

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 21 February 2024

Attendance	
Philip White	Simon Tagg
Mark Deaville	David Williams
Paul Northcott	Mike Wilcox
Jonathan Price	Victoria Wilson
Mark Sutton	
Simon Tagg	
Alan White (Chair)	

Cabinet Support Members in attendance: Paul Northcott and Robert Pritchard.

Apologies: Ian Parry

Part One

88. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

89. Decision notices of the meetings held on 17 and 24 January 2024

Decision – That the notes of the meetings held on 17 and 24 January 2024 be approved.

90. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including the appointment of Mike Wilcox as Cabinet Member for Health and Care following Julia Jessel's decision to step down from the post; the recent announcement that King Charles is being treated for cancer and his decision to raise awareness of the importance of health checks and to encourage others to seek medical advice if they are worried about their own health; the County Council setting a balanced budget for 2024/25 and its work to ensure that its position over the five-year period to 2028/29 also remains balanced; the major highway improvement schemes underway, including the A52 Ash Bank Road, Werrington, the A53 Newcastle Road, Loggerheads, and the A511 Horninglow Road North, Burton and also the proposed A38 Branston Interchange project; the ongoing efforts of the Council's trading standards teams to protect people in Staffordshire including warning people about scams and the seizure of counterfeit goods, and the welcome news that Government plans to ban the sale of disposable vapes; and Staffordshire

becoming the first UK location to join the City Nation Place advisory board, a network of leading decision makers from place brand, economic development and destination marketing organisations from around the world; be noted.

91. Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 7 February 2024

Decision – That the minutes of the meeting of the property Sub-Committee held on 7 February 2024 be received.

92. Staffordshire Means Back to Business

Decision – That the oral report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills giving an update on “Staffordshire Means Back to Business” activity including the following matters be noted:

- This month saw an increase of 320 claimants in Staffordshire, whilst at the same time we have seen increases both regionally and nationally. The total number of claimants in the county now stands at 15,290 and the claimant rate has increased this month from 2.8% to 2.9% of the working age population. However, it is important to note that the claimant count rate in Staffordshire is still one of the lowest in the West Midlands, far lower than the average for the region of 4.9%, and also lower than the average for England of 3.8%. We will continue to support those residents that unfortunately find themselves out of work to access employment through our dedicated Jobs Brokerage service.
- The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 60 claimants this month to a total of 2,895 young people. This is in line with increases also seen regionally and nationally. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit has increased this month from 4.5% to 4.6%. This continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.1% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.9%. Our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or continue in education and training.
- Creating the conditions to support the growth of our economy remains one of our top priorities, including supporting the development of our key industrial sectors which continue to thrive within the county. This includes our visitor economy and ensuring that we are taking full advantage of the fact that Staffordshire is home to numerous nationally renowned attractions.
- Next month we will celebrate and champion these attractions and our tourism and hospitality businesses through our Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism & Good Food Awards, taking place at the National Memorial Arboretum. The awards have been growing year-on-year and in total we received a record number of entries for this year’s awards,

with over 140 entries received across nineteen categories. Our awards are now the largest tourism awards competition in the Midlands and the second largest in England, with only the South West competition, which covers the whole region and not just one county, receiving more entries. The finalists for the event have recently been announced and many of the winners will go on to represent Staffordshire at the national VisitEngland Awards for Excellence in June 2024.

- At the end of last year, I updated Cabinet on our success to secure a Local Visitor Economy Partnership for the area which will work to support and grow the visitor economy and has the potential to bring significant benefits to the county, including through access to support and future funding programmes. We are now recruiting for a chair for the board who will help set the vision for the partnership and will be integral to raising the profile and quality of our visitor product, delivering a green sustainable tourism offer and successfully positioning Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent as a great place to live, work, visit and enjoy. The deadline for applications is the 1st March and I hope to be able to further update Cabinet on the successful applicant and work of the partnership in the coming months.

- Next month I'll be making a number of recommendations to Cabinet related to the integration of the responsibilities of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership into the County Council. However, in advance of that I wanted to provide a quick update on this work and particularly focus on the vital work of the Growth Hub. Since its inception in 2011, we have been a key partner of the LEP and acted as its accountable body, securing a great deal of national investment through the LEP that has helped to deliver some of our most successful programmes and create new jobs, invest in our infrastructure and greatly improve local skill levels. However, last year the Government made the decision to cease funding LEPs from April 2024 and to transfer their responsibilities to the local authorities, and the LEP has therefore already made an in-principle decision to close in the coming months. Firstly, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in making our LEP a success, including all the private sector business leaders who have given up their time for the benefit of the local economy. We of course want to ensure that we continue to engage with our local businesses on our plans for supporting the growth of the Staffordshire economy, and we are currently considering how best to do this in the future and I'll be updating Cabinet on our plans in due course.

- Over recent years the Council's Growth Hub has delivered many positive outcomes, but more recently issues including uncertainty over resources and the Government decision to no longer provide funding to LEPs has affected the effectiveness of the Hub. The County Council, working alongside Stoke-on-Trent City Council, has now taken over full control of the Growth Hub and a great deal of work has been ongoing to meet the requirements of Government for the current financial year whilst also ensuring we are developing our plans and putting the Hub on a sound footing for the future. The integration of the responsibilities of the LEP into the County Council presents us with a significant opportunity to align our economic programmes such as the Growth Hub with our range of business support functions, ensuring that they are as effective as possible.

- We are moving forward with our lobbying activity for the Fifty500 Corridor and we have delivered our ask of government, with letters of support signed by all of the local authorities and major manufacturers along the corridor. At the end of the month we are sponsoring a reception at the Houses of Parliament for the Fifty500 Growth Corridor. The corridor is one of our most significant growth opportunities and the event, which will be hosted by Kate Kniveton MP, will provide an opportunity to meet and activate MPs to support our ask, as well as meet with business leaders, and representatives from universities and local authorities across the Midlands who are behind this project. We are now aiming to work with Government to develop our plans further and take full advantage of this unique opportunity to enhance growth, innovation and decarbonisation in a nationally important corridor.

93. Homes for Children in Our Care

	<p>“Providing a safe and nurturing environment for our most vulnerable children is a priority for us. Most local authorities are facing challenges in this area, which is why it is important we plan effectively to help meet their needs.”</p> <p>We work with families to keep children within the family setting wherever it is safe to do so. If a child is placed in care, we try to find suitable foster carers to place that child in a loving home environment.”</p> <p>If however, a residential home is the appropriate option, developing more places within Staffordshire will ensure our most vulnerable children will be cared for locally and will provide more stability for children - to help them thrive.”</p> <p>Mark Sutton, Cabinet member for Children and Young People</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider a proposal to open six in-house Local Authority run children’s homes.

Decision – (a) That the proposal to open six (6) in-house Local Authority run children’s homes be endorsed.

(b) That a contribution of £0.3m in 2024/25 from the Council’s transformation fund, to meet upfront costs incurred during the transition process (invest to save), be approved.

(c) That the Staffordshire County Council joining the new West Midlands Framework for the Provision of Residential Homes from October 2024 be

endorsed.

(d) That Staffordshire County Council joining the new West Midlands Foster Care Framework from April 2024 be endorsed.

94. Green Solutions – SCC Delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service

	<p>“This is a fantastic opportunity for businesses to make essential improvements to their operations that will support their growth, increase productivity and reduce carbon emissions and energy costs.</p> <p>It is a fundamental part of a business’s evolution that their operations become more sustainable, whether through improvements to their premises or production methods.</p> <p>It is a county council priority to support our businesses and tackle climate change and we’re sure this programme will help to deliver those commitments. It is essential that businesses get in touch now as there is a deadline for project completion.”</p> <p>Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals for the Council to become the Primary Delivery Partner for the Stoke and Staffordshire region, to deliver Energy Assessments and Grants on behalf of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) programme in the Stoke and Staffordshire region.

Decision – That, following a Members Decision Notice to enter into a funding agreement with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), retrospective authority be given for the Council to become the Primary Delivery Partner for the Stoke and Staffordshire region, to deliver Energy Assessments and Grants on behalf of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) programme in the Stoke and Staffordshire region alongside their Green Solutions Programme.

95. House Waste Recycling Centres - Equipment Replacement Programme

	<p>"In Staffordshire, we're shaping the future of waste management. This new machinery will help our continued commitment to a more sustainable, efficient and resident focused service.</p> <p>Waste minimisation is critical to reducing carbon and contributing sustainable living where the materials that would traditionally have gone into the waste stream are recycled instead.</p> <p>We want to make our centres as efficient as possible, and procuring modern machines is one way we can make this happen."</p> <p>Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider undertaking a procurement exercise in compliance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the "Regulations") for 11 new wheeled excavators (JCBs) for the Household Waste Recycling Centre equipment renewal programme.

Decision – That it be agreed that officers undertake a procurement exercise in compliance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the "Regulations") for 11 new wheeled excavators (JCBs) for the Household Waste Recycling Centre equipment renewal programme. (An already established Framework Agreement procured by The Procurement Partnership Ltd will be used).

96. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24

	<p>"Creating the right conditions for businesses and our economy to thrive, whilst supporting the most vulnerable in our communities, remain priorities for the county council.</p> <p>We continue to support local businesses to start up and grow. Our 'We are Staffordshire' brand continues to raise the profile of the county as a great place in which to live, visit and invest. The 'We are Staffordshire' partnership was nominated for two categories at the Comms2point0 awards, and will be showcased at the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) 2024 in Leeds.</p>
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Our work to tackle the effects of climate change continues, with a 12% reduction in the authority's carbon emissions since 2020/21, and a 50% reduction since 2018/19. Since December 2022, the Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme has installed 513 improvements in 349 properties to make them more energy efficient. We have also appointed partners to bring eco-friendly heating solutions to rural properties situated away from the gas network.

Through our Winter Warmth Project and the Household Support Fund, 2,748 eligible residents have received their first payment of £300 towards help with their energy bills. We still face challenges in both adult social care and children's services, although we continue to make good progress on timely social care assessments and have seen a slight drop in the number of children in our care. An OFSTED Inspection of Children's Services resulted in 'Requires Improvement to be Good' and we are developing a plan to improve this rating.

In addition to investment in digital infrastructure and highways, other major projects underway include the Staffordshire History Centre and three new primary schools, which remain on track to be completed and open by Autumn 2024.

"Despite the inflationary pressures facing councils like ours, we continue to deliver on a balanced budget and will invest to keep growing the county in a sustainable way, to make a positive difference in the lives of our residents. We continue to find new, better, and lower cost ways of delivering services and achieving results."

Leader of the Council

"We continue to make significant progress across the organisation during Quarter 3 and departments are delivering on their priorities.

Rising costs across the organisation, along with recruitment and retention pressures continue. Levels of demand and complexity of needs also

	<p>remain challenging, particularly in children’s and families services and in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities where transport costs are rising very significantly.</p> <p>The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £5.4m (0.9%), compared to the Quarter 2 forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1%). Like most local authorities, we still face financial challenges, but we are a well-run council and continue to live within our means, deliver value for money for taxpayers, whilst improving the customer experience. This approach, along with well managed finances, means we can continue to invest in our future, grow our economy and improve people’s lives”.</p> <p>Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider an overview of Staffordshire County Council’s progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan, Corporate Delivery Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Decision – That the report be received.

97. Adoption of Revised Civil Contingency Policy and new Business Continuity Management Policy for Staffordshire County Council

	<p>“It is vital that as a county council we are prepared to deal with civil emergencies whenever they arise, helping to protect our communities and delivering the essential services that we’re responsible for throughout critical periods. This means having the most up-to-date and relevant information in our plans and policies, working collaboratively with key partners across Staffordshire.”</p> <p>Leader of the Council</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider approving the refreshed Civil Contingencies Policy along with a supporting new Business Continuity Management Policy.

Decision – (a) That the Civil Contingencies Policy V6 (as appended to the report), be approved.

(b) That the Business Continuity Management Policy V1 (as appended to the report), be approved.

98. Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion - progress update

	<p>“This is a question of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for residents across the county as well as within the county council.</p> <p>Our work so far demonstrates ways we successfully help people join our communities and find employment, and we are committed to continuing this progress.”</p> <p>Leader of the Council</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider progress in 2023 and proposed areas of focus for 2024 to further strengthen the Council’s approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion both within the organisation and across Staffordshire.

Decision – (a) That the progress of the Council’s work to further strengthen its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including delivery of the action plan, be noted.

(b) That the Council's Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce profile as reported in April 2023, be noted.

(c) That the emerging priorities for 2024/25, as part of the Council’s continued commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, be noted.

99. Procurement of Gas Supplies

	<p>“When the opportunity arises, it is important that all our contracts are the best option for this county council and offer the best value for taxpayers.</p> <p>The awarding of this new contract from 2025 to 2029 ensures we will get a competitive agreement for the public purse.”</p> <p>Mark Deaville, Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals to award a contract for the supply of gas and associated services to Total Energies Gas and Power Limited for the period from 1st April 2025 to the 31st March 2029.

Decision - That it be agreed that the Council awards a contract for the supply of gas and associated services to Total Energies Gas and Power Limited for the period from 1st April 2025 to the 31st March 2029 using the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework.

100. Contract for the Supply of Electricity for Street Lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

	<p>“Through continued effective management of our street lighting we are reducing energy consumption which contributes to our carbon reduction commitments and drives down costs to get best value for money for our residents.</p> <p>Our current contract will have enabled us to convert 47,000 lights to LED by June 2024, saving £2.8million and 1,392 tonnes of CO2, in addition to lower ongoing maintenance costs.</p> <p>By continuing our present procurement arrangements, we will implement the next phase of our invest to save programme, which will see a further 13,900 lights converted to LED.”</p> <p>David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider proposals for procuring the supply of electricity for street lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) assets.

Decision - That the approach for procuring, awarding and entering into an Electricity and Associated Services contract through Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework for the period of 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2028, with EDF Energy for Street Lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) assets be approved.

101. Decisions taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers

Decision – That the following decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers be noted:

Cabinet Member	Decision
Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters	In approving an increase to the advertised value of the Framework Agreement for Maintenance and Minor Works (IA3047) originally presented in the Cabinet report on 21 st June 2023.
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills	In approving that the Director for Economy Infrastructure & Skills, in consultation with the Director for Corporate Services, be given authority to contract with the WMCA to deliver Green Solutions in Association with the Pilot BEAS programme, in advance of formal Cabinet approval.

102. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 13 March to 17 July 2024, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

Subject Matter	Contact
Joint Enterprise Legacy Committee	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204
Extension to the Dynamic Purchasing System Agreement for the supply of Residential and Nursing Care home placements	Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557
Staffordshire's Joint All Age Carers Strategy 2024 - 2029	Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557
Section 75 Agreement for the provision of Adult Social Care Assessment and Case Management	Name: Amanda Stringer Tel: (01785) 895170
Capital Programme for Schools 2024/ 25	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Highways and Transport Capital Programme	Name: James Bailey Tel: 01785) 276591
Corporate Delivery Plan 2024/25	Name: Lynsey Bissell Tel: 07855 026263
Climate Change Strategic Development Framework - Update	Name: David Atkinson Tel: (01785) 277910

Provision of Apprenticeship Services 2024	Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984
Sale of Land at Surplus Land at Histons Hill, Codsall	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service	Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976 191079
Review of Local Authority Social Care Case Management Systems	Name: Jo Crowcher/ Nisha Gupta Tel: 07772 011078/ 07890 402088
Unregulated Placement Update	Name: Nisha Gupta Tel: 07890 402088
Roofing Framework Agreement	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Community Learning Accountability Agreement 2024-2025	Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984
Employability Digital Innovation Strategy for Staffordshire County Council	Name: Linsey Bissell Tel: 07855 026263
Supported Living Commissioning Update	Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557

Leader of the Council