

Cabinet

Wednesday 21 February 2024

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
13 February 2024

Agenda

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16**
- 3. Decision notices of the meetings held on 17 and 24 January 2024** (Pages 5 - 18)
- 4. Leader's Update**
Oral report of the Leader of the Council
- 5. Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 7 February 2024** (Pages 19 - 20)
- 6. Staffordshire Means Back to Business** (Verbal Report)
Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills
- 7. Homes for Children in Our Care** (Pages 21 - 54)
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

8. **Green Solutions – SCC Delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service** (Pages 55 - 104)

Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills
9. **House Waste Recycling Centres - Equipment Replacement Programme** (Pages 105 - 114)

Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change
10. **Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24** (Pages 115 - 166)

Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
11. **Adoption of Revised Civil Contingency Policy and new Business Continuity Management Policy for Staffordshire County Council** (Pages 167 - 192)

Leader of the Council
12. **Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion - progress update** (Pages 193 - 242)

Leader of the Council
13. **Procurement of Gas Supplies** (Pages 243 - 282)

Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters
14. **Contract for the Supply of Electricity for Street Lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)** (Pages 283 - 288)

Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
15. **Decisions taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers** (Pages 289 - 290)
16. **Forward Plan of Key Decisions** (Pages 291 - 296)

17. Exclusion of the Public

The Chairman to move:

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

Part Two

(All reports in this section are exempt)

Membership	
Alan White (Chair)	Robert Pritchard
Philip White	Mark Sutton
Mark Deaville	Simon Tagg
Paul Northcott	David Williams
Ian Parry	Mike Wilcox
Jonathan Price	Victoria Wilson

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 17 January 2024

Attendance	
Mark Deaville	Alan White (Chair)
Ian Parry	Philip White
Jonathan Price	David Williams
Mark Sutton	Victoria Wilson
Simon Tagg	

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

Also in attendance: Samantha Thompson

Apologies: Julia Jessel

Part One

71. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

72. Decision notice of the meeting held on 13 December 2023

Decision – That the notes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 be approved.

73. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including the recent death of Noreen Oliver who founded the Burton Addiction Centre, known to us all now as the BAC O'Connor Centre; the inspection by Ofsted which showed that while the care of children in our care is "good" we need to do more to raise the bar across the service; the 15 people from Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent who received awards in His Majesty the King's New Years Honours list; the dedicated, on-going, work of our highways crews who are responsible for maintaining the county's 6,000km, including the proposals to carry out at least an extra £50 million worth of repairs and essential maintenance over the next three years, on top of any grant given by the government; the County Council receiving a top award for crisis communications for the roll out of the giant carbon bubble to towns across the county to help visualise how their daily activities can impact carbon emissions; and encouraging people, when they make their New Year's Resolutions, to think about giving something back to local communities, perhaps through volunteering or opening up their home to a foster child; be noted.

74. 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 405 claimants in Staffordshire, at the same time we have seen increases both regionally and nationally. This is reflective of the challenging economic conditions businesses continue to operate in across the country. The total number of claimants in the county now stands at 15,165 and the claimant rate remains the same this month at 2.8% of the working age population. It is important to note that the claimant count rate in Staffordshire continues to be one of the lowest in the West Midlands and is far lower than the average for the region of 4.9%, and 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 a decrease of 25 claimants this month to a total of 2,860 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit remains the same at 4.6%. This is lower than the national rate of 5.1% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.8%. Whilst this decrease in the youth claimant count is positive our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or continue in education and training.
- One of our key economic priorities is supporting residents in being able to take advantage of high-paid job opportunities, and I’m therefore pleased to be able to update Cabinet on the recently released earnings data which gives a good indication as to why, at least partly, disposable income has increased within Staffordshire. The average weekly earnings of our residents are now the same as the national average, the first-time that this has been case. Over the last year, the average earnings of our residents have increased by over 12% compared to just 5% across the West Midlands Region and England as whole. Continuing to support the creation of highly paid, high-skilled jobs across Staffordshire and supporting our residents in gaining higher level skills will of course remain a key focus for us in 2024, ensuring we are doing all we can to put more money into people’s pockets.

- Adapting to climate change is evidently already a key consideration for businesses and developers across Staffordshire, with the developer of the first units on the West Midlands Interchange scheme aiming for the highest possible rating for energy performance of the buildings, including through the use of solar panels on the roof, something we have increasingly seen throughout the county in recent years.
- Supporting energy efficiency of our businesses is nothing new to us as the Staffordshire Business & Environment Network (sben) has been operating for over 30 years and has provided advice and delivered countless support programmes since its inception. Last year saw the conclusion of our Low Carbon Business Evolution Programme (LCBEP) which ran for 7 years in partnership with sben and supported businesses to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The programme is estimated to have reduced carbon emissions by over 2,250 tonnes annually, supported over 350 businesses, provided £1.1 million in grants and unlocked £1.3 million in private sector investment.
- Whilst LCBEP has now concluded, we remain committed to supporting businesses to improve their energy efficiency and adapt to climate change requirements. Our businesses can therefore now access our new Green Solutions programme which provides training, an energy efficiency review and a potential grant to implement energy saving measures. Currently this programme is being funded utilising UK Shared Prosperity Funding provided by a number of our district and borough partners, although I'll be updating Cabinet on the further development of this programme next month.
- Last month I updated Cabinet on our success in securing a Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent which has the potential to bring significant benefits including through access to support and future funding programmes. Establishing the LVEP will be a key goal for the coming year and on Friday we have our Tourism and Hospitality Conference at one of our most important attractions, Alton Towers. The event will give our businesses and partners an opportunity to learn all about how we are working directly with VisitEngland through the LVEP and feature guest speakers, workshops and opportunity to network with relevant people and organisations. I look forward to updating Cabinet on this and all of our economic growth programme through 2024.

75. Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation



"Although this authority has taken steps towards its target of reaching net zero by 2050 by cutting carbon emissions by 50 per cent since 2019, there is still more to be done.

This working party report suggests possible ways that the Council can meet its commitment to the environment and support Staffordshire's economy, while also enhancing the county's quality of life.

We will consider the report and respond in due course."

Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the report of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Climate Change Working Group on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation

Decision – (a) That the report of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Climate Change Working Group on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation be received.

(b) That an executive response to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recommendation(s) of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report be provided within two months of receipt of the report.

76. Natural Environment Strategy



"Staffordshire is a stunning rural county but, like much of the UK, nature is under pressure here too. We must act now to help nature Recover.

That is why we have developed this Natural Environment Strategy, which sets out the actions we will take in the coming years to care for nature on our land and through our activities. This will form part of wider efforts across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, which will be identified through the local nature recovery strategy we are leading with our partners and stakeholders.

By helping nature, we are also helping ourselves.

	<p>Nature provides important goods and services that support our wellbeing and quality of life. From the insects that pollinate our food crops, to trees storing carbon, nature is essential to us.”</p> <p>Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the Natural Environment Strategy which has been developed to set out how the Council will deliver its biodiversity requirements and enhance the natural environment.

Decision – That the natural environment strategy be approved.

77. Here to Help - Progress Update

	<p>“As a county council, we want to do everything we can to support people to lead happy and independent lives but recognise too that some residents also may need a little extra hand to help with increasing costs over the colder months.</p> <p>Our Holiday Activity & Food programme has, for example, already supported 199,000 free sessions for eligible children and our Here to Help campaign has signposted people to the wider financial and community support they may benefit from.</p> <p>We have worked collaboratively with our partners across all the district and borough councils to ensure we can work together to make sure we target people who may need the help and will continue to do so over the winter and spring months.”</p> <p>Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider a progress update on the range of support, initiatives and signposting activities which have been undertaken by the County Council to enable our residents to manage cost of living pressures over the last 12 months.

Decision – (a) That how the County Council has supported Staffordshire residents to manage cost-of-living pressures be noted.

(b) That the proposed next steps, as set out in paragraph 19 of the report,

be agreed.

(c) That the continued delivery of the County Council's Strategic Plan through investment in early years provision, education, skills, training and by attracting first class businesses to the county, while supporting existing businesses to thrive and prosper, which will support the long-term prosperity of Staffordshire residents, be noted and supported.

78. Service Provision of Temporary and Interim Staff Resources



"We have over 3,000 valued full-time equivalent employees at the county council; however, we do need temporary employees for a variety of reasons and most notably in front line service areas. This supports us in ensuring we are highly flexible and respond to the needs of our teams as soon as possible. We have in place a sourcing organisation to streamline this process which is well regarded by agency suppliers due to its fair payment processes."


Alan White, Leader of the Council

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the arrangements for the provision to supply temporary and interim human resources (agency workers) to the County Council to provide cover for vital frontline services.

Decision – (a) That the Council continues to operate a neutral vendor model for the provision of temporary and interim human resources.

(b) That the Council awards and enters into a 3 + 1 year call-off contract from Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) framework agreement 653F_23 – Managed Services for Temporary Agency Resources (MSTAR4) with Comensura.

79. Ofsted Report

	<p>"Children Services in Staffordshire have been rated 'good' for a decade, so the result of this inspection requires careful reflection.</p> <p>However, we accept the findings, and I can assure everyone that protecting vulnerable young people is a priority.</p> <p>We are committed to improve our services and have already begun taking steps to do so."</p> <p>Mark Sutton, Cabinet member for Children and Young People</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the report arising from the Ofsted inspection of the Council’s Children’s Services.

Decision - That the information contained in the Ofsted report be noted.

80. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 21 February to 19 June 2024, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

Subject Matter	Contact
Civil Contingencies Policy & Business Continuity Management Policy	Name: Tracy Thorley Tel: (01785) 276337
Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24	Name: Rachel Spain/ Wendy Tompson Tel: (01785) 854455/ (01785) 854267
Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion - progress update	Name: Sarah Getley Tel: (01785) 854265
Lighting and ITS energy contract procurement proposal	Name: James Bailey Tel: (01785) 276591
Procurement of Gas Supplies	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
Green Solutions – SCC Delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204
Homes for Children in Our Care	Name: Natasha Moody Tel: 07976 191079
Household Waste Recycling Centres – Equipment Replacement Programme	Name: David Atkinson Tel: (01785) 277910
Joint Enterprise Legacy Committee	Name: Anthony Hodge Tel: (01785) 277204

Recommissioning of Residential and Nursing Care Homes	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
Burton Regeneration	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228
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
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
Community Learning Accountability Agreement 2024-2025	Name: Anthony Baines Tel: (01785) 895984

81. Exclusion of the Public

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

PART TWO

82. Residential Overnight Education (Exemption paragraph 3)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the commissioning arrangements for the delivery of Residential Overnight Education, funded through the High Needs Block.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

83. Drug and Alcohol Partnership Proposal

(Exemption paragraph 3)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the arrangement for the provision of drug and alcohol treatment services from 01 April 2024.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

84. Unregulated Placements

(Exemption paragraph 2)

Reasons for the Decision – To provide Cabinet with an update in relation to the use of unregulated placements.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

85. Overview of a Child’s Complex Care Planning

(Exemption paragraphs 1 and 2)

Reasons for the Decision – To consider an overview of a child’s complex care planning.

Decision – That the recommendations contained in the report be agreed.

Leader of the Council

Minutes of the Cabinet (Budget) Meeting held on 24 January 2024

Attendance	
Mark Deaville	Alan White (Chair)
Ian Parry	Philip White
Jonathan Price	David Williams
Mark Sutton	Victoria Wilson
Simon Tagg	

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

Apologies: Julia Jessel

Part One

86. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

87. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029



"We are committed to Staffordshire as a place to create jobs and do business, as well as developing a sustainable future, with good schools, communities and open spaces where people can raise a family and enjoy a good quality of life.

Meeting the demands of today with planning for tomorrow remains a difficult task, but we are determined to succeed on our residents' behalf."

Alan White, Leader of the Council



"Despite the well-documented financial challenges facing local authorities, thanks to long-term planning, imaginative change, and careful management of our resources, this council remains financially stable.

It is that stability which allows us to meet our statutory responsibilities and also to look to the future by investing in our economy, infrastructure and communities".

	Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2024 - 2029 and the draft budget for 2024/25.

Decision - (a) That the updates to the financial plans, as set out in the report, be noted.

(b) That the comments of the Director of Finance on the adequacy of reserves and robustness of the budget be noted and that the County Council be asked to take note of these comments when considering the budget and council tax.

(c) That the recommendations of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and Cabinet’s responses to those recommendations be approved.

(d) That it be recommended to the County Council on 8th February 2024 that they consider and approve the following:

- i. a net revenue budget of £666.671m for 2024/25;
- ii. planning forecasts for 2025/26 to 2028/29 as set out in Appendix 11 to the report;
- iii. a contingency provision of £15.000m for 2024/25;
- iv. a net contribution to reserves of £4.552m for 2024/25;
- v. a budget requirement of £671.223m for 2024/25;
- vi. a council tax requirement of £459.123m for 2024/25;
- vii. a council tax at Band D of £1,544.64 for 2024/25 which is an increase of 4.99% when compared with 2023/24;
- viii. This results in council tax for each category of dwelling as set out in the table below:

Category of Dwelling	Council Tax Rate £
Band A	1,029.76
Band B	1,201.39
Band C	1,373.01

Band D	1,544.64
Band E	1,887.89
Band F	2,231.15
Band G	2,574.40
Band H	3,089.28

ix. that the Director of Finance be authorised to sign precept notices on the billing authorities respectively liable for the total precept payable and that each notice states the total precept payable and the council tax in relation to each category of dwelling as calculated in accordance with statutory requirements;

x. the Financial Health Indicators set out in Appendix 10 to the report.

(e) That it be recommended to the County Council on 8th February 2024 that they consider and approve the following recommendations which are included within the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2024/25, the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 and the Commercial Investment Strategy 2024/25 (Appendices 9a to 9c to the report):

- i. Approve the Minimum Revenue Policy for 2024/25 as contained within the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2024/25 in Appendix 9a to the report;
- ii. Approve the Prudential Indicators as set out within the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2024/25 at Appendix 9a to the report;
- iii. Approve the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy, based on the 2021 CIPFA Codes (Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code), and 2018 MHCLG (now DLUHC) Guidance (on Local Government Investments and on Minimum Revenue Provision);
- iv. Adopt the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) 2024/25 detailed in paragraphs 63 to 109 and Annex A and Annex B of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report);
- v. Approve the policies on reviewing the strategy, the use of external advisors, investment management training and the use of financial derivatives as described in paragraphs 110 to 120 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report);

- vi. Approve the proposed borrowing strategy for the 2024/25 financial year detailed in paragraphs 41 to 62 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report);
- vii. The Treasury Management Strategy recommendations will operate within the prudential limits set out in Annex C of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report) and will be reported to the Cabinet Member for Finance, with respect to decisions made for raising new long-term loans, early loan repayments and loan rescheduling;
- viii. Approve the Commercial Investment Strategy for 2024/25 (Appendix 9c to the report) and note the circumstances under which commercial investments can be made;
- ix. Approve the governance arrangements that are in place for proposing and approving commercial investments;
- x. Approve a maximum quantum for commercial investments of a further £20 million in 2024/25;
- xi. Approve a maximum limit for an individual service investment loan of £10 million in 2024/25;
- xii. Any upwards change in the amounts of the limits specified in recommendations x and xi above be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

(f) That the Director of Finance be authorised to adjust the contingency provision to reflect any grant and local taxation changes announced in the final 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement.

(g) That Cabinet Members and the Senior Leadership Team begin the process of identifying savings and service transformation to be incorporated into the budget at the appropriate time.

Leader of the Council

Minutes of the Property Sub-Committee Meeting held on 7 February 2024

Present: Alan White (Chair)

Attendance	
Jonathan Price	Philip White (Vice-Chair)

Apologies: Mark Deaville and Ian Parry

Part One

45. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

46. Minutes of the Meeting held on 1st November 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

47. Proposed Lease to St Peter's Church of England School

The Sub-Committee were presented with proposals to grant a separate 125 year lease for St Peter’s Church of England School, School Lane, Caverswall, ST11 9EN at a peppercorn rent. It was noted that no comment had been received from the local member.

Resolved – That a lease of the site set out in the Report Schedule in the standard format be approved.

48. Exclusion of the Public

Resolved - That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Local Government Act 1972 as indicated below.

49. County Farms' Tenancies Panel Activity Report

The Committee received a report from the Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, on the half Yearly Report on the Activity of the County Farms’ Tenancies Panel, in the second half of 2023. The Committee were presented with details of the panel decisions that have been made during the previous 6 months.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

50. Proposed Sale of County Farm Holding No 137 Rodbaston

Details were submitted of a Proposed Sale and officer delegation on the final sale price decision to the Head of Regeneration and Strategic Projects, of the last remaining 'equipped' farm holding, No 137 on the Rodbaston Estate.

It was noted by a local member whether there were any other reasonable opportunities to utilise the property. The officer confirmed there was no other opportunities, given the property was essentially residential.

Resolved - That approval be given of the proposed sale and officer delegation on the final sale price decision to the Head of Regeneration and Strategic Projects.

51. Renewal of Lease Agreement Unit QB Beaconside Business Park

Details were submitted of the proposed surrender and renewal of lease at Unit QB Beaconside Business Park, Weston Road, Stafford, ST18 0WL.

The Committee considered the surrender of the existing 1-year lease early and take a new lease for a period expiring on 24th October 2035 with a first rent review in 2029.

Representations received from the local member supporting the proposal were reported.

Resolved – That approval be given to surrender the current lease and take a new lease until 24th October 2035 at the terms set out in the report.

Chair

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Homes for Children in Our Care



Councillor Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

“Providing a safe and nurturing environment for some of our most vulnerable children is a priority for us. It is clear that most local authorities are facing challenges in this area, which is why it is important we plan effectively to help meet their needs.”

“By proposing to open six in-house children’s homes, we can ensure our vulnerable children will be taken care of in a home within the county, have better flexibility for those with multiple needs, and we can create more stability for children in our care to help them

thrive.”

“As well as this, by joining regional frameworks for the provision of residential homes and foster care, we can be sure to have vulnerable children and young people in the right home that meets their needs and increase the number of children and young people who return to the family home wherever possible.”

Report Summary:

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has a duty to provide sufficient homes to meet the needs of children in its care.

Nationally all local authorities are facing challenges in meeting these duties, this is recognised in ‘Stable Homes Built on Love’ and the government’s commitment to develop alternative approaches to seek to tackle the national challenges faced through Regional Care Collaboratives will take time to develop and we are therefore seeking to develop local approaches to help us mitigate the impact.

Following the endorsement of the Homes for Our Children, Sufficiency Strategy work has been underway to deliver our plan including exploring a range of possible options which will support us to meet our statutory duty resulting in three recommendations to Cabinet.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Endorse the proposal to open six (6) in-house Local Authority run children's homes.
- b. Contribution of £0.3m in 24/25 from the Council's transformation fund to meet upfront costs incurred during the transition process (invest to save).
- c. Endorse Staffordshire County Council joining the new West Midlands Framework for the Provision of Residential Homes from October 2024.
- d. Endorse SCC joining the new West Midlands Foster Care Framework from April 2024.

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

Homes for Children in Our Care

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Endorse the proposal to open six (6) in-house Local Authority run children's homes.
- b. Contribution of £0.3m in 24/25 from the Council's transformation fund to meet upfront costs incurred during the transition process (invest to save).
- c. Endorse Staffordshire County Council joining the West Midlands Framework for the Provision of Residential Homes from October 2024.
- d. Endorse SCC joining the West Midlands Foster Care Framework from April 2024.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Children and Families

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. We recommend that Staffordshire County Council endorses three proposed parallel approaches to help us secure the right type of homes for our children at the best price.
2. This will help us achieve our objectives set out in the Homes for Children Sufficiency Strategy, 2023,
 - a. Homes that are closer to home,
 - b. Reduce the number of times a child must move,
 - c. Create better flexibility for children with multiple needs,
 - d. Eliminate unregulated provision and
 - e. More cost-effective options in an expensive market.

Homes for Children in our Care

The current picture - National and Regional

3. Nationally the government have recognised that the children's care market is a risk which needs a new approach. Within 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' they acknowledged that there was more that could be done, steps taken nationally to address this have been slow.
4. In 2023 the DfE launched several pathfinders to test new ways of working. The mechanism chosen to affect change for this market was the development of the Regional Care Collaboratives (RCC.) These RCC's would see Local Authorities working through a regional arrangement to enable greater buying power.
5. West Midlands has a developed regional commissioning hub however it is small (circa 4 staff) and has limited capacity to fulfil the suggested model of delivery offered by the DfE.
6. An application was submitted by the WM to develop the RCC and areas will be selected in January 2024. This could see circa £5 million invested in two regions nationally.
7. The urgency for Staffordshire means that we cannot wait for National changes, the pressure on budgets requires a proactive approach in the short term to help us address the financial overspends.
8. A recent report prepared by the LGA compared our level of spend to other local authorities and Staffordshire is a 'middle payer' compared with other local authorities. Some costs nationally have been reported to run to £63,000 per week.

Current Picture - Locally

9. As at 9th December 2023, the number of Children in Care (CiC) was 1,360. These children live in a range of types of homes;
 - a. 353 children with independent foster carers
 - b. 330 children with in-house foster carers.
 - c. 217 children with a Relative/friend foster carer.
 - d. 124 residential homes of which includes 21 children with disabilities.
10. Having developed the Homes for our children sufficiency strategy we sought to develop options which would support the aspirations, exploring options to tackle the rising costs and lack of the right type of care for our children.

Residential Homes

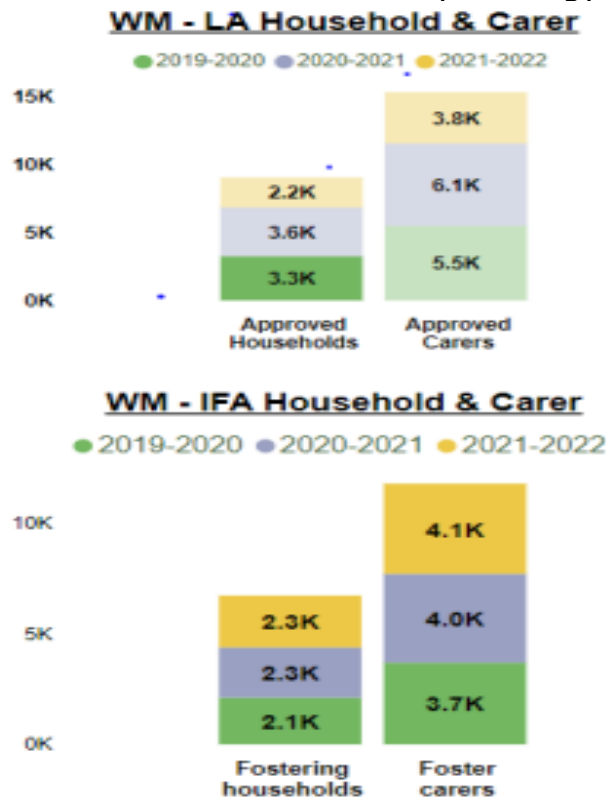
11. Currently the percentage of children in residential homes is 8.6% which is down from around 10% in previous years and compares favourably to the West Midlands average, 12.4%.
12. SCC spends approximately £31.5m per year on residential homes with 124 independent places at any one time. The 20 high-cost place costs SCC £150k per week, which equates to £7.8m per year.
13. We do have unregulated/unregistered arrangements which can cost circa £13k/15k per week per child. We do not want children utilising these places but the existing residential market does not currently match some children leaving us without an alternative. This equates to approximately 2 or 3 children of the top 20.
14. The single most important step we can take in reducing the cost is securing a stable home. When we do not secure the stable home it often results in multiple moves. The 20 most complex children were moved 71 times in total.
15. Of the 124 children; 68 children (57%) are placed outside of Staffordshire (7% of which are in Stoke-on-Trent), ideally they would be placed within the county.
16. Based on the future modelling as part of the transformation we estimate circa 90 children will need to have a residential placement, of those we anticipate circa 15 will have multiple complex needs which would currently be unlikely to be met by the independent sector.
17. Staffordshire is no different to other local authorities in needing both internal and external provision to meet the needs of children. Internally we have capacity for 19 children at any one time (3 medium to long-term). Meaning circa 121 children are currently placed using the external market. Often it is cheaper to use the external market but as the complexity increases the cost externally is not sustainable.
18. Most local authorities are investing in internal provision to disrupt the market and provide care for children who would otherwise be difficult to place. SCC currently has the following internal provision:
 - a. 4 bed edge-of-care provision (Stafford Short Breaks).
 - b. 4 bed home (The Alders).
 - c. 3 bed home (The Firs).

- d. 2 x 4 bed in-house short break disability homes (Cannock Resource Centre and Hawthorne's Resource Centre).
19. Stafford Short Breaks, Cannock Resource Centre and Hawthorne's Resource Centre are all Public Finance Initiative (PFI) buildings that are due to come back to SCC in the next 3 years. The plans for them are to continue to be used in the current form. These buildings have been ruled out for consideration as properties for children's homes on the basis that they are not conducive for offering a small, homely environment.
20. The other in-house home i.e. the Alders is a large 7 bed property which is registered for 4 children. This type of provision is also not appropriate for supporting C&YP with more complex needs such as emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) which we have seen an increase of post pandemic. Hence the new in-house LA home, The Firs, is a smaller setting (3 registered beds).
21. In addition to external provision, Staffordshire County council currently accesses the West Midlands Flexible Framework Contract, which is a contract for providers who provide residential care. This has been developed and implemented on a regional basis to ensure we maximise the leverage with our collective buying power.
22. The framework is due to expire in December 2024. We know that we get better value using regional frameworks and a greater range of providers. The West Midlands region is seeking to widen access to more providers to increase competition to help control the market.
23. The new framework is intended to increase the number of providers, SCC currently purchase 56% of our homes for children from the framework and 44% off-contract for our children. The framework tends to be 41% cheaper than spot purchase.
24. The average cost on the framework is £4.4k per week and for off-contract is approximately £7.4k per week. SCC have always tended to use more framework providers than non-framework providers and are keen to ensure access is increased further. Hence, why a collaborative approach with all West Midlands authorities/trusts, including the West Midlands Regional Commissioning Hub is key to ensure we achieve best value.

Fostering

25. We know that foster carers are in short supply nationally and regionally, with the number of internal foster carers dropping in the West Midlands from 6,070 to 3,780 from 2021 to 2022 (with IFAs maintaining their number of carers at around 4,000, detailed in the table below).

26. Recruitment and retention of foster carers has been difficult with a noticeable decline in the number of foster carers made in the last year which has been identified in SCC Sufficiency Strategy of an area of action.



27. SCC always pursues in-house carers as the priority, however with a reduction overall in the number of foster carers available often SCC relies on the private sector to meet demand.
28. When SCC procures independent foster care via an agency we use the West Midlands Foster Care Framework. This expires on the 31st March 2024. SCC places approximately 160 children with external foster carers in per year via the independent sector. Staffordshire secures better value using these frameworks and therefore renewing the regional approach will ensure maximum value is secured. Average cost of framework placements is £840 per week compared to approximately £1,100 per week compared to off framework placements. Approximately 90% of placements are currently made via the framework.
29. Although, in-house carers are much more cost effective than the private sector, SCC still currently needs the private sector to meet the demand to avoid higher residential costs.
30. The benefits of a regional framework are as follows:

- a. As the contract is used when needed, no need to pay for voids such a block contract.
 - b. No pressure on the providers to accept inappropriate matches.
 - c. Helps widen the market supply by accessing as many providers as possible.
 - d. Standard service specification agreed by all local authorities will help encourage specialisms and deliver consistency.
 - e. Provides regional buying power to influence and help control/cap costs.
 - f. Helps monitor and maintain providers quality.
31. The new framework contract is to commence from April 2024. Tendering anticipated spring 2024. There are a number of proposed changes to attract more providers and to keep providers on the contract. They are as follows:
- a. Increased lots – to cater for more specialists foster carers. i.e. standard, enhanced and disability
 - b. To re-set prices to help support the market to expand and encourage more providers.
 - c. Capped fees to help control costs.
 - d. Uplift process inbuilt into the contract to allow for inflationary increases at an agreed formula to manage the impact to encourage more providers to join.

What are the current challenges?

Residential Homes:

32. We know that Staffordshire has sufficient provision within Staffordshire to meet the current residential demand with circa 500 residential beds in the area. **57% of our C&YP are in homes which are out-of-county**, despite there being sufficient independent residential beds within Staffordshire.
33. The market is used on a national footprint and demand nationally is outstripping the supply meaning that providers can choose which children they match to – often this can be those with less complex needs.
34. A residential manager will carry the risk when matching children who live in their residential home. We have seen an increasing reluctance to match some children who have multiple needs due to the increased risk for the children and the negative impact this could have when they are inspected or on them personally.

35. This often leaves those who have faced significant trauma with the most challenging emotional and behavioural needs without a local residential option. The better option for these children is a smaller home where matching is less of a risk.
36. The challenges the homes face is around how to manage C&YP who display with one or more of the following behaviours / risks:
 - a. aggressive / violent behaviour.
 - b. go missing.
 - c. are involved in criminal behaviour.
 - d. have mental health issues.
 - e. Some diagnosed or undiagnosed SEND needs.
 - f. are involved with gangs / drug misuse.
 - g. self-harm
 - h. are exploited or cause significant damage.
37. With these complexities come the unintended consequences of arrangements breaking down. In 2022/2023 there were 32 children in residential homes which ended prematurely.
38. This often increases costs as providers increase their fees to cover extra resources particularly additional staffing and bed blocking to help manage the C&YP. The top 20 high cost placements average around £7,500 per week.
39. The Local Government Association (LGA) analysis of residential costs has seen a sharp increase in costs over the last 5 years, which has been highlighted in this report. Please see link, [Placement Costs \(LGA\)](#).
40. It can also make it extremely difficult to find a regulated option for some children leading to a small number of children living for a short time in unregistered provision.
41. The Competitions & Market Authority (CMA) report in March 2022, stated that the largest providers are making materially higher profits and therefore LAs need to address the balance by ensuring they are not forced to use these providers for our C&YP with the most complex needs.
42. Local Government Association acknowledged that whilst there are a small proportion who are making excessive profit, there are also a high number who are carrying significant financial challenge.

Foster Carers:

43. Another sector where demand has outstripped supply is the availability of suitable foster carers. LA applications for foster carers have decreased by 22% since 2018 and for the private sector applications have decreased by 21% over the same period.
44. The unintended consequences of a lack of foster carers are some C&YP being placed in residential care when this is not the most suitable place and it comes at an increased cost.
45. SCC are currently reliant on the private sector to meet the demand for foster carers via the framework however as prices have not kept pace with increased costs several private sector providers have chosen to leave the framework.
46. The DfE recently commissioned research into market barriers around fostering recruitment in LA's and several barriers were identified:
 - a. Insufficient benefits / money to foster carers to cover cost of caring.
 - b. Cost of living impact.
 - c. The impact of Covid due to the increase of working from home.
 - d. LA's have less monies i.e., for marketing.
 - e. The process the LA takes can be longer.

What do we propose to do & why?

47. The Homes for our children, Sufficiency Strategy, endorsed by Cabinet on 12th April 2023, aims to meet our sufficiency duty by creating an active and vibrant market delivered both internally and externally with the focus by the end of 2026. The expansion of the in-house homes aims not just to save money but will also contribute to ensuring SCC:
 - a. have the right C/YP, in the right place at the right time.
 - b. have our C&YP living locally in the right 'home' to meet their needs.
 - c. eliminate the use of unregulated arrangements.
 - d. increase the number of C&YP who return home.
48. We recommend that cabinet take steps to increase the options available in the market through supporting three key developments,
 - a. Endorsing the WM Residential Framework: This will see us sign up to the WM regional framework. This framework will ensure SCC continues to be procurement compliant and enable SCC to access a wider market to increase the number of foster carers.
 - b. Endorsing the WM Fostering Framework. This framework will ensure SCC continues to be procurement compliant and enable SCC to access

- a wider market to increase the number of fostering carers and eradicate the use of unregulated residential homes being used.
- c. Invest in six internal homes to disrupt the market and provide a home for our most complex children.

Disruptive Methods Considered

49. To address these challenges and to bring about improvements the following options have been considered (see Options Appraisal Appendix 1):

- a. **RECOMMENDED OPTION - Expand the in-house children's home provision:** SCC currently lack smaller residential homes internally that meet the needs of our children in care whilst also promoting a nurturing, personable approach. Expanding our in-house provision with this in mind would enable us to gain more control over how our children are cared for and would allow for fluency depending on their need that we don't necessarily get with the external market e.g., to support a return to family, or a move into foster care.
- b. **Creation of a LA Trading Company to operate the in-house children's home:** This option was proposed as the operating costs such as superannuation would be significantly lower, it would reduce the apparent risk to the Local Authority and provide greater influence in a market which is challenging. The key benefit is that it would be commercially oriented but not for profit. It is noted that the scale needed to be markedly cheaper may not be available within the children's market. Due to the small market this option did not present any better value for money compared to the internal delivery model.
- c. **Block contracting homes with the private sector:** Creation of a solo home block contract had been endorsed last year and tendered. With the home being solo it would remove the need of matching children and young people which we often see as a barrier when finding homes. However, our experience has demonstrated that this did not appeal to the market and has presented challenges in its use.
- d. **Collaborative partnership with Registered Social Landlords:** Due to affordable housing costing around £5-6K per annum this option was considered to reduce capital investment from SCC or a third-party provider with properties being readily available. Whilst this option could result in affordable accommodation it may be more suited to older children in supported accommodation or those leaving care.
- e. **Collaborative partnership with a private provider/voluntary sector to work with SCC to open up homes:** This could be in the form of a strategic partnership, seeing SCC and a provider sharing the risk. This has been used by some local areas such as Somerset. Having undertaken some soft market testing there was limited interest.

f. **Acquisition of existing children’s home organisation:** The acquisition of an existing children home was considered, as this was seen as the quickest way to address the demand and need for residential homes. This was tested with the market and enquiries were made around purchasing a going concern. The major barrier was the cost of purchasing a going concern which was more expensive than internal provision.

50. The detailed Options Appraisal is available in Appendix 1 showing the pros and cons of each option. This options paper led us to recommend the development of local authority run internal provision.

Legal Implications

51. Commissioners have liaised with Legal colleagues regarding elements of this report such as the regional framework agreements and the ‘in-house’ homes.

52. Depending upon Cabinet’s decision/s commissioners will continue to liaise with Legal colleagues to ensure legal obligations are adhered to and furthermore specific guidance is obtained at the appropriate time.

53. The recommendations within this report will help us to secure our statutory obligations to secure homes for children in our care.

Risks

54. The table provides the risks associated with the proposed recommendations and the associated mitigation.

Recommendations	Risk	Mitigation
In-House LA Homes	Recruiting sufficient staff in a timely manner.	Robust recruitment campaign and promotion of investment by SCC.
	Having appropriate skilled staff	Comprehensive recruitment process and training delivered to all staff.

	Home(s) not admitting the most complex children.	Close monitoring and appropriate matching by commissioners in conjunction with the Placement Team.
	Empty beds or low occupancy	To prevent void placements close oversight by senior management including residential lead to ensure maximum occupancy is achieved at all times.
West Midlands Regional Residential and Foster Care Framework Contracts	Not joining will leave SCC vulnerable to market forces. Resulting in increase in spot purchased placements, hence overall costs.	Regional framework to provide leverage across a wider footprint to help control costs.
	Will not be procurement compliant when the current ends in March 2024 and December 2024 respectively.	Robust tendering process to ensure quality and value of money is considered.

Legal Implications

55. The Children Act 1989 places a general duty on Local Authority (LAs) to secure sufficient accommodation for children in our care so far as reasonably practicable, accommodation that is within the authority's area and meets the needs of those children.

56. Commissioners have liaised with Legal colleagues regarding elements of this report such as the regional framework agreements and the 'in-house' homes.

57. Depending upon Cabinet's decision/s commissioners will continue to liaise with Legal colleagues to ensure legal obligations are adhered to and furthermore specific guidance is obtained at the appropriate time.
58. The recommendations within this report will help us to secure our statutory obligations to secure homes for children in our care.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

59. The financial benefits of entering into the regional framework contracts (recommendation c & d) are detailed within this report. This is to ensure SCC obtains value for money, by entering into a tendering process that is based on a collaborative approach with the West Midlands region in order to help manage the market.
60. The cost of the in-house delivery option vs LATCO is shown within the options paper and demonstrates that the financial impact of using a LATCO is negligible. This is largely due to the LATCO requiring a larger portfolio of provisions to make it more cost effective to run. The proposal therefore is to further expand the local authority run internal residential provision through the acquisition of 6 additional (2 bed) homes to support and manage existing markets and pressures arising due to limited capacity and increasing costs.
61. The timescales will be approximately 8 months for the first 3 homes and 8 months for the second 3 to ensure sufficient time build into the lead in times. See Appendix 2 (Timeline).
62. Operation of the six LA homes on this basis could save approximately £0.5m per annum. This is compared to the cost of placing 12 children with external independent providers at an average cost per child of £7,500 per week. This is shown below and includes significantly:
- a. Capital funding for acquisition and refurbishment of 6 homes (each accommodating 2 children) will require an estimated outlay of £2.580m. This will be funded by borrowing and repaid by the service over 40 years.
 - b. The estimated annual running costs for all six homes is £3.5 m per annum. This assumes an average occupancy level across the homes of 85% and two registered managers overseeing the operation of the homes. This annual cost also includes repayment of the capital expenditure mentioned above.

Capital

Acquisition of premises (6*2 place property)
Adaptations/Fittings
Furniture
Fees - legal/stamp duty/other contingency

Run In House by SCC		
		Total
6	£350,000	£2,100,000
6	£40,000	£240,000
6	£25,000	£150,000
6	£15,000	£90,000
		£2,580,000
		£2,580,000

Funded

Borrowing

* Annual revenue borrowing costs (40 years @ 4.5%)

140,200

Revenue

Running cost of 2 place home

- Employees
- Premises
- Transport
- Supplies & Services
- Transfer Payments
- Fees

	Occupancy	
	85%	100%
	0.473	0.473
	0.008	0.008
	0.018	0.018
	0.028	0.031
	0.002	0.002
	0.006	0.006
Sub Total £m	0.535	0.538
x No of Properties	6	6
Sub Total £m	3.207	3.226
- 2 * Registered Managers (shared across 6 properties)	0.156	0.156
- Capital Charge*	0.140	0.140
Total Cost £m	3.504	3.523

Estimated external residential cost

No. of placements (2 children * 6 properties)
Estimated weekly placement cost
No of weeks

Occupancy

Total £m

	12	12
	7500	7500
	52	52
	4.693	4.693
	85%	100%
Total £m	3.989	4.693

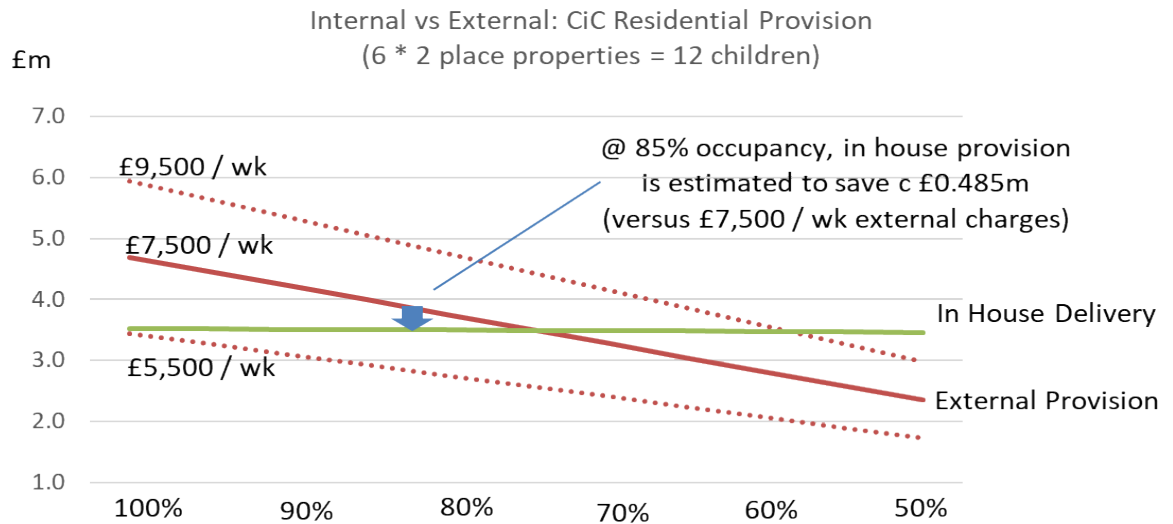
Estimated Saving

0.485

1.170

63. The 2 bed homes cost savings will range from £485k to £1.17m based on occupancy rate between 85% to 100%. There will be flexibility to operate on a solo basis, if appropriate, with the aim of preventing unregulated placements or alternative high-cost placements. Savings will still be achieved as solo placements/ unregulated placements can cost up to £14k/£15k per week.

64. SCC estimate that an average occupancy of 85% is deliverable and will provide a cost saving of circa £0.5m. If occupancy levels are higher, then this could achieve additional cost savings; a minimum occupancy level of 75% must be achieved for the internal provision to be viable.



65. Whilst annual revenues savings circa of £0.5m will be anticipated once the delivery model is fully operational, there will be some initial upfront costs for a period of time, prior to the children being placed, as there will be staff wages and running costs during the recruitment process and therefore the savings shown above will not be realised immediately. In 24/25 it is likely that the additional cost of £0.3m will be incurred in that initial transition year and the recommendation that this is funded from the Councils corporate transition monies. This investment can be repaid in 26/27 (year 3) once operational revenues savings have come to fruition.

£m	Yr1 24/25	Yr 2 25/26	Yr 3 26/27
Capital			
Acquisition and Refurbishment of 6 properties	2.4	0.1	
Funded			
Borrowing (PWLB)	2.4	0.1	
Revenue			
- Employees	0.7	2.7	3.0
- Other	0.1	0.4	0.5
	0.8	3.2	3.5
... versus			
Cost of external provision	0.5	3.2	4.0
Net additional annual revenue cost / (saving)	0.3	0.0	-0.5

Net Present Value and Cashflow

66. The business case for six internally owned and operated (2 place) homes has been tested using a net present value (NPV) analysis. The NPV has been calculated using a range of variables modelled over a 40 year period:

- a. Occupancy
- b. Capital cost
- c. Cost of borrowing
- d. Market comparative operating costs

67. The analysis, based on an occupancy of 85% and comparative market costs of £7,500 per child per week, shows a strongly positive NPV of £8.2m (see Appendix 3 – Net Present Value and Sensitivity Analysis). Sensitivity analysis for each of the main variables remains positive under a range of plausible scenarios but could be negatively affected by a movement from expected occupancy levels and/or service delivery costs.

68. The proposals outlined are deliverable within and supportive of the Council's MTFs. The following shows the cashflow forecast and the net cumulative savings arising (breakeven from year 3):

	Total year 1 £m	Total year 2 £m	Total year 3 £m	Total year 4 £m	Total year 5 £m	Total years 6-10 £m	Total years 11-15 £m	Total years 16-20 £m	Total years 21-25 £m	Total years 26-30 £m	Total years 31-35 £m	Total years 36-42 £m	Total years 0-42 £m
Cash inflows (net savings on provider fees)	(0.3)	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.6	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	4.4	24.8
Cash outflows (borrowing costs)	(0.0)	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.7)	(0.7)	(0.7)	(0.7)	(0.7)	(0.7)	(0.8)	(5.6)
Net Cash inflow / (outflow)	(0.3)	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.5	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.4	3.5	19.2
<i>Cumulative Cash inflow / (outflow)</i>	(0.3)	(0.3)	0.2	0.6	1.1	3.6	6.0	8.4	10.8	13.3	15.7	19.2	

69. For any placements where there is an identified health need, SCC will be seeking funding from the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Continuing Health Care Funding would be sought where appropriate, which could provide an additional contribution to cover part of the placement costs. These would also include children who maybe stepping down from Tier 4 provisions or preventing them from admission.

Climate Change Implications

70. Providing more residential homes in Staffordshire will align with the key principles of the Strategic Plan by reducing carbon emissions and business travel, as local authority practitioners (e.g. Social Workers/IROs) will spend less time travelling.

71. Carbon emissions will also be reduced when children have family time / school transport as they are closer to their home.
72. This proposal will add another property onto the Corporate property list, which will contribute to SCC's carbon footprint. Whilst refurbishing the property(s) it would be prudent to also consider the future energy efficiency and carbon footprint of the building and how these can be lowered/mitigated, so as not to impact negatively on our carbon emissions.

Conclusion

73. Finding homes for children in our care is a priority. Whilst we recognise that work being undertaken nationally may assist the council in the medium to long term. Staffordshire County Council needs to act now to avoid further overspends by disrupting the market.
74. This report concludes that investing in internal provision will provide the quickest access to increased residential provision saving circa £0.5 million per year. As such we recommend work progresses establishing 6, 2 bed properties locally. In addition to committing to the WM regional frameworks which will supplement the capacity needed.
75. The development of the 6 internal homes together with work undertaken using the regional foster and residential frameworks will ensure a mixed market approach which is better able to:
- a. have the right C/YP, in the right place at the right time.
 - b. have our C&YP living locally in the right 'home' to meet their needs.
 - c. eliminate the use of unregulated arrangements.
 - d. increase the number of C&YP who are able to return home.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1- Options Appraisal
Appendix 2- Time Line
Appendix 3- Net Present value and Sensitivity Analysis

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Options Paper - Children's Residential Placements August 2023

Contributors:

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Overview:

Document Purpose

- To consider a range of options aimed at tackling the high level of spend on residential care for children.
- To identify and evaluate options, financial implications, and potential risks.
- To provide recommendations for consideration by Staffordshire County Council's (SCC).

Background

Overview

Our Legal responsibility

There is a legal duty for the Local Authority to understand if we have sufficient provision for children who need our care.

We are required to work with the market to shape it so that our children's needs are met.

We know that for some children a residential setting will meet their needs and we are required to ensure that children and young people can access the appropriate care in a home setting and it is compliant with appropriate requirements as outlined in guidance, regulation, and legislation, including those set out in the Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2013), the Children & Families Act 2014.

National and Local Context

Nationally, there has been an increase of 8.3% of children in care from 2020/21-2021/22 year, in Staffordshire's we have had a 20% increase.

There are 1401 children in our care up 110 from the previous 12 months.

This rise correlates with the increase in UASC.

Equates to 80 children per 10,000 of the population as opposed to the national average of 70. This is because children often stay in our care for too long.

We know that many children placed in residential care do not need this type of place but end up being placed there as there are insufficient foster carers.

Staffordshire has a budget of £18.1m for residential spend (non-disability), with a projected spend of £24.2m approximate overspend of £6.1m for financial year 2023/2024, which is not sustainable.

External providers are astute they know that the pressures in the market mean that they can charge a higher price and choose the children who they perceive will be easier to manage. Therefore costs for external residential care are rising.

Staffordshire has had an independent review by the LGA which considered the costs paid on residential provision and we are slightly below the average costs charged to other Local Authorities across our statistical neighbours. However, we are lower than the West Midlands.

Current Approach

SCC currently has limited in-house provision (5 units) and a reliance on the mainly private independent sector.

We have two In-house provisions for residential care and two homes to support short breaks.

These homes are 4 bed in-house short break disability homes, one 4 bed edge of care provision, one 4 bed short to long-term home (The Alders) and one 3 bed medium to long term home (The Firs).

On average 122 children are in independent residential placements, 24 of which have a disability. Only 88 needed residential provision therefore 10 are in these homes as there were insufficient foster care places.

The majority of placements are commissioned as part of the West Midlands Regional Flexible Framework Contract or through spot purchases if a framework provider is not available.

For more complex children this sometimes has not always been possible, so the Council is left with using more expensive residential placements or expensive unregulated placements.

Proposed Approach

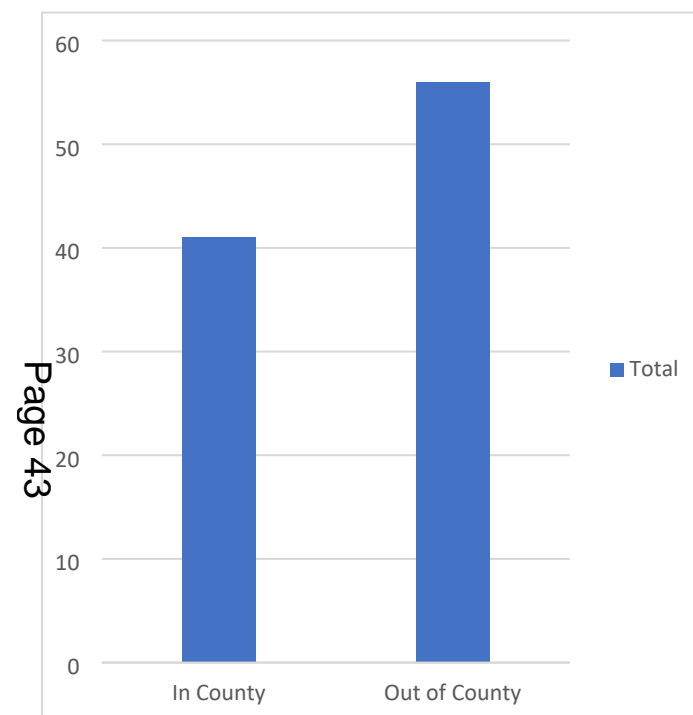
Intervene in the market to develop a more balanced mixed market economy offer, which reduces the reliance on the more expensive independent sector placements and eradicates the use of unregulated placements.

A focus initially on those 15 complex most expensive placements, with a plan to access smaller more cost-effective clustered properties initially in the key locations of Newcastle and Stafford.

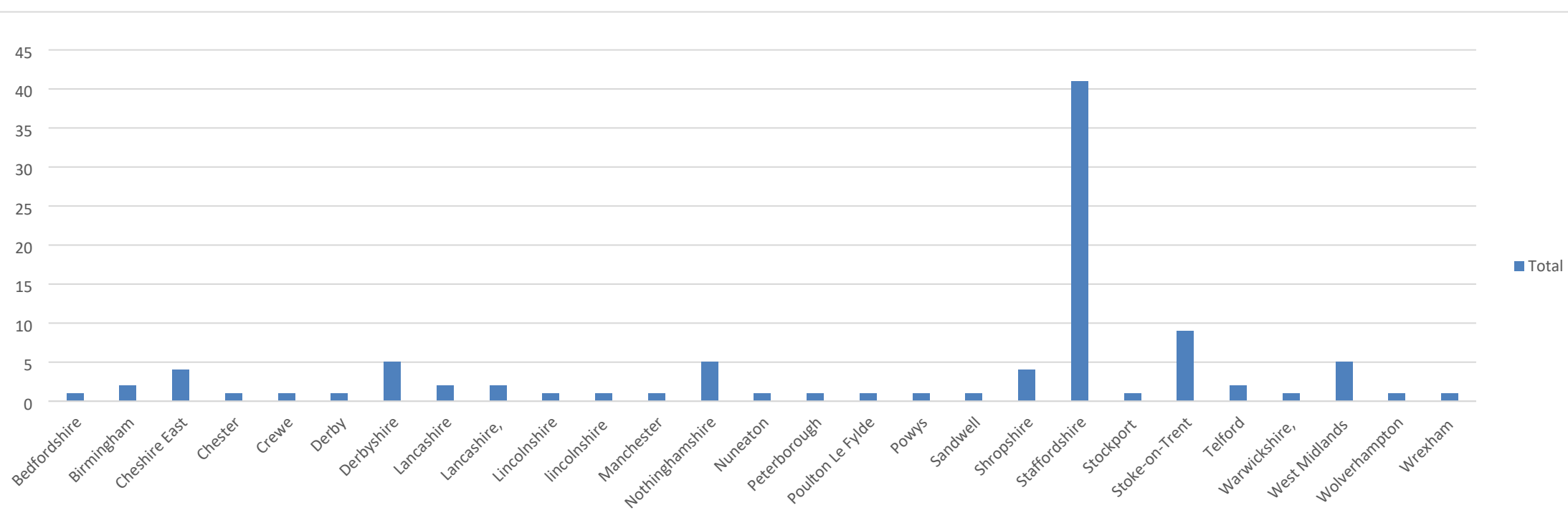
Overview of Children in Staffordshire

- Currently 1401 children in care, with approximately 8.7% (122 children) in residential provision. This is down from 10% over the previous years.
- Across Staffordshire there are over 500 independent sector residential beds excluding Stoke-on-Trent and market intelligence is indicating this will continue to increase.
- SCC is frequently competing with other authorities for placements and with children’s homes having a huge choice, finding a placement for a complex child becomes challenging resulting in the search widening further afield. This has resulted in approximately 57% of our children being placed outside of Staffordshire.
- Below table illustrates the locations where children are placed. Our ambition is for all children to be placed close to home.

Placements Inside and Outside of Staffordshire



Residential Placement Locations



Key Challenges

- There are insufficient smaller 1, 2 and 3 bed children’s homes. With demand outstripping supply there has been an over reliance on the independent sector; enabling providers to be more selective as to the children they will accept; SCC is often competing for places in Staffordshire with other LAs, which leads to providers increasing the price.
- 57% of our children are in out of county placements, despite the volume of independent residential beds in Staffordshire.
- Sourcing placements for the most complex children and young people, approximately 15 at any one time has become an increasing challenge in recent years. Settings have not kept pace and/or been able to recruit and retain people with the skills required to effectively care for these children.
- The children and young people that are harder to find homes for typically display aggression, violence, cause property damage, go missing, involved in criminal behaviour and/or drug taking and those children that have risks around self-harm, sexual harmful behaviour, and sexual exploitation.
- In 2022/2023, 32 placement breakdowns occurred which often increases costs as providers will expect higher payments to offer placements for these children.
- Providers are acutely aware of the risk of complexity and how this might impact OFSTED inspections adding to their reluctance to offer our children their homes.
- Occupancy of in-house provision has been limited due to staff skills, knowledge and understanding of these children. A new management structure has recently reviewed in-house provision and has already taken action to reduce staffing costs, improve the matching of children to these placements, to address previous issues relating to operating at full occupancy, and to deliver an improved in-house service.

Overview of Current Commissioning Arrangements

- In-house homes – The Alders – 4 bed (Tamworth)/ The Firs (new) 3 bed (Stafford)
- Residential Flexible Framework (129 providers) – expires Dec 2024
- Re-tendering the residential framework (Coventry leading West Midlands)
- Block Contract – commenced 2023.
 Mulberry Care – 3 Bed Home (Stafford) 2 bed occupied of the 3 currently.
 Beacon Care – 3 Bed Home (Rugeley) due to commence late-August.
- Usage - Framework Providers 70%, Spot Providers 30%
- Spot arrangements are considered once the above have been considered first. Average price variance of 46% more expensive for a spot.
- The current commissioning arrangements do not effectively address the needs of more complex children, leading to expensive alternatives or unregulated placements being used.

Current In-House Provision



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Brunswick Place	The Alders	Hawthorns Resource Centre	Cannock Resource Centre	The Firs
<p>Edge of Care Service – providing short breaks support for young people on the edge of care and those with plans for reunification home or to kinship care.</p> <p>The home provides four beds for young people 11-17years.</p> <p>The property is a PFI building set in a suburban area near Stafford town centre.</p>	<p>Short to medium term provision to support an assessment process for young people with a view to have an exit plan to return home or foster care.</p> <p>The home is registered for 4 beds and plans to have an emergency provision with set criteria for admission.</p> <p>The property is in Tamworth, it is a semi-detached large, listed building.</p>	<p>Hawthorns provides short breaks for children and young people with learning disabilities.</p> <p>The service supports the LA in meeting its duties in line with the Short Breaks Regulations for young people with additional needs.</p> <p>The building is a PFI large ten bedded property adapted to meet the needs of the young people with additional physical needs. Located in Burton on Trent.</p> <p>The centre is registered for four beds for children and young people 8-17 years.</p>	<p>The purpose of CRC is aligned with Hawthorns. Located in the Cannock area.</p> <p>The service is currently suspended, we have requested the lifting of the suspension to resume operation at the end of December.</p> <p>The building mirrors Hawthorns in size and facilities, a PFI building.</p>	<p>The Firs is a four bedded property located on Newport Road, Stafford.</p> <p>The proposals are for the home to provide three long term placements for young people aged 11- 17 years.</p> <p>The property provides a family home setting the staff establishment compliment provides managers and residential workers with no cook or domestic staff.</p>

- The Firs is new children’s home which has recently been registered. recent review has proposed the sale of The Alders and the purchase of a smaller property.
- Hawthorn, Cannock, and Brunswick Place were PFI (private finance initiative) funded with leases due to expire in 2027, when SCC will take on full ownership.
- SLT paper taken agree the efficiency to reduce costs and improve the occupancy rates of homes

Financial Overview

- The current budget is £18.1m for residential spend (non-disability)
- There is a projected overspend of £6.1m for the financial year 2023/2024, so an overall budget requirement of approximately £24.2m.
- Due to the poor market conditions, cost of living, inflationary pressures unit prices have continue to increase, this is more noticeable for the more complex children.
- Despite residential numbers decreasing, this has not reduced the effect in the overall spend.
- This spend is not sustainable, and therefore alternative options to reduce this expenditure, especially for high-cost placements, have been considered in this paper.
- In August 2023, the top 15 highest residential costs range from £5,944.50 per week to £11,283 per week (p/w), with an average of £8,501 p/w.
- Unregulated costs can range from £9,995k to £19,404 p/w. Average fee for 23/24 is £13,560 p/w

Potential Options

Therefore, six options have been considered to address the challenges described above. The six options are outlined directly below, followed by the associated financial modelling. The below options can be implemented based a combinations of options, such as part in-house and part LATCO.

1. Expand the In-House provision.
2. Creation of a LA Trading Company
3. Block Contracting
4. Collaborative partnership with Registered Social Landlords
5. Collaborative partnership a private provider/voluntary sector provider
6. Acquisition of existing children’s home organisation

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Options

Options	Strengths	Challenges/Weaknesses	Risks
1. Expand In-House Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct control over the placements. • Priority to address the most complex cases and stop the use of unregulated and reduce out of county placements. • Cost effective as efficiencies have been identified that also allow for recruitment of specialist psychology services. • Can be attractive to some to work for a local authority. • Not for profit • Young people will have access to wider Children Services. • New management team will maximise occupancy and be persistent in preventing placement breakdowns. • Develop and grow own staff expertise. • Local provision based on the specific needs of the Council, and clustered to maximise use of registered managers. • Meets the desired mixed market approach. • Possible sale of surplus places if required. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay is comparable with the independent sector but overall SCC staff costs are higher. • Costs of delivery is higher than a LATCO in the longer term. <p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure full occupancy, as this has been a challenge previously. • Timescales to become operational. Historically C&F purchasing/renovating new properties has taken time. • Staff skills, knowledge and practice needs to be improved. • Attracting and recruiting staff in a competitive and overstretched market although this has not been an issue recently. • SCC has previously struggled to recruit to in-house homes; however, this has not been the case recently. • Meeting Ofsted registration requirements. • Void costs awaiting Ofsted Registration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to recruit right staff. • Delays with acquiring properties and making them fit for purpose. • Community objections.

Options	Strengths	Challenges/Weaknesses	Risks
<p>2. Set up an LA Trading Company (LATC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCC owned company: 80% of all activity must be for the County Council. • C&F Service Level Agreement to direct the work of the LATC. • Governance arrangements include SCC SLT/Cabinet Members. • Commercially orientated but not for profit. • Commercial approach to managing void spaces. • Potential future income stream from 20% of its activity if not required by SCC SLA, sale of surplus places. • Lower staff costs in relation to superannuation. • Future SLAs with the LATC could deliver other C&F services e.g., fostering services. • Could be part of a mixed market economy model working alongside in-house provision, within in-house dealing with the most complex cases and the LATC working with other children. <p>Local provision based on the specific needs of the Council, and clustered to maximise use of registered managers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial set up costs and then running costs. • Timescale to establish and recruit the right commercially orientated staff to a LATC. • A significant concern is around attracting and recruiting staff in a very competitive and overstretched market with less favourable pension scheme. • Staff skills, knowledge and practice needs to be improved. • TUPE implications, different T&C's for staff. • Staff costs potentially could increase later to attract staff therefore reducing overall benefits. • SCC would need to purchase properties. • Ofsted registration requirements. • Void costs while awaiting Ofsted Registration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to recruit the right staff. • Timescale to establish a new LATC. • Potential redundancies as a result of changes.
<p>3. Solo block contract.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New providers now joining the market to offer solo provisions. • Matching issues would be removed. • Fixed prices for the duration of the contract which is likely to be lower than the general market due to guarantee of usage. • No competition for placements from other LA's. • Local provision based on the specific needs of the Council as opposed to a generic provision i.e., emergency. • Allow the development of a specification for a therapeutic approach. • Increased partnership working. • Previously went to cabinet previously for a block contract for the value of £5,957,120 but only awarded £1,255,800 which left £4,701,320 un-utilised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council went to market last year with little interest. • Ongoing cost of vacant beds, as there is no guarantee the provider will accept. • Possible over reliance on the provision, leading to less engagement with external market. • Potential conflict between in-house and block arrangements as one may impinge on another in terms of usage. • Less leverage – Home may not be willing to take complex children as reliant on the registered manager who has the final decision to either accept a placement or not. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little interest in the current market • Payment of void beds if placement is not made. • Not effectively accessing it for our most complex children may result in the SCC paying a premium for the placement.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less leverage – Provider may not be willing to take complex children as reliant on the registered manager to make the ultimate decision. • Children already placed may not be from SCC and cannot be removed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider may not have the same values. • May inherit poor quality staff, which may not be known until being operational. • Reliant on the skills/experience of staff that have been recruited.
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Financial modelling of the options

The following modelling outlines the comparative costs of the five of the options. The cheapest options are not in fact reasonable options as the market is not bidding for these within the external market.

Options	Capital Costs 3 x 2 bed homes	Revenue Costs	Total Costs (Year 1)	Revenue Costs 1 low to 6 high
1. In-House provision.	£1,290,000	£1,752,000	£3,042,000	2
2. Use of a Trading Company	£1,290,000	£1,757,000	£3,047,000	3
3. Collaborative Partnership model with a registered social Landlord	Rental Costs	£1,687,581	£1,687,581	1
4. Collaborative Partnership model with Independent/third sector Provider Est. £12k per home	£1,290,000	£1,872,000	£3,162,000	5
5. Solo Block Contract Est. £12.5k per placement	Zero	£1,950,000	£1,950,000	6
6. Acquisition of going concern (eg 7 solo homes)	£1,500,000 initial purchase	£1,800,000	£3,300,000	4

Please note:

- Options 1-4 financial analysis is based on 2 bed homes.
- Options 5-6 financial analysis is based on 1 bed homes.
- SCC would purchase the properties and lease to an SLA to the LATC.
- In-house model costs – is based on registered manager (RM) being shared over three properties.

	Run In House by SCC			Run by LATCO		
			Total			Total
Capital						
Acquisition of premises (3*2 place property)	3	£350,000	£1,050,000	3	£350,000	£1,050,000
Adaptations/Fittings	3	£40,000	£120,000	3	£40,000	£120,000
Furniture	3	£25,000	£75,000	3	£25,000	£75,000
Fees - legal/stamp duty/other contingency	3	£15,000	£45,000	3	£15,000	£45,000
			£1,290,000			£1,290,000
Funded						
Borrowing			£1,290,000			£1,290,000

* Annual revenue borrowing costs (40 years @ 4.5%)

70,100

70,100

	Occupancy	
	85%	100%
Revenue		
Running cost of 2 place home		
- Employees	0.473	0.473
- Premises	0.008	0.008
- Transport	0.018	0.018
- Supplies & Services	0.028	0.031
- Transfer Payments	0.002	0.002
- Fees	0.006	0.006
Sub Total £m	0.535	0.538
x No of Properties	3	3
Sub Total £m	1.604	1.613
- Registered Manager (shared across 3 properties)	0.078	0.078
- Capital Charge*	0.070	0.070
Total Cost £m	1.752	1.761
Estimated external residential cost		
No. of placements (2 children * 3 properties)	6	6
Estimated weekly placement cost	7500	7500
No of weeks	52	52
	2.346	2.346
Occupancy	85%	100%
Total £m	1.994	2.346
Estimated Saving	0.243	0.585

	Occupancy	
	85%	100%
Revenue		
Running cost of 2 place home		
- Employees	0.390	0.390
- Premises	0.008	0.008
- Transport	0.018	0.018
- Supplies & Services	0.028	0.031
- Transfer Payments	0.002	0.002
- Fees	0.096	0.096
Sub Total £m	0.541	0.544
x No of Properties	3	3
Sub Total £m	1.623	1.632
- Registered Manager (shared across 3 properties)	0.064	0.064
- Capital Charge*	0.070	0.070
Total Cost £m	1.757	1.766
Estimated external residential cost		
No. of placements (2 children * 3 properties)	6	6
Estimated weekly placement cost	7500	7500
No of weeks	52	52
	2.346	2.346
Occupancy	85%	100%
Total £m	1.994	2.346
Estimated Saving	0.238	0.580

Conclusion

The report highlights the current challenges facing the Council and it is evident that there needs to intervene in the children's homes market. Data clearly shows that Staffordshire does have the sufficiency within the County, however, accessing these placements has proven more problematic, with several factors influencing this, one being the high demand on placements often from outside of the County. This is more acute for the more complex children where providers can choose fewer complex children leaving our more vulnerable children with limited suitable placements. The paper has explored different options to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses of each one.

The report has also outlined the cost implications of six options but has split this into 2 bed homes and solo homes. It has considered the strengths and weaknesses of each option.

The Financial modelling shows the in-house vs LATCO model are similar in cost, however, there are concerns around being able to attract a workforce on less favourable conditions around pensions than local authority run homes within the current labour market. Recent examples of challenges in the market are the closing by Outcomes First Group of around 20 children's homes. We have also seen several smaller well-established homes either closing or not operating homes due to staff shortages. Therefore, with workforce shortages across the sector, having less favourable terms would be subject to difficulties in terms of recruitment but also ensuring that the appropriate skilled staff are able to be employed. In this sector a good workforce is imperative in order to manage our most complex children and it is not felt that this would be possible in the current climate.

In summary the expansion of the in-house provides the best possibility of meeting our needs in the short-term but also ensuring SCC meets all of our children needs regardless of their complexity and thus avoiding unregulated placements.

Recommendations and Projected Budget Requirement

The In-House option is the quickest way to increase capacity for placing the most complex children. This also supports the actions already taken by the new management team to tackle costs and improve the service. SCC will need to purchase properties for this cohort, but with the intention of buying smaller more modern homes that require less capital outlay than previous approaches.

The following illustrates the potential annual running costs and capital requirement for 6 in-house residential homes. It is based on 2 Registered Managers for 6 x 2 bed homes for a maximum of 12 children. Please note the in-house figure assumes 85% occupancy. The below table shows the capital needed and the running costs and potential savings.

	Run In House by SCC	
		Total
Capital		
Acquisition of premises (6*2 place property)	6 £350,000	£2,100,000
Adaptations/Fittings	6 £40,000	£240,000
Furniture	6 £25,000	£150,000
Fees - legal/stamp duty/other contingency	6 £15,000	£90,000
		£2,580,000
Funded		
Borrowing		£2,580,000

* Annual revenue borrowing costs (40 years @ 4.5%) 140,200

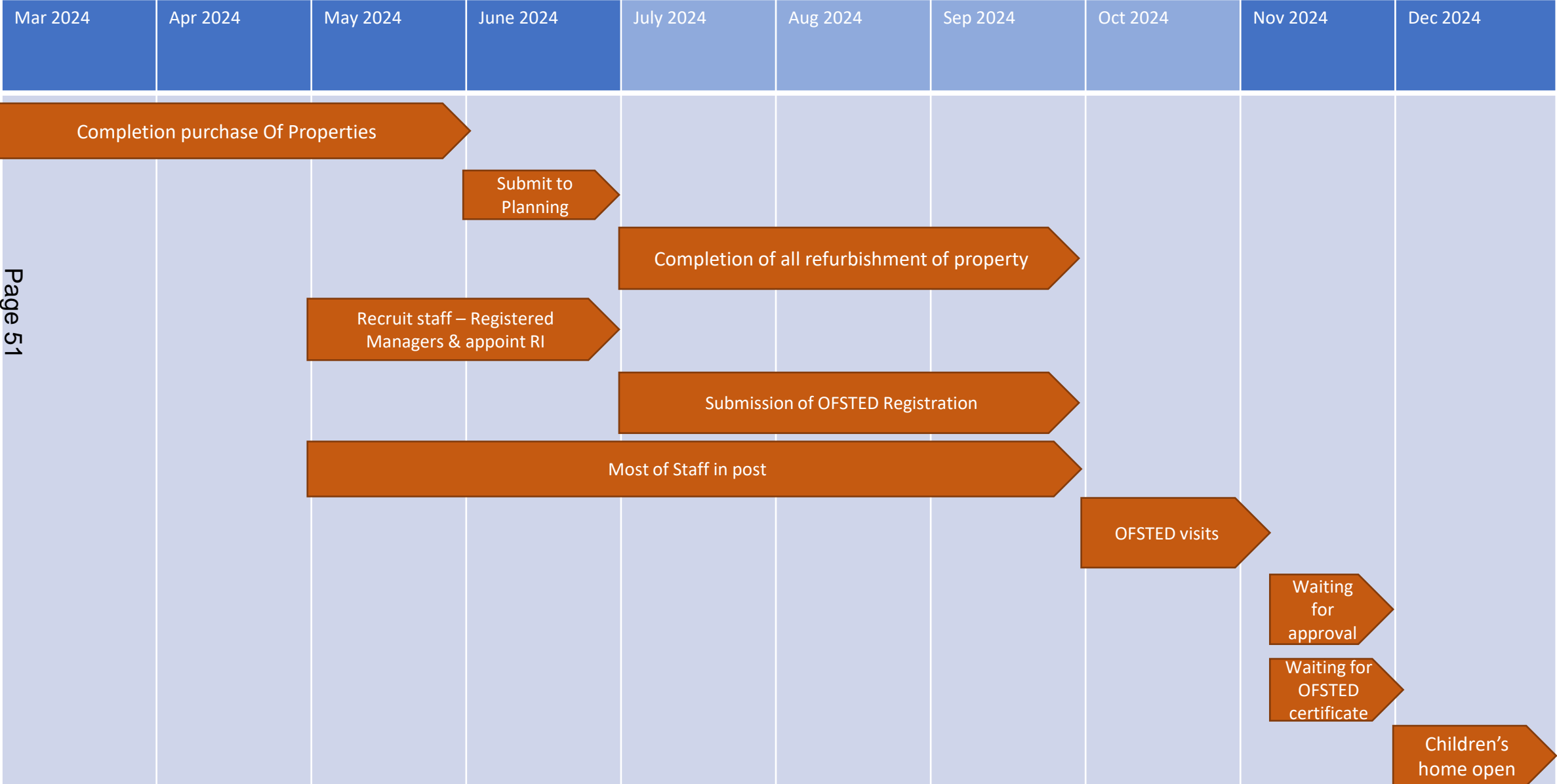
	Occupancy	
	85%	100%
Revenue		
Running cost of 2 place home		
- Employees	0.473	0.473
- Premises	0.008	0.008
- Transport	0.018	0.018
- Supplies & Services	0.028	0.031
- Transfer Payments	0.002	0.002
- Fees	0.006	0.006
Sub Total £m	0.535	0.538
x No of Properties	6	6
Sub Total £m	3.207	3.226
- 2 * Registered Managers (shared across 6 properties)	0.156	0.156
- Capital Charge*	0.140	0.140
Total Cost £m	3.504	3.523

Estimated external residential cost		
No. of placements (2 children * 6 properties)	12	12
Estimated weekly placement cost	7500	7500
No of weeks	52	52
	4.693	4.693
Occupancy	85%	100%
Total £m	3.989	4.693

Estimated Saving **0.485** **1.170**

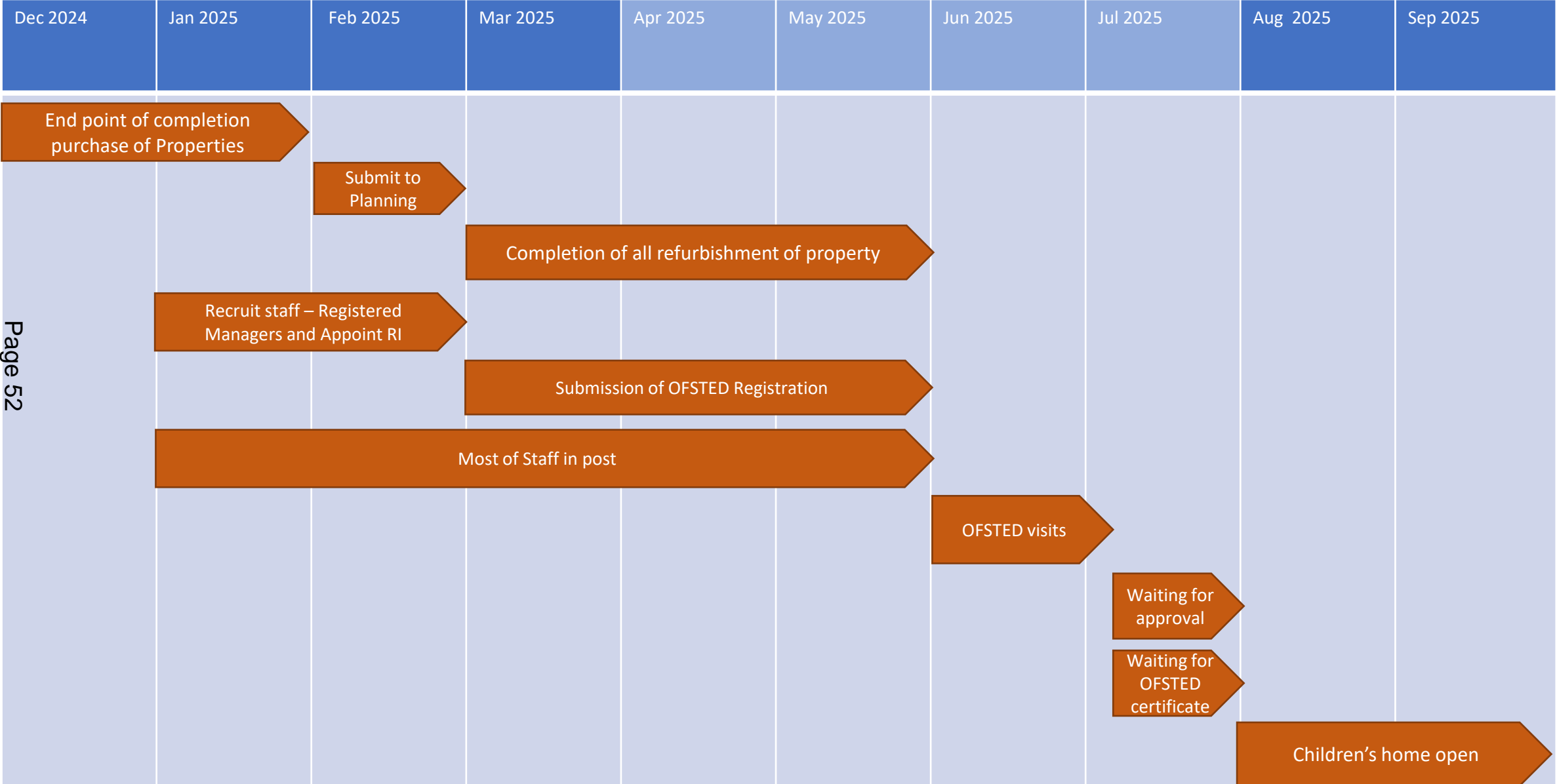
Cabinet Paper (21/2/2024) – Homes for Children in Our Care

Appendix 2: Timeline – In-house Children’s Home/s – FIRST 3 homes



Cabinet Paper (21/2/2024) – Homes for Children in Our Care

Appendix 2: Timeline – In-house Children’s Home/s – SECOND 3 homes



Appendix:3 - Net Present Value and Sensitivity Analysis

The business case for six internally owned and operated (2 place) homes has been tested using a net present value (NPV) analysis. The following shows a strongly positive NPV of £8.2m, based on an occupancy of 85% and comparative market costs of £7,500 per child per week:

	Total year 1 £m	Total year 2 £m	Total year 3 £m	Total year 4 £m	Total year 5 £m	Total years 6-10 £m	Total years 11-15 £m	Total years 16-20 £m	Total years 21-25 £m	Total years 26-30 £m	Total years 31-35 £m	Total years 36-42 £m	Total £m
Direct internal cost of provision	0.8	3.0	3.4	3.4	3.4	16.8	16.8	16.8	16.8	16.8	16.8	23.5	138.4
Market comparative cost	0.5	3.2	4.0	4.0	4.0	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	19.9	27.9	163.2
Potential revenue (cost) / saving	(0.3)	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.6	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	4.4	24.8
Capital investment	(2.4)	(0.1)											(2.6)
Net (spend) / saving	(2.7)	(0.0)	0.6	0.6	0.6	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	4.4	22.2
Net Present Value (NPV)	(2.7)	(0.0)	0.6	0.5	0.5	2.3	1.8	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.8	8.2

Sensitivity analysis for each of the main variables remains positive under a range of plausible scenarios but could be negatively affected by a movement from expected occupancy levels and/or service delivery costs:

Change in occupancy	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%
NPV (£m)	-0.2	4.0	8.2	12.5	16.7

Change in capital cost £m	-20%	-10%	10%	20%
	£2.064	£2.322	£2.580	£2.838
80% occupancy (£m)	4.5	4.3	4.0	3.8
85% occupancy (£m)	8.8	8.5	8.2	8.0
90% occupancy (£m)	13.0	12.7	12.5	12.2

Change in cost of borrowing (discount rate %)	3.5%	4.0%	4.50%	5.0%	5.5%
80% occupancy (£m)	5.2	4.6	4.0	3.5	3.1
85% occupancy (£m)	10.1	9.1	8.2	7.5	6.7
90% occupancy (£m)	15.1	13.7	12.5	11.4	10.4

Change in SCC operating costs (%)	-20%	-10%	-	10%	20%
80% occupancy (£m)	16.5	10.3	4.0	-2.3	-8.5
85% occupancy (£m)	20.8	14.5	8.2	2.0	-4.3
90% occupancy (£m)	25.1	18.8	12.5	6.2	-0.1

Change in market bed price (£/wk)	£6,500	£7,000	£7,500	£8,000	£8,500
80% occupancy (£m)	-5.2	-0.6	4.0	8.7	13.3
85% occupancy (£m)	-1.6	3.3	8.2	13.2	18.1
90% occupancy (£m)	2.1	7.3	12.5	17.7	22.9

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Green Solutions – SCC delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service



Councillor Philip White, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills said,

“As a county council, we are committed to supporting local businesses in becoming more environmentally friendly.

We believe that providing businesses with the necessary skills to understand how they can make their business greener is the first step towards a greener economy.

The Green Solutions project offers professional Energy Assessments, free carbon literacy training, and up to £100k worth of grants to

local businesses.

This scheme is designed to help up to 300 local businesses in the area transition to a more sustainable future.”

Report Summary:

Supporting businesses to grow and thrive is a top priority for Staffordshire County Council, as is tackling Climate Change. We have a Green Solutions Programme in place that provides free advice and grants to businesses to reduce energy use and costs, supporting about 60 businesses a year.

At the end of last year, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) launched a pilot programme for SMEs with combined Authorities around the West Midlands and Staffordshire was approached to see if it could deliver this programme in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. This will allow us to support 300 businesses with energy advice and £2M of grants to make improvements.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Grants retrospective authority following a Members Decision Notice to enter into a funding agreement with the West Midlands Combined

Authority (WMCA) 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.

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

Green Solutions – SCC delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service

Recommendations of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Grants retrospective authority following a Members Decision Notice to enter into a funding agreement with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) 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.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. A Members Decision Notice to enter into a funding agreement with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) 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 has been completed. This report seeks retrospective approval for the decision.
2. Development of the programme by WMCA/ The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has been 'at pace' with final detail of delivery and contracts received on 19th December 2023. The approval of the Members Decision Notice will enable us to maximise the timeframe for operational delivery and enable flow of support and grant funding to Staffordshire and Stoke businesses.

Background

3. Staffordshire County Council was invited by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to become the Primary Delivery Partner for the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent region, to deliver Energy Assessments

and Grants on behalf of the Pilot BEAS programme in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent region alongside their Green Solutions Programme.

4. The programme will deliver 300 Energy Efficiency Assessments and £2M in grant funding to small and medium sized businesses SME's in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
5. Becoming a delivery partner in the Pilot BEAS programme also allows the County Council to support Stoke-on-Trent businesses. Officers have consulted with Stoke on Trent City Council and with their agreement secured, can offer grants to the Stoke and Staffordshire area in totality. This was a required of the grant from the WMCA. As SCC had structures and programmes already in place, this was deemed the most efficient way to deliver the programme in a challenging delivery window.
6. The time frames for the delivery of the Pilot BEAS programme are short. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) require at least 4,000 energy efficiency assessments (nationally) to be completed by the 31st of March 2025. To achieve this target, WMCA as Accountable body for this funding, are aligning the Pilot BEAS with regional and local programmes which will ensure efficiencies through utilising our existing local networks. In SCC's case it has been aligned with our own Green Solutions Programme
7. The objectives of the Pilot BEAS are in summary:
 - a. Learn lessons and gather data to inform future policies on energy demand reduction, and
 - b. Support energy demand reduction in Small and Medium-sized companies.
8. Becoming a delivery partner in the Pilot BEAS programme enables us to significantly expand on the current SCC Green Solutions programme from supporting 60 business to 300 businesses contributing to our strategic objectives to reduce SCC's carbon emission to achieve Carbon Zero by 2050 by supporting the Economy to Become Net Zero as set out in our [Corporate Delivery Plan](#). The Members Decision Notice has enabled the Council to move quickly to get the money out to businesses at the earliest opportunity, to help as many as possible in a very short delivery period. Energy costs are a key component to business activity and programmes which drive those costs down yet contribute to environmental sustainability must be a positive outcome.

Delivery

9. Energy Assessments: businesses are able to apply for this free, independent assessment that looks at their energy consumption, provides recommendations and an action plan to minimize energy usage, save money and reduce carbon emissions.
10. Low Carbon Grant: following the assessment, the programme provides an opportunity for businesses to apply for grants of between £1,000 and £100,000 (covering up to 50% of eligible costs). Available per business to implement recommendations from an Energy Assessment. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - a. Ventilation (fans, distribution, destratification fans)
 - b. Heating (replacement boilers, burners, heat pumps)
 - c. Lighting (LED, controls, sensors)
 - d. Refrigeration
 - e. Compressors
 - f. Insulation
 - g. Recycling & Waste (compactors, balers & crushers)
 - h. Water management
 - i. Other buildings measures e.g. glazing
 - j. Cooling
 - k. Controls
 - l. Equipment upgrades
 - m. Hot water efficiency measures
 - n. Humidification
 - o. Small appliances
 - p. Submetering where monitoring of an energy consuming process could drive reductions in consumption
 - q. Energy management software including training costs where there is clear evidence that a substantial proportion of the consumption would be reduced.
11. A Grant panel will be in place with requisite expertise to approve applications ensuring compliance to the programme.

Timescales

12. Work to commence on: 2 October 2023 (WMCA eligible expenditure in contract is backdated)
Work in progress: 2 Oct 2023 – 31 March 2025
Work completed on date below: 31st March 2025

Legal Implications

13. Due to the timescales, Council Officers consulted with the Monitoring Officer to agree the approach to proceed by way of a Member's Delegated Decision and then obtain retrospective approval from Cabinet. Legal Services have reviewed the MoU and Funding Agreement, there was a limited ability to seek amendments to the documentation as it was template documentation based on the central government grand funding arrangements which were entered into with WMCA which WMCA then flowed down to the Council. Appropriate procedure and processes are in place to ensure compliance including subsidy control, data/privacy aspects, limitation of liability and insurance. Following completion of the the Members Delegated Decision documents have been executed by SCC and are now with WMCA for execution and completion.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

14. Budget provision is within the Funding Agreement to SCC from WMCA as follows:

	23/24	24/25	TOTAL
Energy Assessments	£87,500	£212,500	£300,000
Grant Allocation	£160,000	£1,840,000	£2,000,000
Project Management	£95,000	£250,000	£300,000
TOTAL	£342,500	£2,302,500	£2,645,000

15. Project management costs are covered by the funding including marketing budget to be delivered by SCC Campaigns Officer and staffing three new posts. There is no requested financial contribution from the County Council to deliver the Pilot BEAS.
16. The BEAS programme will form a large part of the Green Solutions programme which has existing funding from SCC of £60,000 and UKSPF allocations of £660,000. The BEAS funding is additional and not duplicating existing funding.
17. The funding will be claimed from WMCA is monthly in arrears. Working with the finance team processes and controls are in place, following best practice we are familiar with from the successful delivery of ERDF business support programmes.

Climate Change Implications

18. This programme will support transitioning Staffordshire to Net Zero. The County Council recognises it has a wider leadership role to play in collaborating with public and private partners in supporting the county of Staffordshire to become net zero where c.5.8m tonnes of carbon is

produced annually. Action on this will need to be co-ordinated at a national, regional, and local level if this is to be achieved.

19. Energy Assessments will provide businesses with clear information on where and how energy savings can be made to support the transition.
20. The recent Climate Change Annual Report 22/23 to Cabinet notes that Achieving net zero requires considerable investment to retrofit properties and decarbonise businesses. Securing external funding is critical to transitioning to Net Zero – this programme secures £2M external funding.
21. Grants will encourage investment by businesses in energy efficient manufacturing, process equipment and buildings measures.
22. The programme will support Staffordshire's businesses to achieve long term sustainability and maximise their business opportunities and efficiency through reduced energy usage and spend.
23. Investment through grants will also stimulate demand for Net Zero goods and service in Staffordshire supporting the expansion of the green economy leading to high value green jobs, skills and growth.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 - GS Cabinet Members Delegated Decision

Appendix 2 - Climate Change Annual Report 22_23

Community Impact Assessment

Contact Details

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Cabinet Member Delegated Decision Form

Decision Title

Green Solutions – Staffordshire County Council (SCC) delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS)

Decision Required

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.

Decision Date

A decision is required at the earliest opportunity, following successful negotiation of the appropriate contract, to allow grants to be made available to the business community without delay.

Decision Summary

Staffordshire County Council was invited by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to become the Primary Delivery Partner for the Stoke and Staffordshire region, to deliver Energy Assessments and Grants on behalf of the Pilot BEAS programme in the Stoke and Staffordshire region alongside their Green Solutions Programme.

The programme will deliver 300 Energy Efficiency Assessments and £2M in grant funding to small and medium sized businesses SME's in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The time frames for the delivery of the Pilot BEAS programme are short. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) require at least 4,000 energy efficiency assessments (nationally) to be completed by the 31st of March 2025. To achieve this target, WMCA as Accountable body for this funding, are aligning the Pilot BEAS with regional programmes which will ensure efficiencies through utilising our existing local networks

Aims and Objectives of the Pilot BEAS:

The objectives of the Pilot BEAS are in summary:

- Learn lessons and gather data to inform future policies on energy demand reduction, and
- Support energy demand reduction in Small and Medium-sized companies.

Becoming a delivery partner in the Pilot BEAS programme enables us to significantly expand on the current SCC Green Solutions programme from supporting 60 business to 300 businesses contributing to our strategic objectives to reduce SCC's carbon emission to achieve Carbon Zero by 2050 by supporting the Economy to Become Net Zero Ref: Corporate delivery plan 2023/24 v5.0

Development of the programme by WMCA/DESNZ has been 'at pace' with final detail of delivery and contracts received on 19th December 2023. To maximise the timeframe for operational delivery and enable flow of grant funding to Staffordshire and Stoke businesses, the purpose of this Decision Notice is to allow the contract to be signed in advance of a Cabinet decision which would result in a pause in activity. This pause would not be deemed in the best interests of our SME's.

Member Delegated Function

General Delegation to Cabinet Member – Section 6 of the Constitution

Specific Delegation to Cabinet Member

If 'Specific Delegation to Cabinet Member' is selected above, please complete this section.

N/A

Public / Exempt

If the decision is exempt, please identify the relevant paragraph number from the list below.

Public

Options Considered

1. Do nothing – no benefit to Staffordshire Businesses
2. Continue with existing Green Solutions Programme funded through SCC/UKSPF – limited benefit to Staffordshire Businesses 60 businesses supported £550K grants across 3 Districts
3. SCC become Delivery Partner for Pilot BEAS – additional 220 businesses supported, additional £2M grants available, support available across All Districts and Stoke-on-Trent

Consultation Process

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member – Philip White
Director for Economy, Infrastructure & Skills – Darryl Evers
Director for Corporate Services – John Tradewell

Assistant Director for Business and Enterprise – Anthony Hodge
 Economic Strategy Delivery Group
 Stoke on Trent City Council – Jon Rouse, City Director
 Cabinet Member – Tina Clements – Chair of Corporate Overview and
 Scrutiny committee
 Leader of the opposition and Cabinet Member – Charlotte Akins

Electoral Divisions Affected

All Divisions

Name of Cabinet Member Making Decision:

Cllr Philip White - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills

Community Impact Assessment

Key Issues

Energy and Resource Efficiency Assessments will provide businesses with clear information on where and how energy savings can be made.

Achieving net zero requires considerable investment to retrofit properties and decarbonise businesses. Securing external funding is critical to transitioning to Net Zero.

Grants will encourage investment by businesses in energy efficient manufacturing and process equipment and buildings measures.

Support Staffordshire's businesses to achieve long term sustainability and maximise their business opportunities and efficiency through reduced energy usage and spend.

Investment through grants will also stimulate demand for Net Zero goods and service in Staffordshire supporting our local supply chain development and subsequent jobs, skills and growth.

Resource and Value for Money Analysis

Budget provision is within the Funding Agreement to SCC from WMCA as follows:

	23/24	24/25	TOTAL
Energy Assessments	£87,500	£212,500	£300,000

Grant Allocation	160000	£1,840,000	£2,000,000
Project Management	£95,000	£250,000	£300,000
TOTAL	£342,500	£2,302,500	£2,645,000

Project management costs are covered by the funding including marketing budget and staffing.

Risk Analysis

The following risks need to be considered:

- a. Demand may not reach the allocation if potential applicants do not come forward. There is a pipeline of businesses already expressed interest in energy assessments and grants. By continuing the previous collaboration between the County Council, Districts & Boroughs, City Council and local business support services there is a low risk of not reaching enough businesses – Low risk.
- b. Demand may exceed the allocation. The scale of the fund is considered appropriate within the timescale. Energy Assessments and Grants will be awarded on a first come first served basis – Low risk.
- c. Funding may be granted to a business that is not eligible – The programme will be efficiently managed by experienced SCC programme managers will be working with WMCA to ensure eligibility of businesses and grant delivery – fortnightly operations group meetings with WMCA. Claims will be monthly so quickly highlighting any issues/risks to eligibility of expenditure – Low risk.

Legal Analysis

Corporate Services have reviewed the MoU and Funding Agreement and approved for signature.

Implementation

Is any implementation action required?

Yes

To be implemented by: Delivery to be implemented by EI&S Environmental Business Support Team

Implementation Status

Work to commence on: 2 October 2023 (WMCA eligible expenditure in contract is backdated)

Work in progress: 2 Oct 2023 – 31 March 2025
Work completed on date below: 31st March 2025

Report Author

Name: Anthony Hodge
Job Title: Assistant Director for Business & Enterprise
Directorate: Economy Infrastructure & Skills
Email Address: Anthony.hodge@staffordshire.gov.uk
Telephone No: 07583 160700

Submission on Mod.Gov

Uploaded by: **Name**
Date uploaded: **Date**

Climate Change

Annual Report 2022/23



Foreword

Climate change has regularly made headlines in the past year. In 2022 the UK witnessed temperatures exceeding 40 degrees for the first time, along with extended periods of drought and storms. Scientific evidence shows that unless we take substantial steps to decrease emissions, these extreme events will become more frequent.

Combating climate change continues to be a high priority for the Council. We ensure that the full effects of climate change are considered in all Cabinet decisions, enabling positive outcomes continually be delivered for our communities.

The dedicated efforts of our staff in designing and delivering projects and programs with climate change in mind have led to a consistent decrease in the Council's carbon emissions each year, since our climate change declaration in 2019. While this is a significant accomplishment, we recognise that there's always more to do.

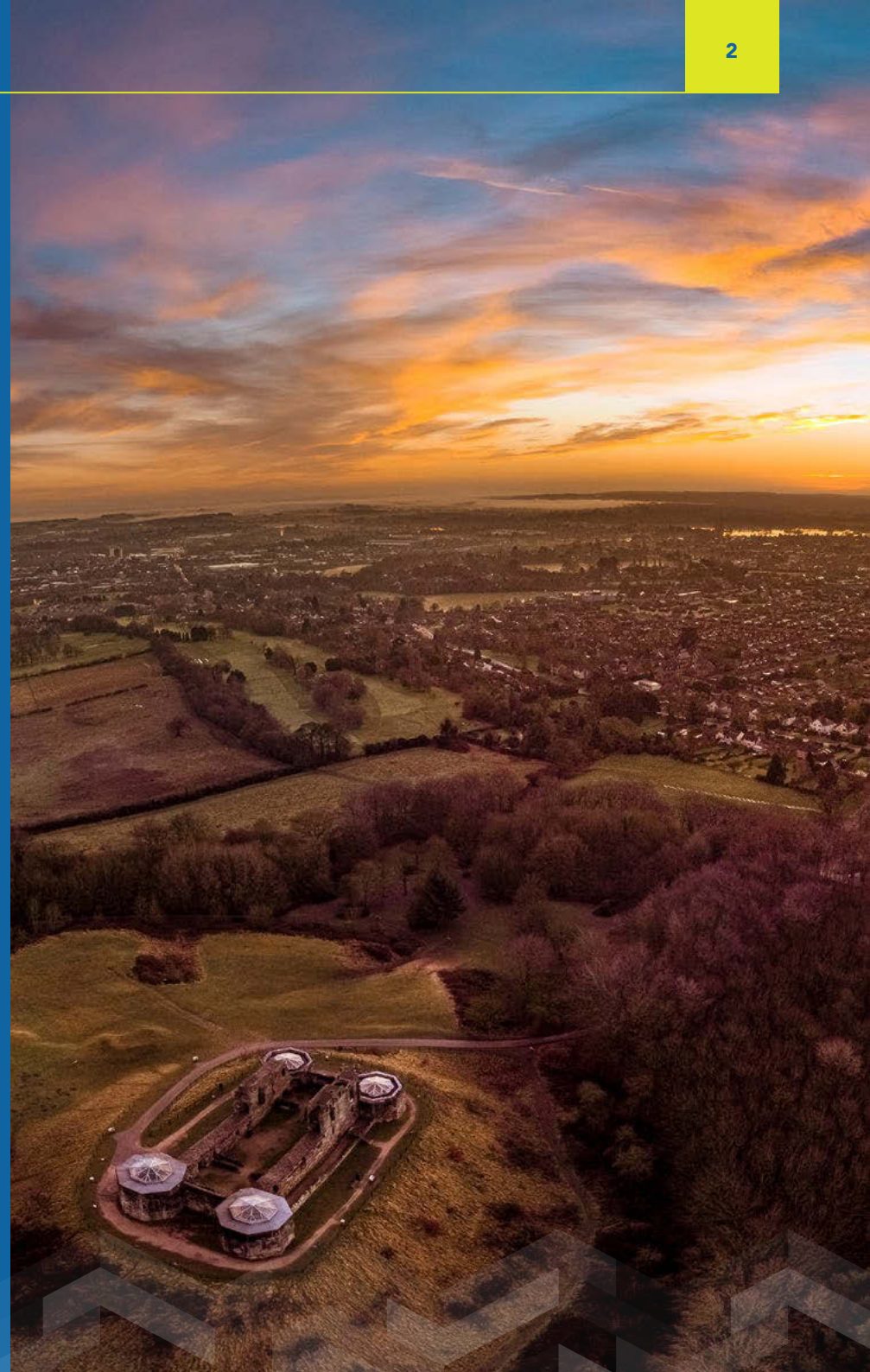
If greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to zero by 2050 or before, our local climate will still change. We need to prepare for this change. Over the next year, our main focus will be developing a plan to make our services more resilient in adapting to a changing climate. This plan will run alongside our efforts in our Climate Change Action Plan to decrease greenhouse gas emissions.

By building on our current work and looking ahead to our future plans, we can make a significant contribution to creating a stronger, more resilient future for our local environment, community, and economy.



Simon Tagg

Staffordshire County Council
Cabinet Member for Environment,
Infrastructure and Climate Change

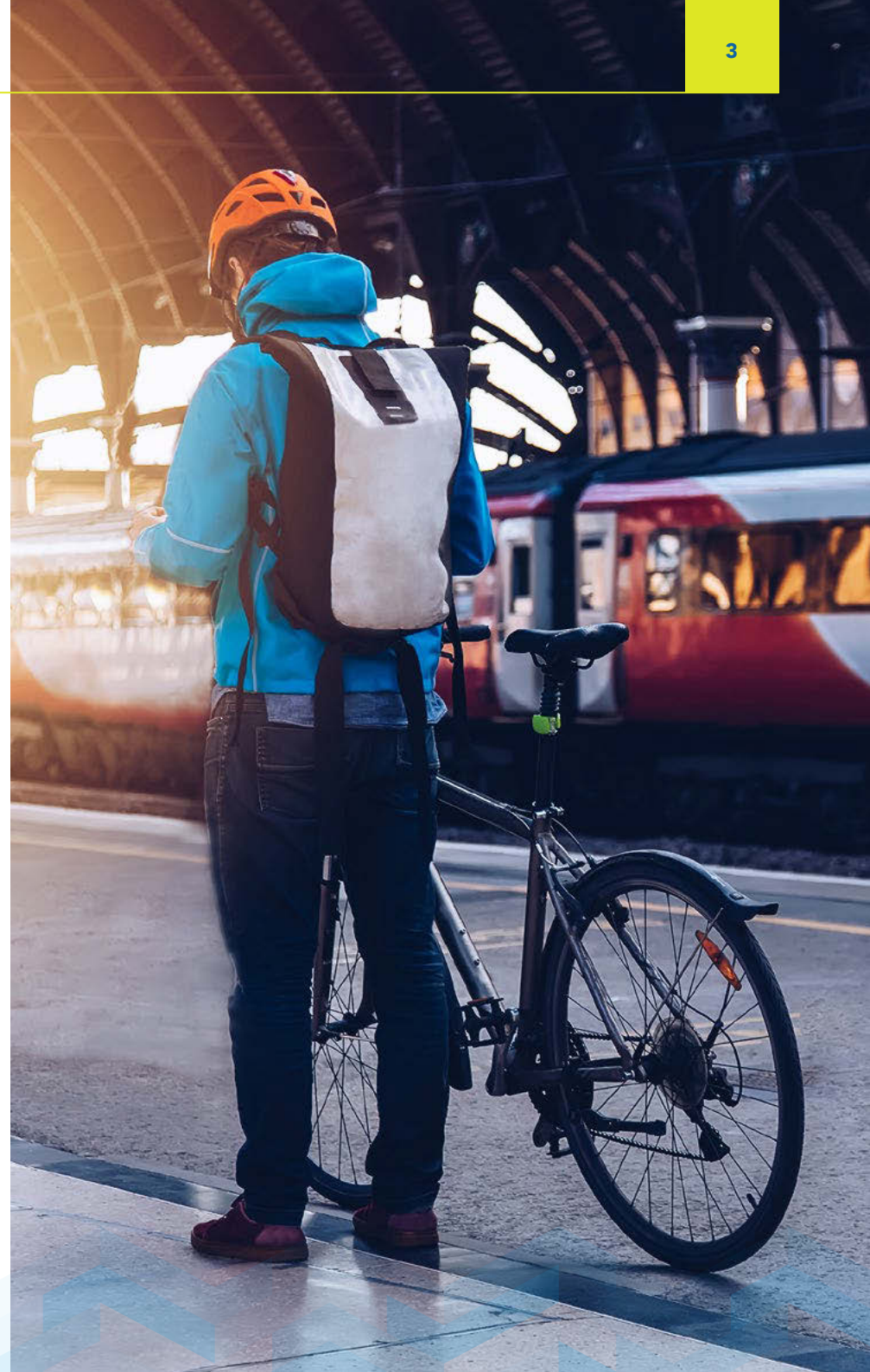


Introduction

Staffordshire County Council has committed to transform our corporate estate and services to be net zero by 2050. To achieve this, we are taking a wide range of actions outlined in the **Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025** to reduce carbon emissions.

This report reviews our achievements during 2022 and 2023. It also refers to the difficulties we have faced and what we're planning to accomplish over the next few years. Previously, our annual report provided information on emissions from the preceding year, which was due to the methods we used for data collection and analysis. Now, we've changed it so we can share achievements and emissions for the same timeframe in one report. So, this report talks about the carbon emissions for both 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The Councils Climate Change Action Plan was reviewed and published in September 2022. This review allowed us to take stock of progress and identify areas where more targeted monitoring would be beneficial. Eleven actions were marked as complete and new actions were introduced to maintain our journey to net zero.



Emissions

Calculating our carbon footprint

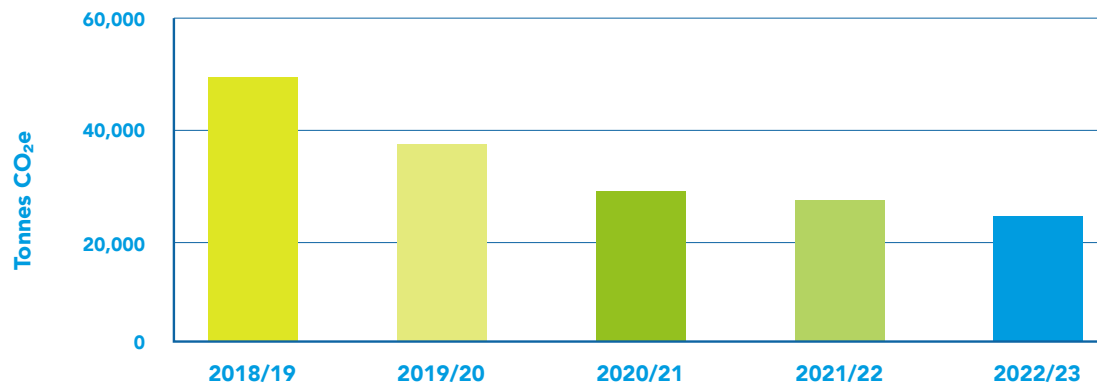
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SCC greenhouse gas emissions

The carbon footprint contains information on our energy, fuel and transport emissions for buildings and assets within the council's reporting boundary. The methodology for calculating the Council's carbon footprint is outlined in Appendix 2.

Greenhouse gas emissions for 2021/22 and 2022/23 are presented in this report. We have continued to reduce emissions, achieving a reduction of **916 tonnes**, taking our carbon footprint to **28,152** in 2021/22. Emissions fell by a further **2,611 tonnes** in 2022/23 to **25,541 tonnes**. This represents a **12% reduction** in emissions since 2020/21 and a **50% reduction** since 2018/19, see Figure 1.

Figure 1 Staffordshire County Council Carbon emissions



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Figure 2 tracks the emissions by generation type. The most notable decline in emissions are from Electricity use and Waste Management. For Waste Management this change is largely because we modified the way we calculate the Council's portion of the waste. This new method gives us a better reflection of the Council's emissions from processing waste.

The total amount of general waste being sent for energy recovery has remained relatively constant over recent years, rising slightly in 2021/22 before falling back to levels of previous years.

A new waste emissions calculation tool is being developed for use by local authorities to calculate emissions from waste operations incorporating incineration emissions. This data has previously been unavailable for local authority use and has the potential to substantially increase the recorded emissions from next year. Reducing the amount of waste produced is essential if we are to tackle the emissions related to managing Staffordshire's household waste. This is one of the key priorities in the **Climate Change Action Plan**.

Electricity use has decreased 15-20% since 2018 for street lighting and corporate properties. Electricity use in schools has decreased by 42% over the same period. The significant fall in schools is largely due to a reduction in some maintained schools becoming Academies and therefore no

longer included in the Council's footprint. The substantial drop in carbon emissions illustrated in Figure 2 reflects the reduction in energy use as well as the council changing to a renewable electricity energy tariff in 2019 which considerably reduces emissions compared to a non-renewable tariff.

Energy efficiency works have also been completed in some schools. It has been difficult to directly attribute the energy savings to the recent works completed since most schools showed a significant reduction in energy use due to the rising energy costs in 2022.

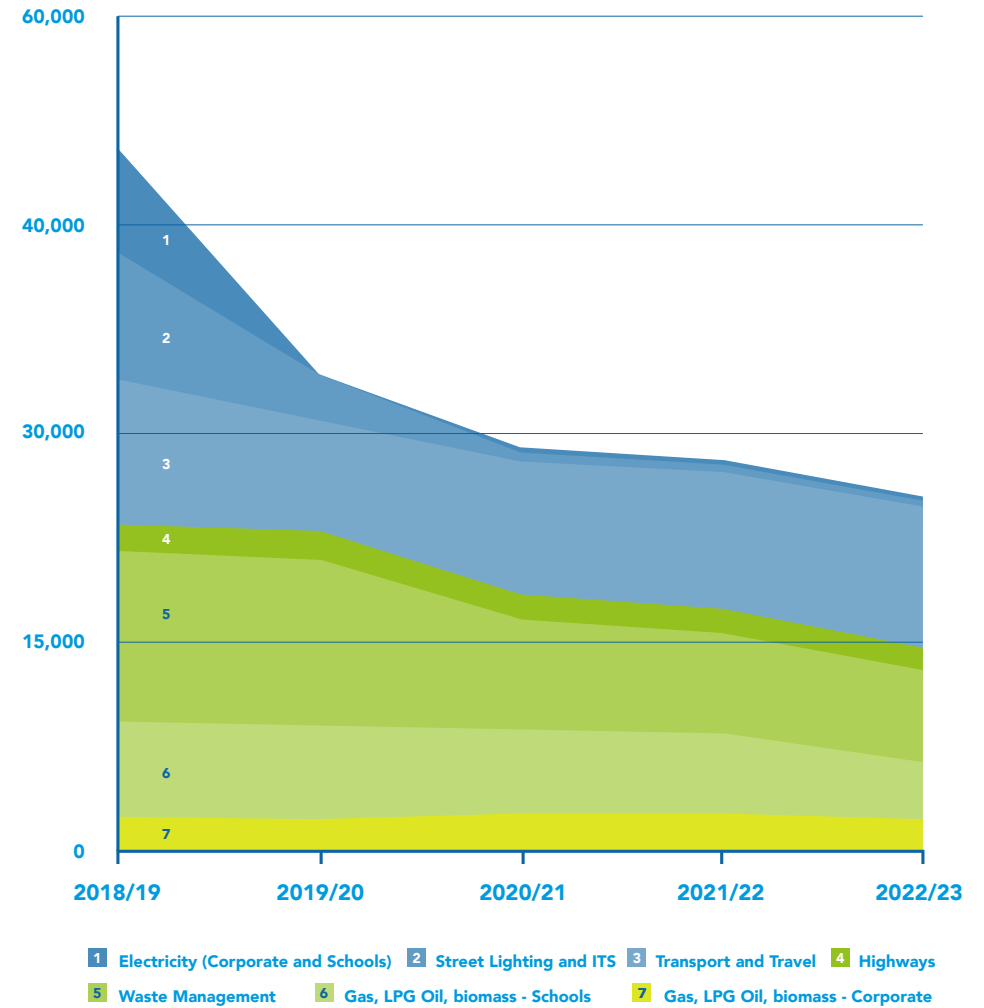
The average reduction of gas usage in council maintained schools from 2021/22 to 2022/23 was 22%. Similarly gas use in corporate properties reduced by an average of 10%.

As we started to recover from the Covid pandemic and lockdown restrictions lifted, emissions from business travel increased slightly in 2021/22. Although business travel emissions rose again in 2022/23 this has remained much lower than pre-pandemic emissions as staff have widely adopted online meetings, significantly reducing the need for travel.

Staffordshire County Council highways, introduced Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to the gritting fleet and forklifts in December 2022, which saved 60 tonnes of carbon emissions in just 3 months.

In 2021/22 travel emissions from our home care service were included for the first time. This data had previously been unavailable and now forms part of the core baseline emissions data.

Figure 2 Carbon emissions by type





Staffordshire Sustainability Board

influencing change
across Staffordshire

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Staffordshire Sustainability Board

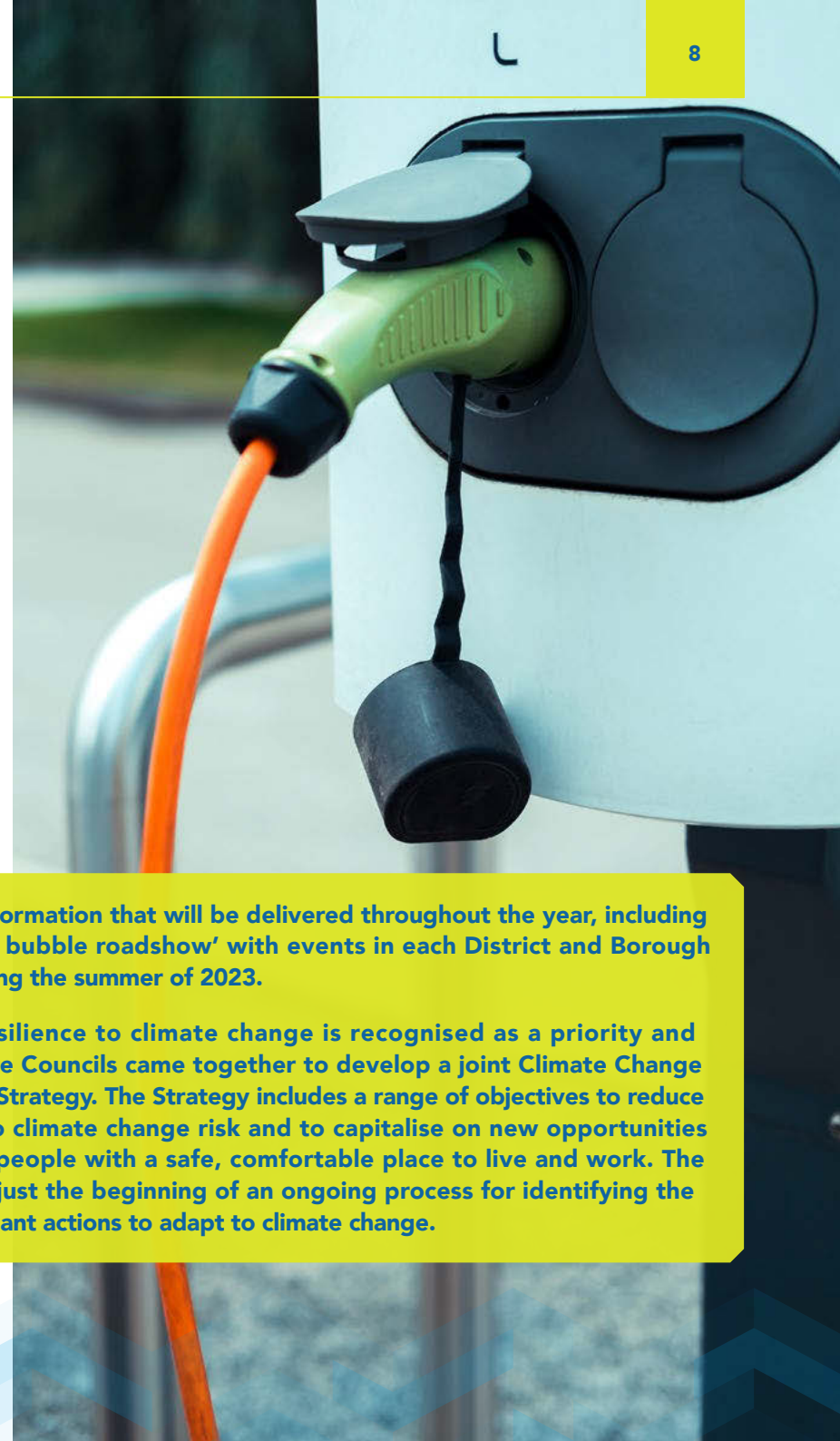
The Staffordshire Sustainability Board (SSB) is made up of elected members and supported by council directors and officers from all the local authorities within Staffordshire.

The Board facilitates a collaborative forum to influence change and encourage organisations and individuals across Staffordshire to join forces to combat climate change.

January 2023 the Joint Waste Management Board successfully integrated with the SSB leading to a clearer focus on waste reduction as part of the Board's overall sustainability goals.

Notable achievements for the Board last year included:

- **Producing a Public Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy.** This document creates a framework to allow coordination and facilitation of safe and reliable access to chargepoints across the county. The Strategy supports all modes of sustainable transport to ensure improvements enhance the full transport offered within Staffordshire to meet the anticipated increase in demand.
- **Developing a joint countywide communications plan** outlining how councils will work collaboratively to advise and encourage residents to make positive climate change choices. The Strategy identifies activities and targeted information that will be delivered throughout the year, including the 'carbon bubble roadshow' with events in each District and Borough Council during the summer of 2023.
- **Building resilience to climate change** is recognised as a priority and Staffordshire Councils came together to develop a joint Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The Strategy includes a range of objectives to reduce exposure to climate change risk and to capitalise on new opportunities to provide people with a safe, comfortable place to live and work. The Strategy is just the beginning of an ongoing process for identifying the most important actions to adapt to climate change.



Achievements

**Bettering the county for present
and future residents**

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Summary of Achievements during 2022/23

Reporting has been provided against the five key themes of the action plan:

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Carbon Reduction

Highways introduce a more sustainable fuel

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) biofuel is a more sustainable, renewable and low-carbon fuel alternative to conventional diesel. Amey, the principal contractor for Staffordshire highways introduced a pilot project and trialled HVO in the gritting fleet and forklifts. The transition provided savings of 60 tonnes of carbon compared to the use of conventional diesel. HVO also produces less pollution than conventional diesel, reducing particulate matter by up to 84% and improving local air quality too.

Investment continues to upgrade street lighting and signalling

The County is working on upgrading the existing streetlights to modern LED equivalents. This four year project is due for completion by 2024 and should achieve a reduction in energy use by 43%. Investment made in 2022/23 will save the council £7,000 per year and result in an annual reduction in energy use of 18,400 kWh. That's an energy-saving equivalent of watching the TV constantly for 42 years!

Energy efficient Staffordshire History Centre

The Staffordshire History Centre decided that when they were building their new extension, they wanted to make sure that it was better than national building standards. They did this to create a centre that would be fit for the future. The four story archive storage extension will be designed to provide passive conditions including a high level of insulation, high air-tightness and heavy thermal mass. The new design provides a secure and stable environment for storing the historic records as well as minimising operational costs for heating and cooling. Energy use saved from this higher specification is estimated to save 2.5 tonnes of carbon a year.





Carbon Reduction Cont...

Retrofit to Tamworth library

Tamworth library underwent significant renovation work and improvements. This allowed for additional work to be completed to make the property more energy-efficient, including improved insulation in the walls and more energy efficient windows. A new Building Management system was installed to allow better control and monitoring of energy use and heating. It is estimated this work will save around 4 tonnes of carbon a year.

Conversion of Kingston Centre to a Primary school

The Kingston Centre building was originally a school built in the 1940s, it was extended and converted to offices in the 1990s until recently where it has been used as a Covid vaccination centre. A £4 million refurbishment project on the site is almost complete to build a new school to allow St Leonards Primary to relocate to a larger property. Funding of £795,000 was secured from the Government's Public Sector Decarbonisation fund to allow for higher specification energy efficiency technologies to be included in the retrofit. Six air source heat pumps have been installed for heating which will create a considerable carbon saving over conventional gas boilers. In addition, high levels of insulation and Solar PV are to be installed. In total, it is estimated adopting lower carbon technologies and greater insulation will save the school 150 tonnes of carbon each year.

Lifting people from fuel poverty with Warmer Homes Scheme

Helping people with rocketing energy bills and lifting them out of fuel poverty is a priority in Staffordshire. The Warmer Home Scheme helps residents in fuel poverty better insulate their homes and install more efficient heating systems so they can heat their home for less. The scheme has been running for a number of years and has delivered outstanding results. Last year, £5.75 million was awarded to 427 properties in Staffordshire, installing a total of 540 energy efficiency measures. This resulted in a reduction in the amount of energy needed to heat homes, lowering carbon emissions and saving residents money on home heating. Much of the success is down to a unique partnership, which includes all district and borough councils alongside delivery partners such as E.ON, Broad Oaks and Beat the Cold. The model and approach are recognised as an exemplar of good practice, having recently been commended in the Regional Energy Efficiency Awards and Finalists for both MJ and LGC Awards.

**150 tonnes
of carbon
saved**





Natural Environment

Native tree planting

Lymedale Business Park had 1,140 native trees and shrubs planted on just half a hectare of land. When these trees mature, this densely planted area will capture 2 tonnes of carbon per year.

Reducing flooding at Hyssop Close – Cannock

In 2021, flooding of local businesses on Hyssop Close resulted in damages of over £300,000. Working with Cannock Chase District Council and a local specialist, a trash screen to prevent the culvert blocking during heavy rainfall events was designed. Funding of £7,000 from the Environment Agency and £3,000 from the District Council allowed the new trash screen to be installed. Just two weeks after installation a flash flood occurred, and the trash screen saved the businesses from suffering further flooding. This is a great piece of collaborative work between Staffordshire County Council and Cannock Chase District Council.

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Waste

Community Volunteer waste ambassadors

The 'waste savvy' volunteer programme managed through our contractor Garden Organic came to the end of its contract period. This programme has reached people of all ages and interests to help to increase awareness of the importance of reducing waste and how to recycle correctly. The volunteers have delivered at least 71 talks, provided information at over 150 events and reached in excess of 5000 people, what an achievement. The enthusiasm and hard work of the volunteers over the last few years to provide information at events and talks to schools and community groups has been very much appreciated. If you are interested in being involved in the new volunteer waste reduction programme, please contact:

wastesavvy@staffordshire.gov.uk

Reduction in waste to landfill

We have reviewed the way we manage the total waste stream when our Energy recovery plants are undergoing maintenance. By decreasing the waste from external sources during maintenance periods, this increases capacity for our own household waste, thus mitigating the need to send over 1800 tonnes of waste to landfill this year. This drastically reduces the climate change impact of this waste and is a positive step for the environment.

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Air Quality

Highway and Transport Capital Programme

Delivery of the 2022/23 highway and transport capital programme included an investment of over £4.5 million towards the development and construction of schemes that will improve the environment for walking and cycling in Staffordshire. In 2022/23, the Council secured a further £6 million through successful bids for active travel schemes that will contribute towards the delivery of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

Planning for the expansion of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

The Staffordshire County Council Public EV Charging Strategy was agreed by the council in January 2023 and is now in the process of being agreed and adopted across the district and borough councils.

A collaborative Staffordshire EV officer working group has been established to share best practice and local updates.

Staffordshire County Council have been notified that Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) capability funding is available up to an indicative value of £613,000 and LEVI capital funding is available up to an indicative value of £4.5 million. It has been agreed in principle that Staffordshire County Council will work in partnership with neighbouring authorities (Derby City Council, Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council) and Midlands Connect to create a consortium to secure the LEVI funding. Expressions of interest for the capability and consortium capital funding have been submitted to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and Energy Saving Trust.

Following initial work to develop and create the Staffordshire County Council Public Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Strategy and in preparation for the upcoming LEVI funding it was recommended that a new role be established for an Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Delivery Manager. This post was fulfilled in December 2022.





Air Quality Cont...

Levelling Up Fund Award – Investing in Mid Staffordshire’s Major Road Network

In 2022/23, Staffordshire County Council was awarded Levelling Up Funding which included:

- **£3.6 million towards access for all improvements focusing on the walking and cycling environment along the A34 Cannock town centre and A34 Stafford (Lichfield Road, town centre and Gaol Square).**
- **£4.3 million towards kickstarting Staffordshire’s zero emission bus agenda in Cannock, Stafford and Burton.**

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 These projects are expected to be completed by March 2026. As well as contributing to the goal of reducing carbon emissions in transportation, promoting more active modes of travel will help tackle long-term health challenges. Additionally, it will make it easier for people to get to work and training opportunities, boosting economic well-being and community pride.

By giving buses priority on the road, it will make sure that public transport is more reliable and will keep travel times more consistent. Introducing zero emission buses on the busy A511 Burton and A34 Cannock to Stafford corridors will reduce carbon emissions and local air pollution.

Air Aware Staffordshire Summary

This year we once again promoted the Countywide Anti-Idling Campaign to schools, businesses and community organisations. The uptake was good with over 100 settings receiving a pack containing a railing banner, posters and signpost boards to raise awareness and remind visitors of their anti-idling commitments.

In schools we ran a total of 12 pupil-led anti-idling campaigns in key areas around the county, targeting parents who are picking up or dropping off at school. We also ran a series of campaigns targeting all schools throughout the year on key dates such as Walk to School Week and Walk to School Month to promote sustainable and active travel.

One school in Leek ran a term-long project to learn about and raise awareness of air pollution. The sixth form pupils at the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school performed outdoor studies within the town of Leek to measure levels of air pollution, to examine where the problem was greatest and ran campaigns to help reduce air pollution. They delivered a whole school assembly and ran a campaign to target visitors, parents and school transport operators to ensure they were switching off their engines when visiting the site.





Behavioural Change

The library service encourages people to make a difference

The library service received £2,500 of funding from the Green Libraries partnership grant fund to support environmental activity in libraries. Library staff were invited to become climate change champions and take a lead on developing small scale climate change projects. The champions developed creative displays and activities, such as delivering craft reuse workshops, to show that small behavioural changes can make a difference. Over 900 Staffordshire residents engaged with the project and positive feedback was received.

Libraires I.T reuse scheme

Staffordshire libraries service teamed up with the Community Foundation for Staffordshire to allow people to donate used IT equipment for distribution to people in our communities who need it most. **The scheme** received over 260 public donations of used IT equipment and 123 laptop donations from organisations. Following refurbishment (where possible) 254 of these items have been gifted to individuals or families who are financially vulnerable, adults with disabilities, children with SEND, Ukrainian refugees, and care leavers.

Carbon literacy training for SMEs

Members of Staffordshire Business Environment Network (Sben) were invited to attend accredited carbon literacy training, funded by Staffordshire County Council. The training helped to raise awareness of climate change and how it can impact our lives and business. 47 businesses completed the training, with 41 going on to complete the assessment to achieve carbon literacy accreditation. Positive feedback was received from the course, with participants confirming they now have the confidence to identify climate change actions at work.





Behavioural Change Cont...

Climate Change Action Fund

Round three of the Climate Change Action fund was successfully delivered from September-December 2022. The Councillor led fund invited applications for funding between £500 - £3,000 from not-for-profit organisations, parish councils and schools. There was a high demand for the funds, with several of the County Councillor Divisions being oversubscribed. 92 applications were received, and 73 projects were awarded funding totalling £85,546 across the County. Successful projects included the conversion of lighting to energy-efficient LED, increasing insulation in properties, installing bike sheds in schools to encourage active travel, tree planting and awareness raising initiatives. Round 4 of the Climate Change Action Fund launched in July 2023.

Climate Change Conference

September 2022, Staffordshire County Council organised its inaugural climate change conference, bringing together representatives from community groups, schools, and parish councils. The conference aimed to educate participants about climate change, increase awareness of critical factors, and motivate them to establish carbon reduction projects in their respective areas. The event saw 44 in-person attendees and 25 virtual participants. 85% expressed inspiration drawn from the conference and 90% indicated an intention to apply to the Councils Climate Change Action Fund scheme.

Climate change training for staff

Climate change is one of the Councils corporate priorities, and all staff are encouraged to take responsibility to tackle climate change. An online training module to raise awareness and empower staff to tackle change in their role was launched in 21/22 and is available for all staff to complete. The target to achieve 1000 staff members to complete the module has been achieved. Staff continue to be encouraged to complete the module.



Future

The next steps to achieving our new goals
and the twist and turns associated

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Next Steps

Building Climate change resilience across Staffordshire

Since declaring a climate change emergency, the Council has prioritised developing and delivering action against the carbon reduction plans. We recognise the potential consequences the changing climate can have on our services and residents. The joint Adaptation Strategy with the District and Boroughs is in the process of being approved. The focus over the next year will be to develop a Staffordshire County Council Adaptation plan in combination with a refresh to the 'Climate Change Mitigation Action Plan'. We also aim to identify how we can strengthen our partnership by working with other public sector bodies such as the NHS, Police and Fire Service to work together on Climate Change initiatives.

Launch public EV site survey

Staffordshire County Council will continue to work with partners (including the district and borough councils) to develop EV infrastructure site lists and the LEVI business case. Upon the succession of LEVI capability funding, a new EV team will be created.

Staffordshire's new Local Transport Plan

Staffordshire County Council is preparing its fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP). The LTP is a statutory document that sets out the Council's vision for the transport

network, together with the policies, plans and programmes needed to deliver that vision. It includes walking, wheeling, public transport, car-based travel and freight, together with the management and maintenance of local roads and footways.

Transport decarbonisation will be a key theme in the new LTP, which will cover the period up to 2050, aligning with the Government's target to decarbonise the entire transport network. Details of how this will be achieved will be set out in a Transport Decarbonisation Strategy, which will bring together a holistic approach to delivering a decarbonised transport network while connecting the county and growing its economy. The Plan will set out how the Council will put the environment at the forefront of every decision it makes. It will identify key actions that need to be taken across operations, maintenance, and renewals to build resilience, ensuring the transport network can continue to deliver the expected level of service for residents and businesses. The Strategy will also define the environmental outcomes the Council wants to achieve and chart its course in delivering them.

Increasing the rollout of HVO fuel

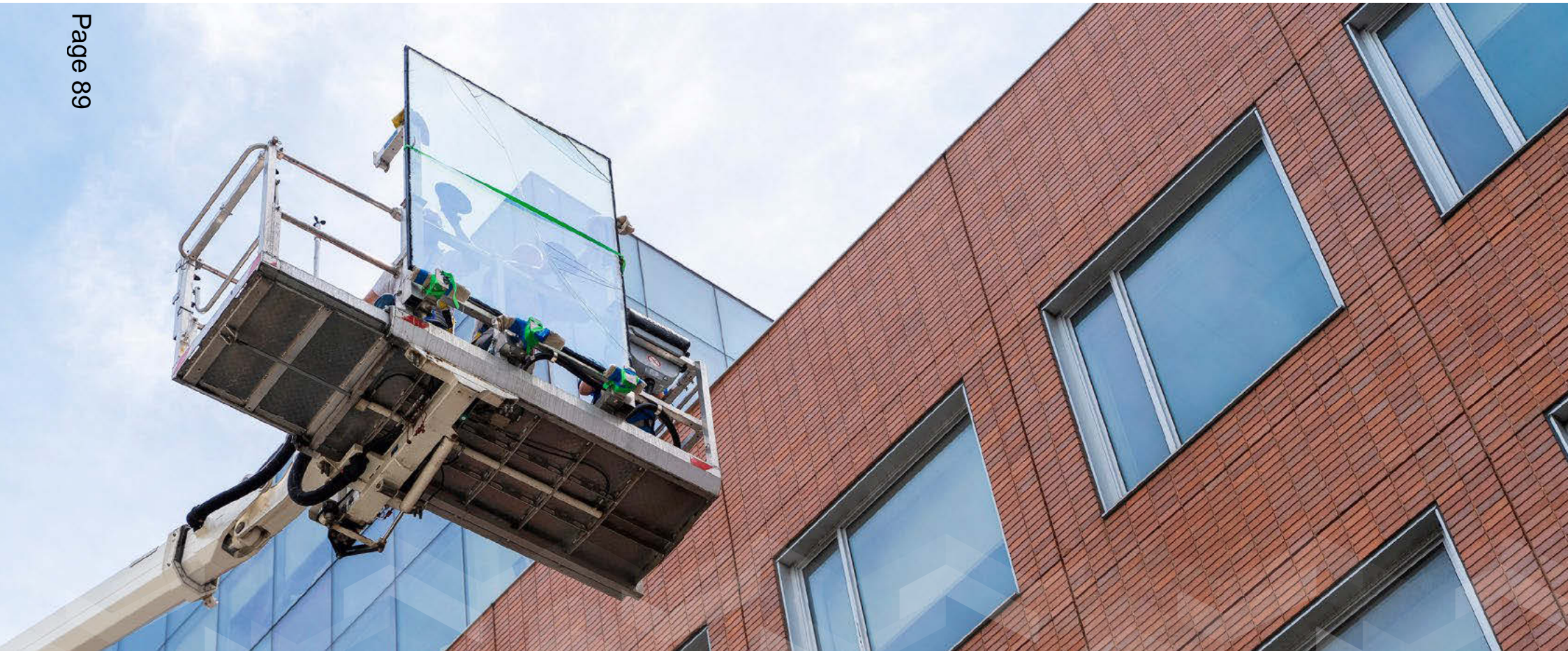
Following the successful trial using Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) biofuel in the gritting fleet and highways forklifts, preparations to rollout for compatible vehicles at the recycling centres have been put in place. This will not only substantially reduce the carbon emissions from these vehicles, but pollution will also be reduced, improving the air quality for staff and users of the sites. HVO should be in use by summer 2023.



Risks and Issues

Local policy and decisions often rely on national policies and legislation. Without a strong direction to guide or mandate decisions, this can make decision-making at a local level challenging. For example, delays in the publication of the Resources and Waste Strategy for England have resulted in a hold up of potential changes to local waste and recycling services until National requirements are confirmed.

Achieving net zero requires considerable investment to retrofit properties and decarbonise our services, requiring all our services to make a positive change. Securing external funding is critical to achieving our targets and we are committed to seeking new funding opportunities. Over the year, we have been successful with some bids and unsuccessful with others. We will learn from these experiences to provide the best possible chance of success in future bids.



Planning to reduce flooding events

Norton Canes Community Library

Norton Canes library has suffered several surface flood events over recent years. Flood Mitigation Measures are proposed through the FCRIP Fair Project. An investment of £58,000 will incorporate Natural Aquifer solutions – the first of its kind to be installed in Staffordshire. Being underground allows the opportunity to support planting to be done above ground, improving the local biodiversity of the area and improving groundwater quality.

Dunston Village

Dunston village can often be cut off from nearby facilities by flooding. School children from nearby St Leonard's first school can have up to a 20-mile diversion to get to the school when the village floods. Funding from the Environment Agency of £68,000 and further investment by the Council of £300,000 will allow a new highway bridge in the village to be built and reduce the risk of the village being cut off during flood events. It is intended this project will be delivered in the early winter of 2023.

Bishops Wood

Bishops wood has historically suffered from flooding, causing widespread damage to residential properties. Working in collaboration with the local community, Local Parish, and private landowners an innovative project has been developed with funding of £142,000 from the Environment Agency. The project includes a ditch around the west side of the village and a flower plugged embankment wall, which will assist overland flows to be directed to a nearby watercourse. The self-growing wall will transform a current grassed area and encourage greater biodiversity. The programme for delivery will start in early 2024.

Wyrley Brook Mitigation Scheme

Staffordshire County Council is working in partnership with Severn Trent to design the Wyrley Brook Mitigation Scheme. To date £50,000 has been secured to assist Severn Trent to investigate and scope options to discuss with the wider community. This project will not only reduce the impact of flooding but, will hopefully with agreement, incorporate new wetland habitats and new public open spaces. This is a long term project and will not be fully delivered until 2029 with delivery of certain phases starting in 2025. This project is expected to achieve £2.5 million in Flood Grant Aid and £6.5 million in Severn Trent Funding.

Festival Court Cannock

The thriving local community hub of Pye Green Road Cannock has flooded consistently for the past 5 years. To address this problem, a Flood Grant of £8,000 has been obtained to look into the local drainage system. The plan includes creating two new tree pits that can hold excess floodwater. These pits will use a natural underground water storage solution beneath the parking areas. This approach aims to manage flooding and water buildup more effectively in the area. This scheme is now on the National Environment Agency pipeline programme and will attract £74,000 in grant aid and will be delivered in 2024/2025.





Appendices

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Appendix 1

Staffordshire County Council approach to Climate change

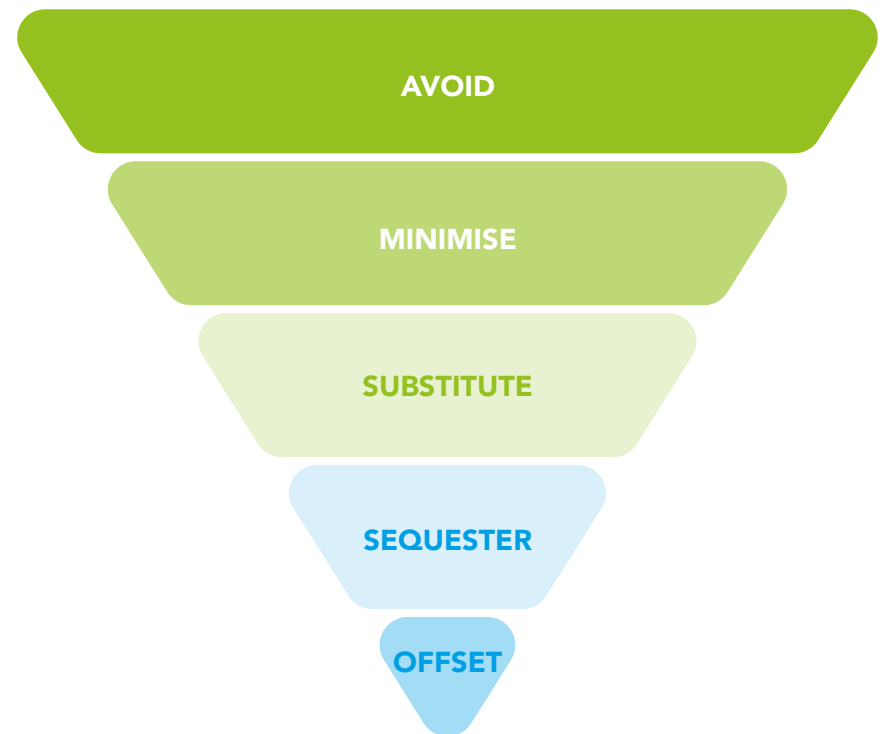
The County Council has championed the climate change agenda for many years and our carbon reduction strategy, Green Shoots, published in 2011 built on previous commitments to this agenda. Staffordshire County Council recognises that climate change is the biggest environmental challenge facing the world today and has reflected this by identifying climate change as one of the four key principles in the Council's Strategic Plan.

With the setting of new legislation in May 2019, through an amendment to the Climate Change Act 2008, the UK became the first major economy to pass a law requiring the country to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050. This means that the country needs to remove as much carbon from the atmosphere as it emits.

Following the publication of this new legislation, the County Council committed itself to this agenda by declaring a climate change emergency in July 2019 to also achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This replaced the previous commitment to reduce carbon emissions to 80% of the 1990 baseline.

We have seen a considerable reduction in our carbon emissions from the initial 1990 baseline of 200,000 tonnes. This is partially attributed to many of our schools converting to academies which, once converted are not included as Council emissions. A number of carbon reduction measures have been implemented since this time which has reduced the carbon impact of our services.

The County Council recognises that a range of actions are needed to reduce the Council carbon emissions. We adhere to the carbon hierarchy principles of avoiding and reducing emissions as a priority, where emissions cannot be reasonably reduced any further we consider sequestering.



We also recognise that we need to put in measures so we can adapt to our changing climate.

Appendix 2

How we measure our carbon emissions

Each year Staffordshire County Council monitors its carbon emissions although it has no statutory duty to report these emissions. Due to the complex structure of the Council's operations, with many services operated under contract or lease, SCC has selected to report on emission sources which it has operational control over, i.e. those services which the Council has the full authority to introduce and implement its operating policies.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) carbon conversion factors provided for use by UK and international organisations to report on greenhouse gas emissions have been used for the calculations. Emissions are reported as CO₂e to account for other greenhouse gases such as methane and nitrous oxide in addition to carbon dioxide. We measure carbon emissions each year from April to March. The DEFRA conversion factors, which provide the data to allow emissions to be calculated are provided by calendar year. To calculate the Council's annual emissions we use the emissions factors which correspond with April to December as most of the reporting falls within this period and apply this to the full reporting period of April to March.

In 2018/19 we reviewed what we reported against and established a new baseline incorporating a wider range of activities, including services previously unrecorded in the baseline such as home school transport and waste disposal/recycling.

A renewable energy tariff is in place for all corporate properties, schools and street lighting. Carbon emissions for electricity use is split into two categories, generation use which is counted as zero emissions for renewable energy and transmission and distribution. The transmission and distribution element is included in the emissions footprint to demonstrate carbon emissions related to purchased renewables. Schools which have converted to academies are no longer included as a Council emission. Academy schools are in total control of their operations and Staffordshire County Council receive no income for their operation or management. The Council is however committed to sharing information with the academies to encourage adoption of the key strategies and so reduce their energy consumption and emissions too.



Greenhouse gas emissions are recorded against the three standard scopes for reporting.

Scope 1 – All direct emissions – these emissions arise as a direct result of our activities under our control. For Staffordshire County Council this includes:

- gas consumption from all maintained schools and corporate buildings
- liquified petroleum gas (LPG) usage from corporate buildings
- heating oil consumption from maintained schools
- fuel used for fleet vehicles

Scope 2 – Indirect emissions – these emissions are our emissions associated with the consumption of electricity purchased for maintained schools and corporate buildings. Where the electricity is 100% sourced from a registered renewable supplier, only transmission and distribution emissions are included.

Scope 3 – All other indirect emissions – this includes a much wider remit and includes the activities which we do not own or directly control, for example services under contract. This includes:

- business miles associated with staff travel
- passenger kilometres associated with staff travel via train
- water consumption (supply and treatment) from all maintained schools and corporate buildings
- contracted waste operations and processes
- electricity consumption associated with street lighting and ITS equipment
- fuel consumption associates with Amey (Highways) operation
- home to school transport.



Climate Change

Annual Report 2022/23

Community Impact Assessment

Green Solutions – SCC delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice

Author: Diane Roberts

Date: 10/01/24

- **Equality Assessment – this has been considered and is not relevant due to the scheme being countywide and will therefore bring benefits to all parts of the area and for all our communities.**

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Age - older and younger people			
Disability - 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.			
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another			
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work			
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers			
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins			
Religion or Belief - 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			

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Sex - men or women			
Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes			

➤ **Workforce Assessment**

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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
Not Applicable			

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

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Not Applicable			

➤ **Communities Assessment**

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Not Applicable			

➤ **Economic Assessment**

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Will promote Staffordshire as a 'go to' location for new businesses to invest and start up and existing businesses to grow?			
Energy Assessments will provide businesses with clear information on where and how energy savings can be made	Businesses overheads reduce – finance available for existing businesses to grow	Lack of uptake	Ensuring engagement / communications with businesses takes place to promote the scheme. Continuing the previous collaboration between the County Council, Districts & Boroughs, City Council and local business support services to deliver the programme
Grants will encourage investment by businesses in energy efficient manufacturing and process equipment and buildings measures.	Investment in Staffordshire building stock delivers long term improvement to building fabric and efficiency	Lack of uptake	Ensuring engagement / communications with businesses takes place to promote the scheme. Continuing the previous collaboration between the County Council, Districts & Boroughs, City

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
			Council and local business support services to deliver the programme
<p>Will the proposal create the right conditions for increased employment in more and better jobs? Grants encourage Low Carbon retrofit of properties</p>	<p>Investment through grants will also stimulate demand for Net Zero goods and service in Staffordshire supporting our local supply chain development and subsequent jobs, skills and growth</p>	<p>Suppliers from outside of Staffordshire secure retrofit contracts</p>	<p>Develop the Staffordshire Net Zero supply chain to deliver retrofit</p>

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➤ **Climate Change Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Energy Assessments will provide businesses with clear information on where and how energy savings can be made to support the transition to Net Zero.	Free, independent assessment look at a business's energy consumption and provides recommendations and an action plan to minimize energy usage, save money and reduce carbon emissions	Recommendations are not acted upon	Support and encouragement is given to businesses to take up the opportunity of a grant
Grants will encourage investment by businesses in energy efficient manufacturing, process equipment and buildings measures.	£2M investment to retrofit energy efficient measures to business properties and decarbonise businesses will support transitioning Staffordshire to Net Zero	Lack of uptake	Ensuring engagement / communications with businesses takes place to promote the scheme. Continuing the previous collaboration between the County Council, Districts & Boroughs, City Council and local business support services to deliver the programme

➤ **Environment Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Grants will encourage investment by businesses in energy efficient retrofit and buildings measures.	Investment in Staffordshire building stock delivers long term improvement to building fabric and efficiency	Lack of uptake	Ensuring engagement / communications with businesses takes place to promote the scheme. Continuing the previous collaboration between the County Council, Districts & Boroughs, City Council and local business support services to deliver the programme

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Household Waste Recycling Centres – Equipment Replacement Programme



Councillor Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change said,

“In Staffordshire we’re committed creating a sustainable and efficient waste service.

This new machinery will help our continued commitment to a more sustainable, efficient and resident focused service.

Waste minimisation is critical to reducing carbon and contributing to sustainable living where the materials that would traditionally have gone into the waste stream are recycled instead.

We want to make our centres as efficient as possible, and procuring modern machines is one way we can make this happen.”

Report Summary:

A Cabinet decision was made in March 2021 to bring the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) back in house. Part of the business case included an invest to save model around equipment renewal. An element of this is machinery used in the operation at the HWRCs. A replacement programme to date has seen the ordering of 4 new machines, which will be delivered to the network early in the financial year 2024/25. A second process has been undertaken to procure the remaining 11 new JCBs. The purpose of this report is to gain Cabinet approval to place the order for the 11 JCBs.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approves and agrees to officers 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. An

already established Framework Agreement procured by The Procurement Partnership Ltd will be used;

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

Household Waste Recycling Centres – Equipment Replacement Programme

Recommendation of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approves and agrees to officers 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. An already established Framework Agreement procured by The Procurement Partnership Ltd will be used;

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director of Economy, Skills and Infrastructure

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background

1. The Council currently provides a network of 14 Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) geographically spread across the county and Staffordshire residents also have access to the jointly funded site at Lower House Farm in Warwickshire. The service is well utilised by residents, with c1.5 million visits per annum across the sites in Staffordshire. The service is also used by traders with 1300 trade visits with 295 different trade companies using the sites in 2019/20.
2. More recently in the Autumn 2023, the van permit system was successfully introduced. This was a part of the improvement programme for the HWRCs which looks to minimise the amount of material in waste streams and to.
3. In March 2021, Cabinet agreed to bring the service back in house and the new Staffordshire County Council service started operation in March 2022:
 - a. A service that is safe to use and operate.
 - b. A service that maximises recycling opportunities.

- c. A service that provides best value for the public purse.
 - d. A service that can match customer demand.
 - e. A service that has appropriate levels of customer satisfaction when considering the authorities overall budget and accountabilities.
 - f. A service that can offer flexibility so that service innovation/improvement is possible over the period of the contract.
4. Within the business case presented to Cabinet in 2021 and as part of the ongoing financial model there is provision for an equipment renewal programme in order for the HWRCs to operate as safely and efficiently as possible.
5. This is currently a fleet of JCB wheeled excavators and one loading Shovel.
6. There are: 6 X JS145W, 7 X JS160W, 1 X JS200W, 1 X CAT Shovel loading shovel 950H.
7. Wheeled excavators (JCBs) as an asset are critical in the management of material at the HWRCs. They are used primarily to compact material in the containers and increase the onsite capacity and maximise payload for haulage. The wheeled excavators are subject to a maintenance programme to keep them operational and working as effectively as possible. Over the life of this asset the maintenance costs increase and the replacement programme is linked to the difference in maintenance costs between newer and older assets.
8. The JCBs on the network are around 8 years old and have operating hours ranging from 2500 – 7000. Market engagement has shown that the new wheeled excavators come with a 5 year warranty. The forecast saving associated with replacing the wheeled excavators with new models (by lease or purchase) in terms of annual maintenance is around £372k each year for the first 5 years of operation.
9. The replacement programme to date has seen the ordering of 2 X JCB JS20MH, 1 X JCB JS160W, 1 X JCB Wheel Loader 457 at a total cost of £823k in 2023/24. These are all being delivered to different waste sites operated by SCC.

Wheeled excavator replacement current phase

10. There are 11 wheeled excavators that are due replacement in this phase of the programme. The Waste team have undertaken a market engagement exercise and the approximate cost are as follows:

- a. 10 X JS160W @ £207,732 = £1,745,270.00 (excluding VAT) (these are material handler, wheeled excavators)
 - b. 1 X JS20MH @ £251,970 = £210,775.00 (excluding VAT) (wheeled excavators)
 - c. All machines need to be able to operate on Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO).
11. These prices include £8k for all excavators to be fitted with a system to prevent the Boom/Grab/attachment coming into contact with the operator's cab.
12. The specification was provided to The Procurement Partnership Limited (TPPL) to put out to market through a framework. A preferred contractor has been identified to supply the JCB vehicles. The value of the award is £1,956,270.00 (excluding VAT).

Legal Implications

13. The provision of the suitable Household Waste Recycling service is a statutory function of the County Council.
14. Legal support and advice have been maintained throughout the procurement process.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

15. Market engagement on ordering the wheeled excavators has demonstrated that with the 5 year manufacturer's warranty, there will be an annual saving £372k per year for the 5 year period. There will also be efficiencies in the HWRC operation as a result of the renewal programme.
16. The investment is funded by the Waste Service through efficiencies and increased income in other areas of the Waste Service.
17. The use of an already established Framework Agreement, which is procured by the council's commercial team in conjunction with the Waste Team is considered the best way to achieve best value.

Climate Change Implications

18. The Waste Service has been the authorities largest Carbon emitter since it began its annual carbon monitoring, following its Climate Emergency Declaration, in July 2019.

19. These new machines will have new more efficient engines, that are better able to Operate on HVO which will reduce the service's carbon emissions. The better reliability of the machine should prevent the need of engineer calls out that will also reduce emissions.
20. Waste minimisation is critical to reducing carbon and contributing sustainable living where the materials that would traditionally have gone into the Waste stream are processed to keep the components of the materials at their highest value. An example of this is the recovery of metals from a range of products that are brought to the HWRCs. The principles pushing material up the Waste hierarchy are in operation at the HWRCs, e.g. Prevent, Reuse, Recycling. It is critical that the machinery that enables this to happen is as efficient and modern as possible.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

See below the background documents to this paper:

17st March 2021 Cabinet meeting – Household Waste Recycling Centre Service review

16th September 2021 Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Household Waste Recycling Centres - Insourcing Update and Potential Changes to the Management of Re-use Items

15th June 2022 Cabinet meeting - Mobilisation of Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres

Contact Details

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Community Impact Assessment

Household Waste Recycling Centres – Equipment replacement
programme

Author: Dave Atkinson

Date: 04 January 2024

➤ **Equality Assessment**

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Age - older and younger people	N/A		
Disability - 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.	N/A		
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another	N/A		
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work	N/A		
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers	N/A		
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins	N/A		
Religion or Belief - 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	N/A		

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Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Sex - men or women	N/A		
Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes	N/A		

➤ **Climate Change Assessment**

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Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Procurement vehicles that have the lowest carbon effect and emissions.	Improved carbon footprint	Specialist machinery may not present an opportunity	Newer vehicles will be more fuel efficient

➤ **Environment Assessment**

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Site operations can create noise, especially to neighbours of the site	Newer vehicles will be less subject to mechanical noises of older vehicles	Changes in operation with efficiency may alter the	Noise management plans are in place and will continued to be under review

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24



Cllr Alan White, Leader of Staffordshire County Council said,

“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.

“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 (UKREiF) 2024 in Leeds.

“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.”

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



"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 remain challenging, particularly in children's and families services and in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities where transport costs are rising very significantly.

"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."

Report Summary

This quarterly Integrated Performance Report provides 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.

Recommendation

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2023/24

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

We recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Notes and challenges performance and advises of any further information and/or action required.

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

Reasons for Recommendations

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

Quarter 3 Summary

This report provides an update on Quarter 3 progress in relation to delivering the council's priorities and pledge as set out within the council's [Strategic Plan 2022-26](#).

Key highlights

- **Number of Children in Care:** Number has reduced, reflecting significant work that has taken place to bring overall numbers down, while continuing to make sure the right children are in care.
- **We are Staffordshire:** Staffordshire's place brand highlighted nationally by nomination for two awards with Comms2point0. Attendance at UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) 2024 launched online.
- **Care Act Assessment timeliness and Reviews:** Good performance continues.
- **Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme:** Since December 2022, 513 measures have been installed in 349 properties. Providers have now been appointed to bring eco-friendly heating solutions to rural properties that are situated away from the gas network.
- **Household Support Fund:** Through the Winter Warmth Project, 2,748 eligible residents have received their first payment of £300 towards help with their energy bills.
- **Climate Change:** Annual report highlights a 12% reduction in the authority's carbon emissions since 2020/21, and a 50% reduction since 2018/19.
- **Schools & Corporate Property Projects:** Stafford History Centre is progressing well. All 3 new primary schools remain on track to open in September 2024.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** Connect Fibre awarded contract to supply fibre broadband to 5,400 properties (£16.5m public sector investment).

Key challenges

- **OFSTED:** Inspection of Children's Services took place with an outcome of 'Requires Improvement to be Good'. An OFSTED improvement plan will be submitted in April 2024.
- **Children in Care (sufficiency and cost of care):** Continued pressures across Children's services, including the rising cost and complexity of Children in Care, and ongoing placement pressures. Recruitment of additional workforce continues.
- **SEND:** Increased demand for Education, Health and Care Plans continues to impact on timeliness. All additional Senior Key Workers are now in post.
- **DoLs Demand:** Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLs) requests remain high. Processes are under review to mitigate against delays in commencement of assessments.
- **Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance:** Preparations continue following publication of guidance.
- **Highways Performance:** Levels of demand were high, particularly in relation to higher risk defects, mostly due to the weather. However, the timeliness of repairs has been maintained, alongside delivery of the Highways Maintenance and Transformation Programmes. Additional resource has been recruited to help tackle the level of demand.

Financial Overview

1. 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%). There continues to be areas of financial risk in Children and Families, with further details included within this report and appendices 2-7.

2. Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience, and independence

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

3. In Quarter 3, demand for Care Act Assessments for new clients was 36.6% higher than last year, with 4,337 assessments initiated between October and December 2023, compared to 3,175 between October and December 2022. However, positively the council continues to exceed its target for completed Care Act Assessments within 28 days (see Appendix 1). There has been a substantial rise in new assessments and a slow increase in unplanned re-assessments over the last 12 months, but demand appears to be stabilising, e.g. someone's needs have escalated, and they may require different support.

4. The number of monthly safeguarding contacts reduced from 1,429 in September 2023 to 1,214 in December 2023, but remained higher than December 2022 (1,117). Analysis indicates that there has been an increase in contacts which are lower in risk; it is not apparent that there has been an increase in risk of abuse or neglect to adults within Staffordshire. Recognising the priority of safeguarding, the council has allocated additional temporary resource to the service and is reviewing its pathways to identify any further improvements that can be made.

5. The number of reviews of people receiving services for 12 months or more has continued to remain high, with 90.2% reviewed in the previous 12 months to December 2023, exceeding the target of 80% (see Appendix 1), which is slightly less than the peak in performance observed in October 2023, of 92.2%.

6. The council continues to see high demand for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) applications where it is necessary to deprive a person of their liberty in a hospital or care home if they lack capacity to consent to their treatment and care. The council currently has 3,904 people with DoLS authorised, an increase of 21% since March 2023. In the three months to December 2023, an average of 670 referrals per month were received, higher than the preceding 3 months (620 per month). The number of DoLS applications pending at the end of January 2024 was

1,060. Of these, 109 had a DoLS authorisation from their managing body, and 352 were within the statutory 21 day timescale for approval by the supervisory body. 599 exceeded the 21 day timescale of which 91 were requests from hospitals and 46 were high priority. The council is reviewing processes to ensure that requests from hospitals are updated to reflect that people have been discharged and DoLS is no longer required. Additional capacity has been appointed to reduce the number of DoLS requests pending, focusing on those exceeding the 21 day timescale. The long term trend for the number of DoLS requests pending is downwards and the council compared favourably to similar local authorities on this metric.

7. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is responsible for assessing how the council is performing against duties under the Care Act 2014. Following the completion of pilots with five councils in November 2023, the CQC published its guidance for local authority assessments in December 2023 and announced the first three councils that will be inspected. The council is now reviewing its self-assessment and the required evidence for its own inspection which may happen any time between now and 2025.
8. The council continues to support its most vulnerable residents through the Warmer Homes Programme. Final figures from the Sustainable Warmth Competition show that since December 2022, there were 513 measures installed within 349 properties. This brings the total number of measures installed through Staffordshire Warmer Homes to 1,329 within 1,021 properties. The council has appointed providers to commence with Phase 2 of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2), bringing eco-friendly heating solutions to rural residences (situated away from the gas network). Properties have started to be processed however no installations have yet taken place.
9. A new Older People Strategy 2024-29 was approved at Cabinet in December, which sets out how the council will support the growing aging population in Staffordshire. The strategy is designed to help people live independently at home, to ensure good quality services are available for those who do need care, to support those needing care to live independently for as long as possible, and to ensure that if someone can no longer stay at home, the right support is available.
10. During Quarter 3, thousands of residents benefited from help, advice, and guidance from the county council's dedicated cost-of-living campaign. The 'Here to Help' website offers information on eligibility for benefits, help with energy bills, business support, wellness, food, essentials and accessing help in the community. Over 21,000 people have visited the website since its launch in 2022 with a total of more than 71,000 page views. Front line services have also provided significant support to residents managing cost-of-living pressures and have saved families an estimated £60,000 since 2020 with pre-loved school uniform.

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

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
AMBER	RED

12. The council continues to face challenges within Children’s Services, including the rising cost and complexity of Children in Care, and is prioritising improvements in Children’s Services after an Ofsted inspection found that the service ‘required improvement to be good’. Following the inspection Ofsted praised provision for the children and young people in care, but also raised areas for improvement. The council is committing to a series of actions, including stronger targets with more structured monitoring, a clearer escalation process when it is felt progress on issues isn’t fast enough, closer cooperation with health and housing providers, more sampling of work, and better provision of broadband access for care leavers to support their first independent steps.

13. Recruitment of additional capacity in the children’s workforce continued in Quarter 3, with further external Social Worker appointments to be made in Quarter 4 for Social Work Practice Leads and Senior Social Worker roles that have not been filled internally. As part of the children and family’s social worker progression scheme project, 30 Social Work Practice Leads have been recruited, with 15 of these posts funded by the Cabinet investment that was approved in December 2022.

14. Progress has been made over Quarter 3 to reduce the number of children in care. As at the 31st, December 2023, there were 1,353 children and young people in the authority’s care in Staffordshire, which is a slight reduction compared to the previous quarter (1,364, as at September 2023). This is a rate of 80.1 per 10,000; higher than the most recent national benchmark (70 per 10,000 - March 2022) but lower than regional (88 per 10,000 - March 2022). The number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan at the 31st, December 2023 was 622, down from a peak of 717, and the lowest number since a low of 606 in March 2022. This is a rate of 36.8 per 10,000 in Staffordshire, which is lower than the most recent benchmarks from March 2022 of 43.2 nationally and 44.8 regionally.

15. The number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was 7,325 at 31st December 2023 compared to 6,985 a year earlier. This increasing demand means that the number of EHCP’s issued in time (within 20 weeks) remains low in Staffordshire; 28% compared to the most recent national benchmark of 58% (2023). Recruitment is ongoing for Educational Psychologists whose

appointments will assist in improving timeliness of Education, Health and Care Plans, and support early intervention. Work is underway to categorise the reasons for EHCP delays and mitigating actions are taking place. The council is also implementing an Enhanced Assess, Plan, Do, Review (EAPDR) approach, which enables schools to assess what additional support the child or young person needs and refine this support through regular reviews. This will also impact on timeliness in the longer term.

16. Final figures for Quarter 3 have confirmed that 1,030 families have achieved a successful and sustained outcome through the Building Resilient Families and Communities Programme since 1st April 2023. The Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) have increased this year's target number of families by 62% to 1,290, and at the end of Quarter 3, 80% of this annual target had been achieved. As the council strives to achieve more for families in Staffordshire, it was hoping to achieve outcomes for 1,677 families (30% above DLUHC target), and at the end of Quarter 3, 61% of this more challenging target had been achieved. Work is underway with partners during Quarter 4 to identify families that demonstrate successful and sustained outcomes to further improve this performance.

17. The Household Support Fund (HSF) supports families and others who need it most, to pay for food and energy bills. Over 9,300 households benefited through phase 1 of the professionals' referral scheme between April and September 2023, and a further 6,800+ through phase 2 since October 2023. Over 700 care leavers also received the first of four £50 voucher payments at the end of August and in December. Through the Winter Warmth Project, 2,748 eligible residents have received their first payment of £300 towards help with their energy bills.

18. Support was made available to Staffordshire's most vulnerable families through the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, which continues to offer children and young people free activities and a healthy meal, over school holidays. Of 50,335 places available across the county 37,454 (75%) were taken. On average an eligible child attended 10 of the maximum-allowed 16 sessions over the summer, compared to 7 nationally. The offer is increased with new provision such as indoor climbing, paddleboard lessons, and specialist sessions offering wellbeing and confidence building.

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

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

20. A key driver for further investment in Staffordshire is the council's Place Marketing campaign, with good progress made during Quarter 3 in promoting the 'We are Staffordshire' place brand, which has been shortlisted for two awards with Comms2point0, a learning and sharing space – Best Collaboration and Best Small Team. A huge achievement from over 450 entries. There was also a successful Ambassador Event held at Stafford Gatehouse in October with over 80 attendees. Staffordshire's attendance at the UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum (UKREiIF) 2024 to market Staffordshire nationally was launched online, sharing the video on social media, and reaching out to previous sponsors. Work is also taking place to relaunch the school engagement work for Staffordshire Day 2024, which is being led by a young person's delivery group engaging with local artists in schools to showcase what Staffordshire means to them.

21. Development at the Chatterley Valley West employment site near Newcastle-under-Lyme re-started in Quarter 3. The project developer, Harworth Group appointed council highways partner Amey Plc to work on critical highways infrastructure to be completed by late spring and has appointed a replacement earthworks contractor to prepare the wider site for development. The multi-million-pound development could create up to 1,700 jobs and when the site is fully built out, it could release total business rates of more than £2.5 million per annum. Until March 2041 these business rates will be wholly retained in the local area and can be used to help fund further regeneration schemes.

22. The council has continued to support local businesses to start up and grow through its dynamic range of business support schemes. Between June 2020 and December 2023, the council has supported 624 businesses through the Staffordshire Start Up Programme. Of these, almost half (294) have started trading following the programme. Get Started and Grow has supported 222 business owners who have been trading up to 5 years with professional services support.

23. Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
AMBER	GREEN

24. Demand challenges remained in Quarter 3 in relation to the volume of high risk 'Emergency', 'Category 1' and 'Category 2' highways defects identified. This was mostly due to the adverse weather, particularly in December 2023. In December, there were over 2.5 times more high-risk defects identified compared with December 2022. Positively, despite the increase in demand, the timeliness of repairing higher risk defects (against benchmarks) has been maintained (see Appendix 1). To

mitigate against some of the demand challenges that the council is facing, additional resource has now been recruited to the inspection team.

25. As well as these reactive repairs, the council has also continued to successfully deliver its Highway Investment Strategy, with 18 capital structural maintenance schemes completed year to date, including A53 Broad Street, Leek and A511 Ashby Rd, Burton during Quarter 3. Ten more schemes are in design and due to start during Quarter 4. This is in addition to continuing to deliver the Highway Transformation programme of work, with priority projects clearly defined and resource requirements to support delivery outlined.

26. The Government's Network North announcement included additional highways maintenance funding for all Local Authorities. In Staffordshire this equates to £6.3m between 23/24 and 24/25. For the following 9 years there is £180m remaining but the breakdown of this allocation is yet to be confirmed by the Department for Transport.

27. As part of Project Gigabit, which aims to provide gigabit-capable coverage to Staffordshire residents, Connect Fibre recently won the contract to supply fibre broadband to 5,400 premises (a £16.5m public sector investment) in the north-east of the county. Challenges remain around a high number of premises still under review for broadband intervention. These are being monitored by a Rolling Open Market review, which confirms where gigabit capable broadband infrastructure currently exists or is planned to be built and identifies eligible target areas for intervention. Plans to deliver to these premises are still on track to reach 85% coverage by 2025.

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

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

29. Staffordshire's Climate Action Fund offers funding assistance to local communities to build resilience and reduce Staffordshire's contributions to climate change. The deadline for the latest round of applications was 22nd December 2023, with 52 applications received and 33 approvals totalling over £33,400 of potential funding to community groups within Staffordshire.

30. Work to refresh the annual Climate Change Action Plan which identifies the priorities and actions for the year ahead has been completed. This will help the council to play its part in the global effort to reduce the

impact of climate change and meet its net carbon zero target by 2050. This and the Climate Change Annual Report were approved at Cabinet in November. The report highlighted a range of initiatives which have seen a 12% reduction in the authority’s carbon emissions since 2020/21, and a 50% reduction since 2018/19. Further work during Q3 to support these commitments saw the council launch a £10.5 million scheme to help Staffordshire residents heat their homes for less using greener and more energy efficient solutions.

31.The new Household Waste Recycling Centre permit scheme continues to work well with 10,158 permits applied for and 9,931 as of December 2023. Launched in September 2023, the scheme aims to improve services and reduce queues for residents while promoting sustainable waste disposal within the county. The e-permits are free of charge for Staffordshire residents, are valid for 12 months and allow up to 12 visits each year. Under the scheme, vehicles such as vans, pick-up trucks, tipper trucks, minibuses with seats removed and campervans with fixtures and fittings removed all require a permit.

32.How we work

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
GREEN	GREEN

33.To achieve the council’s ambitions, we continue to challenge and change how we work.

34.Good progress can be seen during the quarter as part of the council’s commitment to working with its communities. In November, the [Let’s Talk Staffordshire](#) survey was launched as the next step in the council’s #DoingOurBit campaign, to get residents involved with their communities. The survey is also running alongside a wide range of other engagement activities underway, to help ensure the council reaches as many residents as possible. Staffordshire residents are being asked about what community means to them, how they are helping others in their local area and to collect ideas about how the council can help get more people involved and improve the community in which they live. Findings from the survey, which runs until the end of February 2024, will be used to help develop an ambitious communities strategy for Staffordshire.

35.The council’s Libraries and Arts service, in partnership with The Reading Agency, and funded by Arts Council England delivered a successful Summer Reading Challenge during 2023, and figures became available in Quarter 3. In total 10,675 children signed up to the challenge (a 6.9%

increase compared to 2022) and 6,358 children completed it (a 4.7% increase).

36. Work to deliver the Staffordshire History Centre project remains on track despite recent adverse weather conditions, with most of the structural work to the Grade II* William Salt Library building completed. Volunteer support has been ongoing, between October and December 380 hours were provided by volunteers, valuing £7,605.

37. Digital continues to be fundamental to the way the council works as an organisation, as well as how it interacts with partners, citizens, and communities. Progress has been made across multiple priorities, such as exploring opportunities within the Health & Care and Children & Families service, for automation software to streamline operational processes and free up capacity for added-value work. Work is ongoing with Lichfield District Council (LDC) to progress a collaborative "Single Front Door" approach across Staffordshire. A single Environmental Health customer service process has now been successfully embedded and work progresses on the Disabled Facility Grant Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) pilot. A fourth pilot has been initiated focused on a single Blue Badges process working with Lichfield District Council (LDC) and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC).

38. Work is ongoing to deliver the council's refreshed internal People Strategy and will continue throughout 2024. A new careers website was launched in October to improve the candidate experience and support the council's recruitment process. Since launch to the end of December there have been 10,944 views of the website by 5,601 unique visitors. As at 31st December, time to hire was at 43.8 days, which is below the benchmark of 45 days.

39. There is also a continued focus on workforce absence across the council to help improve the number of days lost due to sickness; evidenced by a consistent downward trajectory for the last twelve months. The People Operations Team are working directly with those services with the highest days lost to understand the root causes for absence and proactively supporting them with short and medium-term actions. Across these services, half have improved their absence in the last quarter. Work has already been completed to identify the next services for support into Quarter 4. Additionally, absence related surgeries have continued to be provided to wider management teams to help them manage absence.

40. As a result of this work, as at December 2023, long term absence stood at 7.83 days lost per employee, compared to 8.70 days at the same point in 2022 and an improvement from Quarter 2 where performance was 7.86 days. Short-term absence stood at 3.19 days lost per employee compared to 4.04 days at the same point in 2022. Over half of the

workforce has had no sickness absences over the last year (52%, 2,306 people), with a further 23.9% (1,067 employees) having been absent for 5 days or fewer.

41. **Live within our means and deliver value for money**

Delivery Performance Assessment	Finance Performance Assessment
AMBER	GREEN

42. Key priorities for 2023/24 continue to include carrying out the council's pledge of living within its means and delivering value for money, improving the customer experience, and inspiring a culture of innovation.

43. Work has been completed on refreshing the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, and a balanced budget has been achieved for 2024/25. Cabinet has recommended that Council approve this budget at its meeting in February.

44. Inflation and rising demand for council services requires the council to find new, better, and lower cost ways of delivering services and achieving results. This requires creativity and innovation across the council, finding new ways of working, trialling technology, and applying best practice from other organisations. The council therefore launched the Staffordshire Innovation Challenge in 2023, a cross-organisation approach to discuss and generate innovative ideas and solutions. In recent months there has been a specific focus on ways the council can improve fostering uptake in the county.

45. During 2023/24, the council aims to raise £10.1 million net income through the sale of unused land and buildings to fund transformation of services and activity, in line with new Government regulation. By the end of December 2023, the council had delivered £7.91m.

46. Work on the council's schools and corporate projects is ongoing. All three new primary schools at Beaconfields (Stafford), Amington (Tamworth) and Dunstall Farm (Tamworth) remain on track to open in September 2024. In addition, Burntwood Health Centre, Douglas Road, Wombourne Library, Hawthorne House and Brackenberry projects are all proceeding as per programme.

47. The 2023 Community Fund closed on 31 October 2023. There were 186 applications received from 177 unique organisations, 9 of which were retrospective applications linked to celebratory events for the King's Coronation. The total value of projects in the applications (including the requests from the fund) was c.£760k – this total means that communities offered around £3.73 for every £1 requested from the fund. As a result

of new processes implemented all applications have been processed, approved and all payments have been made to the various Community Groups. An end of year report will be brought to Full Council in July 2024.

48. Legal Implications

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

49. Resource and Value for Money Implications

Please see Finance Appendices, where resource and value for money implications are set out.

50. Climate Change Implications

There are no direct climate change implications of note.

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Performance Dashboard
Appendix 2 - Finance Quarter 3 Summary
Appendix 3 - Finance Quarter 3 Detailed Report
Appendix 4 - Revenue Forecast Outturn 2023/24
Appendix 5 - Capital Forecast Outturn 2023/24
Appendix 6 - Financial Health Indicators 2023/24
Appendix 7 - Prudential Indicators

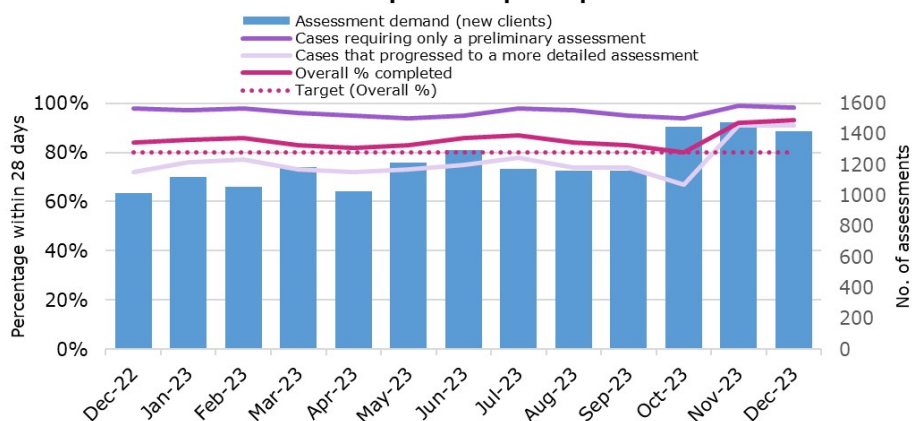
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Health, Wellbeing & Independence Dashboard

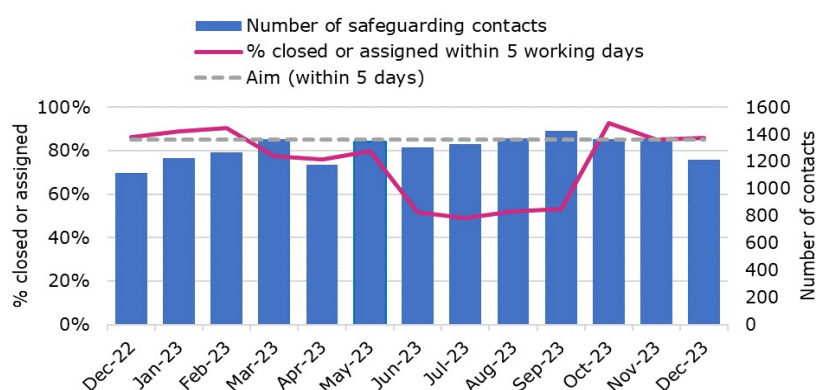
% of Care Act assessments of new clients completed in 28 days and number of requests completed per month



Source: SCC

Performance remained above target in Quarter 3. Where assessments are not completed in 28 days, this is usually because they are more complex. The council tracks these individually to ensure that progress is being made to determine appropriate care and support arrangements, and that any risks are being mitigated.

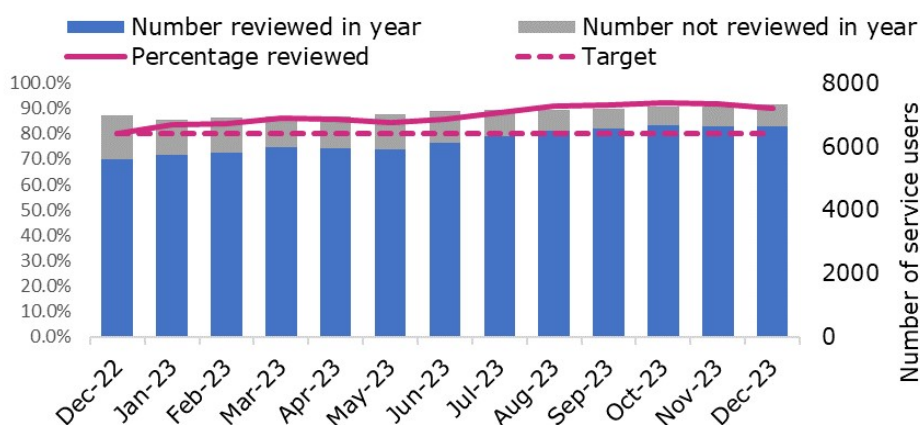
% of safeguarding referrals closed or assigned within 5 working days



Source: SCC

The number of safeguarding contacts has reduced since Quarter 2. Additional temporary resource has been allocated to the service and pathways are being reviewed to identify any further improvements that can be made.

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



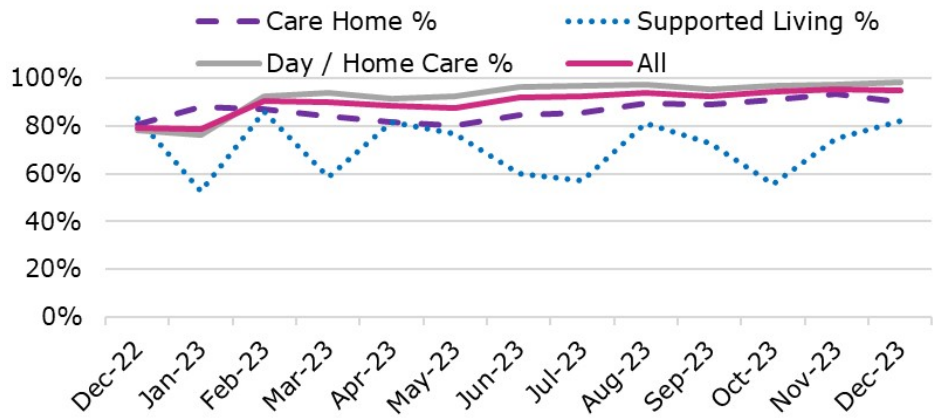
Source: SCC

Performance has remained above target in Quarter 3. Where people have not been reviewed within 12 months this may be because they were unavailable (for example in hospital) or because of insufficient capacity, which is being addressed. However if overall demand increases, resource may need to be diverted to higher priority work.

Health, Wellbeing & Independence Dashboard

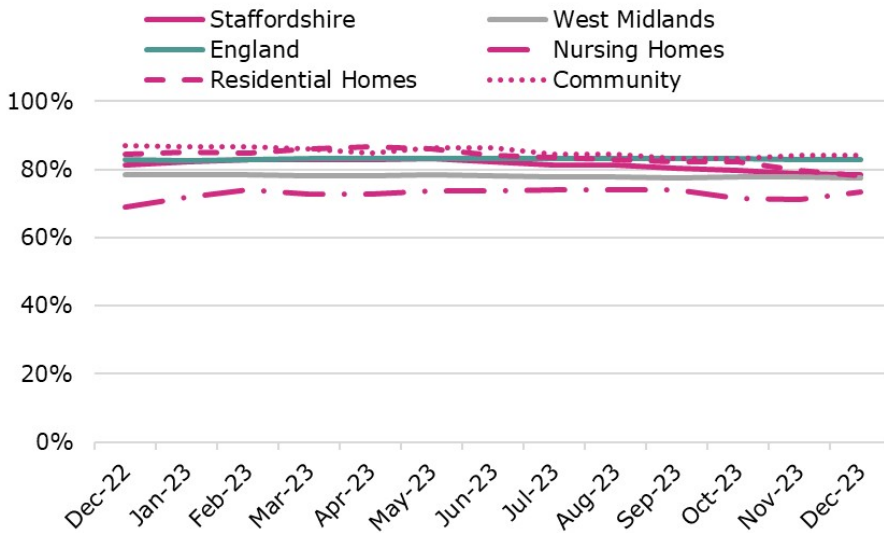
Timeliness of sourcing for brokerage (helping individuals to arrange care) has remained high in Quarter 3 with 94.9% receiving timely access to care in December 2023, and performance remaining 'green' for the service.

% of brokerage sourced within agreed timescale by service type



Source: SCC

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

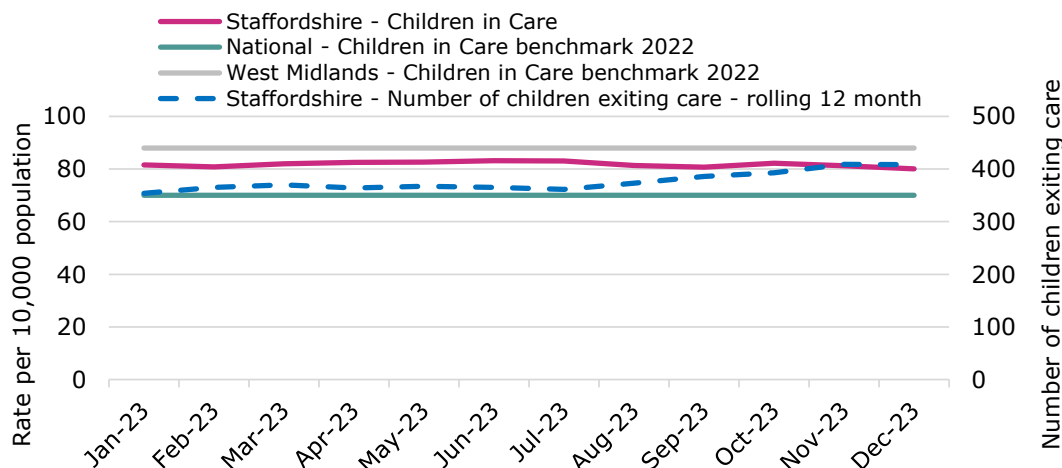


There has been a slight decrease in Quarter 3 of Care Quality Commission Good or Outstanding assessment ratings of Staffordshire's registered locations, with 78.4% Good or Outstanding in December 2023, which is lower than national (82.8%) but remains above the regional average (77.6%).

Source: SCC and Care Quality Commission

Offer the Best Start in Life Dashboard

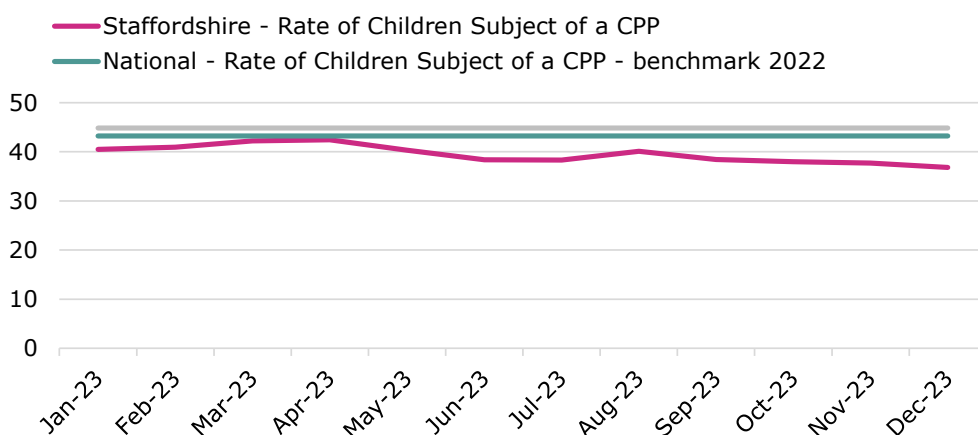
Rate of children in care (rate per 10,000 population) and number of children exiting care



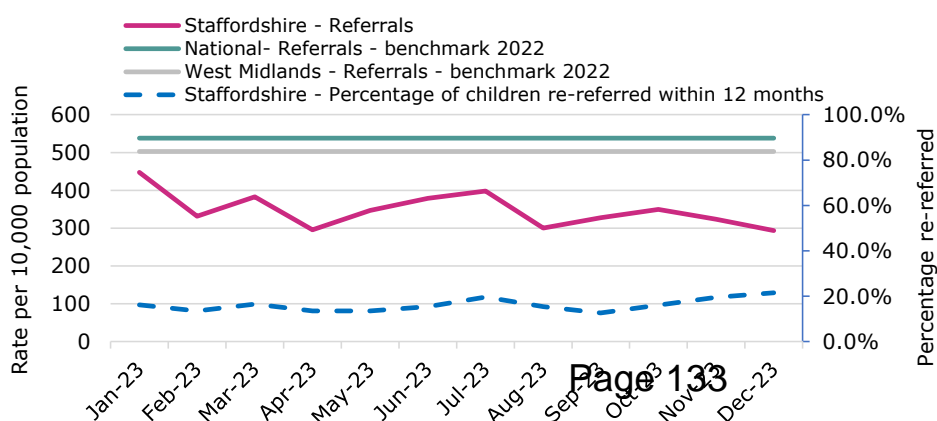
As at the 31st December 2023, there were 1,353 children and young people in the authority's care; a slight decrease compared to the previous quarter (1,364). To help address demand those past exit dates are regularly reviewed to understand any barriers to exiting care and agree any action that might be required.

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

The number of children subject of a Child Protection Plan at the 31st December 2023 was 622, down from a peak of 716 in April and the more recent low of 649 in June.



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

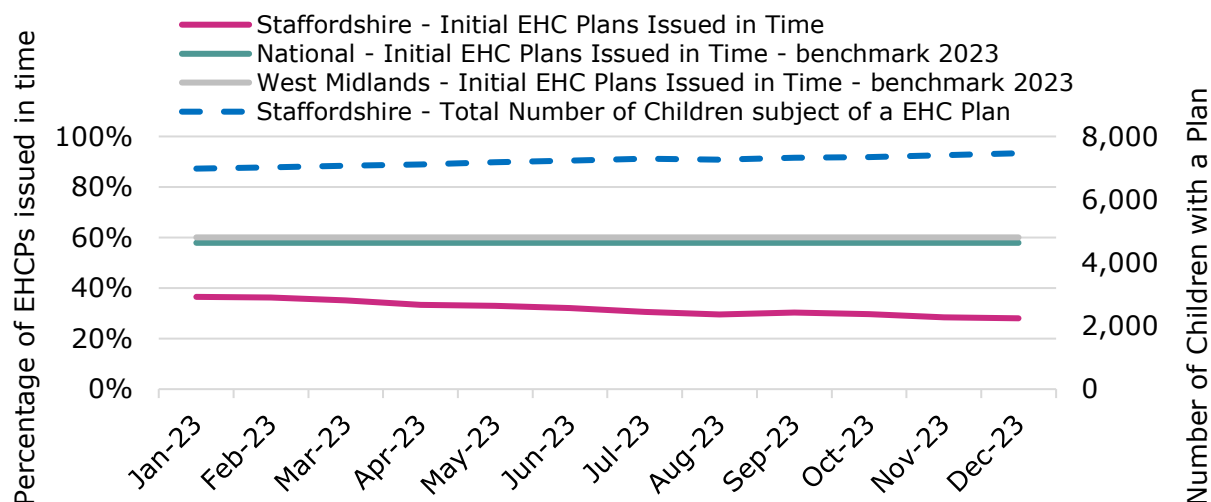


Referrals continue to remain below both national and regional benchmarks. In Staffordshire, 21.5% of children have been re-referred within 12 months as of December 2023 (compared to latest national benchmark of 21.5% in 2022).

Source for page: SCC and Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

Offer the Best Start in Life Dashboard

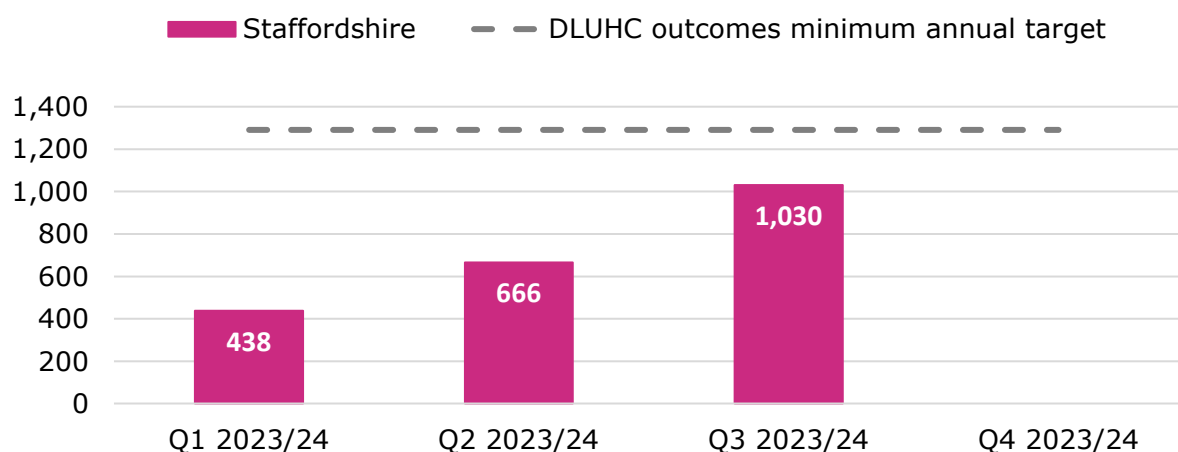
% of Education, Health and Care Plans issued in time (12 month rolling avg), and total number of children with a plan



Source: SCC and Local Authority Interactive Tool (LAIT)

The number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was 7,467 at 31st December 2023 compared to 6,985 a year earlier. This increasing demand means that the number of EHCP's issued in time (within 20 weeks) remains low in Staffordshire; 28% compared to the most recent national benchmark of 58% (2023). Recruitment has been taking place to assist in improving timeliness of EHCPs and support early intervention.

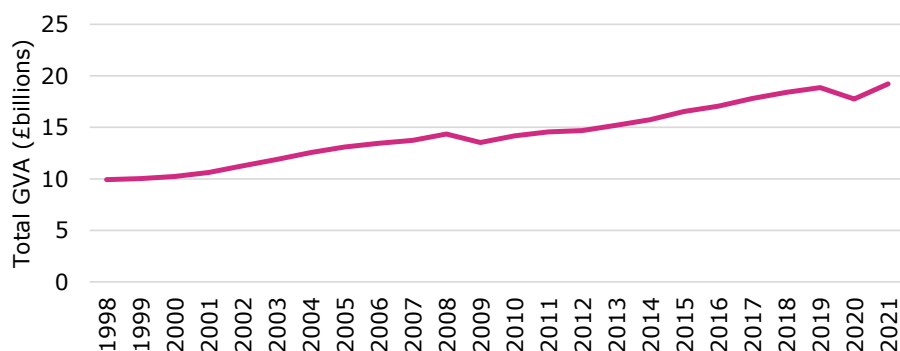
Supporting Families Programme - Reported successful family outcomes in 2023/24 (Cumulative)



At the end of Quarter 3, 80% of the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC's) annual target had been achieved.

Supporting Staffordshire's Economy to Grow Dashboard

Total Gross Value Added (GVA) in Staffordshire (£billions)



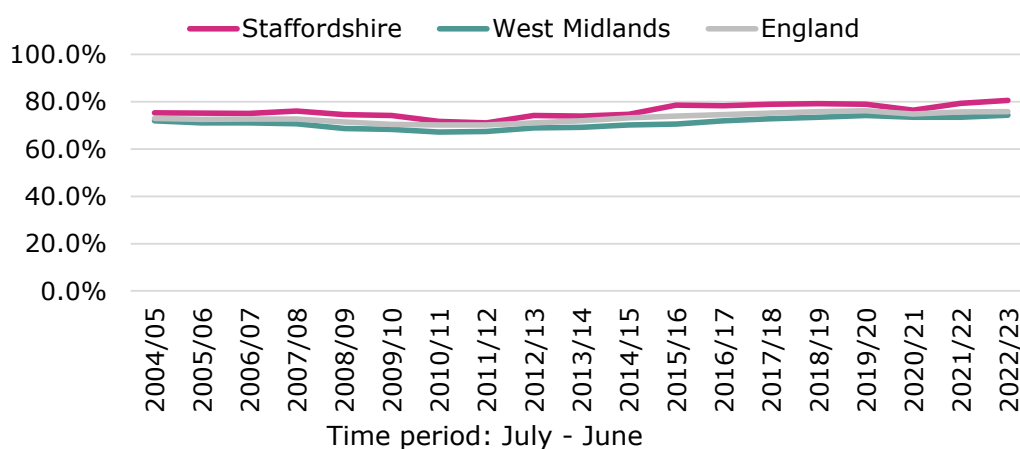
In 2021 (latest data) the Staffordshire economy was worth £19.2bn showing an increase of over £1.5bn between 2020-2021, equivalent to a 8.3% growth and greater than the growth seen for the West Midlands (6.9%) and England (7.1%).

Source: Office for National Statistics

NO UPDATE SINCE QUARTER 1

Employment Rate (aged 16-64)

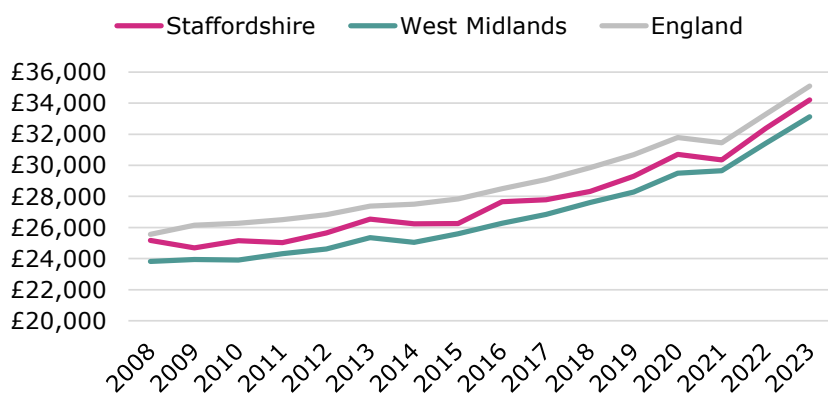
Latest employment figures for the period July 2022-June 2023 show that in Staffordshire there were an estimated 422,900 working age (aged 16-64) residents employed, with an employment rate of 80.6% well above the national and regional averages



Source: ONS National Population Survey

Supporting Staffordshire's Economy to Grow Dashboard

Average (median) annual resident earnings

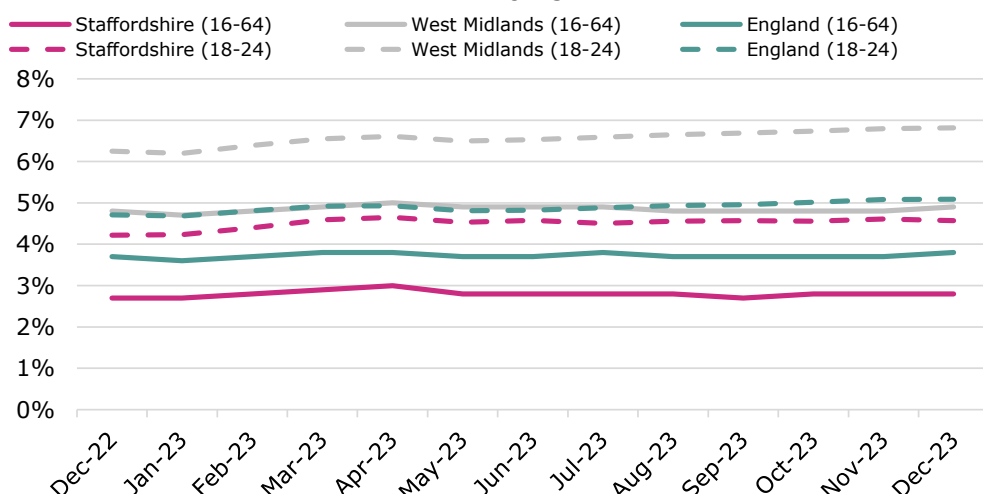


In 2023 average annual resident earnings for full-time workers in Staffordshire stood at £34,204 which was just below the England average of £33,208. Between 2019-23 Staffordshire saw faster improvement in resident earnings compared to national, with 16.8% growth compared to 14.4% for England.

Source: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings—resident analysis

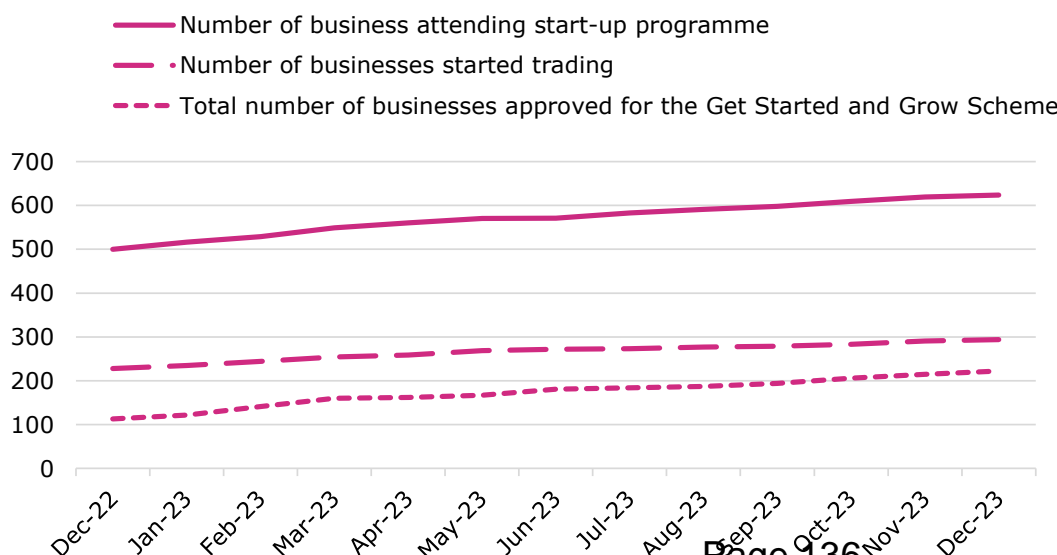
As of December 2023, there were 15,165 claimants in Staffordshire; an increase of 210 claimants compared with the figures reported in Quarter 2 (14,955). Staffordshire Moorlands records the lowest rate (2.1%), and Tamworth records the highest at 3.5%, which is still just below the national position (3.8%).

Claimant Count rate by age



Source: Office for National Statistics

Number of start-up businesses supported by the council (cumulative)

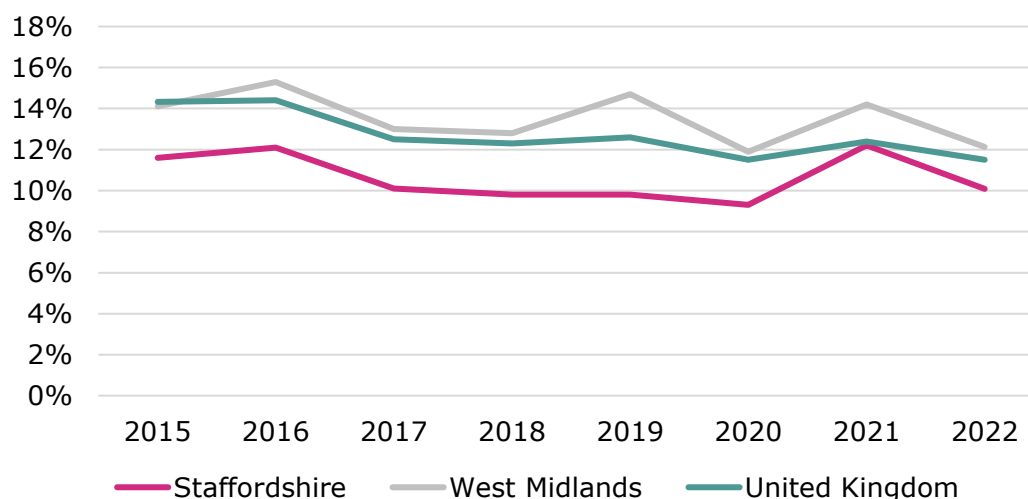


The top sector for businesses attending the start-up programme is 'Professional Services' (digital, financial, marketing, training, science and tech). The 'Get Started' scheme expanded in Quarter 3, 2022/23 to include 'Step up' support for businesses aged 2-5 years.

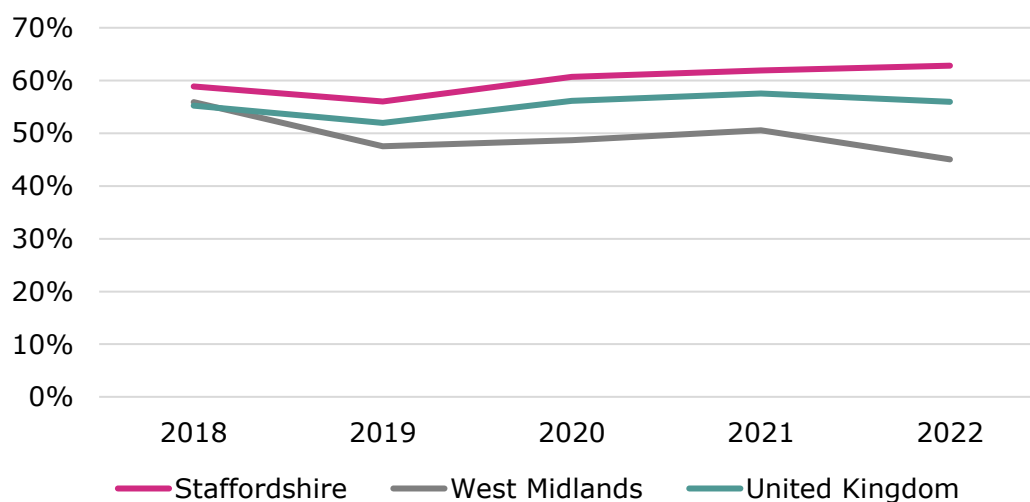
Source: SCC

Supporting Staffordshire's Economy to Grow Dashboard

Annual Business Start-up Rates, 2015-2022



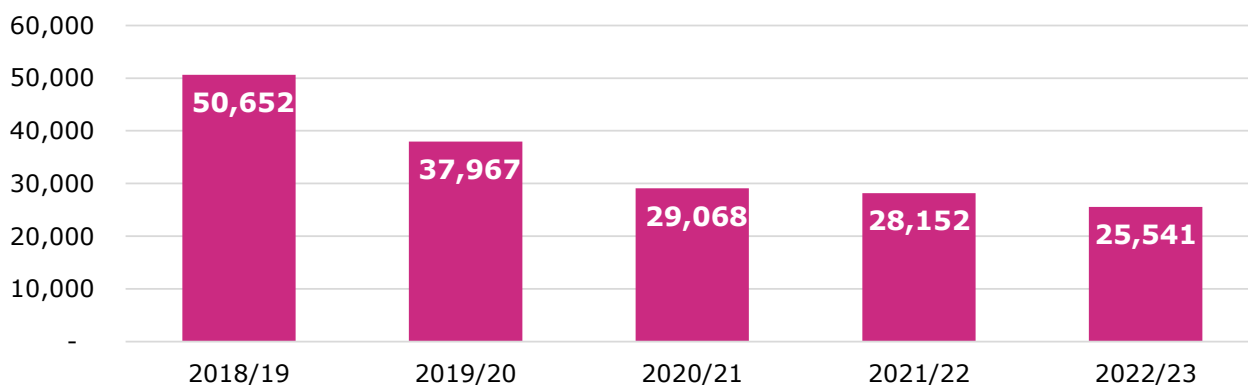
3-Year Business Survival Rates, 2018-2022



Despite a dip in 2022 in Staffordshire's annual business start-up rate (which was also seen regionally and nationally), Staffordshire's 3-year business survival rate continues to increase and outperforms national and regional rates.

Climate Change, Environment & Sustainability Dashboard

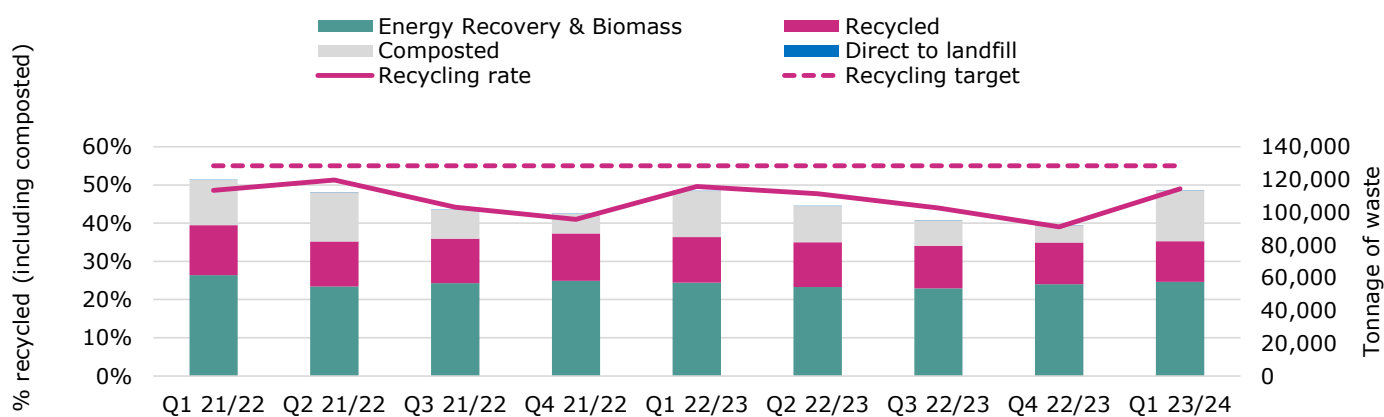
Staffordshire County Council's carbon emissions - Tonnes of carbon (tCO₂e)



There has been a 12% reduction in the authority's carbon emissions since 2020/21, and a 50% reduction since 2018/19 .

Source: SCC

% of waste recycled and tonnage of waste disposed of by method



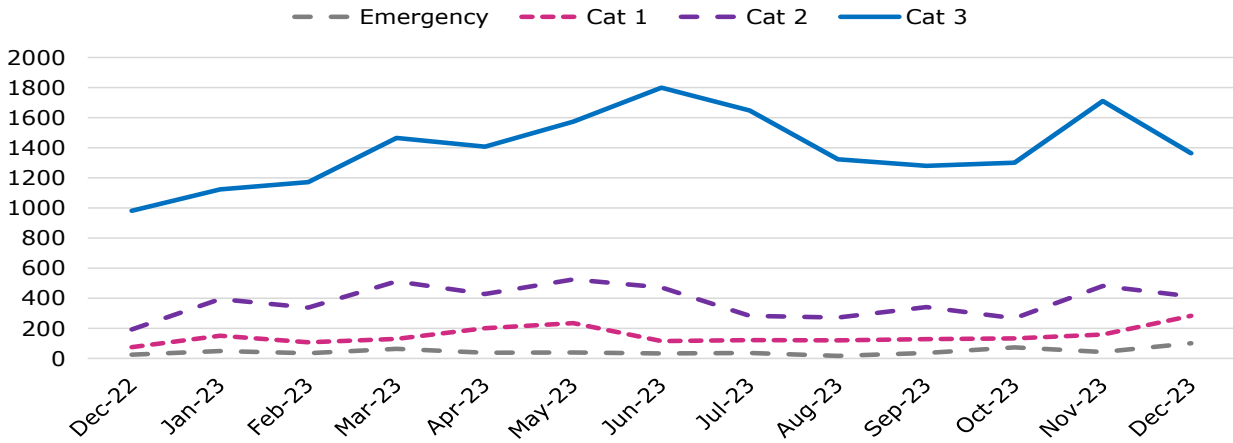
Source: SCC

The recycling rate increased again in Quarter 1 following the usual reduction during the winter, partly due to less composted waste in the winter months. Staffordshire continues to send minimal waste directly to landfill.

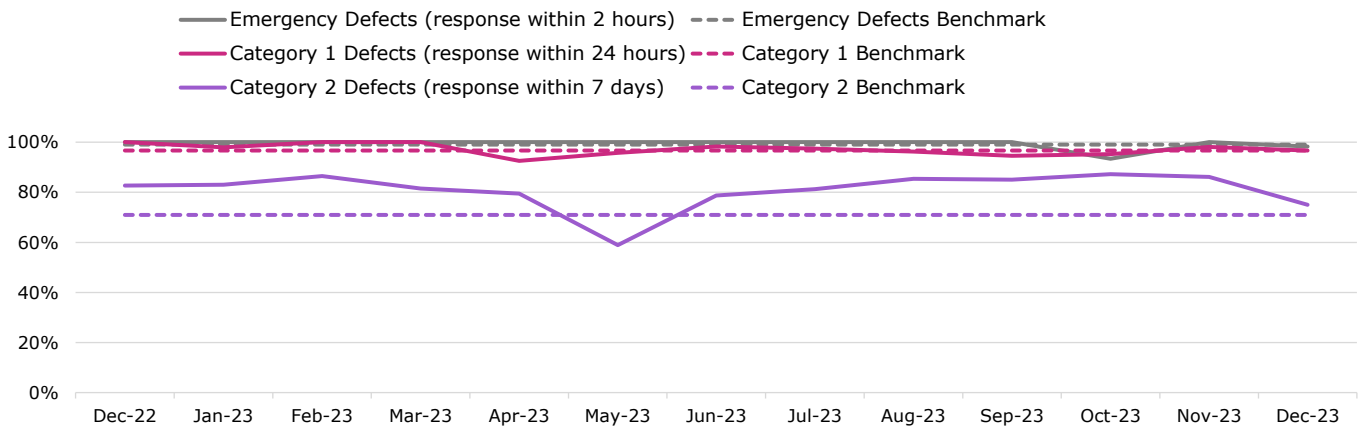
NO UPDATE SINCE QUARTER 1

Roads, Transport and Digital Connections Dashboard

Number of safety defects identified each month



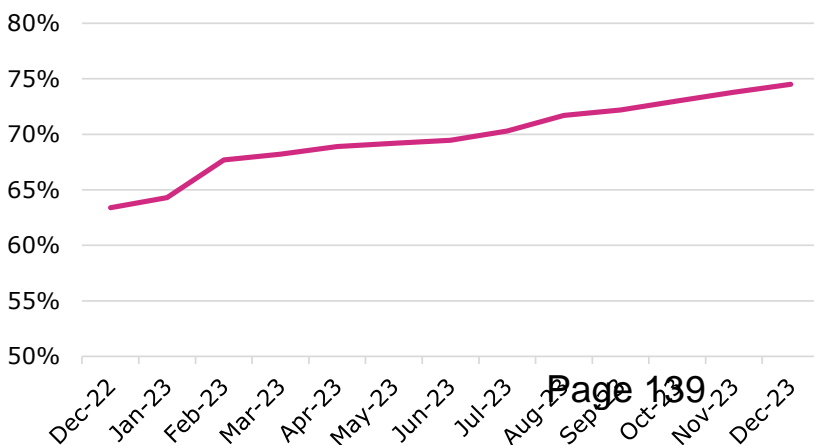
% of Emergency, Category 1 and Category 2 defects repaired in time



Source: Amey, Confirm

There were demand challenges in relation to the volume of high risk 'Emergency', 'Category 1' and 'Category 2' highways defects identified in Quarter 3, particularly in December which was mostly due to the adverse weather. Positively, despite the increase in demand, the timeliness of repairing higher risk defects (against benchmarks) has been maintained.

% of premises with Gigabit capability

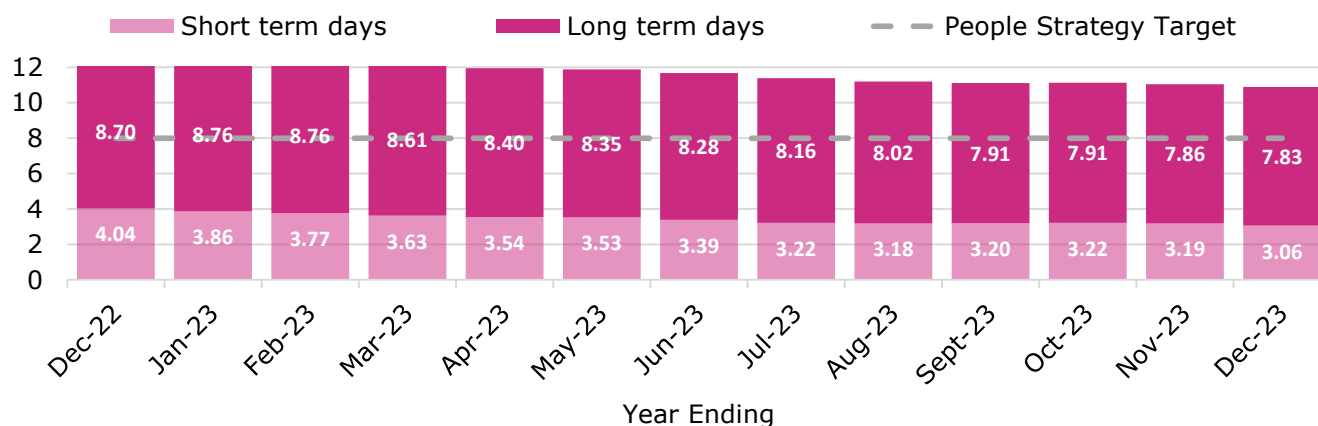


The percentage of premises with Gigabit capability continues to increase, with a target of 85% by the end of 2025 and close to 100% by 2030. It is not appropriate to benchmark against other areas due to differing approaches in rolling this out.

Source: Thinkbroadband.com

How we Work Dashboard

Average payroll days lost per employee



Source: SCC

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

Live Within Our Means Dashboard

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

Quarter 1, 2023/24	Quarter 2, 2023/24	Quarter 3, 2023/24
1.39% (£9.5m overspend)	1.13% (£7.7m overspend)	0.89% (£5.4m overspend)

Source: SCC

A forecast 0.89% overspend is acceptable as it is within the council's Financial Health target of 2% variation on revenue budgets.

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

The graphs and charts are compiled using quarter 3 forecast information.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows an overspend of £5.4m (0.89%), compared to the quarter 2 forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.13%).

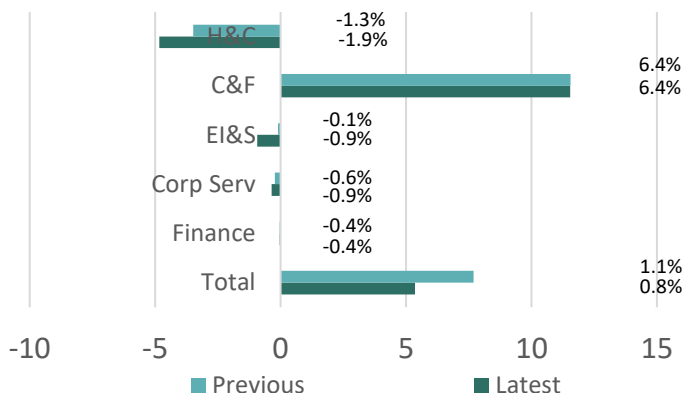
There is a forecast overspend of £11.5m for Children's Services. This is a highly complex and volatile service and costs depend on the type of placements provided. The service is taking mitigating actions to address these pressures as far as possible.

Savings are categorised into confidence of delivery. There are £2.485m savings that are delivered as at quarter 3. There are £6.118m savings classed as Low confidence which mainly related to reductions in Looked After Children's placement costs, and Adults Social Care accommodation-based care.

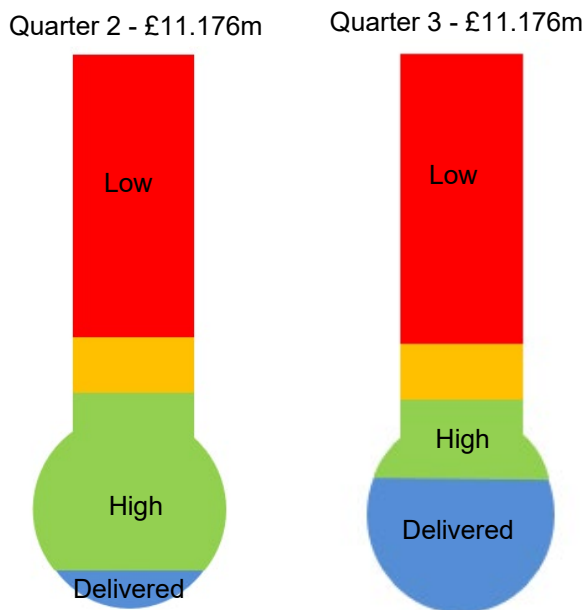
The latest capital outturn projection is £127.0m, compared to the quarter 2 position of £136.0m, a decrease of 6.6%. This projection is a fully funded position. There have been movements across the whole capital programme, however, there has been significant rephasing within Maintained Schools projects.

Within the national context, the latest consumer price index is 4.2%. Interest rates have increased to 5.25% making them the highest level in 15 years. GDP is estimated to have fallen by 0.3% in October 2023, following an increase of 0.2% in September 2023. Current unemployment figures show Staffordshire benefit claimant rate remains below that of the West Midlands and Great Britain.

Revenue Budget Variance

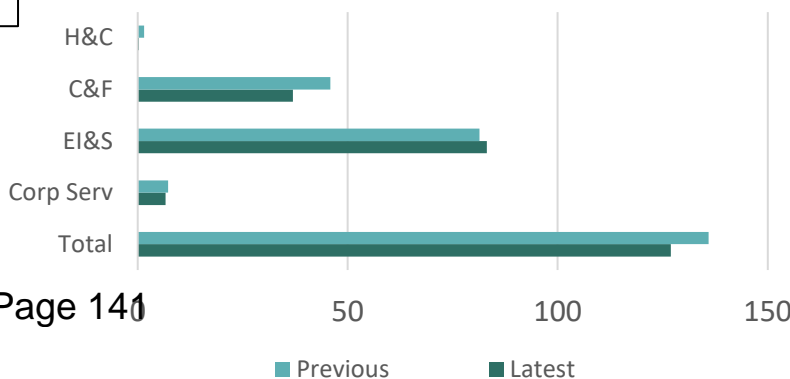


Savings Tracker – Target £11.176m



Savings Rating Key – Blue – Delivered - savings completed in year
 Green – High confidence – Expectation saving will be delivered in year
 Amber – Medium confidence – work still to be done to achieve saving
 Red – Low confidence – expectation that saving will not be made in year

Capital Programme



Introduction

Revenue Forecast

1. The latest revenue forecast outturn (as provided in appendix 4) shows a forecast overspend of £5.4m (0.9%), compared to the quarter 2 forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1%).
2. The following paragraphs consider the key financial issues in each of the council's portfolios.
3. **Health and Care** **Forecast – £4.842m saving**
4. *Public Health and Prevention* *Forecast – Breakeven*
5. The Public Health budget is forecast to breakeven. Inflationary costs are likely to exceed any increases in the Public Health Ring Fenced Grant which may produce a cost pressure in future years, however it is anticipated that this could be met from Public Health reserves.
6. *Adults Social Care & Safeguarding* *Forecast - £2.229m saving*
7. There remain a number of vacancies in the Adults Learning Disability Team (ALDT) which has led to a forecast saving of £0.833m. The vacancies are planned to be filled during the remainder of the year. The team is currently being supported by some temporary external capacity which is being funded from reserves.
8. Posts created in order to prepare for adult social care assurance is forecast to result in a small overspend of £0.750m however it is anticipated that this will not exceed £0.5m in year. Recurrent funding for these posts has been built into the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). There is a forecast overspend of £0.383m to secure some additional temporary resource to tackle a backlog of best interest assessments. Approval has been given to fund this pressure from Health and Care reserves where and if necessary.
9. There is a £0.272m forecast pressure for the Section 75 contract with the Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (MPUFT) due to the 2023/24 pay award being higher than budgeted.

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10. Other variances in the Adult Social Care and Safeguarding budget led to a forecast saving of £0.605m.
11. In house services are forecast to save £2.196m which reflects vacancies in the residential services and Independence at Home homecare service being funded from the Adult Social Care Discharge grant. This is slightly offset by a small overspend within the Complex Needs Service.
12. *Care Commissioning* *Forecast - £2.613m saving*
13. The Older Peoples budget is forecast to save £1.813m. The ongoing management of demand and prices continues to have a positive impact on the financial position. This position is a consequence of a forecast saving of £3.440m on the Home Care budget, mainly due to the utilisation of £2m non-recurrent funding in year. This is offset by a forecast overspend on the Residential and Nursing budget of £1.653m. Other variances result in a small forecast saving of £26,000. A review of the allocation of costs between Older People and Mental Health budgets is in progress, the outcome of which may impact on the above position and will be reflected in future reports.
14. The Physical Disabilities budget is forecast to save £1.139m. The Home Care budget is forecast to save £0.744m due to the utilisation of non-recurrent funding in year. There is also a forecast saving on direct payments of £0.334m as the number of people in receipt of a direct payment during the year has been lower than anticipated. Other variances result in a small forecast saving of £16,000.
15. There is a forecast overspend of £0.157m for legacy items such as pensions costs.
16. There is a forecast additional income of £1.657m for client income, in line with increased expenditure on residential and nursing placements.
17. The Learning Disability budget is forecast to overspend by £1.038m. This is due to an increase in the number and price of supported living placements and because the £1.2m MTFs saving is not expected to be fully achieved. There is a risk of further increases in demand and price, and commissioners will explore actions to mitigate these and bring expenditure back within budget.

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18. The Mental Health budget is forecast to overspend by £1.775m. This is due to an increase in the number and price of supported living placements over and above the additional budget in the 2023/24 MTFS. There is a risk of further increases in demand and price and commissioners will explore actions to mitigate these. Work is ongoing to review the allocation of placements between Older People and Mental Health, the outcome of which may impact this position and will be subject of future reports.
19. There are forecast savings on the Carers budget of £0.302m and on the Advocacy contract of £0.183m, both due to lower activity than assumed in the budgets. These are partially offset by some additional temporary commissioning costs, forecast to be £0.188m. Further to this, there is a forecast saving on the reablement contract of £0.496m, due to final contract value being lower than the sum assumed when the budget was set.
20. Other variances in the Care Commissioning budget total a forecast saving of £0.181m.
21. **Covid Funding**
22. The Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) of £9.703m has been brought forward to 2023/24. Grant conditions require that this must be spent on Covid related activities and there is a final cut-off date where all funds must be utilised by 30th September 2024, when any remaining grant will need to be returned.
23. While spend is progressing against approved proposals, there is a risk that £1.4m of the £2.8m earmarked for Learning Disabilities property refurbishment will not be utilised by the deadline. If this is the case, there is an opportunity to mobilise further proposals to ensure the full utilisation of the COMF. Any funding shortfall on the renovation projects as a result will be monitored and proposed mitigations will be subject of future reports and necessary approvals.

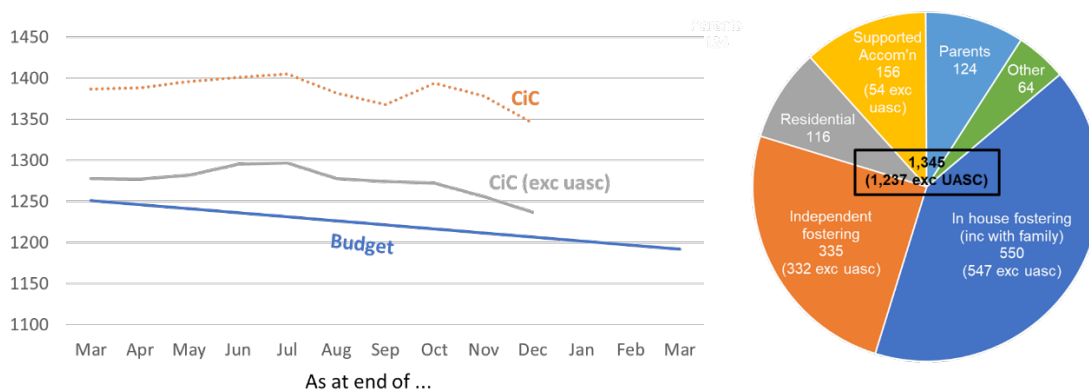
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24. **Children & Families** **Forecast - £11.538m overspend**

25. *Children's Services* *Forecast - £9.317m overspend*

26. The forecast for the service is an overspend of £9.3m, an increase from the quarter 2 position of £8.7m.

27. There has been a reduction in the number of Children in Care (CiC) in recent months. At the start of January, the number of CiC was 1,345 (1,237 excluding Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers). This is 60 children lower than at the highest point at the end of July this year. Unfortunately demand remains significantly higher than the level assumed in the transformation programme – especially for more expensive residential provision – and, given the pressure which has accumulated through the year so far, the CiC Placements budget and Section 17 support is forecast to be £9.6m overspent.

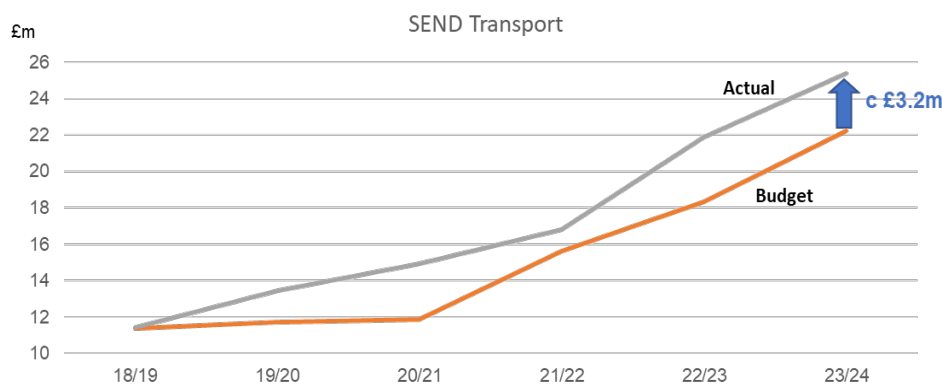


28. The service is taking mitigating actions to address as far as possible the pressures for CiC Placements including:

- Continuously monitoring thresholds for children entering care, especially those requiring residential provision
- Reviewing and expending Edge of Care provision to mitigate and avoid escalation
- Reviewing and improving the reunification support offer
- A review of all existing children in care by cohort, considering areas working well and areas for potential improvement
- Maximizing income contributions from key partners
- Engaging with providers to actively source quality placements and ensure a vibrant market so that the costs of care are competitive

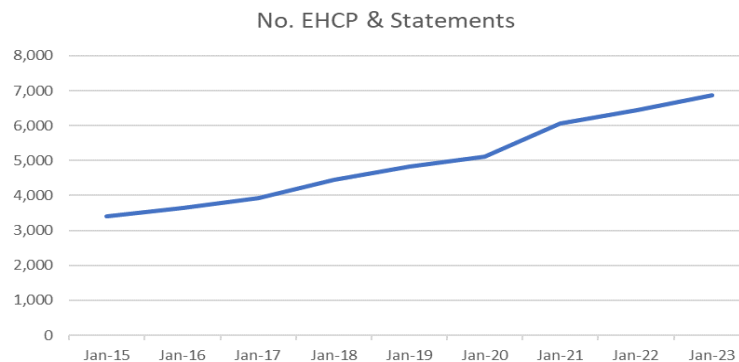
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29. In recent times, the service has been hindered by on-going recruitment and retention problems leading to inconsistent support and capacity. This was recognised in the MTFs, and significant additional resources brought into the budget this year to address these concerns. The service has secured people within several roles and is actively recruiting to other roles, planning to realign services and appointing to new positions; however, this will take time and, for now, the service continues to rely on more expensive agency support for essential service delivery leading to a forecast overspend of £1.3m across the District structure. This is offset by vacancy savings and one off savings due to the staged implementation of the workforce review/restructure that is currently being worked through, forecast to total £2.4m.
30. There are also other forecast overspends of £0.8m, including additional provision for aged debts. There is a risk that this forecast overspend will increase if further high need or complex placements are brought into SCC care before the year end.
31. *Education Services* *Forecast - £2.722m overspend*
32. The service is forecast to overspend by £2.7m, a slightly improved position from the £2.9m forecast at quarter 2.
33. The forecast overspend is primarily due to pressure in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transport budget which in recent years has seen a significant increase in a demand as a result of the rise in Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCPs). Costs increased during 2022/23 as a result of rising inflation, and despite a further increase in budget this year it is forecast that there will be an overspend of £3.2m.



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34. A review of SEND transport is being implemented to identify any actions that may be taken to mitigate the existing demand and costs as far as possible, for example, to improve average occupancy levels and to identify the most efficient transport routes.
35. There is an additional pressure within the Educational Psychology service which is forecast to total £0.3m, due to additional locum costs arising as a result of the increasing demand for EHCP assessments.
36. There are other small savings across the service, including historic teacher pensions contributions, and provision for school deficit converters, which total a forecast of £0.8m.
37. *SEND High Needs Block*
38. The High Needs Block (HNB) is forecast to overspend by £20m and reflects
- Continuing growing demand for SEND support. This is impacting across all areas but especially the Independent sector with numbers now more than double what they were just four years ago and, given the more expensive placement cost, by some was the largest budget pressure in the HNB.
 - Increasing complexity of need and costs impacting all areas.
 - From April 2022 the Council implemented a new 'Education Banding Tool' for assessing a child's EHCP. Following concerns of increasing costs, this has been temporarily suspended while further consideration is undertaken.

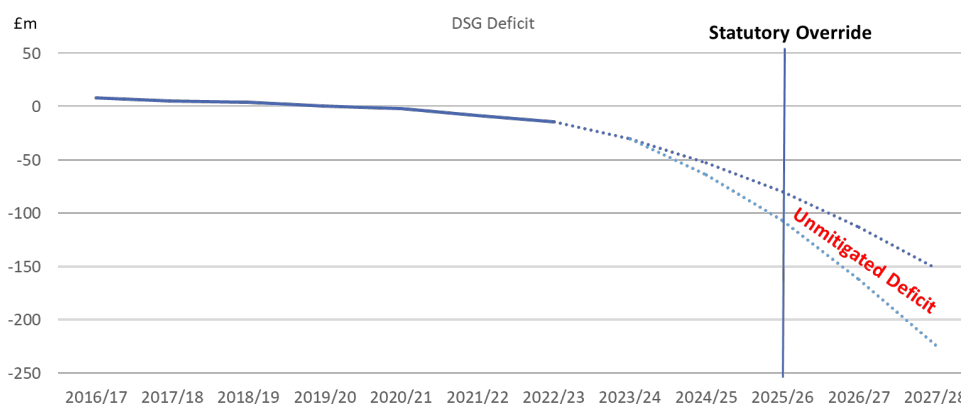


39. This is a position shared by many Councils across the sector. The Government has put in place a 'statutory override' requiring that accumulated Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficits should remain ringfenced, separate to

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the Council's other reserves and this has now been extended through to the end of 2025/26.

40. Accordingly, this forecast overspend will be charged against the DSG reserve which, at the end of 2022/23 was already £14.2m in deficit, and, given the forecast overspend this year, will likely be over £30m in deficit at the end of this year. The Council's Deficit Management Plan (DMP), that is consistent with the wider objectives outlined in the SEND Strategy, outlines the targeted interventions that will seek to mitigate the existing shortfall that is expected to rise over the next 4 years; however, this will take time and is unlikely to address in full the worsening position without further Government support. A key element of the 2024/25 DMP is for a 0.5% funding switch from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block as permitted under Government guidelines; this was initially rejected by Schools Forum, but the Council's subsequent disapplication request to the Secretary of State has since been approved and will provide for an additional £3.2m next year.



41. *Partnerships & Wellbeing* *Forecast - £0.501m saving*

42. The forecast for the service is a saving of £0.5m, an increase from the quarter 2 forecast of £0.1m. This is mainly due to savings against the health and wellbeing contract of £0.1m, along with one off staffing savings of £0.1m. There has also been a reduction in the costs associated with the transfer in-house of the Early Years Entrust contract of £0.3m.

43. A large majority of the Wellbeing and Partnerships budget is funded from government grants, including Resettlement grants of £10.6m, Household Support Fund of £11m, Holidays and Activities Fund of £2.4m and Supporting Families of £2.6m. The programmes included in the service have Cabinet

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approved plans to utilise the allocations and to deliver national programmes of work for the benefit of local residents.

44. **Economy, Infrastructure & Skills** **Forecast – £0.933m saving**

45. *Business & Enterprise* *Forecast – £0.135m saving*

46. The service is forecast to save £0.135m, which is an increase from the quarter 2 position of £8,000 saving. The main reasons for this increase are that a provision for staffing costs has not been required, and that a number of external funding contracts are being agreed for the delivery of business support services over the next two years. These funding agreements include UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding from District and Borough Councils, as well as Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and Funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to deliver legacy activities.

47. *Infrastructure & Highways* *Forecast - Breakeven*

48. The forecast for the service is to breakeven, although there are various overspends and saving forecast across the budget area.

49. The position continues to assume that additional network management income will be used to offset a budget pressure in the traffic signals energy cost area and that staffing vacancies in the school crossing patrol teams will be used to offset the land charges budget pressure.

50. The current forecast position also assumes that the emerging new priority work can be delivered through carry forward of unspent highways transformation monies. It also assumes the additional revenue inflation allocation is needed as the situation around increased costs and material supplies remains challenging for Highways budgets. These areas will continue to be monitored closely.

51. *Transport, Connectivity & Waste* *Forecast - £0.205m saving*

52. The Transport and Connectivity service is forecast to save £0.205m in year. There continue to be risks in the Concessionary Fares service as future Government directives could change and the impact of the Department for Transport Toolkit review is still unclear. There is provision to mitigate these

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risks, but the impact is still uncertain. Furthermore, any savings achieved in this area will need to be ringfenced to support the bus service in future years.

53. The Sustainability and Waste service is forecasting a breakeven position, which includes the delivery of the £0.565m MTFS Dry Mixed Recycling credits saving.
54. It is proposed that the additional third-party waste income and electricity generated income surpluses from the Waste to Recycling Energy plant contract are to be carried forward to fund the remaining 4 years of the 5 year Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) capital investment programme, and to earmark £0.4m to cover the remaining £1m necessary for the Local Transport Assessment work.
55. *Skills* *Forecast - £0.559m saving*
56. The Skills service is forecast to save £0.559m, an increase from the £82,000 saving forecast at quarter 2. The main reason for this increase is the identification of saving on the Schools Career Service contract, which has been brought in house this year from Entrust. This saving is worth £0.458m in 2023/24 and forecast to be £0.3m on going. This saving is earmarked in future years to enable the extension of the Staffordshire Jobs and Careers Service, which currently has temporary funding for its net cost. In addition to this, there is a forecast saving on staffing costs due to vacancies to be filled over the coming months. Some of this forecast saving is earmarked for use to fund an extension to the Ignite Student Start Up programme.
57. *Culture, Rural & Communities* *Forecast – £1,000 saving*
58. The service is forecast to achieve a small saving of £1,000 which is a reduction to the £0.130m saving forecast at quarter 2. This is largely made up of a forecast overspend of £85,000 in Community Safety due to costs for cattle in our care due to delays in the court system, which has been partly offset by increases in income and savings against contracts. There is a forecast overspend of £50,000 for Rural Services due to an increase in expenditure on equipment and services and an underachievement of income, partly offset by vacant posts and a reduction in transport costs.
59. The forecast overspend in Community Safety and Rural is partly offset by a forecast saving for Culture of £0.135m. This is made up of staffing vacancies

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and a reduction in transport costs for the Libraries service, as well as small savings in the Archives service due to additional income.

60. *El&S Business Support* *Forecast - £33,000 saving*

61. The service is forecast to save £33,000 due to small savings across training and pension liabilities budgets.

62. **Corporate Services** **Forecast – £0.357m saving**

63. The service is forecast to save £0.357m, which is an increase of £0.127m from the quarter 2 position.

64. The additional saving is a result of turnover of staff and vacant posts which have not been filled in Commercial of £80,000, Strategic Property of £80,000 and Member and Democratic Services of £50,000. There is also additional income within the Governance Team of £13,000.

65. These forecast savings have been slightly offset by a shortfall in income within the Communications Service of £25,000 as well as several increases in expenditure across the service in areas such as innovation, amongst others.

66. **Finance** **Forecast - £46,000 saving**

67. At quarter 2, there has been no change in the forecast saving for the service. This saving position includes provision for future capacity in the Adult Finance Services team, offset by temporary staffing vacancies.

68. **Centrally Controlled**

69. The forecast for this area is breakeven.

70. In line with the approach contained in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), a contribution of £3m has been made to the Information Technology Reserve as part of the funding required for replacement systems. Also, in accordance with existing practice, additional contributions have been made to care risk and inflation reserves to help mitigate known risks over the next few years of the MTFS.

71. **Capital Forecast**

72. Appendix 5 compares the latest capital forecast outturn of £127.0m, a decrease of £9.0m when compared with the quarter 2 forecast of £136.0m. The key reasons for this decrease of £9m are set out in the following paragraphs.

73. **Health and Care** **Forecast spend £0.308m**

74. There has been a decrease of £1.218m from the quarter 2 report, this is due to the rephasing of several budgets into 2024/25 and 2025/26 in line with the latest project timelines. This includes Hawthorne House Extension/Refurbishment of £0.270m, Care Director Upgrade of £0.170m, Adult Social Care Provider Monitoring System of £0.166m and Brackenberry Renovation of £0.692m. There has been a small increase on Douglas Road Respite Service of £80,000.

75. **Children and Families** **Forecast spend £36.936m**

76. *Maintained Schools* *Forecast Spend £36.739m*

77. There has been a decrease of £8.896m since the quarter 2 report. There have been several schemes rephased into 2024/25 including Madeley High of £1.029m, Oldfields Hall of £2.735m, unallocated Basic Needs of £1.5m, Merryfield's of £0.670m, Rocklands of £0.460m, Littleton Green of £0.751m, unallocated Schools Capital Allocation of £1.738m and unallocated High Needs Provision Capital Allocation of £0.650m.

78. These reductions have been offset by additional Section 106 funding for St Leonards Primary of £0.366m and small budget refinements across the programme of £0.273m.

79. **Economy, Infrastructure and Skills** **Forecast spend £83.135m**

80. *Economic Planning & Future Prosperity* *Forecast spend £4.310m*

81. There has been a reduction of £1.932m since the quarter 2 report. There is uncertainty over the cashflow for the Chatterly Valley project as the contractor has gone into administration, therefore we have adopted a prudent stance and further rephased budget of £0.686m into 2024/25.

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82. There has also been reprofiling of Newcastle Enterprise Centre Extension and Refurbishment project of £0.208m due to the delays with tender, reprofiling of i54 Employment Site of £0.217m and i54 Western Extension of £0.470m reflecting provisions for risk and contingency to 24/25 and 25/26.
83. Rephasing of the Forward Programme into 2024/25 means a reduction in forecast spend in year of £0.172m. Farms budgets have been rephased by £80,000. There have also been minor budget refinements across a number of programmes totalling £99,000.
84. *Highways Schemes* *Forecast spend £73.662m*
85. There has been an increase of £5.507m since the quarter 2 report. This increase is due to the introduction of Network North Funding of £3.188m in 2024/25 enhancing Carriageway Maintenance budgets, as well as a reflection of latest forecast spend levels for Carriageways and Integrated Transport.
86. There has also been a £1m increase due refinements in Developer Funded Scheme budget refinements, as well as a reduction of £0.846m for the Stafford Western Access Route which is in line with the latest project progress reports.
87. *Skills* *Forecast Spend - £0.212m*
88. The Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme has been rephased by £0.188m into 2024/25 to better reflect the forecast project delivery plan.
89. *Rural County* *Forecast Spend - £0.437m*
90. There has been an decrease of £0.153m since the quarter 2 report, which is mainly due to the rephasing of Greenways into future years of £0.1m, M6 Toll rephasing due to ongoing land ownership issues of £50,000.
91. *Waste & Sustainability Projects* *Forecast Spend - £1.339m*
92. There has been a small increase of £62,000 since the quarter 2 report, due to budget refinements for the JCB/CAT Fleet replacement budget of £0.103m and the introduction of NHRC Lighting Repairs programme of £40,000. There have

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been rephasing and refinements of other schemes totalling a reduction of £81,000.

93. **Property, Finance and Resources & ICT** **Forecast spend £6.593m**

94. There has been a decrease of £0.6m since the quarter 2 report. There has been a project scope review which has resulted in a number of projects within the District Property Rationalisation being carried over into 2024/25 totalling £0.760m. There has also been rephasing of £0.3m for the Back up Solution Premises Hardware project as this is still under review.

95. There has been the introduction of a new project for Burntwood Youth Centre Demolition, increasing the forecast spend by £0.2m, and there is forecast acquisition of 10 new vehicles for the Network team and 1 vehicle for the Fostering team, increasing the forecast spend by ££0.260m.

96. **Financial Health**

97. Appendix 6 provides a forecast outturn performance against the key Financial Health Indicators approved as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

98. There have been 97.7% of invoices paid within 30 days of receiving them at the end of May, exceeding the financial health indicator target.

99. The Debt Key Performance Indicator (KPI) has been amended, which reflects the following:

- The aged debt indicator has been re-calculated in the light of increased income levels and changes to charging arrangements, it is expected that the target will be reviewed and amended for 2024/25

100. Due to increasing income levels year on year (in particular in residential care) and changed to charging arrangements, the target will need to be reviewed and revised annually, the target will be updated for 2024/25.

101. The estimated level of outstanding sundry debt over 6 months old is £24.242m, this is over the revised target of £21.5m by £2.742m. This position is an increase of £3.738m since the quarter 2 report. The debt recovery process involves chasing by a range of methods with the eventual escalation to the

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external collection agent or to Legal for the possibility of a court decision to recover the debt.

102. The level of CCG health debt over 6 months old is now £0.339m, £0.861m below the target figure.
103. Non-Residential Client debt now stands at £14.980m and could potentially increase as a consequence of the pandemic. A working group has been established to look at why clients are not paying debts and to implement ways to avoid clients getting into debt in the first instance, this includes an initiative to encourage and assist clients with setting up direct debit instructions.

Debtor Type	2023/24 Target	30/09/2023	31/12/2023	Increase / (Decrease)
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Health Bodies & CCGs	1.200	0.876	0.339	(0.537)
Other Govt. and Public Bodies	2.800	1.977	2.102	0.125
Other General Debtors (Individuals & Commercial)	5.200	4.527	5.514	0.987
H&C Non-Res Client Debt	11.000	12.474	14.980	2.506
H&C Residential Client Debt	1.300	0.650	1.307	0.657
TOTAL	21.500	20.504	24.242	3.738

104. Prudential Indicators

105. Appendix 7 provides a forecast outturn performance against the Prudential Indicators approved as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.
106. The County Council operated within the limits and Prudential Indicators for Treasury Management as set out in the County Council's Treasury Management practices, except for the indicator relating to variable interest rates. This indicator is calculated based on the highest expected cash balance in year, but this was surpassed towards the end of last financial year when forward funding was received.

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107. Given the current volatile economic situation, these indicators are being monitored even more closely than usual. At the time of writing it is considered that the Treasury Management Strategy does not need amending but this will be subject to regular monitoring and any changes will be reported to Cabinet as part of the Half Year Treasury Management report.

Revenue Forecast Outturn 2023/24









	Revised Budget Qtr 3 £m	Forecast Outturn £m	Total Variation £m
Health and Care			
Public Health & Prevention	0.263	0.263	0.000
Adult Social Care & Safeguarding	41.826	39.597	(2.229)
Care Commissioning	218.195	215.582	(2.613)
Specific Grant Allocation (Public Health)	(0.263)	(0.263)	0.000
Health and Care Total	260.021	255.179	(4.842)
Children and Families			
Children's Services	132.406	141.723	9.317
Children's Public Health	0.000	0.000	0.000
Education Services	39.802	42.524	2.722
Wellbeing & Partnerships	9.028	8.527	(0.501)
Children and Families Total	181.236	192.774	11.538
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills			
Business & Enterprise	2.627	2.492	(0.135)
Infrastructure & Highways	40.915	40.915	0.000
Transport, Connectivity & Waste	45.981	45.776	(0.205)
Skills	2.825	2.266	(0.559)
Culture, Rural & Communities	13.504	13.503	(0.001)
EI&S Business Support	1.199	1.166	(0.033)
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Total	107.051	106.118	(0.933)
Corporate Services Total	39.070	38.713	(0.357)
Finance Total	12.038	11.992	(0.046)
Total Portfolio Budgets (Saving)/Overspend	599.416	604.776	5.360
Centrally Controlled Items			
Interest on Balances & Debt Charges	23.881	23.881	0.000
Pooled Buildings and Insurances	28.066	28.066	0.000
Pensions	1.706	1.706	0.000
Investment Fund	0.039	0.000	(0.039)
Care Market Pressures	15.000	9.679	(5.321)
Capital Investment Fund	3.500	3.500	0.000
Traded Services / Business Partner	(0.812)	(0.812)	0.000
Contingency	11.578	11.578	0.000
Net Revenue Budget (Saving)/Overspend	682.373	682.373	0.000

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

	2nd Quarter Budget	Enhancements to Programme	3rd Quarter Budget
	£m	£m	£m
Health and Care			
Care and Independence	1.526	(1.218)	0.308
Health and Care Total	1.526	(1.218)	0.308
Children and Families			
Maintained Schools	45.635	(8.896)	36.739
Vulnerable Children's Projects	0.197	0.000	0.197
Children and Families Total	45.832	(8.896)	36.936
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills			
Economic Planning & Future Prosperity	6.242	(1.932)	4.310
Highways Schemes	68.155	5.507	73.662
Connectivity	0.400	(0.400)	0.000
Skills	0.000	0.212	0.212
Rural County (Countryside)	0.590	(0.153)	0.437
Tourism and Culture	4.736	(1.561)	3.175
Waste & Sustainability Projects	1.277	0.062	1.339
Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Total	81.400	1.735	83.135
Trading Services - County Fleet Care	0.712	0.260	0.972
Finance, Resources & ICT	0.885	(0.300)	0.585
Property	5.596	(0.560)	5.036
Total	135.951	(8.979)	126.972

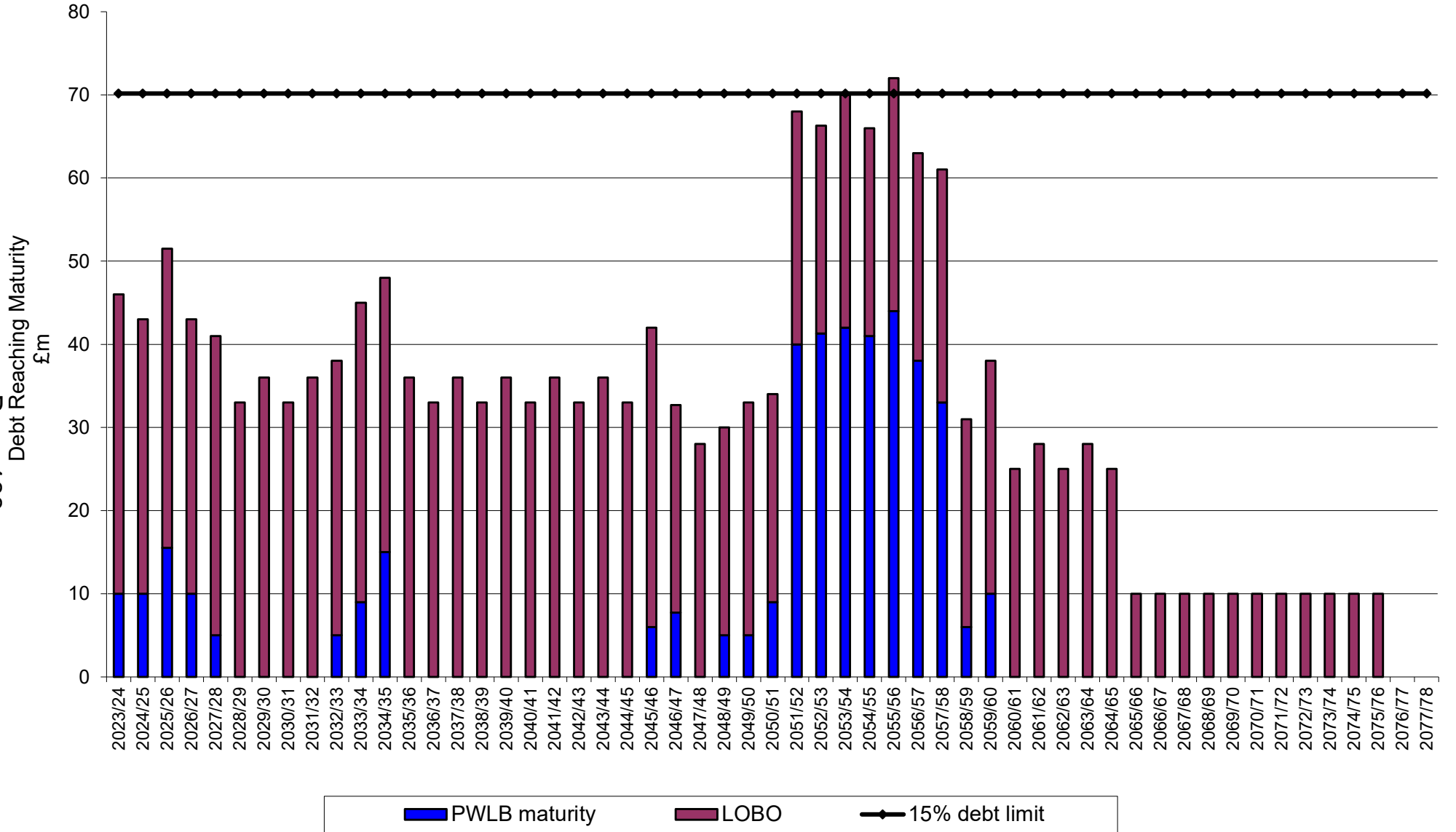
Financial Health Indicators 2023/24

Appendix 6

Indicator		Current Performance
<p><u>Debtors</u> Level of outstanding general debtors more than 6 months old does not exceed £21.5m (Current Performance – £24.2m).</p>		
<p><u>Payments to suppliers</u> At least 90% of invoices have been paid within 30 days of us receiving them during the last quarter (Current Performance – 97.7%).</p>		
<p><u>Monitoring</u> Quarterly financial monitoring reports have been issued to Cabinet during the last 12 months.</p> <p>The council's most recent revenue outturn forecast did not vary by more than +/-2% when compared to the overall revenue budget.</p> <p>Quarterly monitoring reports of progress against MTFS savings have been produced for the Senior Leadership Team during the last 12 months.</p>		  
 Indicator not met	 Indicator not met by small margin	 Indicator met

Prudential Indicators 2023/24

Indicator	Budget 2023/24	Q3 Estimate 2023/24
	£m	£m
External Debt – Authorised Limit for borrowing	621	399
External Debt – Authorised Limit for other liabilities	118	69
<i>Total</i>	<i>739</i>	<i>468</i>
External Debt – Operational Boundary for borrowing	525	399
External Debt – Operational Boundary for other liabilities	118	69
<i>Total</i>	<i>643</i>	<i>468</i>
External Debt - Loans	596.5	399
Interest Rate Exposures – Upper Limit (Fixed)	546.4	399
Interest Rate Exposures – Upper Limit (Variable)	(470.0)	(370.5)
Upper limit for total principal sums invested for longer than a year	245.0	30
Estimate of Capital Expenditure	111.9	127.0
Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	572.1	562.9
Gross Debt – External Loans (Should remain below CFR, except in the short term)	568.2	399
Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream – Financing Costs	22.9	19.2
Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream – Proportion of Net Revenue Stream - %	3.6%	2.97%



Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

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



Councillor Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

“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.”

Report Summary:

We work closely with the Fire, Police, District Council’s and Health to make sure that we have emergency plans in place. Those plans are constantly being tested, reviewed and updated to make sure they remain fit for purpose.

This report asks Cabinet to agree our Policy approach for dealing with emergencies and sets out the three key outcomes that we will seek to achieve if an emergency should happen:

- a. To safeguard people and assets;
- b. To maintain business critical services; and
- c. To restore full services as soon as is practicably possible.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Cabinet approves the Civil Contingencies Policy V6 attached.
- b. Cabinet approves the Business Continuity Management Policy V1 attached.

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

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

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Cabinet approves the Civil Contingencies Policy V6 attached.
- b. Cabinet approves the Business Continuity Management Policy V1 attached.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. To ensure that the Council has an up-to-date Civil Contingencies Policy to inform its emergency planning arrangements and robust Business Continuity Management in place.
2. The Council has always taken its responsibility for planning for civil contingencies very seriously. It has established, with partners, a highly skilled and experienced team to help it manage its planning and response to emergencies. The Council has been advised by that team, the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU), that its Civil Contingencies Policy needs to be updated and best practice suggests a dedicated Business Continuity Management Policy is developed with both being approved at the highest level. The two policies proposed are attached to the report.
3. The refreshed Civil Contingencies Policy has been updated, along with a supporting new Business Continuity Management to reflect current guidance, learning and ways of working and is once again based on ensuring that the Council's civil contingencies arrangements continue to deliver three key outcomes in the event of an emergency:
 - a. To safeguard people and assets;
 - b. To maintain business critical services; and
 - c. To restore full services as soon as is practicably possible.

Legal Implications

4. There are no specific legal implications arising out of the report. However, the Council's ability to perform its civil protection duties as a CAT1 responder within the Act is subject to external scrutiny and failure to comply with legislation or legal requirements (eg Civil Contingencies Act 2004, Flood Water Management Act 2010) can result in external censure, financial loss (including fines and compensation) and reputational damage.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

5. There are no specific financial implications resulting from the policies within this report, although it is worth noting that the cost of any incident cannot always be planned for, both in relation to resources required to plan and respond and financial cost of rectification.
6. In the event that the Council are not able to discharge its legal obligations there is a consequent unquantifiable risk or damages resulting from any liability, together with legal costs arising in the resolution of any matter.
7. We form part of the Staffordshire Civil Contingencies partnership model which gives us the benefits of economies of scale, with a supplementary contract for the provision of additional support. We therefore don't have dedicated emergency planning officers within the Council.

Climate Change Implications

8. Cabinet approved the Staffordshire Climate Change Adaptation strategy in September 2023, which aligned all the Councils within the County to work together, to ensure that the services that we deliver to our communities are resilient to the effects of climate change.
9. Considering that a changing climate has seen the increased incidence of extreme heat, flooding, storms and wildfires it is confirmed that within the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and adverse weather guidance we consider the effects of climate change and where necessary implement controls and actions within relevant Business Continuity Plans and risk registers to mitigate and potential negative impacts".

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Staffordshire County Council Civil Contingency Policy V6
- Appendix 2 – Staffordshire County Council Business Continuity Management Policy V1

Contact Details

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Report Author: Tracy Thorley
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Staffordshire County Council

Civil Contingencies Policy

Version 06 (January 2023)

Version control

Version number	Author	Summary of changes	Date
Version 05	Chris Holloway (CCU)	Date changes, organisation name updates etc.	February 2023
Version 5.1	Chris Holloway (CCU) & Tracy Thorley	Complete policy rewrite	
5.2	Tracy Thorley	EPRWG feedback	27/11/2023
5.3	Tracy Thorley	SLT feedback	27/11/2023
5.4	Tracy Thorley	CGWG feedback	18/12/2023
Version 06	Tracy Thorley	Cabinet approval	

Distribution list

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A copy of this plan will be stored securely on Resilience Direct, with a paper copy stored within the SP1 Incident Control Centre.

Enquiries and updates

Any enquiries or updates in reference to these arrangements should be directed to the Civil Contingencies Unit at ccu@staffordshirefire.gov.uk.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) is an Upper Tier Local Authority and is classed as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004¹. Category 1 responders are those organisations at the core of emergency response (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies). Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Staffordshire County Council therefore has wide ranging obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act, and as such has statutory requirements to ensure that certain arrangements, planning and policies are in place. This policy outlines the Council's approach to ensuring it has effective arrangements in place for responding to and recovering from incidents, as well as meeting all statutory obligations under relevant legislations.

¹ [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

1.2 Obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

Civil Contingencies Act 2004	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Duty to assess risk	The Council will assist in undertaking risk assessments of hazards likely to affect Staffordshire and participate in maintaining the Staffordshire Community Risk Register. This will inform response and recovery and business continuity planning relevant to the Council. Council officers are represented on the Staffordshire Resilience Forum Risk Assessment Working Group to achieve this.
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Duty to maintain plans – Emergency Planning	The Council will put in place relevant Emergency Planning where legislation dictates this is required, this includes our obligations as Lead Flood Authority, and COMAH. Alongside this, the Council will ensure that there is robust Business Continuity Management in place to ensure the continued Day to Day running of priority activities in the event of an incident that affects the Council's Business as Usual operations.
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Duty to maintain plans – Business Continuity	The Council will provide information to the public to inform them about civil contingencies matters and maintain arrangements to support multi-agency work to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an incident.
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Duty to communicate with the public	The Council will promote business continuity and provide advice on producing Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) to local businesses and voluntary organisations, predominantly via www.staffordshireprepared.gov.uk .
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Business Continuity Advice to businesses and the voluntary sector	The Council will ensure that arrangements and procedures are in place to share critical information with other responders as far as is required to support incident response and emergency planning.
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Formal Information Sharing	The Council will co-operate and share information with other responders, in order to enhance coordination and efficiency, ensure that plans are robust and effective and that they integrate with other responders' plans.
	Civil Contingencies Act 2004: Cooperation	

1.3 Obligations under other legislation

Other Legislation	The Pipelines Safety Regulations 1996 (PSR)	A local authority which has been notified by the Executive that there is, or is to be a major accident hazard pipeline in its area shall before the pipeline is first used or within 9 months of such notification, whichever is later, and subject to paragraph (5), prepare an adequate plan detailing how an emergency relating to a possible major accident in its area will be dealt with
	Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975	Statutory duty for the safety certification of sports grounds under Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975 (as amended) (1975 Act) and the Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987(1987 Act), and also recognises its responsibilities for spectators' safety at all sports grounds within its boundary
	Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sport Act 1987	
	The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974	Statutory duty for the Health and Safety of those attending outdoor events and also recognises its responsibilities for spectators' safety at all events within its boundary
	The Flood and Water Management Act 2010	A lead local flood authority for an area in England must develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for local flood risk management in its area (a "local flood risk management strategy")
	Control of Major Accident Hazard Regulations 2015 (COMAH)	A local authority in whose administrative area an upper tier establishment is situated must prepare an external emergency plan specifying the measures to be taken outside the establishment. There are 5 Upper Tier COMAH sites within Staffordshire, of which 4 are the responsibility of SCC.
	Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPIR)	Every local authority must prepare and keep up to date arrangements to supply, in the event of an emergency in that local authority's area (however that emergency may arise), information about and advice on the facts of the emergency, of the steps to be taken and, as appropriate, of the protective action applicable (Regulation 22).

2.0 Organisation of Civil Contingencies in Staffordshire County Council

2.1 Structure

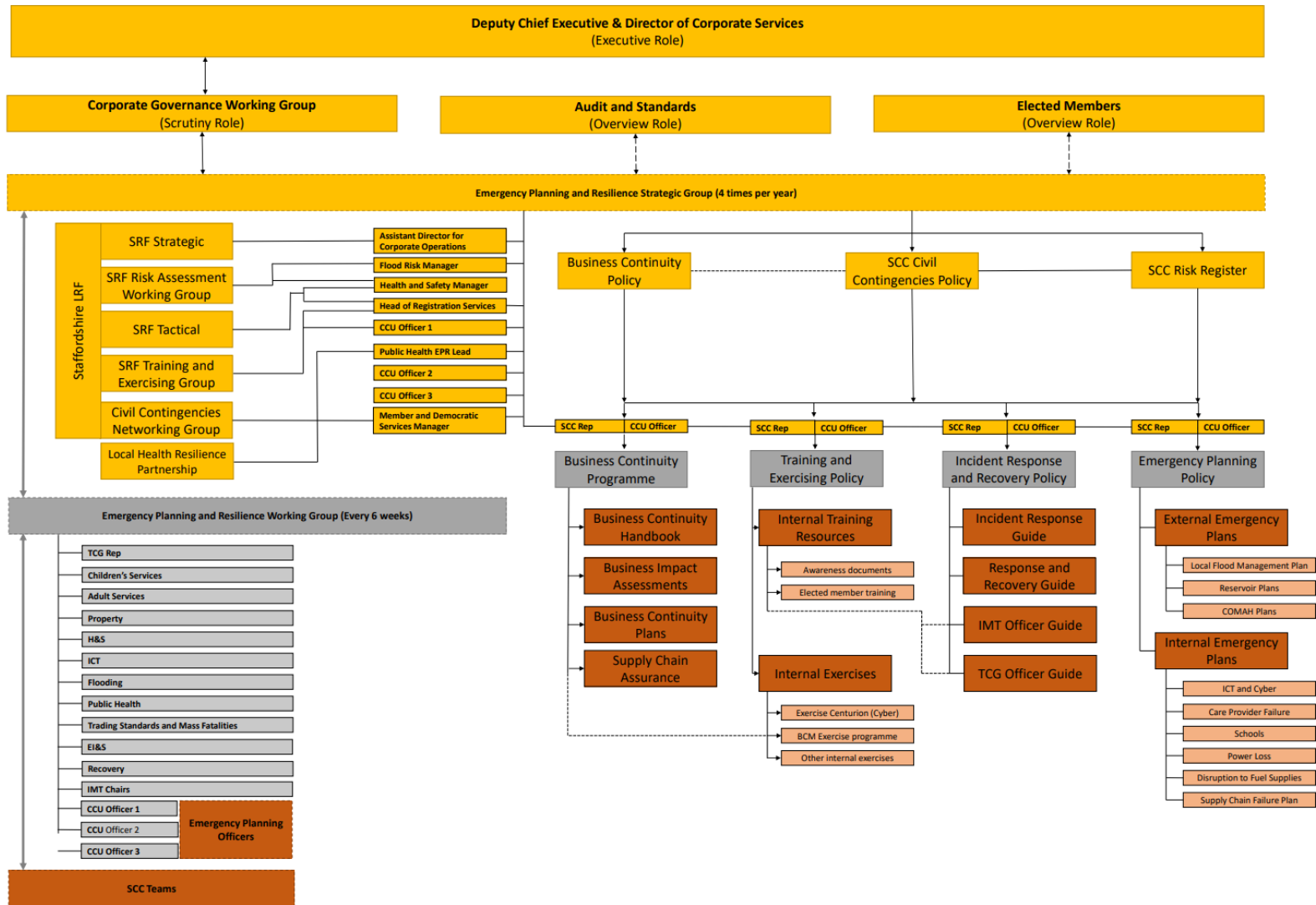


Figure 1: Civil Contingencies Structure Overview

The diagram on the previous page outlines the full structure of Staffordshire County Council's Civil Contingencies organisation. Below is a breakdown of the key organisational areas:

2.1.1 Strategic Level management and oversight

Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services	The Lead Director for Civil Contingencies, providing leadership and oversight, as well as briefing SLT and Elected Members as required.
Assistant Director for Corporate Operations	Day to day lead for Civil Contingencies, chairing the EPRSG and EPRWG, as well as attending the Senior Leads Meeting and SRF Strategic meeting.
Audit and Standards Committee	Provide scrutiny of any, and all documents as appropriate or requested.
Corporate Governance Working Group	Scrutinise and approve policy documents with the exception of Strategic Level Policies and Documents at 2.1.3, where Cabinet approval is required.
Elected Members	Direct SLT and provide scrutiny where required.

2.1.2 Emergency Planning and Resilience Strategic Group (EPRSG)

Emergency Planning and Resilience Strategic Group	A group of key staff involved in Civil Contingencies, who represent Staffordshire County Council on multi-agency groups and meeting
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2.1.3 Strategic Level Policies and Documents

Business Continuity Policy	A strategic level policy outlining the intention and direction of the organisation's Business Continuity approach.
Civil Contingencies Policy (this document)	A strategic level policy detailing the structure, governance and statutory obligations for Staffordshire County Council's Civil Contingencies approach.
SCC Risk Register	An internal risk register for Staffordshire County Council outlined current threats and risk to the organisation. Used to inform Emergency Planning and Business Continuity.

2.1.4 Emergency Planning and Resilience Working Group (EPRWG)

Emergency Planning and Resilience Working Group	A group of Senior Managers, IMT members and IMT specialists providing support to develop policies, processes, as well as providing input into planning process and risk assessment.
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2.1.5 Tactical Level Policies and Documents

Business Continuity Programme	The breakdown of how the Business Continuity Policy will be achieved, including requirements for Business Continuity Plans, Business Impact Assessments, review cycles, training and exercise requirements, governance and assurance
Training and Exercising Policy	SCC Policy on Training and Exercising requirements, including training requirements for key roles, number of staff required in each key role, exercise requirements to provide assurance in key areas, including a link the Business Continuity Programmes exercise requirements.
Incident Response and Recovery Policy	SCC Policy on how the organisation will respond to incidents (both internal and external) and ensure an appropriate recovery strategy after any incident.
Emergency Planning Policy	SCC Policy on how the organisation meets its obligations under various legislation, include internal and external plans, review cycles, accountability and governance

2.2 Governance and Accountability



Figure 2: Governance Structure

Cabinet	SLT	Lead Director	EPRSG	EPRWG
Set and approve Civil Contingencies policy	Set strategy	Oversee delivery	Represent SCC at LRF groups	Lead Tactical Delivery
Direct SLT	Agree resources	Provide Leadership	Review documents passed from EPRWG	Support delivery of Tactical Level policies via working groups as required
	Ownership and accountability of risk	Maintain CCU Shared Services Service Level Agreement	Provide an avenue for escalation of issues from EPRWG	Scrutiny and development of documents and Business Continuity Plans
	Liaise with members	SCC representative at SRF Strategic / Strategic Co-ordinating Group	Escalate issues to SLT as appropriate	Provide an Incident Management Team (IMT)
		Attend Civil Contingencies Strategic Leads meeting		Monitoring, updating and escalating risk
				Identify and Maintain priority activities

2.3 Role of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

By law, category one responders have duties to plan and prepare for emergencies. In Staffordshire, this is done through the largest public sector partnership called the Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF).

The partnership approach promotes greater economy and efficiency, achieving positive outcomes through sharing existing resources, capabilities and knowledge for the benefit of Staffordshire's communities.

All partners of the SRF contribute to the funding of the CCU. The CCU is accountable to the SRF through the CCU Strategic Leaders' Meeting who represent the Unit's stakeholders.

The corner stone of the SRF partnerships preparations for an emergency are its multi-agency plans. These are known as Staffordshire Prepared Plans and they are stored, maintained and exercised by the CCU on behalf of the SRF partnership.

All SRF members have a legal duty to appropriately warn and inform their partner's organisations and the communities of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

2.4 Role of the Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU)

2.4.1 What is the Civil Contingencies Unit

The Civil Contingencies Unit (CCU) is a small team of specialist planners based in Stafford that ensures preparations are in place to support the people of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in an emergency or major incident such as a flood.

It is a public sector partnership, working at a local level, consisting of twenty-four public sector organisations. These are the Emergency Services, all Local Authorities, Health organisations, Highways England and the Environment Agency. The CCU supports these public services in meeting their obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The CCU sits at the heart of the SRF partnership and has four primary roles:

- To write and maintain the Staffordshire Prepared Multi-Agency plans on behalf of the Staffordshire Category 1 responders as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- To provide multi-agency training and exercises for the SRF
- To offer 24-hour, 365 days a year operational call-out capability to support emergency responders in the discharge of their statutory duty in the event of an emergency

To deliver the secretariat and administrative support functions for the SRF and its supporting meetings. In an emergency, any SRF partner can contact the CCU's Duty Officer to request specialist advice and support them to deal with what can at times be very complex and dynamic situations. This assistance ranges from providing useful contact numbers over the telephone to deploying to the scene of the incident. The CCU can also provide support to partners through the deployment of a Mobile Control Unit (MCU).

The CCU's main day to day role is to produce multi-agency response plans for the risks identified in the area and to provide high quality training and exercises to all organisations of the SRF partnership. The exercises range from one-to-one coaching for Chief Executives, up to the RAVEN or Response Assessment Venue exercises which require partners to work together to respond to and recover from a credible risk within Staffordshire.

2.4.2 The role of the CCU within Staffordshire County Council

The Council is accountable for the delivery of its statutory responsibilities under the legislation outlined in Section 1.

The CCU supports the delivery of these duties under a shared service arrangement, and Service Level Agreement (SLA). Staffordshire County Council commits to contribute to the CCU and support the provision of staff, to a level commensurate to meet, and continue to meet, its statutory requirements in full while ensuring value for money is achieved. This partnership approach promotes greater economy and efficiency across all of Staffordshire's Category 1 and 2 responders. It delivers positive outcomes by sharing existing resources, capabilities and knowledge across the Staffordshire Resilience Forum area for the benefit of Staffordshire's communities and residents.

2.5 Approval process

Strategic Level documents – EPRSG, SLT, Approved by cabinet

Tactical Level documents – EPRWG, EPRSG, Approved by Corporate Governance Working Group

Operational Level documents – EPRWG, Approved by EPRSG

2.6 Multi-Agency meetings

The Council commits to support wider multi-agency working in order to promote a joined-up, partnership approach to resilience in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. It therefore supports the following meetings:

- Staffordshire Resilience Forum (SRF): Chief Executive or Lead Director (Deputy Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Services), or their representative deputy
- SRF Tactical Meeting: Incident Management Team Chair, or other TCG chair
- Risk Assessment Working Group (RAWG): Health & Safety Manager and Flood Risk Manager
- Staffordshire Prepared Conference: Open invitation to all staff
- Task & Finish Projects: Specialist staff to support on request of CCU and / or EPRSG
- Strategic Assessment Meeting (SAM) / Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)
- Tactical Assessment Meeting (TAM) / Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)
- Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) and Sub-Groups dependant on the nature and scope of an incident.
- SRF Training and Exercising Group
- Local Health Resilience Partnership
- Civil Contingencies Strategic Leads Meeting (SLM)

2.7 Policy and document structure

Key SCC documents are shown below:

The diagram illustrates the structure of Staffordshire County Council (SCC) documents, categorized into three levels:

- Strategic level:**
 - Staffordshire County Council Risk Register (Version 01 (Mar 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Civil Contingencies Policy (Version 06 (November 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Business Continuity Management Policy (Version 1 (November 2023))
- Tactical level:**
 - Staffordshire County Council Training and Exercising Policy (Version 1 (December 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Emergency Planning Policy (Version 1 (August 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Response and Recovery Policy (Version 1 (October 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Business Continuity Programme (Version 1 (January 2024))
- Operational Level*:**
 - COMAH
 - Flooding
 - ICT / Cyber
 - Reservoirs
 - INCIDENT RESPONSE GUIDE
 - Staffordshire County Council Response and Recovery Handbook (Version 04 (Feb 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Emergency Contact List (Version 20 (Oct 2023))
 - Staffordshire County Council Business Continuity Management Toolkit (Version 1 (January 2024))
 - BC Plan or BC Action Card (Example Team)

* The above is not a full list of all operational documents, a full list of all relevant documents can be found in the relevant policy.

3.0 Response and Recovery: Structure and Organisation

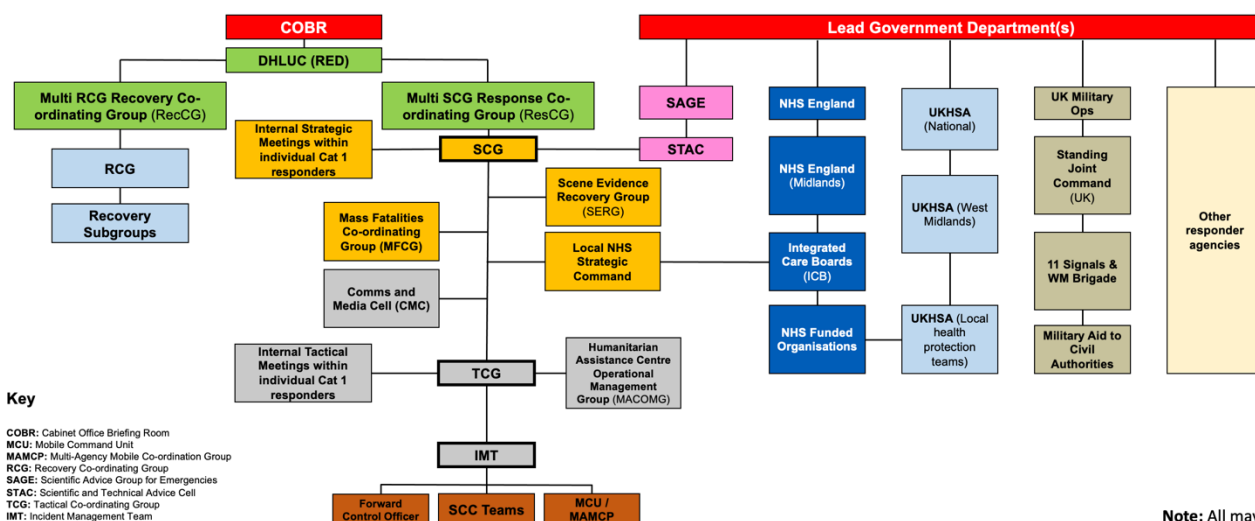
3.1 Overview

Staffordshire County Council has a statutory duty as a Category 1 responder to respond to, and recovery from, incidents that impact the county, as well as internal responses to issues impacting the delivery of priority activities within SCC. The level of response will vary depending on the size and scale of the incident and therefore the structure required, but can include the following:

- An SCC Incident Management Team (IMT)
- A Recovery Co-ordinating Group (Chaired by SCC)
- A Tactical Co-ordinating Group / Tactical Assessment Meeting (SCC representative, potential SCC chair)
- A Strategic Co-ordinating Group / Strategic Assessment Meeting (SCC representative)

3.2 Structure

Structure diagram below represents the national structure for a major incident and will be scaled up/down dependent on size/scale of incident.



3.3 Policy

A separate Response and Recovery policy is in place to provide full detail, policy and governance for Response and Recovery within SCC.

3.4 Response and Recovery documents

- Response and Recovery handbook
- Incident Response Guide
- Incident Management Team guide
- Tactical Co-ordinating Group guide

3.5 Relevant standards and indicators

UK Resilience Standards: 1, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13

Indicators of Good Practice: 1B, 1D, 1G

British and International Standards: BS1120, BS1129, BS31111

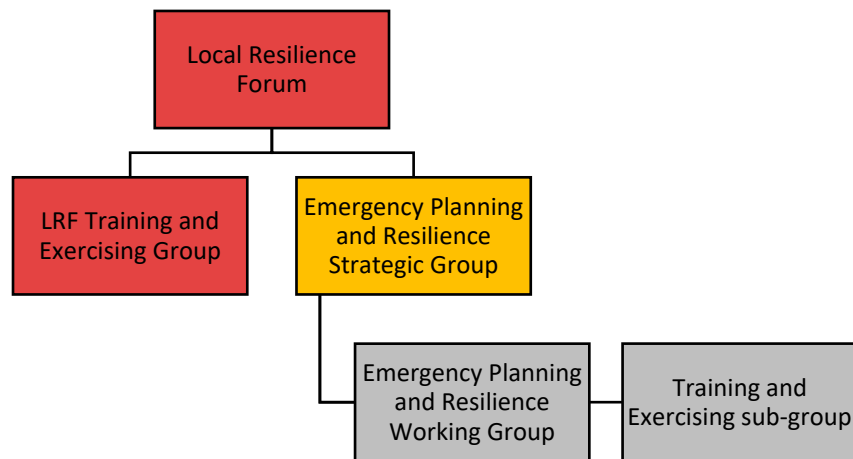
4.0 Training and Exercising: Structure and Organisation



4.1 Overview

It is a requirement that key staff within Staffordshire County Council are trained and experienced to a suitable level to carry out key response and recovery roles. It is the responsibility of Staffordshire County Council to track learning and experience of these staff, so that in the event of an incident, there is a clear audit trail of staff being appropriate for the role they undertake. Some training is provided through the LRF, with other additional training being provided by SCC. Alongside this, SCC will participate in a number of LRF and National exercises to allow staff to gain experience in their roles. Additional internal exercises are also carried out to test internal arrangements, and business continuity.

4.2 Structure



4.3 Policy

A separate Training and Exercising policy is in place to provide full detail, policy and governance for Response and Recovery within SCC.

4.4 Training and Exercising documents

- All internal training and awareness documents
- Forward Control Officer logbook
- Forward Control Officer handbook
- Loggist handbook

4.5 Relevant standards and indicators

UK Resilience Standards: 6, 7, 8

Indicators of Good Practice: 1B, 1C, 1G, 3B

British and International Standards: PD 25666, BS65000, ISO 22301, BS 22398

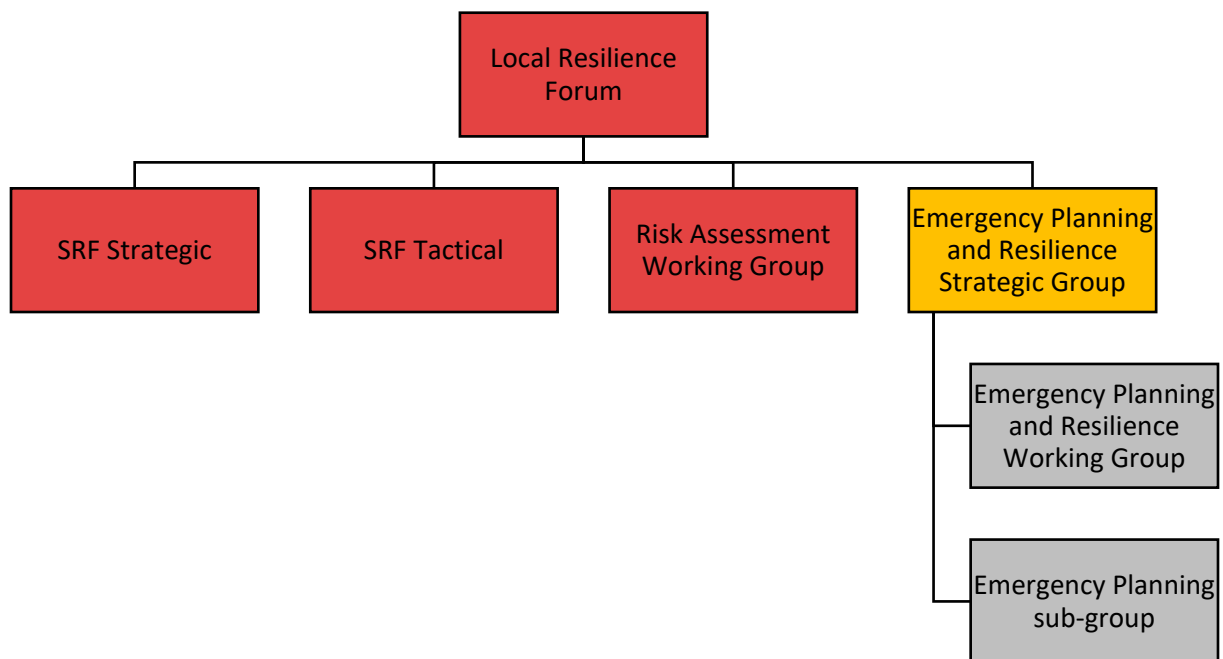
5.0 Emergency Planning: Structure and Organisation



5.1 Overview

Staffordshire County Council has wide ranging obligations for Emergency Planning under the legislation listed in Section 1. Staffordshire County Council is the Lead Flood Authority, and has responsibilities under COMAH, REPPiR, and PSR legislation. As such SCC is involved with both internal and external emergency planning. Some of these responsibilities are covered by the Civil Contingencies Unit, however others fall to SCC to complete. The Emergency Planning Policy covers details of all planning, the cycle of review, and the accountability for delivery of each. Alongside the external emergency planning, SCC also has a requirement to ensure that appropriate Internal Emergency Plans are in place for incidents and issues such as Cyber Attack, Supply Chain Failure, etc, these are also outlined within the Emergency Planning Policy.

5.2 Structure



5.3 Policy

A separate Emergency Planning policy is in place to provide full detail, policy and governance for Response and Recovery within SCC.

5.4 Emergency Planning documents

- Incident Response Guide
- Internal Emergency Plans
- External Emergency Plans

5.5 Relevant standards and indicators

UK Resilience Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 13, 14, 15

Indicators of Good Practice: 1B, 3B, 3E

British and International Standards: BS 31000, BS 31111, BS 65000

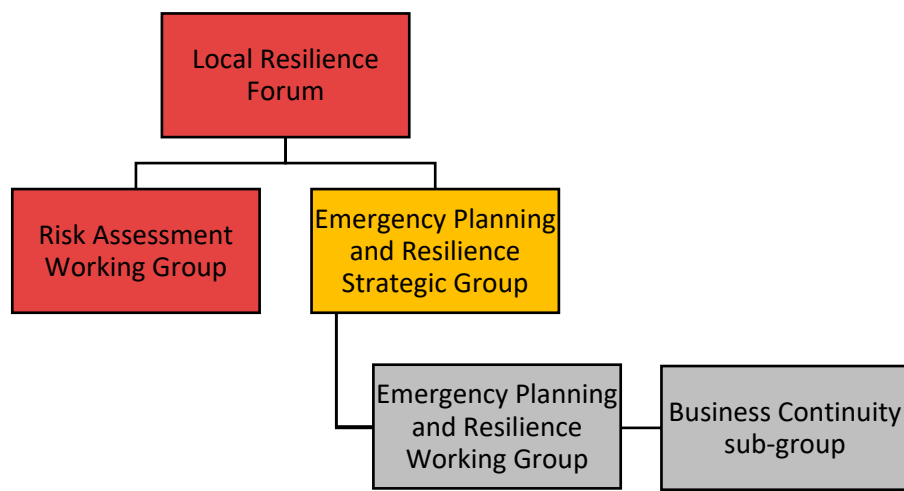
6.0 Business Continuity: Structure and Organisation



6.1 Overview

Under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004, the Council, as a Category 1 responder, commits to undertake Business Continuity Management (BCM) to ensure continued operation of services during an emergency. BCM is a process by which the organisation or service area can prepare for a disruptive incident which is likely to create a gap in normal business provision.

6.2 Structure



6.3 Policy

Unlike the other 3 working areas within Civil Contingencies, Business Continuity has a Strategic Level policy, and a Tactical level Business Continuity Programme. The BCI Good Practice Guidelines 2018 indicate that a Business Continuity Management policy should always be set and approved by top management, as such, the Policy document within SCC is a Strategic level document, with a Business Continuity Programme providing the fine detail of how Business Continuity will be implemented below this.

6.4 Business Continuity documents

- Business Continuity Plans
- Business Continuity Handbook
- Business Impact Assessments

6.5 Relevant standards and indicators

UK Resilience Standards: 9, 10

Indicators of Good Practice: 1C, 1E, 3B

British and International Standards: ISO 22301, BS65000, BS 11200, BS 31000

7.0 Review cycle, Performance Monitoring and Recording

7.1 Performance Monitoring and Recording

The Assistant Director for Corporate Operations & CCU maintain a comprehensive work programme and updates the Council on its delivery as follows:

- The Lead Elected Member for Civil Contingencies, when requested
- The Lead Director responsible for Civil Contingencies, when requested
- The EPRSG, on a monthly basis
- The EPRWG, on a quarterly basis
- Internal audit, when requested
- Scrutiny by any Member, when requested

7.2 Document review cycle

	Review cycle	Approved by
Civil Contingencies Policy	2 years	Cabinet
SCC Risk Register	Live document	n/a
Business Continuity Policy	2 years	Cabinet
Training and Exercising Policy	3 years	SLT / Corporate Governance Working Group
Emergency Planning Policy	3 years	SLT / Corporate Governance Working Group
Response and Recovery Policy	3 years	SLT / Corporate Governance Working Group
Business Continuity Programme	3 years	SLT / Corporate Governance Working Group

Staffordshire County Council

Business Continuity Management Policy

Version 1 (December 2023)

Version Control

Version	Author	Details	Date
V0 – V05	Karen Poyser (CCU) & Chris Ebberley	Draft Copies prior to formal approval	Jan - Sept 2023
V06	Karen Poyser (CCU) & Chris Ebberley	EPRWG feedback	28/08/2023
V07	Karen Poyser (CCU) & Chris Ebberley	CGWG feedback	23/10/2023
V08	Karen Poyser (CCU) & Chris Ebberley	SLT feedback	27/11/2023
1	Karen Poyser (CCU) & Chris Ebberley	Cabinet approval	

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Any enquiries or updates in reference to these arrangements should be directed to the Civil Contingencies Unit at ccu@staffordshirefire.gov.uk.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Staffordshire County Council (SCC) is an Upper Tier Local Authority and is classed as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Category 1 responders are those organisations at the core of emergency response (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies). Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Staffordshire County Council therefore has wide ranging obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act, and as such has statutory requirements to ensure that certain arrangements, planning and policies are in place.

This policy sits at the highest level of documents as shown below, and outlines the Council's approach to ensuring it has robust Business Continuity Management in place to ensure the continued Day to Day running of critical services in the event of an incident that affects the Council's Business as Usual operations.



2.0 Policy

2.1 Policy

2.1.1 Business Continuity is a key contributor to effective corporate governance and helps interested parties to ask searching questions around:

- a. Resilience of the council's business and operating model
- b. Key products and services
- c. Key dependencies including priority assets and processes
- d. How the council would respond to a loss or threat to any of these
- e. Main threats today and in the future
- f. Evidence that continuity plans work in practice

2.1.2 Staffordshire County Council (SCC) policy is to maintain the continuity of its activities, systems, facilities and processes and where these are disrupted by any event, to enable it to return to 'normal' operations as soon as possible. Taking full account of the impact of any delay on SCC's quality of service, reputation and finances.

2.1.3 This policy is intended to ensure:

- a. The concept of Business continuity, policy and approach are understood by all employees and stakeholders.
- b. Internal and external dependencies on customers, suppliers, partners and resource implications are identified.
- c. Service level plans are then consolidated into a directorate plan (where appropriate), which in turn informs the whole council plan.
- d. All plans are developed to ensure recovery continuity is assured to an acceptable level in the event of an interruption to services.
- e. Plans are regularly reviewed and systematically tested.
- f. A programme of training and communication is put in place.

3.0 Objectives

The objectives of business continuity planning are to ensure that SCC:

- a) Understands its prioritised activities and maintains the capability to resume operations within agreed timeframes, following the deployment of a contingency planning response.
- b) Increases resilience by protecting prioritised assets and data (electronic and otherwise) through a co-ordinated approach to management and recovery.
- c) Minimises impacts using a focused, well-managed response activity.

4.0 Scope

All SCC activities and services wherever conducted, must comply with the requirements of this Policy.

5.0 Requirements

5.1 SCC requirements:

- a) Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as top management hold the responsibility to recover generic facilities, corporately managed systems and central data security but each team leader, service manager and Assistant Director hold the responsibility to ensure that plans are maintained, updated and validated in conjunction with each other to ensure no information is lost as part of each consolidation exercise and;
- b) The maintenance of an Incident Response Guide, with Response and Recovery Guides to guide the team on the recovery from major incidents which are wider than operational disruption, including call out arrangements and operational requirements. This Business Continuity Policy & Business Continuity Toolkit have been developed to support the writing of Business Continuity Plans, with a plan being subject to testing at least bi-annually;

- c) SLT, Wider Leadership Team (WLT) and Emergency Planning & Resilience Working Group (EPRWG) to support service areas in carrying out a business impact analysis (BIA) and setting parameters on acceptable recovery times for each, including mitigating actions required. Directorate teams are responsible for completing a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in response to their BIA.
- d) Registers, BCP's and BIA's must be reviewed annually by each team leader, service manager and Assistant Director or following invocation of a plan so as to implement any lessons learnt.

In compiling plans due consideration must be given to:

- a) Taking all reasonable measures to prevent and avoid any disruption to normal operations.
- b) Including, where relevant, continuity planning and resilience implications in all process, project, change and system developments.
- c) Making advance arrangements for the recovery of infrastructure components (e.g. accommodation, transport, telecommunications, equipment and supplies).
- d) Making advance arrangements to re-locate or re-organise operations to allow critical processes to continue.
- e) Providing resilience for information systems and data, or alternative ways of working in the event of their failure. All new systems and processes to be in line with Policy.
- f) Protecting staff, members, visitor and third-party health, safety and wellbeing during and following an incident.
- g) Ensuring the effectiveness of plans and recovery arrangements through robust and regular testing and training. Consider at what point recovery arrangements need to be implemented.
- h) Updating plans following significant changes to contingency planning requirements. Such changes may occur as part of organisation structural change, planning and management.
- i) Ensure resilience by using alternative communication channels such as phone, email and social media to contact staff, learners and stakeholders.
- j) Use of cloud-based business critical systems ensures resilience by limiting down time of systems and accessed anyway with Wi-Fi or 4G/5G tethering.
- k) ICT will support the recovery time objectives and ensure they are streamlined across the organisation in accordance with ICT Business objectives with any hosted systems
- l) All commissioned and contracted services must be considered as part of a team level BIA to ensure that there is supply chain resilience with the organisation. The responsibility for this sits with relevant service manager and Assistant Director.

6.0 Approval and review

Business Continuity Policy approved by Cabinet and will be update every 2 years, unless there is reason for an update (e.g. Change in Legislation/ Guidance).

7.0 Business Continuity documents

- Business Continuity Plans
- Business Continuity Toolkit
- Business Impact Assessments

8.0 Relevant standards and indicators

8.1 UK Resilience Standards: 9, 10

8.2 Indicators of Good Practice: 1C, 1E, 3B

8.3 British and International Standards: ISO 22313, 22317, 22301, 22318, 22331,22332, 22361, 31000 BS65000, BS 11200, BS 31000

8.4 Relevant Groups:

- a) Local Resilience Forum
- b) Risk Assessment Working Group
- c) Emergency Planning and Resilience Strategic Group
- d) Emergency Planning and Resilience Working Group
- e) Business Continuity sub-group

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Progress Update



Councillor Alan White, Leader of the Council said,

“This is a question of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for residents across the county as well as within the county council.

“Our work so far demonstrates ways we successfully help people join our communities and find employment, and we are committed to continuing this progress.”

Report Summary:

This report and the attached Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Plan reviews our progress in 2023 and provides proposed areas of focus for 2024 to further strengthen our approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion both within the organisation and across Staffordshire.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- 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.

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Progress Update

Recommendations of the Leader of the Council

I recommend that Cabinet:

- 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 Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

Background

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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 1st 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.

4. 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.
5. Progress against the action 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.
6. A draft of this EDI progress report was discussed with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 18 December 2023. The Committee noted both the progress made to deliver against the Council's EDI principles, objectives and delivery plan and the Council's Gender Pay Gap and Workforce Profile report.
7. The Committee requested that work experience for care leavers be encouraged with partners. The Committee also requested further information on the employment broker service which has been provided.

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.

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.

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

9. 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 as a key focus for this year.
10. 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 1st 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 1st 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 last 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. Throughout 2023, 1424 members of staff completed the current e-learning which is an increase from 813 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. 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%.
11. 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:
 - 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 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.
12. 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.

13. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. **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.

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. 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.
22. 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.

23. **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.
24. A senior 'sponsor' has been identified to participate and represent the Council in the Integrated Care System **Workforce Race Equality Standard Champions programme (WRES)**. 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.
25. 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:
 - a. 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.

- b. Increase confidence among colleagues in talking about race.
- c. Create a greater understanding of shared lived experiences.
- d. Support in the development of allies.
- e. Enhance the understanding of accountability for race equity.
- f. Influence career development opportunities for under-represented groups.

26. 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:

- a. Women in leadership - promoting fairness and opportunity for women in the workforce
- b. Multi-cultural leadership and Multi-cultural network – supporting black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups
- c. Wellbeing network – promoting physical/mental wellbeing, supported by our network of Wellbeing Ambassadors and Mental Health First Aiders
- d. Inclusion network – supporting diversity/inclusion in our business via our network of Inclusion Ambassadors
- e. Neurodiversity network – supporting neurological differences in our employees, such as autism, Asperger's syndrome and learning difficulties etc
- f. PRIDE network – supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans individuals
- g. Armed Forces network, supporting services leavers and veterans
- h. STEM Ambassador network – allowing staff to inspire young people to pursue engineering careers and STEM fields

27. 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

28. 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.
29. Set out below are a number of proposed areas of focus for 2024/25.
30. 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.
31. Continue to improve the **recording of protected characteristics** in MyHR, which will in turn improve the accuracy of our workforce profile and enable the targeted recruitment and improvement of employment policies that will enhance the diversity of our workforce and reduce the gender pay gap.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. 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.

35. 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.
36. 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.
37. 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.
38. 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 more early career and entry level opportunities.
39. 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.
40. 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.
41. **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.

42. 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.
43. **Staffordshire Highways Strategic Partnership** will sustain and further develop EDI opportunities, building a new plan for 2024-29, including:
 - a. Continue to work with the Social Care Leavers Team to provide opportunities for vulnerable and looked after children;
 - b. Continue to work with 'open door' providing opportunities for those facing barriers to employment; and
 - c. Each year run at least 2 'journey to work' events around Staffordshire providing rewarding career opportunities in highways and infrastructure for local people
44. 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

45. 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.
46. The EDI action plan is overseen by the Leader of the Council and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services.
47. 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

48. 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.

Legal Implications

49. Paragraph 3 of this report outlines the Council's legal requirements. The progress of the EDI delivery plan set out in this report, and the adoption of the proposed Principles and Objectives will contribute towards meeting our legal requirements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

50. Should any further budget be required to support EDI activities this will be sourced from local service budgets or a business case will be prepared to request further investment.

Climate Change Implications

51. Although there are no direct climate change implications resulting as a result of the recommendations set out within this report, it is recognised that there may be indirect impacts, the service will work to reduce any impacts that are identified as part of a wider commitment to tackling climate change.

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
Community Impact Assessment

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>1.1 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"> • Roll out the Employer Brand proposition • Embed employer brand through a range of communications activity that promotes the county council as a diverse employer • EDI Steering Group representative on the Applicant Tracking System project stakeholder group • Monitor diversity of workforce via the annual workforce profile report 	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>1.2 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"> • Review of wider diverse employment promotion opportunities • Pilot and embed any new recruitment channels in our recruitment process • Monitor diversity of workforce via the annual workforce profile report 	Ongoing	<p>New promotion opportunities identified and embedded in the Council’s recruitment approaches</p>
<p>1.3 Ensure our recruitment processes and procedures provide an equitable, inclusive, and accessible experience for all candidates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Ensure a robust and consistent process is in place to capture new hires onboarding experiences 	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>1.4 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"> • Refresh the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy, as part of the Big 5 Policies project 	Ongoing	<p>Policy launched and timely communications delivered</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch and promote new policy across the organisation, through a range of internal communication activities • Develop clear approach to measure its impact, including identifying any relevant benchmarks 		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
2.1 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"> • Deliver a range of communications during 2023 that celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion • 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 • Consider the potential delivery of an EDI campaign 	Ongoing	<p>Effective delivery of key communications, aligned with key dates</p> <p>Future communications informed by key workforce</p>
2.2 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"> • Refresh of current EDI web pages to strengthen and update content • 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 • Monitor and evaluate impact of new EDI intranet pages 	Complete	<p>Increase in number accessing EDI intranet pages</p> <p>Positive feedback on impact of supporting guidance and materials</p>
2.3 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"> • Analyse data and use this to inform strategy development and future planning 	Ongoing	Insights directly inform EDI action planning

<p>2.4 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"> • Review of good practice to inform toolkit development • Produce first draft toolkit, for feedback from the EDI Steering Group and consultees • Launch and communicate final toolkit on EDI StaffSpace • Ongoing provision of corporate advice and support in the establishment of new staff forums, as required 	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Staff forum groups are active and positively contributing to the Council's plans</p>
<p>2.5 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"> • Review national and local examples of community engagement good practice and approaches, including working with Public Health to use the learning of Community Champions • Develop draft toolkit, guidance and supporting materials informed by learning and engagement of key stakeholders • Test and shape first draft with key stakeholders • Refine and secure sign off through appropriate governance channels • Launch and embed across the organisation 	<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>2.6 Improve the completion of protected characteristic data by staff, to better understand the profile of our workforce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce plan of activity to improve completion of data • Promotion of data input pages on MyHR – new tile and banner on landing page • Targeted emails to leaders reinforcing the importance of employee self completion 	<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"> • Explore opportunity to gather and migrate this data at application stage, via the Applicant Tracking System project • Explore option to opt-out of declaring sensitive information 		
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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
3.1 Provide meaningful work experience opportunities to people from diverse / under-represented groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure demographics of Open-Door candidates is captured and monitored • Early Careers programme opportunities are expanded to reach diverse and under-represented groups (e.g. Enterprise Adviser volunteers, Jobs and Careers newsletters and internet) • 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) 	Ongoing	Aligned with existing programme measures
3.2 Use apprenticeships to provide nationally recognised work-based qualifications to people from diverse / under-represented backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an Apprenticeship Strategy, ensuring nationally recognised work-based qualifications are available to people from diverse and under-represented backgrounds • 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 	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"> • Develop the specification for a new EDI mandatory training module and a module for hiring managers on providing accessible and inclusive recruitment • Continue to develop internal and external resources, to support self-directed and team led learning • Build in a feedback channel to understand the impact of the development offer • Respond to and complete the EDI Training Audit action • Commission a new product(s) to support recruiters, and review impact following launch 	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>

Page 2

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"> • Explore linkages with the System Wide EDI Forum mentoring programme, to ensure the Council can put forward candidates for the initial programme • Promote the scheme internally 	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"> • Council's EDI Steering Group and possible Black Workers Forum representation on system level EDI forums • Develop and ensure a regular communication mechanism is in place between the EDI Steering Group and system level EDI forums 	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"> Share draft with EDI Steering Group for consideration Ensure final suggested risk wording, shaped by the EDI Steering Group, is passed back for entry into the new risk system 	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"> Agree format of EDI delivery plan Identify leads, interdependencies, inputs, outcomes and success measures for each action Monitor progress and written progress update report to Cabinet in December 2022 	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>
Understand light touch assessment against EFLG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess EDI delivery plan against LGA EFLG Review Delivery Plan 	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"> Seek comment from EDI Steering Group members Sign-off Terms of Reference 	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"> EDI Steering Group to consider options as part of the development of the 2023/24 plan. 	Ongoing	
Ensure CIAs consider intersectional protected characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing CIA guidance and supporting materials to understand any gaps Refine and publish tweaked CIA guidance and supporting materials 	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">• Conversations with delivery leads identify key measures of success• Alignment of key measures with any existing plans	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.

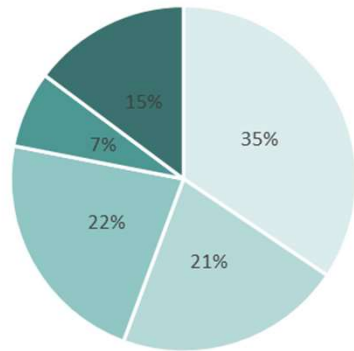
All figures for the 2022-2023 financial year are taken as at 01/01/2023.



Overview

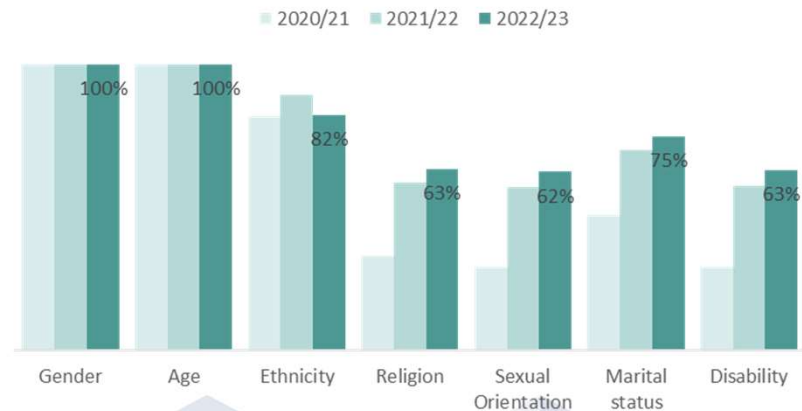
- The structure of the Council has changed over the last year, with a number of staff transferring in from other employers, and a new Directorate being created. As at the 1st January 2023, SCC employed people in 4,226 contracts across 5 directorates, *Finance* being the smallest, and *Children and Families* 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

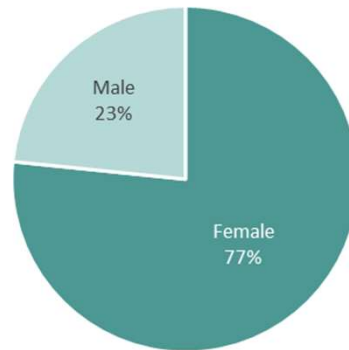
Completion rates by characteristic



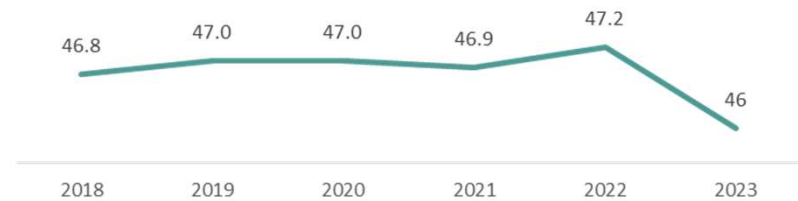
- Please note that although the Council works with a number of partner organisations to deliver its services, particularly in the adult social care sector, the figures in this report only cover those people directly employed by SCC

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

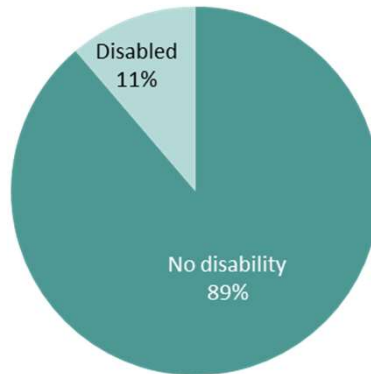


- The County Council's age profile has remained stable since 2009, and currently 28% of staff are aged 39 or under, 25% are aged 40-49, 32% are aged 50-59, and the remaining 14% are aged 60 or over
- The average age of the workforce has fallen over the last year to 46, although the male workforce continues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



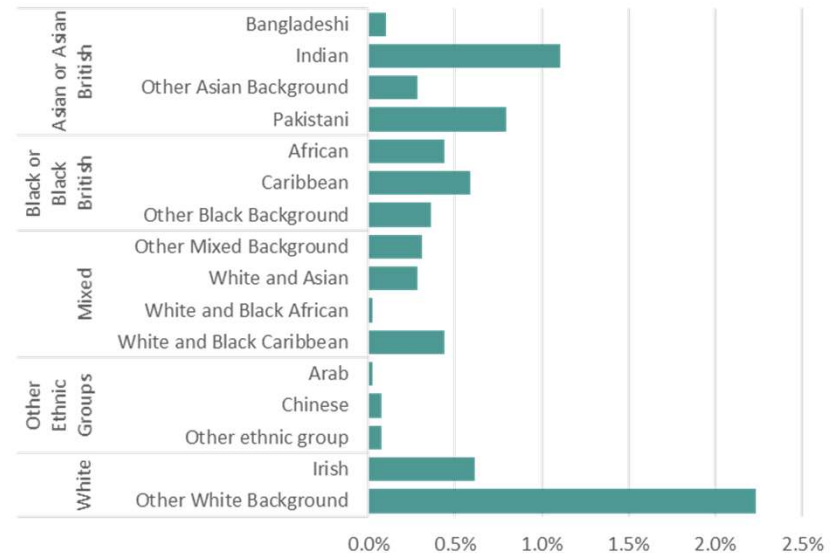
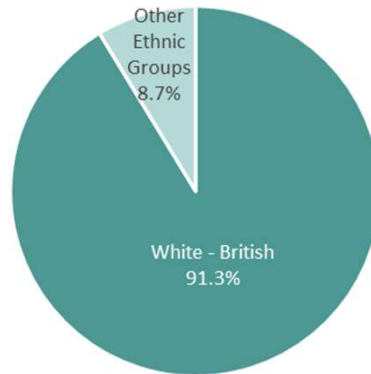
- Information on religion or belief is now held for 63% of staff – 2,672 people - which represents an increase of 8% from last year



- 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

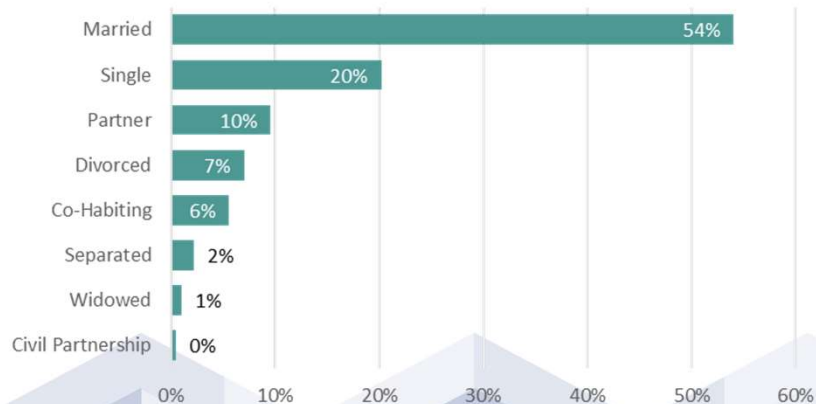
- Ethnicity information is now held for 82% of staff – 3,471 people. Although the number of records held is virtually unchanged from last year, the larger workforce means that in real terms this represents a fall of 8%
- 8.7% of the known workforce are from ethnic backgrounds other than White – British,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



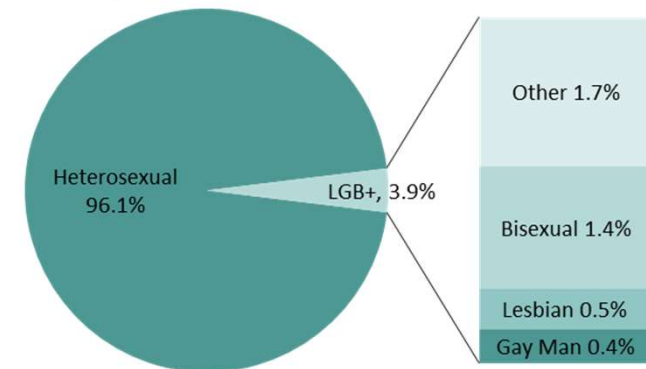
- Previous analysis against data from the 2011 Census has shown that our workforce is broadly representative of the wider Staffordshire population, and this will be refreshed as more detailed information from the 2021 census becomes available

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



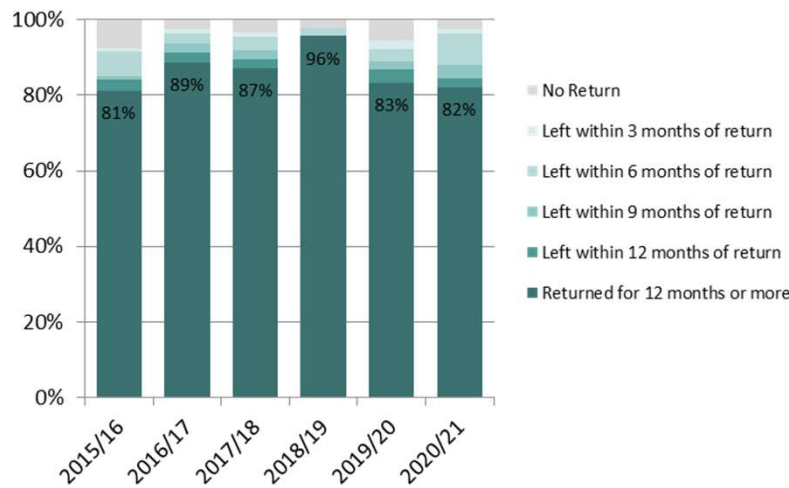
- Information on sexual orientation is now held for 62% of staff – 2,635 people - which represents an increase of 10% from last year



- 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:

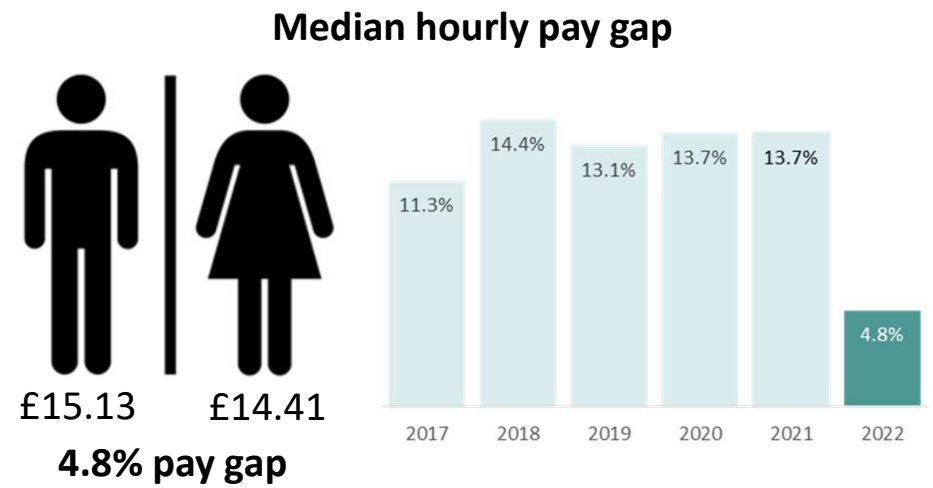
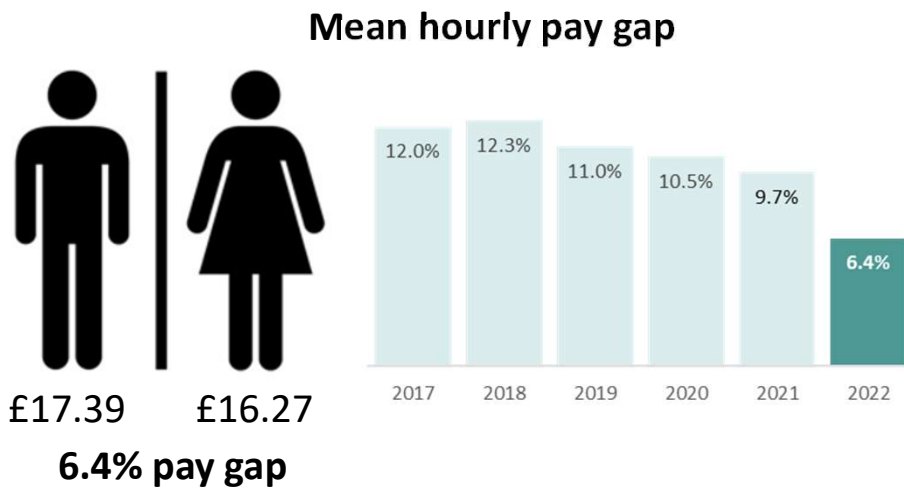
- ✓ Gender pay gap (mean and median values)
- ✓ Gender bonus gap (mean and median values)
- ✓ Proportion of men and women receiving bonuses
- ✓ Proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure.

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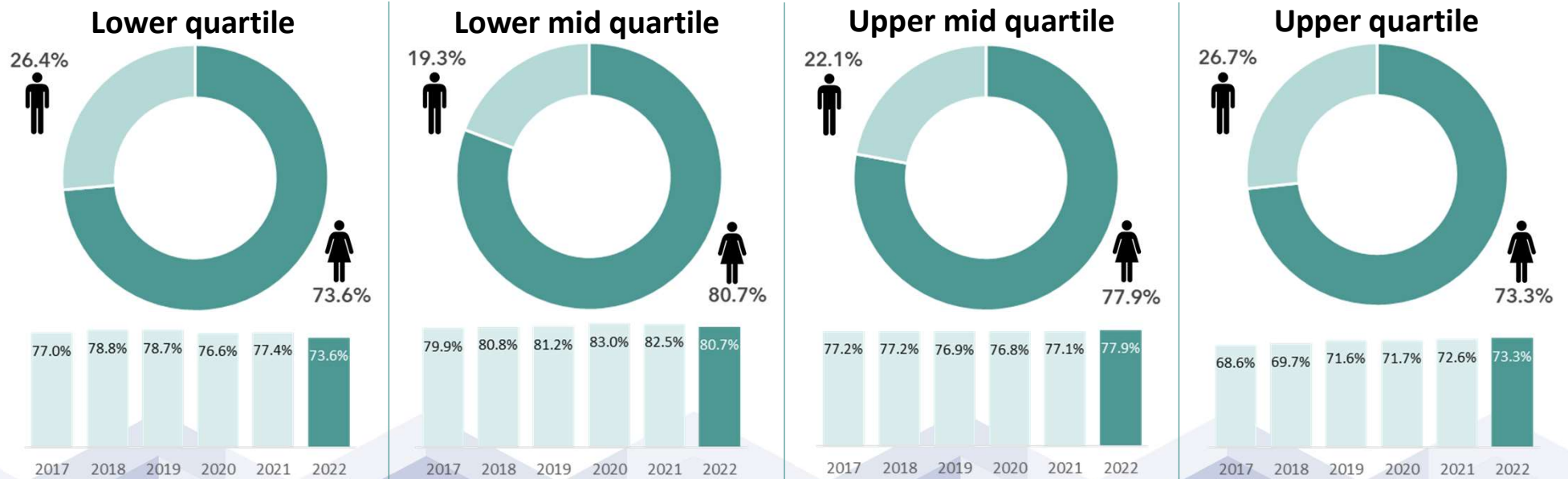
- Our bonus pay gap is now zero, with no staff receiving bonus payments in the last 12 months

*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.

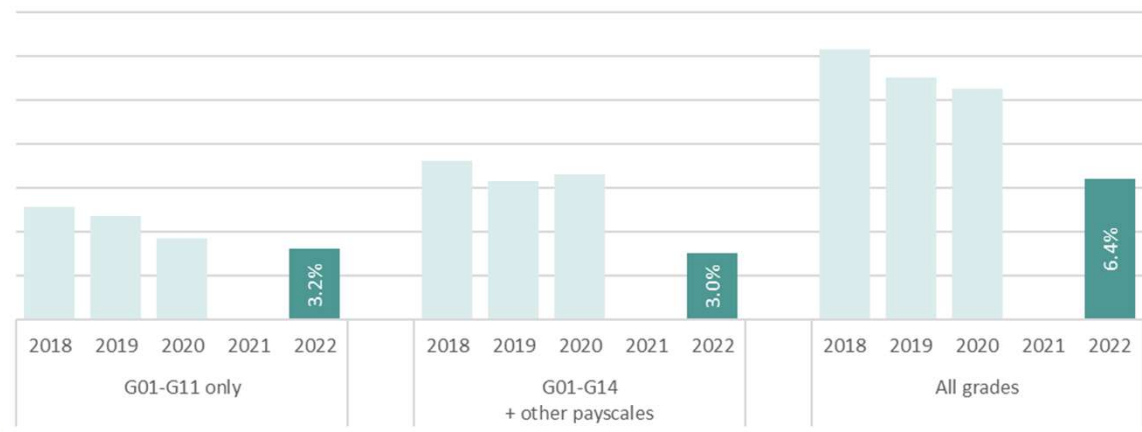
Gender pay gap by directorate

- 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

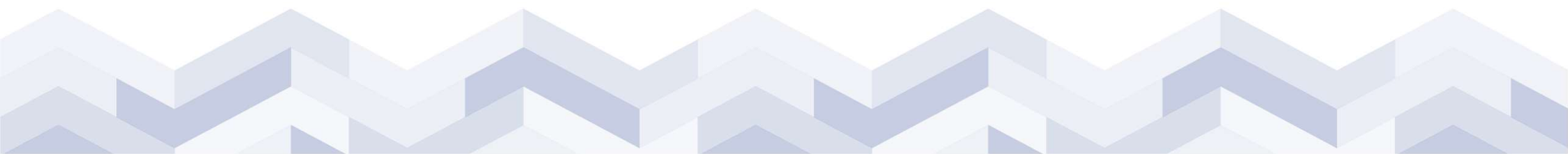
- Previous work to understand our gender pay gap has shown that the gap is relatively narrow for employees within grades 1 to 11, then increases as more senior employees are included
- This year's data shows a median pay gap of 3.0% up to and including G14 – the improvement here being largely due to 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: Sarah Getley, Assistant Director for People

Date: 21 February 2024

➤ **Equality Assessment**

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Page 234</p> <p>Cross-cutting – 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 undertaken and continue to progress as set out within the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthening our employment promotion and recruitment processes to enable a more diverse workforce 	<p>Delivery of the EDI action 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 action plan is undertaken. Quarterly performance monitoring is overseen by the EDI Steering Group, with any stalled actions discussed at regular meetings.</p> <p>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
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - strengthening our approach to engaging and collaborating with our workforce and communities on diversity to raise awareness and enable shared shaping of policies and services, and - strengthening our training offer to employees. 		
Age - older and younger people	See cross-cutting benefits identified in first row above.	See cross-cutting risks identified in first row above.	See cross-cutting mitigations / recommendations identified in first row above.
Disability - 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.			
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another			
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work			

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
<p>Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers</p>			
<p>Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins</p>			
<p>Religion or Belief - 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>Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes</p>			
<p>Sex - 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</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
	which ensures equal pay, however, there is a difference between the average hourly pay of men and women across our entire workforce and steps are being taken to reduce this.		

Workforce Assessment

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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	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	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 action 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>range of initiatives and activities that are set out within the EDI action plan. With further detail in the EDI action 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>	<p>engagement in EDI activities/initiatives.</p>	

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

Key considerations	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Work to strengthen the Council's approach to EDI includes broad cross-cutting actions/activity relating to health and well-being.	Further strengthening the EDI approach, and helping to promote diversity and inclusion with a view to also reducing inequalities across Staffordshire has potential to have a positive impact upon people's health and well-being.	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.

➤ Communities Assessment

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Work to strengthen the Council's approach to EDI includes broad cross-cutting actions/activity that will reduce inequalities and engage and empower communities to ensure everyone has the opportunity to prosper and be healthy and happy.	Strengthening the Council's approach to Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion will have positive impacts on our communities. This includes work that the County Council undertakes to deliver against its Equalities duties, together with a range of initiatives	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.

Key consideration	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	<p>and activities that are set out within the EDI action plan. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enhancing our employment promotion and recruitment processes to achieve more diverse candidates - improving quality and reach of engagement activity and - expanding the reach of our work experience/apprenticeship opportunities. 		

➤ **Economic 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 improve the diversity of the workforce and enable Staffordshire residents to improve their skills and qualifications</p>	<p>Further strengthening our recruitment and retention processes to promote diversity and inclusion will benefit both the organisation, its workforce</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>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.</p>		

Climate Change Assessment

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

Environment Assessment

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

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

Procurement of Gas Supplies



Councillor Mark Deaville, Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters said,

“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.

“The awarding of this new contract from 2025 to 2029 ensures we will get a competitive agreement for the public purse.”

Report Summary:

The objective of the report is to establish support for the procurement direction and award of the supply of the gas contract, by utilising Crown Commercial Services (CCS) energy framework and their flexible purchasing model to gain the best value and volume for the purchase of gas, from the supplier Total Energies Gas & Power Limited for the period 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2029.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. 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 using the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework.

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

Procurement of Gas Supplies

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. 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 using the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. The objective of the report is to establish approval for the future supply arrangements of gas to gain the best value by utilising the CCS energy framework and their flexible purchasing model. The framework has a single supplier, Total energies gas & power limited.
2. Within the public-sector arena, energy procurement has been a focus for central purchasing bodies (referred to as consortiums or public sector buying organisations) throughout the UK. These bodies offer aggregated volume based flexible pricing procurement routes and are Public Contract Regulations (PCR) 2015 compliant.
3. There has also been a strong drive from the UK Government Energy Project board to utilise such Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs), all of which were reviewed as part of market research. Energy market conditions have presented several challenges in the supply and delivery of these type of contracts over the past 24 months, and all CPBs and in particular CCS have adapted to the changes in the market.
4. The annual value of the gas usage is currently an estimated £2.4 million per annum for corporate properties and maintained schools for 2024/5. The framework also allows for partners such as Police and Fire, Academies and District councils to utilise it. For 2024/5 this spend is estimated at circa £5m, with academies accounting for £4m. This is

therefore a high-profile category for the Council due to the financial impact.

5. The amount of Gas purchased is based on data showing previous demand, but there is no contractual obligation to a set volume purchase. CCS have a dedicated account management team who review and monitor the market and liaise with the supplier (Total energies gas & power limited) to identify the optimal purchasing window. Volume is then purchased in varying amounts across the basket period creating a consistent pricing approach for all customers. This allows CCS to take advantage of minor movement in current markets and pass these benefits on to customers, but also protects customers from spikes in gas volume trading. It is noted however that current trading conditions are still extremely volatile, and purchases are primarily made to secure volume where possible whilst this volatility continues.
6. To provide an example (at the time of writing: 19/12/2023)* the typical CCS Framework Gas Rate has recently changed to 4.06p/kWh, if the Council were to move onto a standard non-contracted deemed tariff, then this would rise to 6.25p per kWh, with suppliers able to change this at any given moment. This would represent a significant cost increase and risk.

*Rates are currently fluctuating daily, and market volatility continues to impact on unit rates significantly.
7. Following a framework comparison, it is the recommendation of the Council's Commercial team and Entrusts Energy Management team that the Council move from YPO (Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation) to CCS Energy Flexible purchasing framework for the period 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2029.
8. SCC are required to serve notice with YPO 12 months prior to the end date of the contract. Hence the dates in this report.
9. Crown Commercial Services (CCS) is a UK-wide procurement organisation providing a broad range of solutions, including energy services, to public sector entities.
10. Alternative framework offers for Gas exist, such as from Yorkshire Purchasing Organization, Eastern Shires Purchasing organisation, Laser Energy and West Mercia Energy all of which offer a framework provision for Gas.
11. CCS sets itself apart by offering tailored procurement frameworks for energy services, designed to streamline the process for public sector

entities, ensuring efficiency and flexibility. CCS also have a significant public sector customer base, team of dedicated risk analysts, and have recently published information which included data showing that during the energy crisis they required no government assistance as the rates procured had been below the energy cap for Gas. This gives assurance and confidence in CCS.

12. Alternative options of a specific procurement of our own is not recommended. There is a considerable resource overhead in conducting the procurement and then operating it that will not be returned via a different service level or cheaper prices. It would present potential significant additional risks in terms of the volume purchasing decisions. The council would need to secure considerable additional skills for itself that we can access via the CCS framework.
13. Spot purchases, either ourselves or via a broker, are not recommended by LGA and government guidance which clearly indicates utilising a collaborative procurement approach.

Legal Implications

14. The tendering process completed by CCS complies with the PCR 2015 and was advertised and awarded in accordance with the regulations.
15. Partner organisations will be required to complete an access agreement establishing the commitment to the framework and supply contract terms.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

16. Current energy market trading conditions are extremely volatile, and purchases are made to secure volume where possible whilst this volatility continues. Gas prices increased by around 400 – 500% from winter 2022 to spring 2023. However, the trend has now started to decrease significantly, and markets have continued to stabilise.
17. There are projections which are provided by Total energies gas & power limited along with market trend information from the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM). Current purchasing strategies have shifted from securing unit rate and volume discounts to a necessity to secure volume to ensure supply. In addition, CCS have developed (following recent world events) an extremely robust risk profiling model for the purchasing of energy to ensure any trades meet a series of purchasing markers prior to the volume being committed.

Climate Change Implications

18. The council has a commitment to carbon reduction and reaching net zero by 2050. There are programmes of work to reduce energy consumption and the use of gas as a source of heat. However, the phasing out of gas heating will take time and considerable investment and in the meantime a cost efficient supply mechanism remains an essential requirement of the council.
19. The framework has enhanced provisions for sleeving power purchase agreements (PPAs).
20. PPAs allow you to buy green energy directly from renewable generators, which can be secured with long term, fixed prices. The opportunity to purchase a percentage of green energy Gas using the PPA process, can be explored upon the authorisation to proceed. There will be an additional cost to this, which will be calculated at the point of application and a partial purchase approach may not be possible due to the nature of the commodity (Gas).
21. It should be noted that Green Gas is subject to limited availability and usually demands a large additional premium.
22. Any future change over the purchase of Green Gas would be subject to a further formal decision.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Gas Sourcing Strategy 2024

Appendix 2 - Report of energy sourcing options by FPA Consulting Ltd

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Ian Turner | Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets

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Job Title: Head of Corporate Assets
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Sourcing Strategy (v13.12.22)

Contract for the Supply of Gas and Associated Services

CONTRACT REFERENCE IA2983

Author

Matt Sutton

Date

January 2024

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Scope and Objectives of Activity

The contract will consist of the supply of Gas volume for corporate and school use. With the option for use by the Fire / Police and Academies.

1.2 Current Operations and Process

The current arrangement is through YPO (Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation) contracted with Corona Energy Ltd, with the term being 01st April 2021 to 01st April 2025. All Energy Contracts require a 12 month prior notice of termination.

1.3 Current Spend and Volume

The anticipated annual value of the corporate gas usage is currently £2 million per annum. This is a high-profile category for the Council due to the financial impact. The Councils procurement also provides for schools and Fire / Police to purchase gas at £2.4m pa.

1.4 Anticipated Spend and Volume

The anticipated annual value of the corporate gas usage is currently estimated to be £2.3 - £2.5 million per annum, (however this is thoroughly dependant upon the market and unit rates). This is more difficult to estimate for schools and the Fire and Police.

1.5 Strategy Development Team / Stakeholders

Client Lead – Ian Turner (Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets)

Client Lead – Lee Wells (Head of Corporate Assets)

Technical support – David Bates (Energy Consultant & Team Leader)

Procurement support – Matt Sutton (Senior Procurement Manager)

As this procurement will be over £2 million it is being referred to council Cabinet for decision. In addition, the Deputy Chief Executive & Director for Corporate Services is also being kept updated.

1.6 Market Place Activity

Within the public sector arena, energy procurement has been a focus for central purchasing bodies (referred to as consortiums or public sector buying organizations) throughout the UK.

This has become even more focused given the recent impact of the crisis in the energy markets relating to world events and placed even more emphasis on the importance of these frameworks for the local government authorities.

These bodies offer aggregated volume based flexible pricing procurement routes and are PCR compliant. There has also been a strong drive by from the UK Government Energy Project board to utilize such Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs) such as YPO, Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and Eastern Shire Purchasing Organisation, all of which were reviewed as part of market research.

1.6.2 Pre-Market Engagement (PME) / Early Supplier Involvement

Staffordshire County Council engaged FPA Consulting to provide and produce a review of Staffordshire County Councils current energy position, pre market assessment and options. This report is appended to this document.

Framework offers for Gas exist, from organisations such as from Crown Commercial Services (CCS), Eastern Shires Purchasing organisation, Laser Energy and West Mercia Energy all of which offer a framework provision for Gas and have been reviewed prior to the recommendation in this document.

1.7 Specification/operational process

This is a high-profile category to SCC and stakeholders due to financial impact. The category can also be classed as contentious due to the SCC user and general public awareness of the volatility of the markets, underpinned by the domestic market understanding.

Historically SCC and Entrust Energy Management have conducted a call off from a consortium contract based on flexible volume procurement.

There is a strong drive in the public market place that flexible purchasing of volume can produce savings compared to that of fixed purchasing. Between 2018 and 2020 public sector organisations that were operating on flexible framework agreements delivered on average 2.8% cost reduction against average wholesale market price. Consortiums with flexible solutions can facilitate aggregation of demand and can also mix flexible and fixed purchasing models which brings the benefits of both approaches if appropriate.

A flexible purchasing model provides the opportunity to be more reactive to changes in energy markets, purchasing small amounts of volume throughout the year and not fixing large volumes at any particular prices. Thus, this allows the purchasing of volume to take advantage of price drops, however it must be carefully managed to ensure volume is purchased little and often during the purchasing period.

Fixed price procurement is where a price is fixed for the length of the contract and not subject to any energy price increase or decreases. It may be subject to other element increases use of system, standing charges and, transportation charges however.

1.8 Environmental / Climate Change / Digital Strategy

Regarding renewable Gas provision, consortiums have enhanced provisions for sleeving power purchase agreements (PPAs)

PPAs allow you to buy green energy directly from renewable generators, which can be secured with long term, fixed prices. The opportunity to purchase a % percentage of green energy Gas using the PPA process, can be explored upon the authorisation to proceed. There will be an additional cost to this, which will be calculated at the point of application and it must be noted that any PPA would come with a fixed term and fixed cost. It should be noted that Green Gas is subject to limited availability and usually demands a large additional premium. Any future change over the purchase of Green Gas would be subject to a further formal decision.

1.9 Business Continuity

Modifications to the gas supply licences by OFGEM have introduced a new licence condition that requires all suppliers to produce and maintain a Customer Supply Continuity Plan ("CSCP"), which sets out the supplier's strategy for safeguarding the continuity of supply for its customers in the event of its exit from the market.

1.12 Collaboration

Our existing contract for the supply of gas is used by schools, academies and the Fire and Police, moving forward where an organisation such as those listed wish to remain in our supply basket for gas, we will ask for an EOA or access agreement to be signed, documenting these organisations commitment to remain in our supply basket for the full term.

2.0 Sourcing Strategy

2.1 What options are there other than public tendering?

Staffordshire County Council engaged FPA Consulting to provide and produce a review of Staffordshire County Councils current energy position and pre market assessment and options. This report is appended to this document and provides details of alternative options available.

However, for purposes of this report it is noted these options are:

- **Collaborate with other Public Sector Organisations**
This would create considerable work, which would not be beneficial as the consolidated values of other organisations would not impact the unit rates provided. By joining a consortium framework, we will be included in a purchasing basket which includes other public sector organisations.
- **Utilise alternative Public Procurement Frameworks**
This is the preferred option and we have explored available frameworks, which has identified CCS as the most appropriate framework supplier.
- **The Council creates its own Framework Arrangements**
Staffordshire County Council do not have the resource to adopt this approach.
- **Partner with a single Energy Supplier**
- *This would be subject to the Councils procurement regulations which would require an SLT business case and cabinet approval for this direct award approach.*
- **Engage a Third-Party Intermediary (e.g. Utility Broker)**
- *Staffordshire County Council utilise the services of Entrust Energy Services who offer Energy advice, employment of a broker may add additional cost to the unit rates and often deals provided are short term, fixed and without further support.*

2.2 Recommended Option

From consideration of the options provided above, the only viable option is the use of an alternative Public Procurement Framework.

Following a framework comparison, it is the recommendation of the Council's Commercial team and Entrusts Energy Management team that the Council move from YPO (Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation) to CCS (Crown Commercial Services) Energy and one of their Flexible purchasing framework baskets for the period 1st April 2025 until 31st March 2029. SCC are required to serve notice with YPO 12 months prior to the end date of the contract (by March 2024).

The objective of the report is to establish approval for procurement direction and award of utilising the CCS energy framework and their flexible purchasing model to gain the best value for the purchase of Gas, from the supplier Total energies gas & power limited.

CCS have a dedicated account management team who review and monitor the market and liaise with the supplier (Total energies gas & power limited) to identify the optimal purchasing window. Volume is then purchased in varying amounts across the basket period creating a consistent pricing approach for all customers. This allows CCS to take advantage of minor movement in current markets and pass these benefits on to customers, but also protects customers from spikes in gas volume trading. It is noted however that current trading conditions are still extremely volatile, and purchases are primarily made to secure volume where possible whilst this volatility continues.

To provide an example (at the time of writing) the typical CCS Framework Gas Rate has recently changed to 4.06p/kWh, if the Council were to move onto a standard non-contracted deemed tariff,

then this would rise to 6.25p per kWh, with suppliers able to change this at any given moment. This would represent a significant cost increase and risk.

*Rates are currently fluctuating daily, and market volatility continues to impact on unit rates significantly.

CCS sets itself apart by offering tailored procurement frameworks for energy services, designed to streamline the process for public sector entities, ensuring efficiency and flexibility. CCS also have a significant public sector customer base, team of dedicated risk analysts, and have recently published information which included data showing that during the energy crisis they required no government assistance as the rates procured had been below the energy cap for Gas. This gives assurance and confidence in CCS.

3.0 Project Management and Implementation

3.1 Risk Assessment

The risks associated with the recommended option are:

Risk: CCS trade at the point of a peak in the market

Probability: Low **Impact:** Medium

Mitigation: CCS have a significant public sector customer base and thus trend data and a team of dedicated risk analysts. This allows significant and detailed monitoring of the markets to mitigate against an imbalanced trend.

Risk: Energy Markets (Gas) are subject to a world event which causes a price shock

Probability: Low / Medium **Impact:** Medium

Mitigation: The mitigation of this is difficult as it is an unprecedented and unpredictable event, however CCS continually monitors the markets and their conditions to note trends and the feedback from the markets to mitigate and spot rises in unit rates where market difficulties occur.

3.3 Savings / Efficiencies / Income

This would not be applicable to energy services.

3.4 Key Performance Indicators ('KPI's) / Performance

This would not be applicable to energy services.

3.5 Contract Implementation

SCC are required to serve notice with YPO 12 months prior to the end date of the contract, this would mean notice would be required to be served by or before the end of March 2024.

3.6 Payment

Payment and management of invoices is managed by Energy Management (Entrust).

4.0 Approval (Cabinet approval being sought)

This Sourcing Strategy is to be agreed by the 'key' stakeholders in the project. Note that approval here also recognises the conflicts of interest as above.

As a minimum, approval advised to be the budget holders, Commissioners/advisers, technical input, Change Team, contract managers and Procurement Advisors (the latter where engaged, mandatory at/over £100k) and evaluators where known in advance. Other reps may also include legal and finance teams.

All to understand to revise / re-approve the Sourcing Strategy where there are fundamental material changes made to it during the procurement process: -

Ian Turner (Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets)

Date: 11/1/24 Signature: 

Lee Wells (Head of Corporate Assets)

Date: ...11/01/2024..... Signature: 

SCC Procurement Advisor (mandatory for agreements at/over £100,000)

Date: 11/01/2024 Signature: 



Review of Procurement Strategy for Electricity and Natural Gas Supply Contract Arrangements

For



Staffordshire County Council

22nd December 2023
(DRAFT)

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Executive Summary

- The Council's Head of Corporate Assets has operational responsibility for the procurement process and strategy for its Electricity & Natural Gas Supply arrangements, with the Council's Assistant Director taking overall responsibility.
- The Council are currently spending circa £29 million per annum on Electricity and Natural Gas supplies for its property portfolio.
- From the analysis of the pricing data received from Entrust Property Services (Entrust) during the last 3-year period it would appear that in the majority of cases the Yorkshire Procurement Organisation (YPO) contract prices secured for the Council were reflective of the average wholesale market prices leading up to the point of contract commencement, although there may have been potential opportunities for the Council to have secured more preferential pricing.
- FPA Consulting Limited (FPA) have been appointed by Staffordshire County Council (the Council) to assist them in determining their future strategy for the purchase of Electricity and Natural Gas supplies.

Included within this report is the following:

- A summary of the current Electricity and Natural Gas Contract arrangements in place between the Council, YPO, Entrust and respective Electricity and Natural Gas suppliers.
- Analysis of the utility supply pricing arrangements secured by YPO (for the purpose of this analysis we have used annual April contract period prices).
- Future Procurement Strategy Considerations and Alternative Procurement Approaches Available to the Council.
- Recommended Next Steps

Report Recommendations

The Council may wish to consider the following summarised recommendations to assist it in managing both its current Contract and also its future strategy for the procurement and ongoing management of Electricity and Natural Gas.

Current Contract

- Given the Council's significant annual spend on electricity and natural gas supplies, it may wish to ensure that a representative is actively involved with YPO to fully and transparently understand its procurement strategy i.e. understand how the energy is being procured.

Whilst there is a level of transparency from YPO via the market update reports provided (since October 2022) it is unclear as to whether:

- What the proportion the Council's energy portfolio represents as a percentage of the overall energy basket which YPO trade.
 - If purchasing decisions made by YPO are in accordance with the Council's price risk management requirements.
 - Regular individual client (the Council) benchmarking of energy procurement arrangements is undertaken by YPO.
- A lead representative from the Council may be beneficial to take ownership for managing the Council's requirements and for chairing internal meetings in order to ensure that the Council has a procurement strategy which delivers the optimum solution against its defined budgets.

Future Procurement Policy and Strategy

- A documented energy procurement policy does not appear to exist and it is recommended that one is drafted and issued with the involvement of all relevant Stakeholders within the Council.
 - The Council should consider the fixed versus flexible pricing arrangements compared to its financial strategy for risk.
 - The Council's Sustainability requirements e.g. credentials of renewable energy products, power purchase agreements or otherwise.
- Regularly undertake a procurement review of which procurement route to market offers best value to the Council, as described in Section 5 of this report i.e.:
 - Remain with YPO
 - Use Alternative Public Procurement Framework
 - The Council creates its own Framework Arrangements
 - Collaborate with other Public Sector Organisations
 - Partner with a single Energy Supplier
 - Engage a Third-Party Intermediary

1. Introduction

1.1. Terms of Reference

FPA Consulting Limited (FPA) were appointed by the Council to assist them in reviewing its recent past utility procurement performance together with offering options for consideration with regard to its future strategy for the purchase of Electricity and Natural Gas supplies.

This report has been prepared by FPA after due and careful enquiry, based on information provided by the Council and its associates.

1.2. Project Team

The report was commissioned by Lee Wells, Head of Corporate Assets for the Council. The data analysis and this report were produced by Matthew Luty of FPA.

1.3. Method of Approach

Information was requested by FPA and subsequently provided by the Council i.e..

- Copy of the Council's Gas Access Agreement with YPO.
- Copy of YPU's Gas User Guide
- Market Trade/Positioning reports from YPO.
- Sample copies of the Council's Utility Supply Contracts.
- Utility expenditure reports from Entrust.

2. Utility Contract Relationships

2.1. Review Findings

- Operational responsibility for these Contracts currently resides with the Council's Head of Corporate Assets, with the Council's Assistant Director taking overall responsibility for the procurement.
- The Council currently employs the services of YPO, a central purchasing body, governed by a consortium of publicly owned county, metropolitan and borough councils in Yorkshire and the North West of England for its utility supply purchasing (electricity and natural gas)

The current arrangement with YPO allows the Council the ability to delegate their procurement responsibility, offering the following features:

- Utilising established YPO frameworks for access to energy markets which are Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015) compliant.

- The Council's volume is aggregated with other participating organisations and prices sought from the Electricity and Natural Gas markets for the total aggregated volume.
- The Council accepts that there are other utility procurement support providers available to them, however the use of YPO as a government backed market aggregator is viewed as an established route to market offering value for money and less requirement for internal resource and expertise.
- The Council pays for access to the YPO framework via a commission-based charging mechanism. FPA have not been provided with these commission recovery values and are therefore unable to calculate the estimated cost of using this service provision.
- The Council have utilised the YPO framework for the past 10 years (for electricity purchases) and since April 2022 (for gas purchases). Prior to this the Council utilised the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) Framework for their gas purchases. Under the YPO arrangement the Council's volume is aggregated with other participating organisations and prices sought from the Electricity and Natural Gas markets for the total aggregated volume.
- The YPO Gas Framework Contract arrangements are with the Council, via the 'Customer Access Agreement' dated 21st March 2021. FPA have not had sight of the Access Agreement for Electricity supplies, however, following meetings with FPA, the Council confirm that an Access Agreement exists for Electricity purchases and operates in a similar manner to that of the gas agreement.
- The Council's existing Electricity and Natural Gas Contract arrangements for the supply of Electricity and Natural Gas are with Npower (Electricity) and Corona Energy (Natural Gas) negotiated via the YPO Framework Agreement.
- A review of the Supplier Electricity and Natural Gas supply Contracts in place for the Council were reviewed during the data review process and were found to be in line with industry standard terms and conditions of Contract.
- Since October 2022, YPO issue the Council with a briefing paper outlining the traded price position for Electricity and Natural Gas Contract prices. Prior to this, YPO provided this information via verbal communication to the Council as part of monthly utility supplier meetings. The Council has confirmed that these meetings were not recorded.
- Historically, electricity supply Contracts to the Council have operated over a 12-month supply period commencing in April of each year, where the estimated volume has been purchased on a flexible contract basis by YPO in advance of the Contract start date.

- Contracts for natural gas also commence in April of each year, however, the commodity element of the price is traded on a month by month basis and as such, prices vary across the Contract term accordingly. The non-commodity element of the contract is fixed at the outset.
- There is no evidence of documentation, processes or procedures requiring the Council to issue any instruction to YPO to authorise their buying decisions.
- The Council also has separate procurement arrangements in place for the provision of utilities for street lighting, which is not within the scope of this review.
- The Council currently contracts with Entrust Consulting (Entrust), with whom they have worked with for the past 11 years. Entrust provide the Council with technical energy advice, invoice validation services and energy management solutions. Entrust also act as interface for the Council at YPO's monthly review meetings, together with the appointed electricity and natural gas suppliers. FPA has not been provided with the terms and conditions for the Entrust Agreement and is not currently aware of costs of this service provision to the Council and the termination requirements of the Agreement.
- SystemsLink software has been employed by Entrust to automate the utility invoice validation process. Invoice queries and consumption anomalies are identified via the SystemsLink software.
- Contract unit rates and all other key charges are validated by SystemsLink.
- Utility invoices are received electronically by Entrust from the Council's utility suppliers. The information is then uploaded into the SystemsLink validation software which validates the following key invoice items:
 - Meter Reads are checked against pre-determined consumption boundaries.
 - Utility unit rates are checked against the latest YPO contract arrangements.
 - Half-hourly consumption data trends are analysed for the Council's key electricity and gas supplies.
- Entrust manage invoice queries with the appointed suppliers on behalf of the Council.
- Entrust pay the supplier invoices on behalf of the Council and manage all accounting activity, including allocations to cost codes via the 'Integra' software system.
- The SystemsLink software then rejects any invoices which register as an exception, either because they fall outside of the Council's pre-determined consumption boundaries, or the unit rates being charged do not correlate to those agreed within the latest supply contract.

- All queries are dealt via a query log as they arise. The query log is managed between Entrust, the Council and the respective utility suppliers.
 - Entrust also attend one-to-one meetings with YPO and/or the appointed utility suppliers when required i.e. to discuss any specific issues arising.
- 2.2.** Whilst there is evidence that monthly general update meetings are being undertaken between Entrust, YPO and the respective Electricity and Natural Gas suppliers, more detailed, Council specific meetings appear to occur only on an irregular basis i.e. contact is made only when a specific issue needs to be resolved.
- 2.3.** It would appear from the YPO user guide provided by the Council that a level of monitoring of supplier performance is being undertaken.
- 2.4.** The relationship between the respective parties is shown in the diagram below.

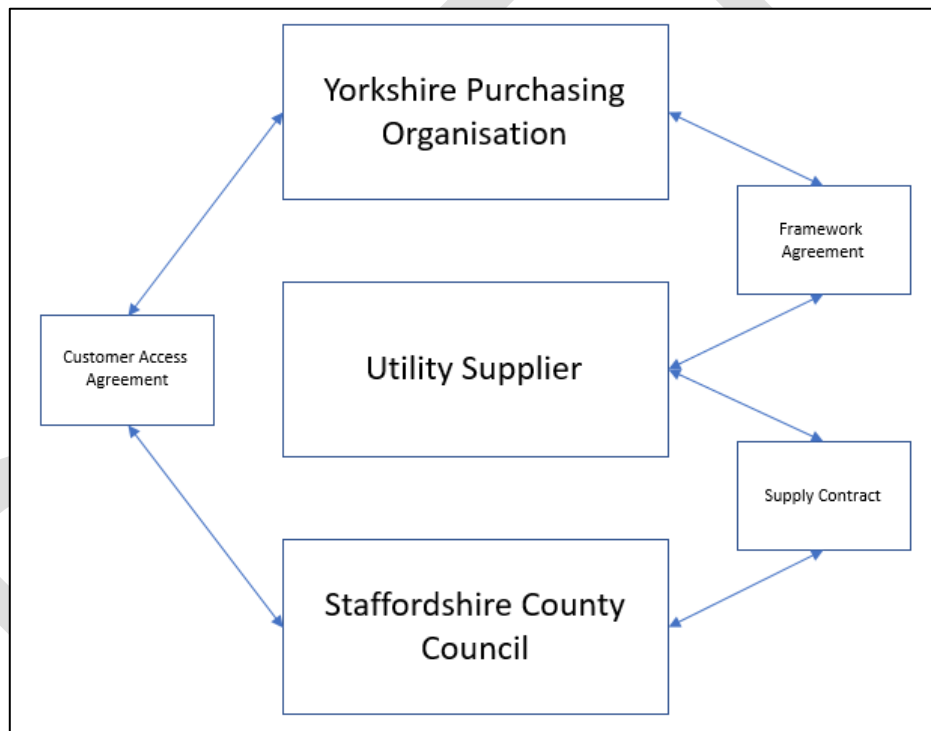


Figure 1

3. Analysis of the Council’s Historical and Current Utility Pricing

- 3.1. A high-level summary of the Council’s annual expenditure on Electricity and Natural Gas is shown in Figure 2 below.

Utility	Estimated No. of Supplies	Estimated Annual Consumption (kWh)
Electricity	888	55,000,000
Natural Gas	605	103,300,000

Figure 2

Supply Period – April 2022 to March 2023

Data Source – Entrust Expenditure Report dated 17th November 2023.

This provides an annual estimated Electricity and Natural Gas spend for the Council of circa £29 million.

For further information and background a summary of procuring electricity and natural gas within the UK market is provided in Appendix A.

The graphs below show historical wholesale Electricity and Natural Gas price trends in relation to Contracts commencing in April 2020 to supply arrangement up to 31st March 2023.

An overlay has been applied to show the estimated price paid by the Council for each Contract year.

To ensure consistency, and for the purpose of comparison, the pricing analysis uses a forward purchase window 12 months prior to the Contract start date, for example, a supply contract commencing 1st April 2020 would have a commodity purchase window of 1st October 2019 to 31st March 2020.

We are aware from meetings with the Council and the information provided that this is how YPO procure the electricity requirement. We understand that the gas was procured by CCS for the April 2020 and 2021 supply requirement and YPO for the April 2022 requirement and was purchased on a flexible month-by-month basis, however, in the absence of historical trading reports, from either CCS or YPO, and for the purpose of comparison to provide an indicative analysis, we have applied the same procurement approach to both commodities.

See the ‘Notes’ section below for a further explanation.

Purchasing Opportunity Electricity - April 2020 Contract Start

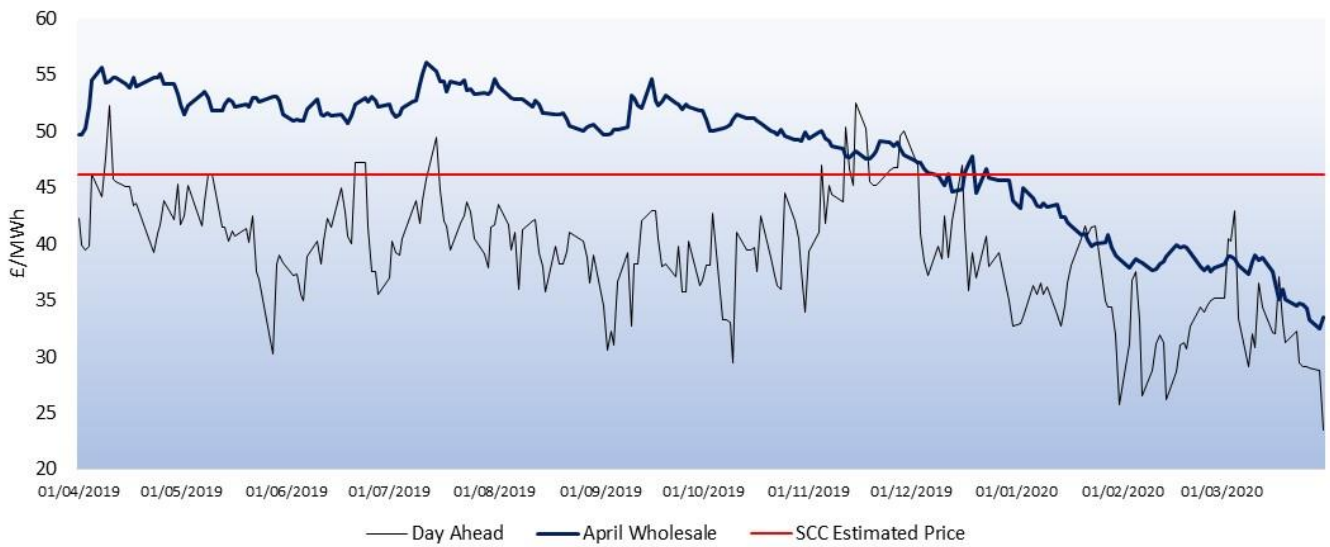


Figure 3

Purchasing Opportunity Electricity - April 2021 Contract Start

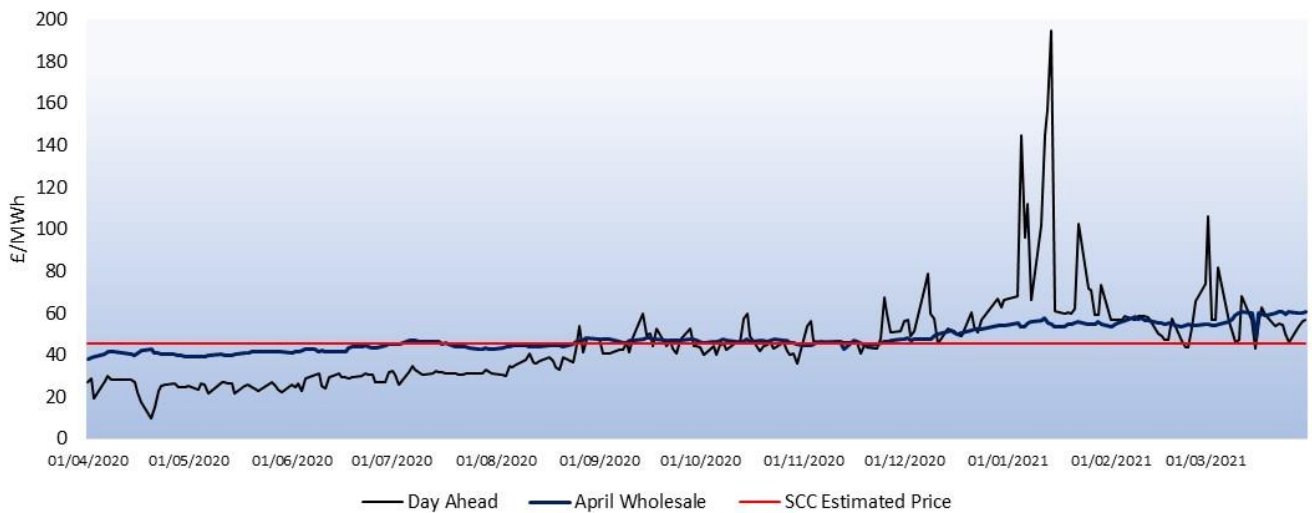


Figure 4

Purchasing Opportunity Electricity - April 2022 Contract Start

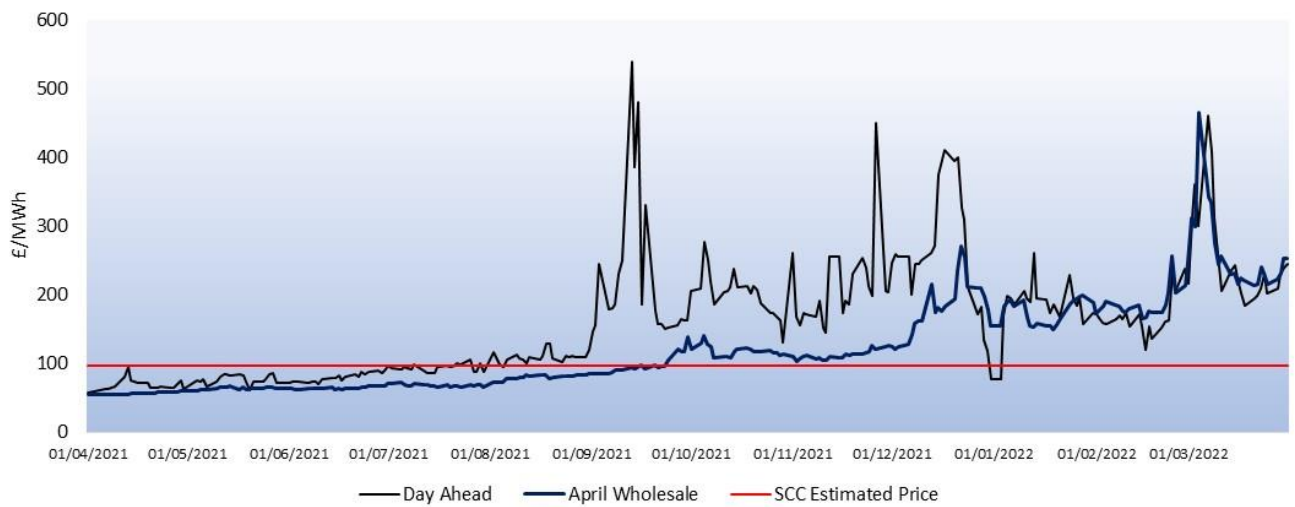


Figure 5

Notes

1. Data Source – The Council/Entrust.

Contract Start	Council Estimated Price	Minumum Price Available	Maximum Price Available	Average Wholesale Price for Period
April 2020	£46.13	£32.45	£56.13	£48.09
April 2021	£45.42	£38.07	£60.85	£47.71
April 2022	£96.20	£54.28	£464.83	£123.06

Figure 6

In addition to the graphical representations in Figures 3 to 5, Figure 6 summarises the estimated price at which each respective Contract was secured by YPO, and also the minimum, maximum and average price points available during the 12-month window of opportunity prior to each Contract start point.

Notes

1. Data Source – The Council/Entrust.

Purchasing Opportunity Gas - April 2020 Contract Start

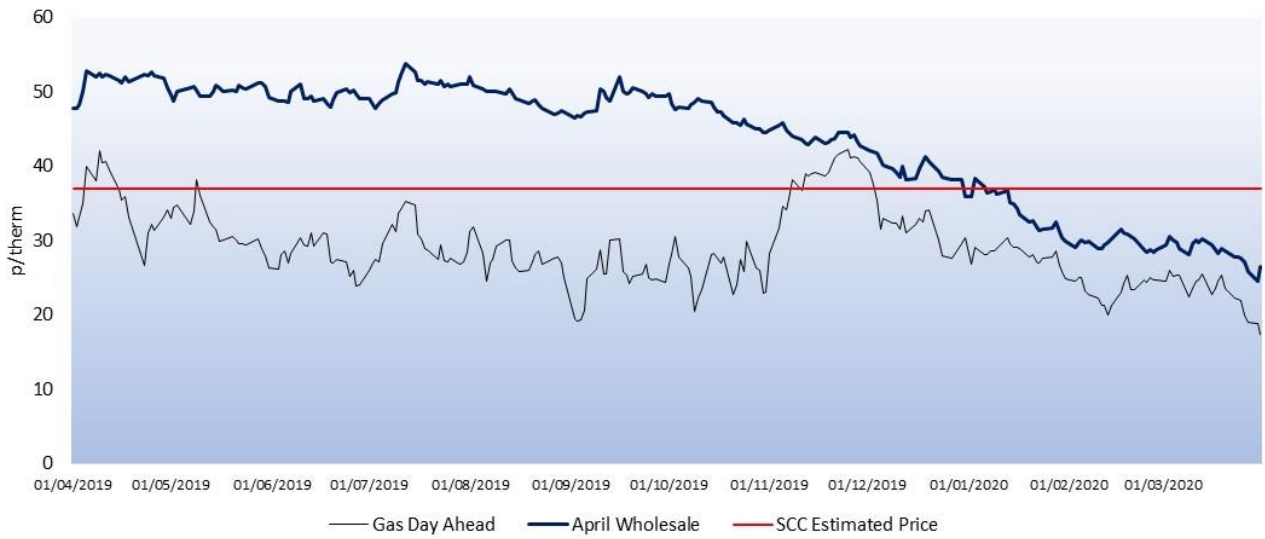


Figure 7

Purchasing Opportunity Gas - April 2021 Contract Start

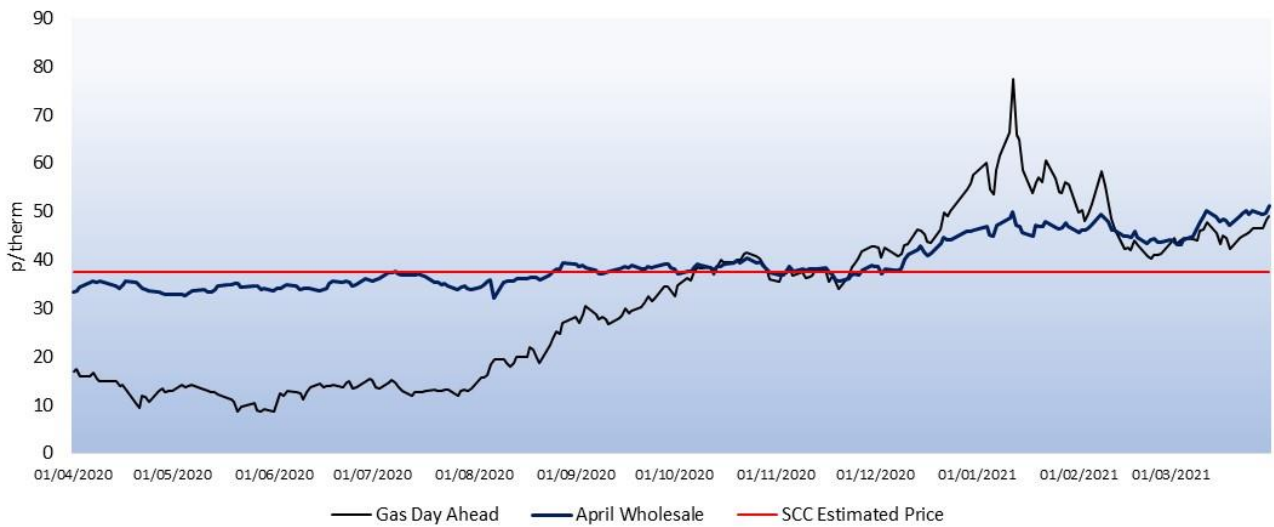


Figure 8

Purchasing Opportunity Gas - April 2022 Contract Start

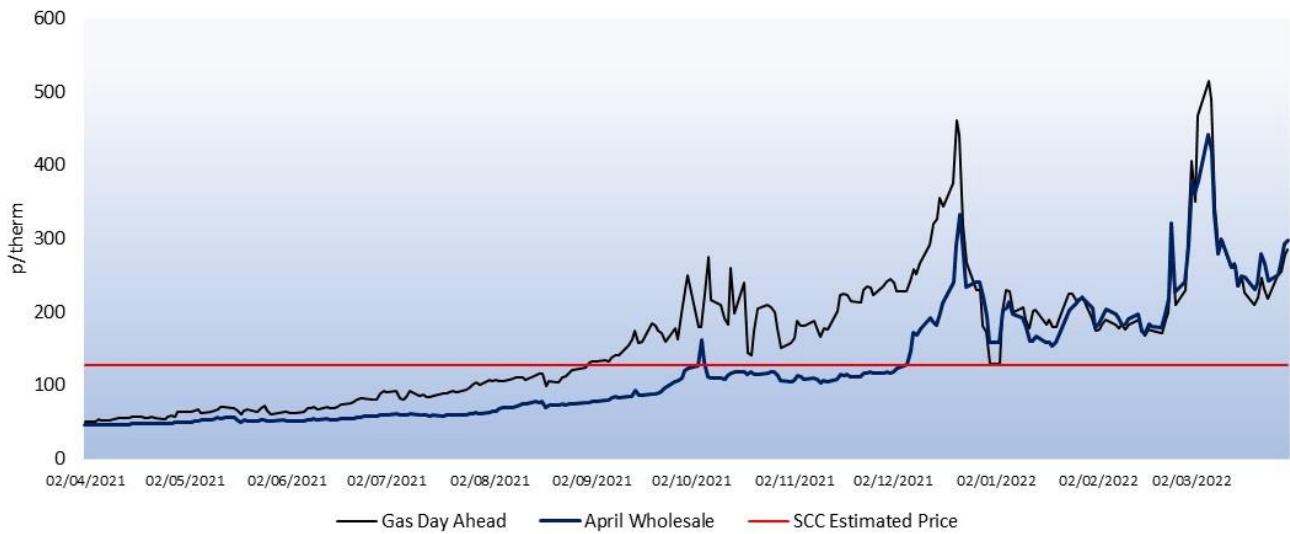


Figure 9

Notes

1. Data Source – The Council/Entrust.

Contract Start	Council Estimated Price	Minumum Price Available	Maximum Price Available	Average Wholesale Price for Period
April 2020	36.92	24.60	53.87	43.54
April 2021	37.62	32.19	51.13	39.33
April 2022	127.55	45.52	441.08	125.37

Figure 10

In addition to the graphical representations in Figures 7 to 9, Figure 10 summarises the estimated price at which each respective Contract was secured by CCS/YPO, and also the minimum, maximum and average price points available during the 12-month window of opportunity prior to each Contract start point.

Notes

1. Data Source – The Council/Entrust.
- 3.2 From the analysis of the data received and as demonstrated in the above graphs and tables it would appear that in the majority of cases the YPO/CCS contract prices secured were reflective of the average wholesale market prices leading up to the point of contract commencement.

It is, however, noted that on a number of occasions there were opportunities within the market to substantially improve upon the prices ultimately secured for both electricity and natural gas. The most notable example of this is the electricity contract commencing in April 2021 when in the 12-month period preceding the contract start date, wholesale prices dipped circa 65% below the price secured. It is also noted that in the majority of cases across the portfolio, wholesale prices traded at least 14% lower than the secured price during the 12-month period prior to contract commencement.

It is important to consider that the YPO contract will have been traded using multiple energy purchases in varying consumption blocks (clips) e.g. months, quarters and seasons during the 12-month period preceding the contract start date for electricity and, due to the way the Contract is traded, the gas arrangements will have been purchased by CCS and YPO using varying monthly pricing within the 12-month period of delivery.

In all cases, final contract prices will have been derived by trading individual months, quarters or seasons dependent upon the specific price risk management strategy employed. The above price analysis is, therefore, provided for indicative purposes only and to illustrate general price volatility for contracts with an annual April commencement date.

Utility prices are traded on the forward market, hence it is possible to secure contract prices well in advance of the contract start date, in some cases beyond 3 years into the future. Not only does this provide the opportunity to secure longer term arrangements at a time when wholesale markets are low, it also allows potential for long-term budget certainty for the Council. Limiting the electricity purchasing decision to a 12-month window every year is, may not achieve the optimum result. A more flexible approach to the timing of the purchasing decision would widen the window of opportunity and potentially give the Council opportunity for more competitive prices.

- 3.3** Away from general supply/demand market fundamentals, the main price driver for utility markets over the last 18-months was the Russia/Ukraine conflict, causing wholesale energy prices to rise to record levels, indeed on some occasions during 2022 prices were circa ten times higher than in preceding years.

Another general price driver for utility markets is the availability of renewable electricity generation. As renewables become more prevalent in the UK's overall generation fuel mix, any lack of renewable generation causes a reliance on gas fired power generation. Given the above-mentioned unrest in Russia/Ukraine and the subsequent reduction in gas supplies to Europe and the UK, rising gas prices increase the cost of electricity generation and, in turn, carbon prices, as carbon intensive generators are required to purchase carbon allowances to off-set their environmental emissions.

It is, however, important to note that despite these bullish market drivers, UK and European gas storage levels are currently at higher levels than usual for this time of year, with deliveries of Liquified Natural Gas cargoes continuing to arrive at UK and European terminals. Market fundamentals are, therefore, relatively bearish at present.

Given current market conditions it is important to consider the Council's budget aspirations in relation to the timing of new contract awards. It may, therefore be worth giving consideration to securing new Contract arrangements at this time to mitigate the Council's exposure to future price increases.

It is extremely difficult to forecast accurately future price movements in the wholesale Electricity and Natural Gas markets due to factors outside of the generators/suppliers control e.g. geo-political events, weather conditions and supply and demand fundamentals. However, based upon current future forecasts the differential in prices for Contract periods are summarised in Figure 11 below.

Commodity	April-24	April-25	April-26
Electricity (£/MWh)	91.78	88.32	92.60
Natural Gas (p/therm)	103.93	99.38	91.81

Figure 11

Notes

1. Prices based on April annual prices.
2. Indicative wholesale market prices recorded during December 2023.
3. While suppliers are prepared to enter into a longer-term supply agreement, they are not always prepared to fix prices beyond a three-year period.

4. Future Procurement Strategy Considerations

A documented procurement strategy does not appear to exist and it is recommended that one is produced with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

The Council may consider the outputs of this report in assisting it in determining its future strategy for the procurement and ongoing management of Electricity and Natural Gas.

As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the Council accepts there are other utility procurement strategies available, however, the use of YPO as a government backed market aggregator is seen as a well-established route to market bringing the most value for money, with less requirement for internal resource and expertise.

When reviewing the options outlined below it is, therefore, important to consider how each would impact upon the Council's internal costs and resources, and to manage the trade-off between the overall cost of procurement versus the service levels available through each of the options outlined below.

To assist it in its deliberations we have outlined within Section 5 a number of options which it may wish to consider in the strategy development process.

5. Alternative Procurement Approaches

5.1 Future Electricity and Natural Gas Procurement Options

Details of the most common types of structures currently used in the marketplace for the contracting of Electricity and Natural Gas in the UK are detailed below.

- **Fixed Price Contract**

Fixed energy purchasing is designed to provide protection against future price increases and safeguard against market volatility. It is the easiest way of managing price risk as it provides a simple understandable structure that gives the consumer absolute certainty on what it will pay for its energy in advance. Prices are based on the wholesale cost of the energy being fixed for the total volume requirement over the full period of the contract. All the other cost components including transmission and distribution are also typically incorporated into a fixed fully inclusive delivered price.

- **Flexible Variable Price Contract**

This option provides the opportunity to be more responsive to changing market prices throughout the year and as a result reduces the risk of fixing all of your volume at a time when prices may be at a peak. It allows the consumer to participate directly in the wholesale market undertaking trades through its appointed supplier for both different durations and profiles which are tailored to a consumers individual demand requirements. In effect consumers have complete control over what and when to buy. Consumers' can also manage their imbalance exposures by using short term load forecasting and buying/selling in the market as necessary to balance expected consumption. The decision to purchase (or indeed sell) is made from live quotes given directly from the trading floor, providing the opportunity for the consumer to be actively involved in deciding both the timing and volume of the trade. Alternatively, an automatic pricing method can be used with triggers for times of purchase set in advance. Various forms of flexible variable price products, with varying levels of complexity, are available through utility suppliers.

5.2 Strategy Option - Remain with YPO ('As Is')

Continuation of the existing arrangement with YPO allows the Council the ability to hand over the procurement responsibility to a third party, thus bringing the following advantages:

- Utilising YPO frameworks for access to energy markets.
- Limited internal resource is required under this arrangement as the procurement of energy and associated services is outsourced.

- Cost savings on resources and processes as no requirement to run internal tender exercises for utility supplies.
- YPO are used to managing large site portfolios which could be seen as a good fit for the Council given the complexity of their portfolio. YPO are specialists in working with public organisations similar to the Council.
- The aggregation of the Council's energy demand with that of other organisations will provide the Council with direct access to the wholesale market and flexible contract structures which may not be available if they were to contract for their own supplies independently. The perception is that a sizeable aggregated committed volume to the market will provide the additional benefit of a reduced supplier margin and reduced risk premium, although this is not guaranteed.
- Having YPO as a single point of contact brings convenience to the Council rather than handling processes in-house and thus expending operational time.

The main disadvantages of this approach would be as follows:

- No Direct Control - the Council cannot commit their Contracts on a day/time of their own choice or when they believe the market position is advantageous to do so.
- The unit cost of the Electricity or Natural Gas is not known in advance of the Council making a commitment to join the YPO framework and therefore the Council cannot compare against prices offered by other suppliers of its own choice. This may also cause problems for future budget planning.
- Potential for price/credit cross-subsidisation particularly for participating organisations who have a smaller volume or poorer demand profile.
- Aggregated Demand - this approach may not always provide the optimum price for the Council. The Council has a substantial annual volume of energy and, as such, may have the opportunity to seek to obtain more preferential prices from suppliers in its own right, taking advantage of the optimum market price, rather than relying on volume aggregation as it currently does.
- Lack of Relationships with YPO/Electricity and Natural Gas Suppliers – perhaps as the Council's requirement is aggregated with that of many other Organisations within the YPO Contract, there does not appear to be any robust relationships in place between the Council and YPO, nor between the Council and the Electricity and Natural Gas suppliers.

5.3 Strategy Option - Utilise alternative Public Procurement Frameworks

It is recognised that the Council would like to explore the potential merits of switching from the YPO arrangement and utilising alternative public sector procurement frameworks.

There are numerous providers of alternative procurement framework arrangements, examples as follows:

- Crown Commercial Services
- ESPO
- Laser Energy

Each provider will approach the wholesale energy markets with their own aggregated, flexible and risk-managed energy procurement strategies. Various options exist in relation to commodity procurement methodologies e.g. purchasing in advance or during the supply period, buying in quarters, seasons or indeed tracking the day ahead market. In addition, each framework will have options for the management of non-commodity charges e.g. fixed at the outset of the Contract or passed through at cost during the supply Contact term. It is, however, important to consider that irrespective of the strategy employed, all providers are purchasing from the same dynamic wholesale market and, therefore, it could be argued that there is no single best approach.

The key consideration, therefore, is the requirement for the Council to have already established its own energy procurement strategy, thus allowing it to subsequently undertake a review of all available framework providers to understand which are most able to accommodate their chosen price risk strategy accordingly. Such a strategy will be dependent upon the Council's own budget aspirations and attitude to risk.

The benefits of this type a market approach are the same as those already stated in Section 5.2, however, irrespective of which framework provider is chosen, the general lack of control over the timing of buying decisions remains constant, hence the key question is whether the Council wish to continue to outsource this procurement or take an alternative approach to future exercises.

5.4 Strategy Option - The Council creates its own Framework Arrangements

This approach would provide more control over the timing of energy purchases as the Council would 'own' the framework.

In order to commence such a process, utilising either in-house expertise or the appointment of energy procurement professionals, noting that the procurement will be subject to PCR 2015 regulations, the Council would need to consider the following,:

- Define specific procurement requirements i.e. strategy;
- Conduct market research/engagement;

- Create framework procurement pack i.e. Invitation to Tender;
- Take the procurement to market following identification of interested parties;
- Manage the procurement process including clarifications and the evaluation of responses;
- Conclude contractual arrangements and manage the call off process.
- Manage the Contract and ongoing supplier relationships.

Potential key considerations of this approach would be the level of expertise available within the Council in relation to energy procurement which requires a specialist knowledge of the Electricity and Natural Gas marketplace. A lack of such knowledge could result in potential risk to the Council.

Wholesale markets are extremely volatile and change on a daily basis, hence it is paramount for the daily monitoring of market conditions to be undertaken in order to determine the optimum point for any subsequent Contract award.

As mentioned previously, due to the level of the Councils annual expenditure there is a requirement for any tendering activity to be undertaken in accordance with PCR 2015 legislation, which requires a working knowledge of these processes.

Considering the size of the energy portfolio, the Council would need several dedicated resources to effectively manage the process, software support, and specialist knowledge in Energy Markets.

5.5 Strategy Option - Collaborate with other Public Sector Organisations

Potential for lower prices with aggregated demand bringing access to a wider range of market products, however, unless the other parties within the collaboration have particular skill sets relating to Electricity and Natural Gas procurement, then any benefits may be limited. In addition, it would need to be agreed who would lead i.e. who would make the purchasing decisions and equally how would the cost of facilitating such an arrangement be apportioned across the group.

5.6 Strategy Option - Partner with a single Energy Supplier

Developments in flexible pricing products offered by energy suppliers now means that a number of suppliers are able to offer simplified solutions to end users. Volume can be traded on the wholesale utility markets by the supplier, on behalf of the Council, within a pre-defined set of price parameters, thus offering a level of budget certainty while still having the ability to take advantage of falling price trends.

In advance of entering into a flexible pricing arrangement, the Energy supplier would arrange a Risk Management scoping session with the Council to formulate a trading strategy. Numerous strategies are available and for the purpose of example we have outlined below a 'price-cap' strategy that can be employed by the supply market.

This market approach aims to deliver a level of cost certainty through the use of a price cap, but also provides the opportunity to take advantage of downward wholesale market price movements. The price cap is recalculated if wholesale prices fall, but it is never increased above the original price cap, hence it can provide a means to ensure that energy is procured equal to or under a pre-agreed budget level. A strategy such as this aims to manage price risk and deliver a level of budget certainty, but it is important to state that such an approach is not designed to deliver the lowest possible market price

Although this type of market approach does place onus on the supplier to trade on behalf of the Council, the ultimate decision in terms of when to secure volume/prices would need to be determined by the Council i.e. the supplier is not able to act on behalf of the Council, only advise on current market conditions and purchase options. This option would, therefore, require a point of contact within the Council to lead and authorise the purchasing decisions.

Additional services may also be offered by the partnered supplier in relation to energy saving initiatives and support with industry legislation.

A potential disadvantage to this approach is that for a supplier to assist with a flexible pricing approach, then a long-term (3+ years) would be preferable. If, therefore, for any reason the Council were dissatisfied with the service levels received from their appointed supplier then they may find themselves locked into a contract for a lengthy period.

In addition, the appointment of a single supplier in this manner may also raise questions in terms of benchmarking prices against a competitive supply market i.e. this is not an independent approach to the supply market.

In order to commence such a process the Council would need to consider the appointment of a single supplier would require a procurement exercise to be undertaken which is compliant with PCR 2015.

5.7 Strategy Option - Engage a Third-Party Intermediary (e.g. Utility Broker)

Provides an outsourced solution giving the Council confidence in the procurement process and also allowing the Council to concentrate on other key areas of expenditure within the Organisation.

The chosen third party can manage the whole Electricity and Natural Gas procurement process from the PCR 2015 process stage all the way through to final Contract award. These organisations are also well placed to monitor wholesale markets on a daily basis, hence they can advise when conditions are favourable for new Contract awards.

This approach provides the Council with assurance that the various prices from suppliers are being compared on an independent basis, and that all supplier proposals are evaluated comprehensively using up to date industry knowledge and pricing expertise, hence eliminating risk from the process. The Council is able to consider various procurement options e.g. fixed versus flexible pricing, the option to enter the market at

any time, and for varying contract durations, ensuring the Council is in control of its own purchasing decision in line with Council policies.

This process would require effective management by a designated individual within the Council who would;

- act as the interface with the third party
- be responsible for distributing any information received to the other designated individuals within the Council
- Obtain the relevant financial authority/approval to be attained prior to any subsequent Contract awards.

In order to commence such a process the Council would need to consider the appointment of a third party would require a procurement exercise to be undertaken which is compliant with PCR 2015.

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APPENDIX A

Overview of Purchasing Electricity and Natural Gas in the UK

- Since the early 1990's, the UK's Electricity and Natural Gas industry has evolved from a government-controlled monopoly to a fully competitive market giving consumers the freedom to choose their energy suppliers. In the process a commodity market for wholesale electricity and Natural Gas transactions was established.
- In the UK the larger suppliers generate a proportion of their own energy, but most is purchased either direct from the producers who generated the power or sourced the gas, and the rest is bought from the traded wholesale markets. In either of these scenarios, the UK suppliers are usually paying the price set by the traded market, where a variety of producers, utilities and speculators are active every day.
- Like other commodities such as oil, the wholesale market prices are driven by traders' perceptions of the relationship between supply (how much is readily available and at what cost) and demand (how much is required now and, in the future).
- Traders' perceptions are based on their analysis of many factors that influence supply and demand. These factors include; changes of related commodities including fuels for electricity generation e.g. oil, gas, coal and carbon (see Figure 12 below); short and long-term weather forecasts; the impact of international events and politics. Contract prices can change every second, as sometimes hundreds of trades are made on the same contract each day. So the difference in price between contracts, and even for the same contract over the course of the day, leads to a plethora of wholesale prices.
- There is a clear correlation between electricity and Natural Gas prices in the UK, mainly due to the fact that Natural Gas is the mostly used input fossil fuel for electricity generated in the UK.
- Over the last 10 years, however, electricity generated from renewable sources has increased dramatically as part of the overall fuel mix. These sources include wind, solar and hydro.
- The chart below show the breakdown of input fuels used to generate UK electricity in 2022.

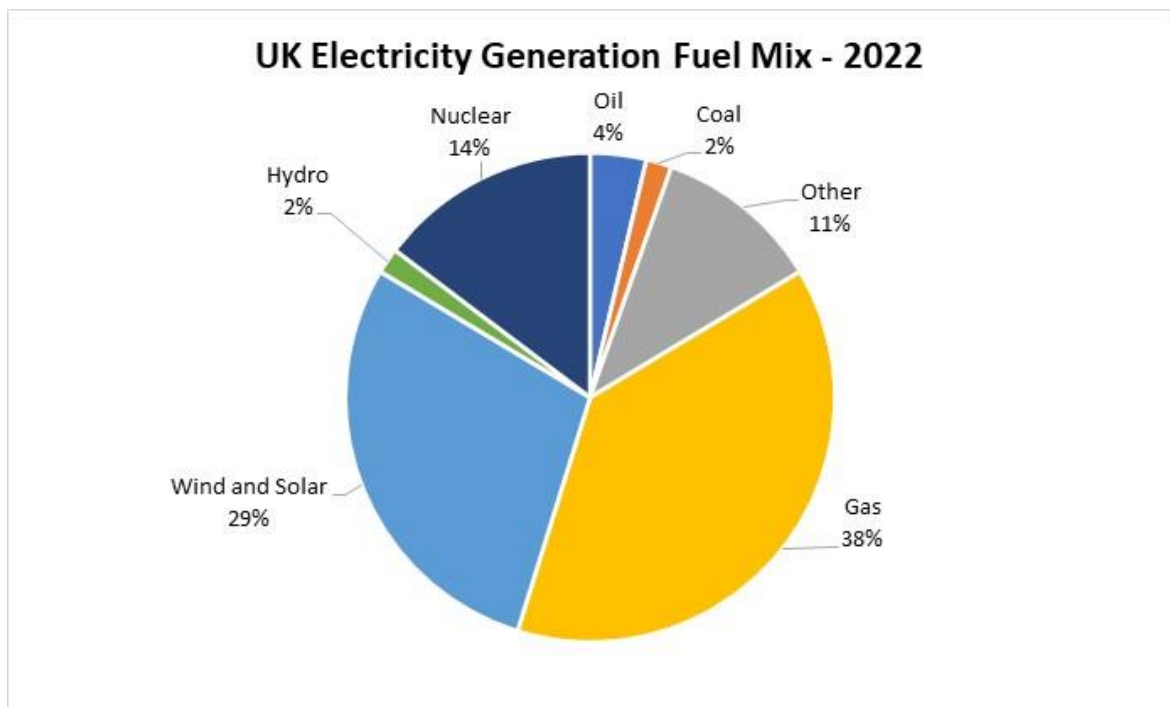


Figure 12

- The constantly changing relationship between these factors leads to a volatility in wholesale prices and indeed risk.
- The wholesale cost of Electricity and Natural Gas were historically the single biggest component of the unit price in supply quotations, typically accounting for 60% to 80% of the delivered price depending on the consumption profile and market prices. This is no longer the case for electricity as growth in generation from renewable sources has been funded by numerous Government incentives over the last 8 years which has added more and more cost to the final delivered price.
- The delivered electricity costs in general have also been subject to increases in distribution/third party charges, and as mentioned above the introduction of new environmental charges. Examples of this are the Feed in Tariff, Renewable Obligation, Contracts for Difference and Capacity Market charges, all of which are Government imposed initiatives. While these price additions serve as an incentive for suppliers to generate more electricity from renewable sources and ensure adequate supply at times of high demand, they have meant an additional cost has been borne by suppliers to meet their obligations under the schemes, and ultimately part of these costs have been passed on to end users.

- The charts below show an indicative breakdown of the various cost elements included within an Electricity and Natural Gas Contract and how these have changed over the last 8 years.

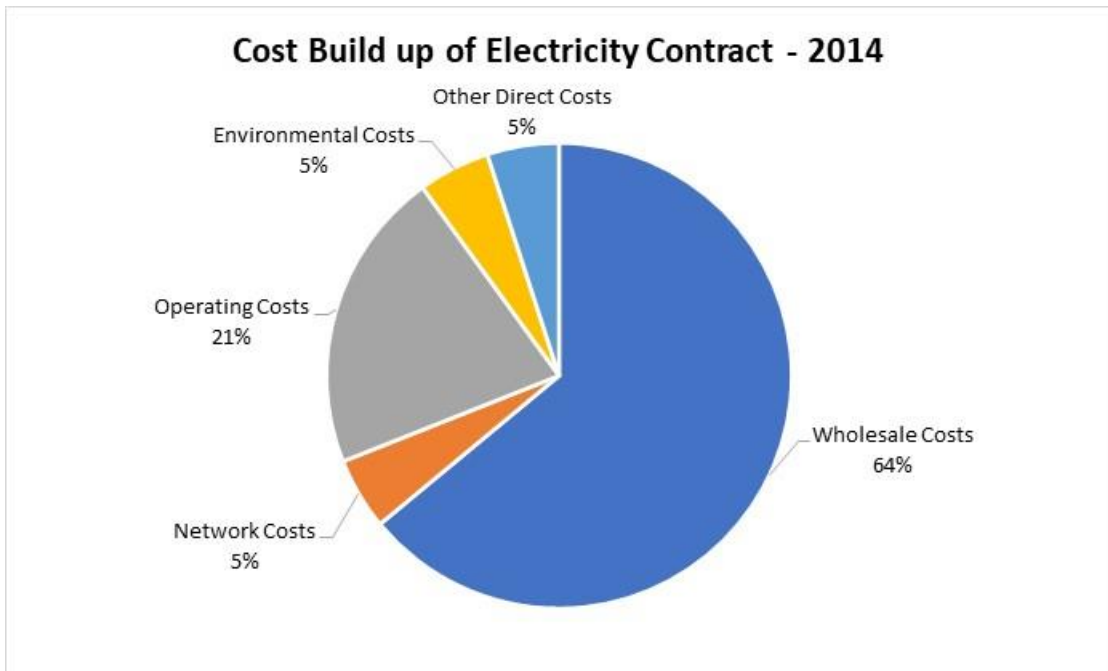


Figure 13

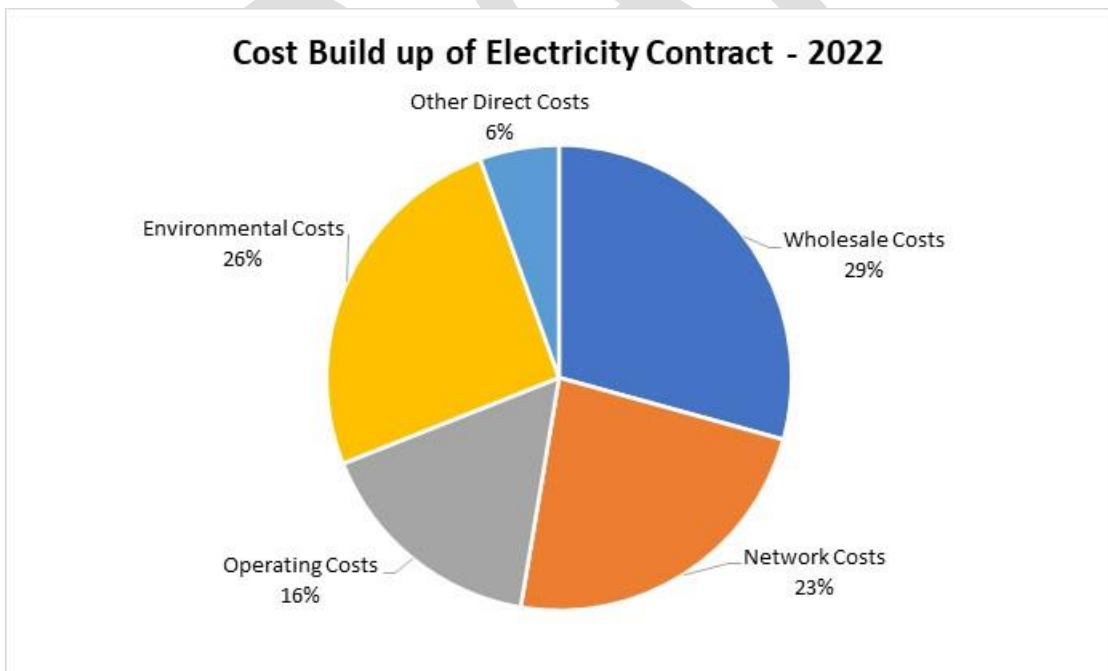


Figure 14

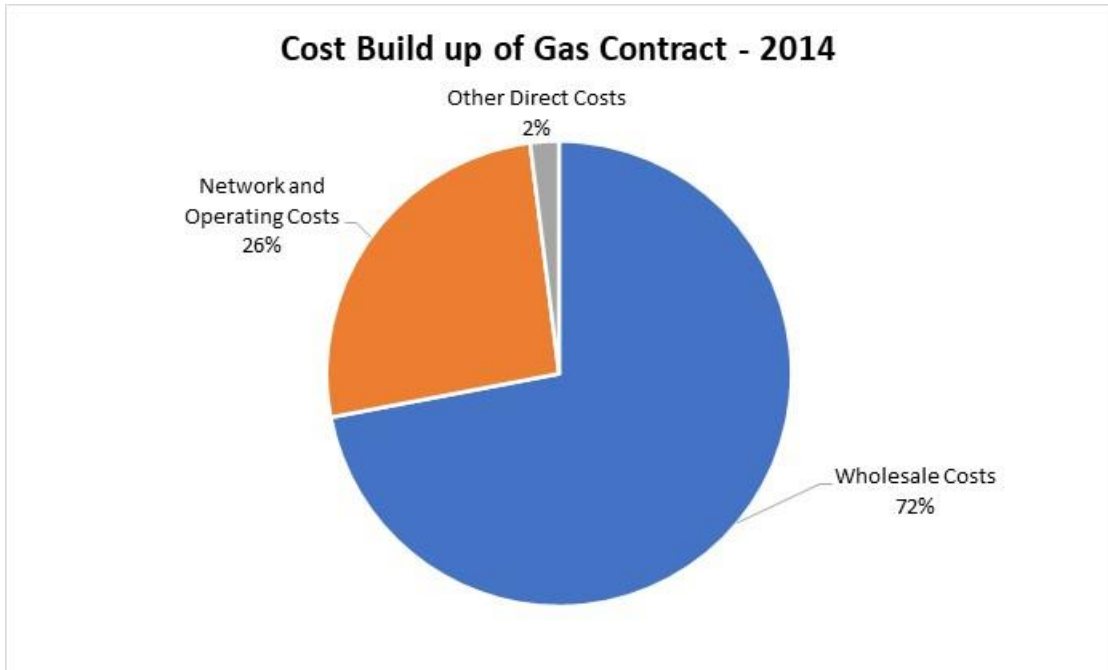


Figure 15

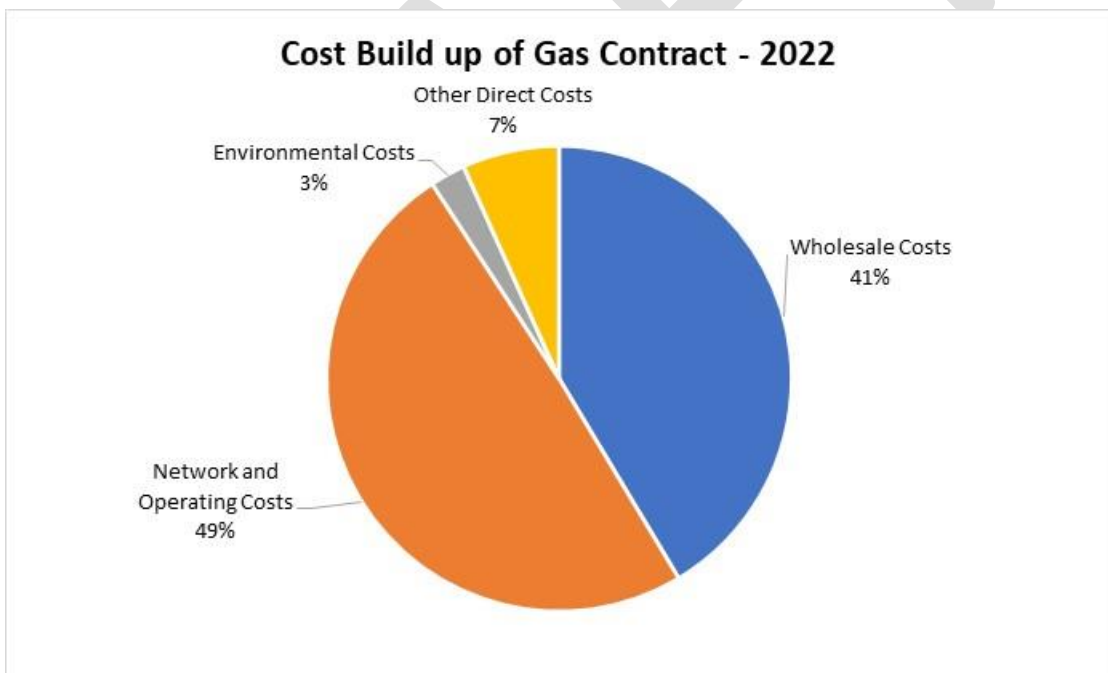


Figure 16

- The above charts demonstrate that the traded commodity proportion of the final delivered utility price is reducing as part of the ongoing drive by Government to introduce more renewable energy sources to the UK's fuel mix.
- It is, however, important to note that any change in this commodity element of the price will have a direct impact on the performance and profitability of the Council unless managed effectively.

- The majority of the other elements of the cost built up price are typically regulated charges and a 'pass through' to the consumer at cost. It is, however, still possible to mitigate the Council's exposure to some of these charges albeit as part of a very detailed and carefully managed overall Energy Strategy. The deployment of such a strategy would almost certainly involve investment in energy management technologies to provide alternative local sources of supply e.g. solar/wind generation facilities. It is, therefore, essential to assess the financial viability for such technologies when considering an energy management solution of this nature.

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Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 21 February 2024

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



Councillor David Williams, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport said,

“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. 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. 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.”

Report Summary

The objective of the report is to establish support for the procurement direction and award of the supply of electricity for street lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) assets, by utilising Crown Commercial Services (CCS) energy framework and their flexible purchasing model to gain the best value possible and volume for the purchase of electricity, from the supplier EDF Energy. The contract will be for the supply of 100% renewable electricity product for the period 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2028.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approve the approach for procuring, awarding and entering into an Electricity and Associated Services contract through the 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.

Cabinet – Wednesday 21 February 2024

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

Recommendation of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Approve 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.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Reasons for Recommendations

1. The objective of the report is to establish approval for procurement direction and award of utilising the CCS energy framework and their flexible purchasing model to gain the best value for the purchase of electricity, from the supplier EDF Energy for energy supply for the street lighting and ITS assets for the period 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2028.
2. Within the public-sector arena, energy procurement has been a focus for central purchasing bodies (referred to as consortiums or public sector buying organisations) throughout the UK. These bodies offer aggregated volume based flexible pricing procurement routes and are Public Contract Regulations (PCR) 2015 compliant. There has also been a strong drive from the UK Government Energy Project board to utilise such Central Purchasing Bodies (CPBs), all of which were reviewed as part of market research. Energy market conditions have presented several challenges regards the supply and delivery of these type of contracts.
3. The annual value of the electricity usage for the Council's street lighting (91% of the total usage) and ITS (9% of the total usage) assets is currently an estimated £7.3M million per annum. This is a high-profile category for the Council due to the financial impact.

4. Regarding renewable electricity provision, CCS will ask members for their green requirements once new contracts are signed and will return to the market to ascertain the volume price increase. Currently (at the time of writing, 20/11/2023), prices are £9.25 per megawatt hour (mwh) that would equate to an additional 1p per kilowatt hour (kwh) for green electricity provision. Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) certification will be provided upon contract start.
5. The amount of electricity purchased is based on data showing previous demand, but there is no contractual obligation to a set volume purchase. CCS have a dedicated account management team who review and monitor the market and liaise with the supplier (EDF Energy) to identify the optimal purchasing window. Volume is then purchased in varying amounts across the basket period creating a consistent pricing approach for all customers. This allows CCS to take advantage of minor movement in current markets and pass these benefits on to customers, but also protects customers from spikes in electricity volume trading. It is noted however that current trading conditions are still extremely volatile, and purchases are primarily made to secure volume where possible whilst this volatility continues.
6. To provide an example (at the time of writing: 20/11/2023)* the typical CCS Framework Electricity Rate has recently changed to 28.0p per kwh. If the Council were to move onto a standard non-contracted deemed tariff, then this would rise to 45.92p per kwh, with suppliers able to change this at any given moment. This would represent a significant cost increase (64%) and a budgetary risk.

*Rates are currently fluctuating daily, and market volatility continues to impact on unit rates significantly.
7. Following a framework comparison, it is the recommendation of the Council's Commercial team and Entrust's Energy Management team that the Council continue with the current provider CCS Energy Flexible purchasing framework for the period 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2028 for street lighting and ITS assets. Reasons set out below:
8. Crown Commercial Services (CCS) is a UK-wide procurement organization providing a broad range of solutions, including energy services, to public sector entities. Alternative framework offers for electricity exist, such as from Yorkshire Purchasing Organization, Eastern Shires Purchasing organisation and West Mercia Energy, all of which offer a framework provision for electricity.
9. CCS sets itself apart by offering tailored procurement frameworks for energy services, designed to streamline the process for public sector

entities, ensuring efficiency and flexibility. CCS also have a significant public sector customer base, team of dedicated risk analysts, and have recently published information which included data showing that during the energy crisis they required no government assistance as the rates procured had been below the energy cap. This gives assurance and confidence in CCS moving forward.

Legal Implications

10. The tendering process completed by CCS complies with the PCR 2015 and was advertised and awarded in accordance with the regulations.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

11. Current energy market trading conditions are extremely volatile, and purchases are made to secure volume where possible whilst this volatility continues. Prices increased by around 300 – 400% from winter 2022 to spring 2023. However, the trend has now started to decrease significantly, and markets have continued to stabilise.

12. There are projections which are provided by EDF Energy for their records and for CCS, along with market trend information from the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM). Our current purchasing strategy has shifted from securing unit rate and volume discounts to a necessity to secure volume to ensure supply. In addition, CCS have developed (following recent world events) an extremely robust risk profiling model for the purchasing of energy to ensure any trades meet a series of purchasing markers prior to the volume being committed.

Climate Change Implications

13. The climate change implications with this procurement revolve around the conservation of renewable fuel and power. This contract will use 100% green electricity, and upon the awarding of the contract and securing of a volume of energy, a REGO certificate will be provided to the Sustainability and Climate Change team from EDF Energy for their records and carbon calculations.

Energy Consumption Reduction

14. The Lighting for Staffordshire Private Finance Initiative (LFS PFI) has delivered energy savings throughout the life of the contract. This has included de-illuminating bollards, de-illuminating road signage, and switching to energy efficient lanterns.

15. Through the contract, a significant volume of street lighting lanterns will be converted to LED. With the Invest to Save Phase 1 programme, approximately 47,000 high powered lanterns will be converted to LED by June 2024. This offers significant cost and energy savings - £2.8m (at the current energy rate) and 1,392 tonnes of CO2 have already been saved to date. In addition, there will be lower ongoing maintenance costs.
16. A second phase has recently been approved for funding – Invest to Save Phase 2 – which will commence upon completion of Phase 1. Phase 2 will change approximately 13,900 lanterns to LED and will focus more on lower powered existing lanterns. It will cost c. £4.6m to implement, with an anticipated breakeven point of four years, and will save an estimated 660 tonnes of CO2 emissions annually once implemented. A third phase of the Invest to Save programme is currently being investigated, and it is expected that further cost and energy savings will be identified. The reductions will be more modest for Phase 3 as the vast bulk of the high-volume, high-energy lanterns will have been converted.
17. In terms of ITS assets, existing halogen signal heads are currently being converted to LED. All signal heads are planned to be converted to LED by April 2025. Due to the smaller volume and energy consumption of these asset types, the conversion doesn't offer the same scale of cost and energy savings as the street lighting LED conversion, but there are still considerable benefits, particularly regarding ongoing maintenance.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

N/A

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Cabinet - Wednesday 21 February 2024

Decisions taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers

Recommendation of the Leader of the Council

1. That the decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers, as detailed in paragraph 3 below, be noted.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services

Reasons for Recommendations

2. To inform Cabinet of recent decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers.

Background

3. Cabinet are requested to note the following decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers:

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.

List of Background Papers:

Cabinet Member Delegated Decision Nos. 568 and 569.

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Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 13 March 2024 - 17 July 2024

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions is prepared on a monthly basis and published at least 28 days before the start of the period covered. Key Decisions are defined as those Executive decisions which are likely:

- a. to result in the County Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant budget for the service or function to which the decision relates; or
- b. to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions in the County's area.

The Forward Plan will contain **all** matters which the Leader of the Council has reason to believe will be the subject of a Key Decision to be taken by the Cabinet. It may also include decisions that are not key decisions but are intended to be determined by the Cabinet. Part of the Cabinet meetings listed in this Forward Plan may be held in private where a report for the meeting contains exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended) and that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it. If you would like to make representations about any particular decision to be conducted in private then please email: michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk. Such representations must be received in advance 6 clear working days before the date on which the decision is scheduled to be taken.

The Membership of the Cabinet consists of:

Leader of the County Council – Alan White
 Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills – Philip White
 Cabinet Member for Health and Care – Mike Wilcox
 Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change – Simon Tagg
 Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters – Mark Deaville
 Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – David Williams
 Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources – Ian Parry
 Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture – Victoria Wilson
 Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Mark Sutton
 Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) – Jonathan Price
 Cabinet Support Member for Highways – Robert Pritchard
 Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Integrated Care – Paul Northcott

A copy of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions may be inspected, free of charge, at the Member and Democratic Services office, County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford, during normal office hours Monday to Friday. A copy of the notice will also be available on Staffordshire County Council's Website at <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/>.

Documents submitted for decision will be a formal report which will be available on the County Council's website at least 5 clear working days before the date the decision is to be made, unless that report is subject to any prohibition or restriction on its disclosure. Other relevant background documents used in compiling the report will also be made available in the same way unless they are subject to any prohibition or restriction on their disclosure. Minutes of Cabinet meetings will be published within three working days and will be subject to call-in. The call-in period lasts for three working days. If the decision is not called-in it will be implemented on the fourth working day. Special urgency items are exempt from call-in.

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Note:

1. The Forward Plan of Key Decisions sets out all Key Decisions intended to be made by Cabinet during the above period.
2. The Cabinet date can be provisional and items may move/roll forward to another meeting date but this will be monitored.
3. Items should remain on the Notice until a decision is made by Cabinet or is formally removed.
4. Where there is an intention to make a decision in private the exemption paragraph relied upon will be included within this notice

Predicted Date of Decision	Public or Private Decision	Title and Description	Consultation	Contact Officer
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills (Philip White)</p> <p>To establish a Joint Committee on behalf of Staffordshire County Council and Stoke on Trent City Council to take all decisions within the budget and policy frameworks for both councils arising from the winding down and cessation of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).</p>	TBC	<p>Anthony Hodge (Tel: 01785 277204)</p> <p>Service Area: Business and Enterprise</p>
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Extension to the Dynamic Purchasing System Agreement for the supply of Residential and Nursing Care home placements Cabinet Member for Health and Care (Mike Wilcox)</p> <p>Extension to the Dynamic Purchasing System Agreement for the supply of Residential and Nursing Care Home placements, and development, procurement and implementation of a new commissioning model</p>	Legal, finance, commercial, ASC operational teams, SARCP and some customer engagement planned in the new year	<p>Andrew Jepps (Tel: 01785 278557)</p> <p>Service Area: Care Commissioning - Health and Care</p>

20 March 2024	Public	<p>Staffordshire's Joint All Age Carers Strategy 2024 - 2029 Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Mark Sutton), Cabinet Member for Health and Care (Mike Wilcox)</p>	Young and adult carers, including parent carers and families of young carers, social care professionals in the County Council and Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, and the wider public.	Andrew Jepps, Natasha Moody (Tel: 01785 278557, Tel: 07976 191079) Service Area: Health and Care and Children's and Families
		<p>The new All-Age Carers Strategy (2024-2029), which has been jointly developed by Staffordshire County Council and the Integrated Care Board, to be considered</p>		
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Section 75 Agreement for the Provision of Adult Social Care Assessment and Case Management Cabinet Member for Health and Care (Mike Wilcox)</p>	Health & Care scrutiny	Amanda Stringer (Tel: 01785 895170) Service Area: Adult Social Care
		<p>Review of Section 75 Agreement for the provision of adult social care assessment and case management</p>		
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Capital Programme for Schools 2024/ 25 Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) (Jonathan Price)</p>	None at this stage	Ian Turner (Tel: 01785 277228) Service Area: Strategic Property
		<p>The Capital Programme for Schools 2024/ 2025 consists of SCC's Statement of Priorities for its schools and associated appendices for major projects and maintenance projects. Programme to be approved by Cabinet for commencement/ completion in 2024/ 2025.</p>		
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Highways and Transport Capital Programme Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport (David Williams)</p>	Nil	James Bailey (Tel: 01785 276591) Service Area: Highways and the Built County
		<p>Details of the proposed capital highway maintenance and transport improvements programme for 2024/25.</p>		

20 March 2024	Public	<p>Corporate Delivery Plan 2024/25 Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Ian Parry), Alan White</p>	N/A	Lynsey Bissell (Tel: 07855 026263) Service Area: Strategy and Transformation
		<p>This is the proposed Corporate Delivery Plan for 2024/25 outlining Staffordshire County Council's key activities against the Strategic Plan.</p>		
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Climate Change Strategic Development Framework - Update Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Simon Tagg)</p>	N/A	David Atkinson (Tel: 01785 277910) Service Area: Connectivity and Sustainability
		<p>An update of the existing framework to reflect future ambitions to reduce carbon emissions and improve SCC resilience to the changing climate.</p>		
20 March 2024	Public	<p>Provision of Apprenticeship Services 2024 Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills (Philip White)</p>	N/A	Anthony Baines (Tel: 01785 895984) Service Area: Skills and Employability
		<p>The report outlines the requirements to change to a new Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to procure apprenticeship provision. We currently have an agreement with ESPO until September 2024 however they no longer have dedicated apprenticeship framework. The report details the benefits of joining an established DPS.</p>		
20 March 2024	Private	<p>Sale of Land at Surplus Land at Histons Hill, Codsall Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters (Mark Deaville)</p>	None	Ian Turner (Tel: 01785 277228) Service Area: Property
		<p>Sale of land surplus land at Histons Hill, Codsall</p>		

17 April 2024	Public	<p>Children and Young People's Emotional Health and Wellbeing Service Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Mark Sutton)</p> <p>The options paper will outline the current children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing service in Staffordshire and provide potential options for the future of a children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing service, along with a preferred option / recommendation.</p>	TBC	<p>Natasha Moody (Tel: 07976 191079) Service Area: Families and Communities Commissioning Team</p>
17 April 2024	Public	<p>Review of Local Authority Social Care Case Management Systems Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Mark Sutton), Cabinet Member for Health and Care (Mike Wilcox)</p> <p>Review of Local authority social care case management systems utilised by Health and Care Children & Families and Finance Services</p>	N/A	<p>Jo Cowcher, Nisha Gupta (Tel: 07772 011078, Tel: 07890 402088) Service Area: Health and Care</p>
17 April 2024	Private	<p>Unregulated Placement Update Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (Mark Sutton)</p> <p>Update on the young people in unregulated placements</p>	n/a	<p>Nisha Gupta (Tel: 07890 402088) Service Area: Children and Families</p>
15 May 2024	Public	<p>Roofing Framework Agreement Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters (Mark Deaville)</p> <p>Renewal of Corporate Roofing Framework Agreement</p>	None at this stage	<p>Ian Turner (Tel: 01785 277228) Service Area: Strategic Property</p>
15 May 2024	Public	<p>Community Learning Accountability Agreement 2024-2025 Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills (Philip White)</p> <p>The report provides an update on performance across Community</p>	N/A	<p>Anthony Baines (Tel: 01785 895984) Service Area: Skills &</p>

		Learning and the opportunity to consult on the Accountability Agreement which lays out priorities and targets for the 2024-2025 academic year. The Accountability Agreement forms the basis of the Council's Adult Education Budget grant agreement with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). It is a funding requirement to seek approval from Cabinet and submit the Accountability Agreement to the ESFA by the 30th June 2024 for funding to be released to the Council.		Employability
15 May 2024	Public	Digital Innovation Strategy for Staffordshire County Council Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources (Ian Parry)	N/A	Lynsey Bissell (Tel: 07855 026263) Service Area: Corporate Services
		Proposing a revitalised Digital Innovation Strategy for Staffordshire County Council, our submission outlines a comprehensive framework aimed at driving digital excellence to enhance our services, fostering inclusivity and building a smarter, more connected future for our community. With a focus on leveraging emerging technologies, this strategy seeks Cabinet approval to empower our community with efficient, accessible, and forward-thinking digital solutions.		
15 May 2024	Public	Supported Living Commissioning Update Cabinet Member for Health and Care (Mike Wilcox)	None at present	Andrew Jepps (Tel: 01785 278557) Service Area: Health and Care
		This report will provide an update on the re-commissioning of supported living care services as approved by Cabinet in July 2023, and seek approval from Cabinet for a future fee structure with assurance that this will ensure the sustainability of the market.		