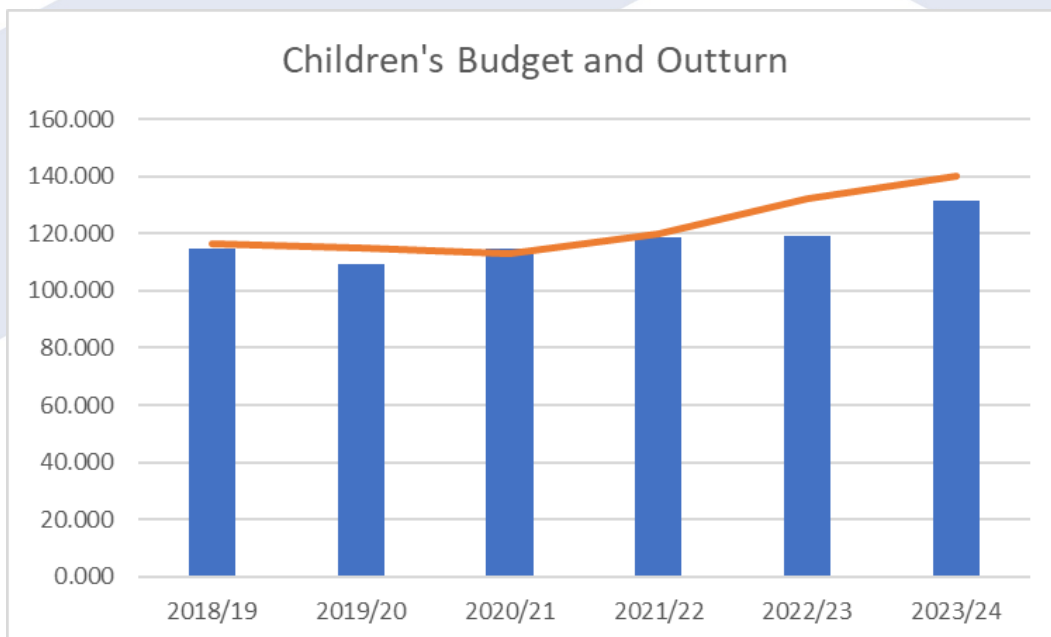
check direction of travel and whether the information provides confidence in the assumptions made in the draft MTFS.

### Children's Services Budgets and Outturn 2018/19 to 2023/24

	Budget at Year End	Actual at Year End	Over / - Under Spend	Year on Year Growth - Budget £	Year on Year Growth - Budget %	Year on Year Growth - Actuals £	Year on Year Growth - Actuals %
	£m	£m	£m				
2018/19	114.822	116.513	1.691				
2019/20	109.115	115.026	5.911	-5.707	-5.0%	-1.487	-1.3%
2020/21	114.824	113.207	-1.617	5.709	5.2%	-1.819	-1.6%
2021/22	118.696	120.159	1.463	3.872	3.4%	6.952	6.1%
2022/23	119.405	132.285	12.880	0.709	0.6%	12.126	10.1%
2023/24	131.364	140.155	8.791	11.959	10.0%	7.870	5.9%

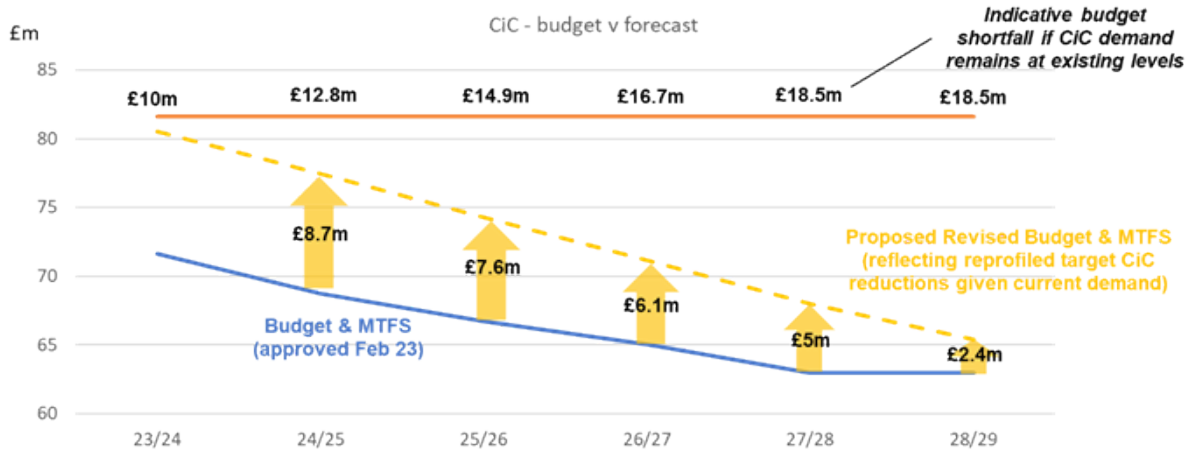
Overall Growth from 18/19 to 23/24 - Budget - 16.452m - Actuals - £23.642m

### Children's Services Budgets and Outturn 2018/19 to 2023/24



Blue bars indicate Budget at year end - Orange line indicates actual at year end

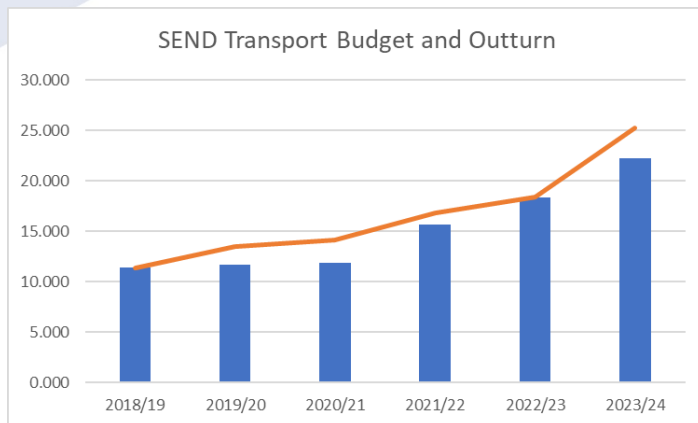
### Children's Placement Costs



### SEND Transport Budgets and Outturn 2018/19 to 2023/24

	Budget at Year End	Actual at Year End	Over / - Under Spend	Year on Year Growth - Budget £	Year on Year Growth - Budget %	Year on Year Growth - Actuals £	Year on Year Growth - Actuals %
	£m	£m	£m				
2018/19	11.382	11.407	0.025				
2019/20	11.700	13.464	1.764	0.318	2.8%	2.057	18.0%
2020/21	11.888	14.126	2.238	0.188	1.6%	0.662	4.9%
2021/22	15.631	16.789	1.158	3.743	31.5%	2.663	18.9%
2022/23	18.325	18.424	0.099	2.694	17.2%	1.635	9.7%
2023/24	22.218	25.209	2.991	3.893	21.2%	6.785	36.8%

### SEND Transport Budgets and Outturn 2018/19 to 2023/24



Blue bars indicate Budget at year end - Orange line indicates actual at year end  
SEND Transport Budget

77. We found the information surprising; it shows a continuous trend in overspend in the services and an upward trajectory. We consider that further work can be undertaken for each of the MTFs planning assumptions to check 5-year trend data to inform Cabinet.
78. We are mindful that these savings targets are in areas that affect some of the most vulnerable in our society, we must ensure that there are commensurate performance measures that demonstrate that any changes in operational procedures that are changed by the savings targets do not result in a deterioration of the service that we provide, and ideally demonstrate a measurable improvement in service provision.



## Recommendations

I recommend to Cabinet:

1. **Plan B** - that Cabinet considers preparing a contingency plan to refer to if Plan A goes off track. Not a replacement but a plan that offers an alternative to compliment the risk-based approach on what we know so far 2024-26, assumptions from five-year trend and performance data. With so many uncertainties in the coming years, combined with some significant risks, it would be useful to have the assurance from Cabinet that a Plan B exists.
2. **Children's Transformation** - that the Children's Transformation programme continues at pace and delivers a reduction in numbers of children in our care, in line with the assumptions in the MTFS. It is recommended that Cabinet and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly monitoring as part of the integrated performance updates, as follows:
  - a. High-level dashboard monitoring of the transformation programmes performance.
  - b. Exception reporting and corrective actions planned.
  - c. A breakdown of the target savings against delivery dates
3. **SEND Transport** – that Cabinet be requested to inject more pace to move forward on SEND transport work and encourage exploring new ways to engage with parents to find provision for their child nearer to home.
4. **EHCP Guidance** - that Cabinet be requested to challenge the lack of clarity in the guidance when determining EHCP's and make representation to the Secretary of State for Education to review policy and guidance in the interests of clarity and consistency in EHCP process.



## **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:

- 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](mailto:mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk))

### Work Programme 2023/24

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
5 June 2023	Reserved for Call In		
20 June 2023	<b>Work Programme Planning -</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry	Development of the work programme for 2023/24	The draft work programme was approved. <b>Action-</b> Cabinet members and officers invited to meetings and dates confirmed
	<b>Appointment of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Working Group</b> Officers: Mandy Pattinson		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr M Wilcox (Chair)</li> <li>• Cllr B Peters</li> <li>• Cllr N Yates</li> <li>• Cllr J Pert</li> <li>• Cllr G Heath</li> <li>• Cllr S Thompson</li> <li>• Cllr J Oates</li> </ul>
Page 140	<b>O&amp;S Annual report</b> Officer: Deb Breedon		The report was approved and referred to <b>Council for consideration on 20 July 2023</b>
	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes</b> Overview and Scrutiny Chairman	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	The quarterly work programmes was agreed.
	<b>Climate Change Working Group Update and member appointment</b> Officer: Zach Simister	To receive an update report	a) The update was received. b) Cllrs Smith and Wileman would be asked if the wish to remain on the working group. <b>Action-both confirmed they want to remain.</b> c) That subject to councillors confirming their wish to remain on the Group, the membership remain as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr S Thompson (Chair)</li> <li>• Cllr C Wileman</li> <li>• Cllr N Yates</li> <li>• Cllr T Clements</li> <li>• Cllr J Pert</li> <li>• Cllr B Peters</li> <li>• Cllr D Smith</li> </ul>

**Work Programme 2023/24**

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
	<p><b>Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 4</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon</p>	<p>Quarterly report.</p>	<p>a) The Integrated Performance and Financial Outturn Report was noted as the position as at the end of year 2022/23. b) A copy of the “Social Care workforce strategy” be circulated to members for information. c) Information clarifying the position with the Household waste sites charging for DIY waste would be forwarded to members when available. <b>Action-</b> b and c Emailed to members on 030723</p>
<p>July 2023</p>	<p>Reserved for Call In</p>		
<p>August 2023</p>	<p><b>Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 1</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon</p>	<p>Quarterly report.</p>	<p>a) That the information contained in the Integrated Performance and Financial Outturn Report be noted as the position as at the end of quarter one 2023/24. b) That the following information, which was not available at the meeting, be sent to Committee members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on the national bench marking figures for re-referrals and where Staffordshire fell against that would be sent to the Committee for information.</li> <li>• Information on Wood burning use (paragraph 102 of the report).</li> <li>• Results of the SEND transport review as recommended by the MTFs working group 2022/23.</li> <li>• That Highway repairs be added to the key areas of concern as listed in the report, as this was one of the main complaints from local residents in most areas.</li> </ul>

**Work Programme 2023/24**

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
			<p>c) That the O&amp;S Chairs forum to asked to consider a review of the way that the Divisional Highway Programmes (DHP) funding is allocated, and the processes involved in identifying and progressing schemes. Members felt that once an issue had been identified and a feasibility study had been carried out, there was insufficient fund left to carry out the work.</p> <p><b>Action</b> – information requested (b) emailed on 240823. (c) referred to Chair and Vice Chairs forum 12 October.</p>
<p>1 August 2023 (2pm)</p>	<p>Reserved for Call In</p>		
<p>1 September 2023</p>	<p>Reserved for Call In</p>		
<p>12 September 2023</p>	<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes</b> Overview and Scrutiny Chairman</p>	<p>To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication</p>	<p>The work programmes for the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees were agreed.</p>
	<p><b>1. Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021/22.</b> <b>2. LGSCO Annual Report</b> Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Kate Bullivant</p>	<p>Annual reports</p>	<p>a) The Complaints team be thanked for their support and work undertaken over the past 12 months.</p> <p><b>Action: Chairman thanked team on 22 09 23</b></p> <p>b) the Complaints process training be included in the annual Members Training Programme.</p> <p><b>Action : Included in annual training schedule for all members</b></p> <p>a) Information on the online app working for android phones be</p>

**Work Programme 2023/24**

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
			<p>reported to members after the meeting. Action: information emailed to members on 29 09 23</p>
<p>Page 143</p>	<p><b>Electoral Review of Staffordshire County Council: Draft Recommendations</b> Member: Alan White Officers: Katie Marshall/Chris Ebberley</p>	<p>Update and presentation prior to Council 12 October</p>	<p>a) The progress on the County's Electoral Review was noted and the officers were thanked for their work during the review. b) That the comments from the Committee as listed above be referred to Cabinet as part of the consultation. <b>ACTION: Reported to Council on 12 October</b></p>
<p>6 October 2023</p>	<p>Reserved for Call In</p>		
<p>6 November 2023 (was the 24 October 2023)</p>	<p><b>Climate Change Annual report and action plan</b> Member: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright</p>	<p>Pre decision scrutiny. Annual report</p>	<p><b>Resolved:</b> a) That the Committee receive an update in 12 months time. b) That the comments made by the Committee, listed above, be reported to the Cabinet on 15 November 2023. <b>ACTION – reported to Cabinet on 15 November 2023.</b></p>
	<p><b>Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 2</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Lyndsey Bissell</p>	<p>Regular quarterly report</p>	<p>a, That the Quarter 2 2023/24 Integrated Performance Report be noted. B, The tolerance on graph axis's should be changed, wherever practical, so that it starts at a number closer to the actual e.g. started at 90 if the data started at 94 and not zero.</p>

**Work Programme 2023/24**

Date of Meeting	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
Page 144			<p>C, That the following information be provided to the committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full list of schemes which had applied for covid funding as well as the successful ones.</li> <li>• A copy of the Cabinet (20/09/23) report entitled “SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Enhanced Assess-Plan, Review Pathway, Strategy for Special Provision and the Staffordshire Children and Young People’s Framework”.</li> <li>• The financial impact of the new online financial self-assessment portal, as mentioned in Paragraph 41 of the report. An update on the Chatterley valley scheme slippage be sent to Councillor Yates directly.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTION: Emailed 27/11/23</b></p>
	<p><b>Entrust – Review of changes</b> Member: Mark Deaville Officers: Ian Turner</p>	<p>Requested at 25 October 2022 O&amp;S to scrutinise changes and implications.</p>	<p><b>Resolved:</b> That the Committee hold an informal meeting to discuss the possible future targets for the service. <b>ACTION: 24 January 2024 – Cllrs Wilcox, Pert, Francis and Yates</b></p>
	<p><b>Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration</b> Officers: Deb Breedon</p>	<p>Climate Change Working Group final report. Cllr Thompson Chairman</p>	<p>The draft report and recommendations to Cabinet – 13 December 2023. Due to report back in Feb/March 2024 <b>ACTION: Response added to WP</b></p>
<p>4 December 2023</p>	<p>Reserved for Call In cancelled</p>		



18 December 2023	<p><b>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan update (to include gender pay gap update)</b> Member: Alan White Officers: S Getley</p>	Requested at 25 October 2022 O&S to scrutinise changes and implications.	
	<p><b>Peoples Strategy</b> Member: Alan White Officers: S Getley</p>	Suggested at triangulation June 2023. Scrutiny of actions taken. Fits with the Equality report above	
	<p><b>MFTS 2022-2027 Working Group Report</b> Chair of COSC - Cllr Wilcox Rob Salmon/Rachel Spain</p>		
9 January 2024	Reserved for Call In		
14 January 2024	<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes</b> Overview and Scrutiny Chairman</p>	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	
9 February 2024	Reserved for Call In		
26 February 2024	<p><b>Quarterly Integrated Performance report (Quarter 3)</b> Members: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Lynsey Bissell</p>	Regular quarterly report	
	<p><b>Corporate Plan/ Delivery Plan</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Lynsey Bissell</p>		

8 March 2024 Reserved for call-in	<b>Corporate Plan/ Delivery Plan</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Lynsey Bissell	Moved to 26/02/24	
	<b>Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration- cabinets response</b> Members: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright	Moved to 09/04/24	
8 April 2024	Reserved for Call In		
9 April 2024	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes</b> Overview and Scrutiny Chairman		
Page 146	<b>Customer Services strategy</b> Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: Tracy Thorley/ Emily Doorbar	Pre decision scrutiny	
	<b>Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration- Cabinets response</b> Members: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright	Cabinets response to the working groups report.	
29 April 2024	Reserved for Call In		

<b>Items for Consideration or needing more detail– Work Programme 2023/24 and 2024/25. Includes items raised at triangulation meetings and pending items.</b>		
<b>Suggested Item</b>	<b>Details (Background)</b>	<b>Proposed Date of Meeting</b>
<b>Leadership Board</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	Already in the work programme as pending. Leader suggested scrutiny of priorities	Priorities going to CEO board in March. Mtg with Chair 31/11/23 – report to Corporate Chair and Vice Chairs in the first instance for them to agree when and what should come to Cttee.
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
Scrutiny of the <b>Local Enterprise Partnership</b> – Officer Pete Shakespeare	Previously annual scrutiny in January each year. LEP now transferring to LA. Felt that an update on transition would be more useful. Approx June 2024. <b>Set up of Joint Local Enterprise Committee – February 2024 – Forward plan item</b>	TBC – possible 26 February 2024
<b>Cyber Security</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	Range of activity taking place currently – Ian Turner is lead officer. No decisions to be taken – information item	Briefing/information paper to Committee members in early 2024. – Can be discussed at O&S meeting if required.
<b>Legal function</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	How do they operate, their offer. Information item	No decisions to be taken or performance to be monitored. Information gathering session Member briefing session- January 2024
<b>Planning</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	As above (legal services)	Chair to talk to the Chair of Planning Committee
<b>Customer services</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	Performance – are we getting it right for the public	Draft strategy being developed. 9 April O&S

<b>Items for Consideration or needing more detail– Work Programme 2023/24 and 2024/25. Includes items raised at triangulation meetings and pending items.</b>		
<b>Suggested Item</b>	<b>Details (Background)</b>	<b>Proposed Date of Meeting</b>
<b>Delivery plan</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	To be considered with the Corporate Plan	In the work programme for February 2024 meeting
<b>Digital Strategy</b> Raised at triangulation meeting	To consider the strategy when appropriate if it covers corporate issues. Prosperous O&S consider digital infrastructure.  Probably late 2024.	TBC
<b>Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration-cabinets response</b> Members: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright	Due 2 months after it is considered at Cabinet	April 2024

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#### **Updates/ Briefing Notes / Visits 2023/24**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Details (Background)</b>	<b>Action / Outcome</b>

#### **Working Groups / Inquiry Days 2023/2024**

MTFS Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr M Wilcox (Chair)</li> <li>• Cllr B Peters</li> <li>• Cllr N Yates</li> <li>• Cllr J Pert</li> <li>• Cllr G Heath</li> <li>• Cllr S Thompson</li> <li>• Cllr J Oates</li> </ul>	Draft report submitted to Committee 18 December.
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**Updates/ Briefing Notes / Visits 2023/24**

Date	Item	Details (Background)	Action / Outcome
Climate Change Working Group	Membership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr S Thompson (Chair)</li> <li>• Cllr C Wileman</li> <li>• Cllr N Yates</li> <li>• Cllr T Clements</li> <li>• Cllr J Pert</li> <li>• Cllr B Peters</li> <li>• Cllr D Smith</li> </ul>	Draft report submitted to Committee 6 November. Reported to Cabinet early 2024.	



Membership – County Councillors 2022-23	Calendar of Committee Meetings – 2023-24
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 Math Perry Bob Spencer Mike Worthington	5 June 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	20 June 2023
	6 July 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	1 August 2023
	7 August 2023 (2pm) (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	1 September 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	12 September 2023
	6 October 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	24 October 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	6 November 2023
	4 December 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	18 December 2023
	5 January 2024(reserved for call-ins)
	24 January 2024
	9 February 2024 (reserved for call-ins)
	26 February 2024
	8 March 2024
8 April 2024 (reserved for call-ins)	
9 April 2024	
29 April 2024 (reserved for call-ins)	