

Council Agenda

Thursday 20 July 2023

10:00

Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford

To: The Members of the Staffordshire County Council

Notice is given that the meeting of the Staffordshire County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, County Buildings, Stafford at 10:00 on Thursday 20 July 2023 to deal with the matters set out on the agenda.

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>

Pat Flaherty
Chief Executive
12 July 2023



Agenda

(Note: The meeting will begin with prayers)

Part One

General Housekeeping and Declaring an Interest

1. **Apologies for absence (if any)**
2. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**
3. **Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 May 2023** (Pages 5 - 34)
4. **Chairman's Correspondence**

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

5. **Statement of the Leader of the Council** (Pages 35 - 42)

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

6. **Recommendations to the Council**
 - a) Independent Remuneration Panel - Recruitment (Pages 43 - 44)
 - b) Updates to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to Staffordshire County Council's responsibilities under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Pages 45 - 52)
7. **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022-2023** (Pages 53 - 74)
8. **Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel - Annual Report 2022-23** (Pages 75 - 108)
9. **2022 Community Fund - 2022/23 Report and Next Steps** (Pages 109 - 120)

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

(Pages 121 - 126)

11. Questions

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

12. Petitions

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

13. Exclusion of the Public

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

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

Part Two

(All reports in this section are on pink paper)

Nil.

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

Filming of Meetings

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

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

If you have privacy concerns about the webcast or do not wish to have your image captured, then please contact Member and Democratic Services.

Recording by Press and Public

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



NOTICES FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Questions

- 1.1. Questions must be addressed to the Chairman, or to the Leader of the Council or to a Portfolio Holder or to the Chairman of a Committee. Notice in writing of any question must be emailed to the office of the Director of Corporate Services (michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk) by no later than 1:00 pm on the third working day preceding the Council Meeting i.e. **by not later than 1:00 pm on Monday, 17 July 2023**. All questions and answers will be circulated around the Chamber before the commencement of the meeting.
- 1.2. Questions may be addressed to the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council, any Cabinet Member or a Committee Chairman. The Leader of the Council may refer questions asked of them to the relevant Cabinet Member if they consider it appropriate.
- 1.3. Each Member may submit a maximum of one question each, however only the first 15 questions received by the Director of Corporate Services before the deadline will be dealt with at the meeting. All other questions will receive a written answer.
- 1.4. Questions and written responses will be circulated to all members at the start of each meeting and will be made available online to accompany the webcast but will not be read out at the meeting.
- 1.5. Each questioner will be entitled to ask one supplementary question on their question/answer and the time limit for supplementary questions and answers will be at the sole discretion of the Chairman.

2. Notices of Motion

- 2.1. A Notice of Motion must reach, by email, the Director for Corporate Services (michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk) nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 10 July 2023**. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Paragraph 11 of Section 12 of the Constitution.
NB. Notices of Motion for the County Council meeting on 12 October 2023 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 2 October 2023.

RULES OF DEBATE

3. Speaking at Council Meetings

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

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

4. Content and Length of Speeches

- 4.1. Subject to Paragraph 4.2 below, no Member may speak for more than five minutes during debates by the Council unless the Chairman gives an extension.
- 4.2. When the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members nominated by the Leader or Committee Chairmen propose reports to the Council they may speak for up to ten minutes. Members who have been nominated by the Leaders of minority political groups as spokesmen on a report discussed by the Council may also speak for up to ten minutes.
- 4.3. Members will confine their speeches to the question under discussion or to a personal explanation or a point of order. No Member may question another Member's motives or use offensive expressions to any Member of the Council or Officer.
- 4.4. The Chairman may call the attention of the Council to continued irrelevancy and tedious repetition or any breach of order by a Member and may direct them to discontinue their speech. If the Member continues to disregard the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may ask them to retire for the remainder of the sitting. Should a Member refuse to retire the Chairman may order their removal from the meeting.
- 4.5. The Council operates a 'traffic light' system for speeches. During any speech, the amber light will come on notifying the speaker that they have 60 seconds left.
- 4.6. Where a Local Member is presenting a petition, they may speak for a maximum of two minutes. The amber light will come on for the final 30 seconds.
- 4.7. If there is serious disorder or persistent disregard of the authority of the Chairman, the Chairman may, without prejudice to any other powers which they have, direct that the Meeting be suspended for such period as they consider desirable.

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

DEFINITION OF WHAT IS A DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

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

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

WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

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

An example of what you should say

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

DECLARING INTERESTS AT FULL COUNCIL

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

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

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 18 May 2023

Attendance		
Arshad Afsar	Philip Hudson	Bob Spencer
Charlotte Atkins	Syed Hussain	Mike Sutherland
Philip Atkins, OBE	Graham Hutton	Mark Sutton
Gill Burnett-Faulkner	Thomas Jay	Stephen Sweeney
Tina Clements	Peter Kruskonjic	Simon Tagg
Richard Cox	Tom Loughbrough-Rudd	Ross Ward
Mike Davies	Johnny McMahon	Jill Waring
Mark Deaville	Paul Northcott	Alan White
Janet Eagland	Jeremy Oates	Philip White
Ann Edgeller	Gillian Pardesi	Mike Wilcox
Alex Farrell	Ian Parry	Ian Wilkes
Keith Flunder	Kath Perry, MBE	Bernard Williams
John Francis	Jeremy Pert	David Williams
Colin Greatorrex	Bernard Peters	Victoria Wilson
Philippa Haden	Jonathan Price	Mark Winnington
Gill Heath	Robert Pritchard	Mike Worthington
Phil Hewitt	Janice Silvester-Hall	Nigel Yates
Jill Hood	David Smith	
Derrick Huckfield	Paul Snape	

Apologies: Jak Abrahams, Julia Jessel, Jason Jones, Samantha Thompson, Carolyn Trowbridge and Conor Wileman.

Part One

1. Election of the Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year

Councillor Snape moved, and Councillor Haden seconded, and it was:

Resolved – That Councillor Phil Hewitt be elected Chairman of the County Council for the ensuing year.

2. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meetings held on 16 March and 13 April 2023

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings of the County Council held on 16 March and 13 April 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Election of the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year

Councillor Peters moved, and Councillor Worthington seconded, and it was:-

Resolved – That Councillor Colin Greateorex be appointed Vice-Chairman of the County Council for the ensuing year.

5. Chairman's Correspondence

There were no items of Chairman's Correspondence on this occasion.

6. Statement of the Leader of the Council

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

Staffordshire Means Back to Business – Oral Update

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Councillor Smith referred to recent developments in Lichfield including the proposed provision by BP of 20 new electric vehicle charging points, Bloor Homes' regional headquarters and a proposed 10 acre site for high-tech manufacturing units. Councillor Yates referred to the Chatterley Valley West site in Newcastle-under-Lyme and also asked that the County Council support the provision of new development sites in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Councillor Hussain indicated that many high streets were struggling to attract and retain shops and businesses and he asked what could be done to address this issue. In response, Councillor Philip White referred to the £200m investment by the Government through its Town Deals, Future High Streets and Levelling-Up funding. He added that town centres were a priority for the County Council and outlined how the Authority was working in partnership with the District and Borough Councils.

Councillor Pert referred to the opening of the new Pets At Home Distribution Centre near Stafford and the employment opportunities the development would generate.

Councillor Winnington enquired about whether it was still proposed that a rail freight facility would be provided as part of the West Midlands Interchange proposals.

Councillor Philip White also referred to the Council's Employment and Skills Strategy which was currently out for consultation.

Capital Programme for Schools 2023/24

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Councillor Yates referred to SEND provision in the Staffordshire Moorlands including the recent creation of a SEND Parents Group. He also welcomed the support for SEND provision contained in the Capital Programme.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins indicated that it was becoming clear that Leek could only sustain one High School and she enquired as to how the capital programme could be utilised to facilitate this. In response, Councillor Price indicated that he would be happy to meet with Councillor Atkins to discuss this matter further.

Councillor Winnington welcomed the proposals for a new primary school at Burleyfields, Stafford. In response, Councillor Price indicated that the construction of the new school was due to commence in April 2024.

Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about the need to develop new schools where there was demand for additional places due to new housing developments.

Councillor Francis commented on the excellent SEND provision at Marshlands School in Stafford which was amongst the best in the Country.

Councillor Price indicated that the Capital Programme contained proposals amounting to £43m of which support for SEND provision totalled £13.3m. He also added that a consultation was currently taking place on future SEND provision and he encouraged all Members to get involved.

Highways and Transport Programme 2023/24 and Pothole Funding

(Paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Statement)

Councillor Hudson, Councillor Afsar and Councillor Loughborough-Rudd welcomed the funding being made available under the Highways and Transport Programme. They also spoke about the need for Amey to keep to agreed timescales and to ensure that works undertaken were completed to a satisfactory standard. Councillor Loughborough-Rudd added that he would welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue further with the Cabinet Member.

Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about the potential impact of the proposals to permit longer HGVs on UK roads. Councillor Smith added that many

of the County's roads were not designed to take the types and volume of vehicles which currently used them.

Councillor Yates extended his thanks to Councillor David Williams for meeting with him recently to discuss highway issues within Biddulph and the surrounding area. He also expressed concern about potential slippage of some proposed schemes/works; he suggested that the draft Maintenance/Surface Treatment Plan should be shared with Members for their consideration prior to its approval; and asked that consideration be given to the implementation of more "Safer Routes to School" schemes when finances permitted.

Councillor Worthington referred to poor condition of the A520 in Leek and the quality of some of the works undertaken by Amey.

Councillor Flunder expressed his thanks to his Local Highways Team for the work undertaken in Biddulph and surrounding area.

Councillor Sutherland spoke about the proposed funding being made available to improve walking/cycling routes between Cannock Town Centre and the McArthur Glen Designer Outlet.

Councillor Clements and Councillor Snape referred to the recent seminar for Members on the Highways Transformation Programme and they encouraged all Members to work closely with their respective Local Highway Team.

Councillor Huckfield welcomed the funding being made available under the Highways and Transport Programme.

Councillor David Williams extended his thanks to Members for their comments. He also spoke about the progress of the Highways Transformation Programme which included revisions to the contractual arrangements with Amey and the determination to increase the quality of repair works.

Councillor Alan White spoke about the need to continue to lobby Central Government to try to secure adequate funding to support the County's highways network.

Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028 (Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Councillor Northcott outlined the principles behind the Strategy and explained that implementation of the action plan would be monitored by the Health and Wellbeing Board. He also referred to the importance of the Strategy as it had been found that mental health issues amongst the

population had increased since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins referred to NHS reductions in funding for mental health services at community level and enquired as to what action could be taken by the Health and Wellbeing Board to address this issue.

Councillor Hood referred to the impact which working from home could have on an individual's mental health due to a reduction in socialisation. She also highlighted that the cost-of-living crisis was affecting many people's mental health and spoke about the need for increased investment in mental health services.

Councillor Pert indicated that the Strategy was not just about adults as it also covered children and young people. He highlighted that one in every ten people suffered from an anxiety disorder and that £5.5m was being invested in mental health services in Staffordshire. He also extended his thanks to Councillor Edgeller, the Council's mental health champion, for her on-going work in this area.

Councillor Edgeller welcomed the Strategy and extended her thanks to those persons involved in its preparation. She added that she was lobbying her MP in relation to securing more funding for mental health services; and encourage other Members of the Council to do the same.

Councillor Loughborough-Rudd spoke about his own experience of accessing mental health services and his concerns about the length of waiting lists for some services. He supported the call for more funding in this area.

Councillor Cox also highlighted the increase in mental health issues in the population, some of which he felt were due to lifestyle changes.

Councillor McMahon indicated that the Resolution Foundation had found that between all income brackets the degree of emotional distress post Covid varied between 30% at the highest and 46% at the lowest. He also paid tribute to the vital role played by the voluntary sector, such as "Andy's Man Club", of which there were now 120 across the Country, in supporting people with mental health issues. Councillor McMahon also referred to the impact of people leading more isolated lives.

Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about mental health in the farming sector, which saw around three suicides per week, and the support available through the Farming Community Network.

Councillor Francis referred to internet fraud, how those who were subject to fraud often suffered from mental health issues as a

consequence and the need for Central Government to do more to tackle this issue.

Councillor Hussain spoke about the how social media could have an adverse effect on an individual's mental health and he outlined the support available to Members where they were being targeted through social media.

Councillor Sutton indicated that in the vast majority of suicides cases were not known to mental health services. He also outlined how the Health and Wellbeing Board was working with the NHS to implement and monitor delivery of the Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Strategy. He also spoke about how the Council had contracted with "Action for Children" to provide support to around 1,800 children per year.

Councillor Alan White also extended his thanks to Councillor Edgeller for her on-going work as the Council's mental health champion. He also encouraged staff and colleagues to ensure they achieved a work life balance by taking a break from dealing with emails outside of working hours.

Our People Strategy 2023 and Beyond (Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Councillor Yates stated that he applauded the quality, knowledge and enthusiasm of the Council staff he had come into contact with since being elected to the Authority. He also spoke about staff retention and succession planning and the need for the Council to take a lead on the promotion of "T Level" qualifications.

Councillor Alan White and Councillor Hewitt extended their thanks to all County Council staff for the work that they do.

Staffordshire County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Councillor Charlotte Atkins enquired as to what difference the revised strategy would make to those residents affected by flooding issues; and whether those residents would in future receive a better, more coordinated response.

Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about the range of agencies involved in dealing with flooding issues. Councillor Smith and Councillor Pert also spoke about the need for the various Councils and agencies to work in partnership to deliver solutions.

Councillor Flunder referred to works in his divisions to deal with flooding and drainage issues. Councillor Yates and Councillor Huckfield also referred to the need to upgrade old sewer systems which were no longer fit for purpose; and Councillor Francis spoke about the impact of rainwater running-off new housing developments.

Councillor Tagg thanked Members for their comments and indicated that there had been 15 significant storm events in Staffordshire since 2000. He added that there had been a positive response to the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and he also extended his thanks to the Council's Flood Management Team and also partner organisations and local groups.

Staffordshire Better Care Fund 2022 - 2024

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Councillor Pardesi referred to the Social Care Workforce Strategy and whether this included proposals to increase pay above the rate of inflation to those working in the sector. She also enquired as to what was meant by "helping to support the recruitment and retention of home care staff by offsetting some cost pressures".

Councillor Hood asked whether the Leader was aware of a case in her Division whereby a provider had withdrawn the services to an individual at short notice and the replacement services put in place by the Council were not adequate.

Councillor Sutton thanked Councillor Pardesi and Councillor Hood for their comments and stated that he would ask Councillor Jessel to respond to them following the meeting.

Councillor Alan White added that, with regard to Councillor Pardesi's question about what was meant by "helping to support the recruitment and retention of home care staff by offsetting some cost pressures", this was explained in paragraph 9(b) of the Cabinet report. With regard to her question on pay increases, Councillor White indicated that the Council had awarded a recurrent fee uplift of 12% from April 2022 to reflect cost pressures facing home care providers.

With regard to the question raised by Councillor Hood, Councillor Alan White indicated that he would ask Mrs McIver, the Council's Assistant Director Public Health and Prevention, to pick this issue up with her following the meeting.

Staffordshire Day and Coronation

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Councillor Tagg, Councillor Hood and Councillor Snape spoke about the local community events that had taken place in their respective areas over the Coronation weekend.

Councillor Snape and Councillor Cox also extended their thanks to Councillor Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, for allowing the Members Community Fund grants to be used to support local events/celebrations during the Coronation weekend.

Councillor Hussain spoke about how some volunteer organisations were struggling to keep their doors open due to inflationary pressures and expressed the hope that the County Council would do whatever it could to assist them.

Councillor Wilson thanked Members for their comments and added that the County Council was to present a commemorative mug to the parents the 14 babies born in Staffordshire on 6 May. She also paid tribute to the vital role played by volunteers and announced that the Council would shortly be launching a new Volunteering Framework which aimed to ensure that everyone who volunteers with the Council is supported to have a positive and consistent experience.

UKREiiF

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Councillor Alan White spoke about the Council's attendance at the UK Real Estate Infrastructure and Investment (UKREiiF) Conference in Leeds which provided an opportunity for the Council to raise the profile of the county and to explain to developers and investor why Staffordshire was such a great place to do business.

And Finally

(Paragraph 13 of the Statement)

Members extended their thanks to Mr Henderson for the contribution he had made during the eight years he had served as the Council's Chief Executive, particularly for his leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic, and wished him well for the future.

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

7. Staffordshire Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee - The Code of Joint Working - Local Authorities

The Council considered the revised Code of Joint Working Arrangements with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny. The Code had

been reviewed and refreshed to develop the health scrutiny function across Staffordshire and to foster good relationships with District and Borough Council scrutiny committees and Health Partners.

Resolved – (a) That the revised Code of Joint Working Arrangements (Joint Code) with District and Borough Councils for Health Scrutiny be approved.

(b) That the constitution be amended to include the following wording:

a. The Council has agreed a Code of Joint Working between the District/ Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council in relation to Overview and Scrutiny of health matters.

b. In accordance with the agreed code:

i. the County Council shall discharge the overview and scrutiny function under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance including the Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013.

ii. the [*Borough/District*] Chairman of the [*relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee*] Committee will be appointed to Staffordshire County Council's Health and Care Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

iii. the County Council is entitled to appoint one of its members to the [*relevant Borough/District Overview & Scrutiny Committee*] in relation to health matters.

8. Annual Report of the Audit and Standards Committee 2022/23

The Council considered the Annual Report of the Audit and Standards Committee 2022/23.

Councillor Worthington extended his thanks to the Council's Internal Audit Team for the work that they do.

Resolved – That the contents of the Annual Report of the Audit & Standards Committee for 2022/23 be approved.

9. Committee Membership

Cllr Alan White moved, and Cllr Philip White seconded, and it was:

Resolved – That the Members indicated on the attached schedule be

appointed to serve on the Committees listed for the period up to the Annual Council meeting in 2024.

10. Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels

Cllr Alan White moved, and Cllr Philip White seconded, the nominations for the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees.

Resolved – That the under-mentioned be appointed as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committees stated for the period up to the annual Council meeting in 2024:-

Committee

Chairman

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Colin Greatorex
Samantha Thompson
Gill Heath

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Jeremy Pert
Richard Cox
Ann Edgeller

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Tina Clements
Peter Kruskonjic
Ross Ward

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Bob Spencer
Gill Burnett-Faulkner
Paul Snape

Planning Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman

Mark Winnington
David Smith

Pensions Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman

Mike Sutherland
Mike Davies

Audit and Standards Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman

Mike Worthington
Carolyn Trowbridge

Corporate Parenting Meeting

Chairman
Vice-Chairman

Mark Sutton
John Francis

Charities and Trusts Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman

Paul Snape
David Smith

11. Appointment of members to Outside Bodies 2023/24

Cllr Alan White moved, and Cllr Philip White seconded, and it was:

Resolved - That the nominations of the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Political Group Leaders, on the appointment of Members to Outside Bodies for 2023/24 be approved and that the Leader be authorised to make any changes to those appointments as may become necessary.

12. Questions

Councillor Yates asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

I have been promoting the use of the MyStaffs mobile device app to residents, it has come to my attention that the current version cannot be installed using the latest android software. Could the portfolio holder please ensure that the App is updated so that it can be

downloaded universally across commonly used hardware platforms, and a "test and review" procedure is introduced to ensure that the compatibility of the App keeps pace with device software upgrades.

Reply

On the 22nd of March 2023 Google and Apple updated their terms and conditions and subsequently required us to undertake a review of the data captured by the MyStaffs App and re-apply to be listed on the Google Play Store and Apple App Store. This work was carried out and the MyStaffs App was successfully relisted. Testing was undertaken to check it was working on Android and Apple devices and no issues were identified.

This is the first issue that has been raised with us on this and officers are now investigating and working to resolve it. Once we have identified the problem and it's cause we will ensure that this doesn't happen again. In the interim all the services provided by the MyStaffs App are still available via the Council's website.

Supplementary Question

What I would like to see is the app linked to "What Three Words" so that when a person logs an issue in real time it also automatically includes a precise location.

Reply

That is a good idea, and I will ask officers to have a look to see if we could make this work.

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

Question

Just two weeks ago Staffordshire was united in celebration of the coronation of our new monarch, His Majesty King Charles III.

Street parties and celebrations took place across Staffordshire, including in Tamworth town centre and Borough Road in my Division.

Local businesses also got involved by decorating their premises and holding events.

Clare Lee, at the Tam O Shanter in my division, threw open her doors to host a free family fun day for the local community.

Would the Leader join me in congratulating everyone who made these wonderful events happen for the coronation, including by community champions like Clare Lea at the Tam O Shanter?

Reply

It was fantastic to see people, businesses and organisations all over Staffordshire coming together to celebrate the coronation, once again emphasising the community spirit, patriotism and pride people take in their local areas.

So yes, I would also pay tribute to and congratulate Clare Lea and everyone who contributed to another memorable weekend, hot on the heels of our latest Staffordshire Day celebrations.

Over the last four weeks the county council counted down to the coronation across our social media channels and through the media, promoting local events and street parties, and the array of volunteering as part of the Big Help Out.

Our libraries marked the occasion with a giveaway of commemorative bookmarks and wildflower seeds. And we will be giving every Staffordshire baby born on 6th May a commemorative mug – we are inviting their parents to an event here in county buildings in the coming weeks.

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

Question

When will it be accepted that it is not sustainable to expect Amey alone to deliver in a timely fashion?

Reply

The highways service already uses a range of different providers, including EoN for street lighting, SWARCO for traffic signals, a number of Borough and District Councils for grass cutting and other environmental maintenance activities, and of course Amey for a wide range of day-to-day operational activities. Furthermore, the Amey workforce is typically made up of around a 50/50 mix of directly employed local operatives and a wide range of local subcontractors. Around 85% of all expenditure through the Amey contract remains within Staffordshire and neighbouring authority areas.

Working in partnership with a tier 1 national provider like Amey provides the county council many benefits, including added Resilience, Scale of Economy and Buying Power. It means that when additional funding becomes available, like it did last summer when Cabinet committed to the first year of £15m extra investment to fix more roads, we are well placed to respond quickly and competitively to bring on-board the extra capacity needed to ensure delivery and value for money for our residents.

With the extra investment being made by the county council over the next two years extra sub-contract resources will again be brought in. These include specialist resurfacing and surface treatments teams, extra pothole repair teams - including the specialist velocity patcher and thermal patching techniques, continuation of the additional Member priorities gully emptying team and additional drainage repair teams.

It's also worth mentioning that as part the ongoing Highways Transformation Programme we are currently moving to a new Hybrid-Mixed-Economy operating model. Whilst retaining the benefits of having a Tier 1 strategic delivery partner the new model will also provide the council with much greater control and assurance of the highway service. Under the new model each separate function, from carriageways to footways and from drainage to winter gritting, will each have its own politically agreed budget, service level, specification and performance requirements, including Quality, Customer Service and Value for Money. Delivering on Members priorities will be a key design feature of the new model.

Cabinet have reviewed the options and agree that the fastest, most efficient way to transition and start to realise the benefits of this new model is to extend our relationship with Amey – but on very different contracting terms:

- a. Under the new arrangement a lot of inspection, works prioritisation and quality assurance activity has already been moved back in house and is now being managed directly by the council;
- b. And even though it's a 5-year contract – under the new arrangement Amey are not guaranteed any work. If any element of activity is under-performing, or we feel things can be done better in a different way, then we retain the freedom to move functions into new arrangements, for example in-house or through a new delivery partner.

Amey have recently been sold and their new owners are really excited and want to work with us on innovative new solutions. They like the

look of this new model and are confident it will help them to demonstrate to us and others in the sector the added value they offer.

All that being said even with infinite resources and the best possible delivery model available, we still can't always do everything as quickly as we would like to. Roadworks are, by their very nature, disruptive. Our own operations actually only make up only about 1/3rd of all activity that takes place on the road network, with utility providers, including the major fibre roll out, making up the majority of the rest. It takes careful management to plan and co-ordinate activity to minimise delays and prevent as far as possible traffic diverting on to inappropriate local routes.

Despite these challenges fixing more roads is a priority for this council. I along with all other Cabinet Members and the highways team really appreciate the support from local members in helping us to achieve this goal.

Supplementary Question

In light of the extra £15m investment, can I now safely tell my residents that they can expect potholes to be fixed more quickly than they have up until now?

Reply

You can tell the residents that you will be more accountable for the prioritisation of what gets done in your area.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

What assessment has the County Council made of the impact of the National Tutoring Programme in Staffordshire to help young people struggling to catch up after the disruption to their schooling caused by Covid lockdowns? How many pupils received tutoring under the scheme last year in Staffordshire and in which schools? What is the predicted take up of such tutoring in 2023 now that the government subsidy has been cut from 60% to 25%? Has the attainment gap for GCSEs in Staffordshire widened for disadvantaged pupils?

Reply

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) provides primary and secondary schools with funding to support targeted academic support, delivered by trained and experienced tutors and mentors. The overall approach to the NTP in the 2022 to 2023 academic year is to allow schools to design and deliver a tutoring offer that suits the needs of their school and pupils. The DfE has provided schools with a range of information to support them in delivering this programme.

Over 75% of pupils (85% in schools deemed secondary) are now being educated within academies which are no longer under the control of the local authority. It is for schools and academies to evaluate the impact of their tutoring programme, and as part of their evaluation of the quality of education and leadership and management, Ofsted inspectors will consider how schools make effective use of tutoring.

The virtual school has been working with school to use the funding to provide tuition support for the pupils in care, working with relevant schools as necessary. The additional tutoring is reviewed as part of the pupil's personal education plan (PEP).

The local authority has provided funding to independent special schools to enable them to provide tutoring for eligible Staffordshire pupils.

Attainment 8

In 2022, Staffordshire disadvantaged pupils Attainment 8 score increased by 0.9 points from 2019, which was in line with the increase seen nationally.

Pupils achieving GCSE Grade 5+ in E+M

In 2022, Staffordshire disadvantaged pupils achieving GCSE 5+ in E+M increased by 5 percentage points from 2019, this was in line with the increase nationally which also increased by 5 percentage points.

Supplementary Question

In view of the widening attainment gap between the most disadvantaged pupils and the rest, I am a bit concerned that the County Council doesn't have a greater oversight of what is actually happening in schools. Do you share my concerns that the County Council should really have greater oversight of what's going on?

Reply

I will provide you with a full written response.

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

Question

Plant trees to make the world a better place. We must do more. Can the Cabinet Member tell us that he would go to whatever length to promote tree planting, particularly after plantation care? Unfortunately, many plants are destroyed within the first few months after being planted. What more would he do to guarantee a long-term tree planting and balanced tree growth?

Reply

The benefits of trees are wide and varied from slowing down flood pressures and ensuring that we enhance biodiversity, the benefits of trees are felt for generations.

As part of our commitment to reduce the Councils carbon emissions, we are exploring where potential lies to plant trees and diversify habitats to sequester carbon dioxide and mitigate some of our carbon footprint.

Over the past couple of years we have planted thousands of native trees on our land.

Whilst tree planting is a hugely beneficial act, we need to be mindful in balancing the various demands on our countryside for the benefit of our communities.

Whenever trees are planted, a balanced and proper maintenance programme should be entered into. However, sometimes unforeseen circumstances such as last years unprecedented heatwave catch even the most experienced land managers out.

With climate change in mind and the increased pressures that our natural environments is under from weather extremes and increased attacks from plant pathogens, diseases, and pests, we need to carefully consider the resilience of any decision we take to plant trees.

Supplementary Question

In your reply you state that "whenever trees are planted, a balanced and proper maintenance programme should be entered into." May I

point out that there are many stakeholders involved in this. Is there any way we can better strategically coordinate the looking after of these trees?

Reply

The County Council is looking to put a policy in place which dictates how we will look after the trees we plant and will share that once it is done. I know that District Councils will also have their own policies and we can look to using the Staffordshire Sustainability Board for partner authorities to work together on the harmonisation of those policies.

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

Question

On a regular basis myself as a County Councillor receives complaints from residents regarding claiming for damages to motor vehicles due to faulty Highways issues and uneven pavements / trip hazard injuries. Can I have the latest data for insurance claims made and paid out because of Highways claims and personal injury?

Reply

The existence of a highway defect does not in itself constitute a legal liability on the council. The courts have accepted that Highway Authorities cannot be on hand at all times to repair or put right each and every defect or remove every piece of debris the moment it arises on the road. Instead, highway authorities should have a reasonable regime in place to identify and action safety defects in a timescale corresponding to the level of risk they pose to highway users.

To meet this duty like most other Local Highway Authorities we inspect all roads, footways and cycleways at regular intervals. The public can also report safety defects directly to the council online or through the MyStaffs app. Identified defects are risk assessed and given an order of priority for repair.

The council is only liable where it has failed to maintain these systems and processes or where the timescale for completing the repair exceeds that assigned for the level of risk. This is why, especially during and immediately after the winter season, crews are often fully utilised attending to higher risk category 1 and 2 defects, and return at a later date to deal with lower risk category 3 defects.

Highway claims data for the last 5-years shows that during this period an average of around 1,600 third-party highway claims have been received by the council each year. The council's successful repudiation rate is around 70%, meaning that on average less than 500 claims are accepted each year with a total cost in the order of £1.25m/year.

The extra £30m being invested in road repairs over the next two years is expected to further improve this picture. This will allow more repairs to be carried out within legal timescales, helping to further reduce the risk of personal injury and property damage claims.

On top of repairing around 30,000 potholes each year this extra £30m investment will:

- enable five more major road reconstruction schemes at key locations into our towns;
- the resurfacing of nine junctions/roundabouts;
- an extra 800,000 sq.m of pothole prevention surface treatments; and
- additional work to repair and improve many old highway drainage systems.

Central Government have also recently announced further funding of over £4.8M to fix more roads and of this £2M will be used to repair local County Councillor led prioritised pothole repairs.

Fixing more roads is a top priority for the Council. We want the people of Staffordshire to see an improvement in our highways over the next few years and are most grateful for help from the public who can report specific highway defects to us online and through the MyStaffs app - helping with the planning and co-ordination of efficient and effect repairs.

Supplementary Question

Having studied the claims procedure on the County Council's website, could I ask that the background information provided in the response to my question be included in the preamble on the on-line claims form in an endeavour to reduce the number of non-qualifying claims and thus free up officer time?

Reply

That is a good suggestion and I will ask officers to look at this.

13. Petitions

Request for Parking Restrictions along Monks Walk, Gnosall

Councillor Winnington presented a petition from local residents requesting parking restrictions along Monks Walk, Gnosall.

Chairman

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING – 18 May 2023

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP – NOMINATIONS OF GROUP LEADERS

CORPORATE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (13)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
12	1	-
Tina Clements	Nigel Yates	
Mike Davies		
John Francis		
Gill Heath		
Jeremy Oates		
Jeremy Pert		
Bernard Peters		
Kath Perry		
Bob Spencer		
Samantha Thompson		
Mike Wilcox		
Mike Worthington		

PROSPEROUS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (10)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
9	1	-
Tina Clements	Charlotte Atkins	
Philippa Haden		
Philip Hudson		
Graham Hutton		
Peter Kruskonjic		
Samantha Thompson		
David Smith		
Ross Ward		
Bernard Williams		
Co-opted Members - Reverend Prebendary Michael Metcalf (Church of England Diocese representative); Hannah Gallimore (Parent Governor representative) and; three vacancies - Roman Catholic Diocese representative (1) and Parent Governor Representatives (2)		

SAFEGUARDING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (10)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
9	1	-
Gill Burnett-Faulkner	Gillian Pardesi	
Janet Eagland		
Anne Edgeller		
Johnny McMahon		
Kath Perry		
Paul Snape		
Bob Spencer		
Mike Wilcox		
Conor Wileman		

HEALTH AND CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (13)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
11	1	1
Philip Atkins	Charlotte Atkins	Jill Hood
Richard Cox		
Ann Edgeller		
Keith Flunder		
Phil Hewitt		
Thomas Jay		
Kath Perry (AW 07/06/23)		
Jeremy Pert		
Bernard Peters		
Janice Silvester-Hall		
Mike Sutherland (AW 07/06/23)		
Ian Wilkes		

PLANNING COMMITTEE (15)

To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
13	1	1
Jak Abrahams	Arshad Asfar	Tom Loughborough-Rudd
Richard Cox		
John Francis		
Phil Hudson		
Johnny McMahon		
Jeremy Oates		
Rob Pritchard		
David Smith		
Paul Snape		
Mike Sutherland		
Carolyn Trowbridge		
Jill Waring		
Mark Winnington		

PENSIONS COMMITTEE (9)

To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
8	1	-
Philip Atkins	Syed Hussain	
Mike Davies		
Colin Greateorex		
Derrick Huckfield		
Bob Spencer		
Mike Sutherland		
Stephen Sweeney		
Mike Wilcox		

AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (15)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
14	1	-
Richard Cox	Arshad Asfar	
Keith Flunder		
Philippa Haden		
Phil Hewitt		
Derrick Huckfield		
Graham Hutton		
Bernard Peters		
James Salisbury		
Janice Silvester-Hall		
Stephen Sweeney		
Carolyn Trowbridge		
Ross Ward		
Bernard Williams		
Mike Worthington		

OTHER BODIES:

CORPORATE PARENTING MEETING (15)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
13	1	1
Gill Burnett-Faulkner	Syed Hussain	Jill Hood
Janet Eagland		
Ann Edgeller		
Alex Farrell		
Keith Flunder		
John Francis		
Phil Hewitt		
Phil Hudson		
Thomas Jay		
Peter Kruskonjic		
Mark Sutton		
Samantha Thompson		
Victoria Wilson		

CHARITIES AND TRUSTS COMMITTEE (5)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
5	-	-
Phil Hewitt		
Thomas Jay		
David Smith		
Paul Snape		
Mark Winnington		

PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE (5)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
5	-	-
Mark Deaville		
Ian Parry		
Jonathan Price		
Alan White		
Philip White		

COUNTY FARMS TENNANCIES PANEL (3)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
3	-	-
Gill Heath		
Carolyn Trowbridge		
Victoria Wilson		

COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY PANEL (7) (Subject to the approval of the Planning Committee)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
7	-	-
Jak Abrahams		
Phil Hudson		
Rob Pritchard		
David Smith		
Paul Snape		
Jill Waring		
Mark Winnington		

STANDARDS PANEL (5) (Subject to the approval of the Audit and Standards Committee)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
5	-	-
Philippa Haden		
Graham Hutton		
Carolyn Trowbridge		
Bernard Williams		
Mike Worthington		

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (5)		
To be nominated by the Leader of the Conservative Group	To be nominated by the Leader of the Labour Group	Independent
5	-	-
Philip Atkins		
Paul Northcott		
Kath Perry		
Paul Snape		
Mike Wilcox		

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Staffordshire Means Back to Business - Oral Update

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

- Last month saw a decrease of -465 claimants, with the total number of claimants in the county now standing at 15,385 or 2.9%. 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% of the working age population. The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw a decrease of -40 claimants to a total of 2,870 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit has remained the same this month at 4.6%. This is lower than the national rate of 4.9% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.6%, both of which also remained at the same level this month. These decreases coincide with a significant 26% increase in job vacancies seen between April and May, both in Staffordshire and nationally.
- The Staffordshire Jobs & Careers service to support people to find a job and help businesses to find suitable employees now has six Employment Brokers in post with a 7th Broker to be recruited in the Summer to specifically support employment and training needs related to the West Midlands Interchange scheme.
- The Staffordshire Jobs & Careers Service website continues to be well publicised, and the team continue to develop promotional materials and messaging to promote the service.
- We are in the process of developing updated communications to support our Open Door Staffordshire programme, which continues to support work placements within the County Council and external organisations. Since April 2022 the team have supported 47 Open Door candidates to start a placement, with eight going on to secure paid employment to date.
- To support the delivery of our overarching Economic Strategy, we are currently developing a new Employment and Skills Strategy for Staffordshire with the support and input from our skills providers and partners. This will be used to guide our future employment and skills work programmes, support external funding bids, enable effective communication of Staffordshire's shared employment and skills goals

and to inform the development of other relevant skills plans and actions as appropriate.

- Developing higher-level technical skills is one of the emerging priorities of our Employment & Skills Strategy, and the growth of high-quality apprenticeships will be key to us achieving this. Our partners have recently relaunched The Ladder for Staffordshire, previously established to support Apprenticeship growth across Staffordshire, with the aim to secure 1,500 individuals as a minimum onto an apprenticeship across the county by January 2025.
- Staffordshire's recent success in the National VisitEngland Awards for Excellence where three of our visitor economy businesses collected awards, most notably the National Memorial Arboretum won Gold for Business Events Venue of the Year. Also, the Duncombe Arms for Pub of the Year and Trentham Gardens for Unsung Hero who both brought home Bronze.

(Cabinet 21 June 2023)

2. Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) Consultation Feedback, Policy Changes, Re-use and HWRC Network Improvements to Date

Since the HWRC service moved in-house, it has been identified that there has been a significant increase in the disposal of bulky and trade waste, particularly at the Cannock site (the largest HWRC within the network) which has increased disposal costs putting pressure on existing budgets. Following public consultation, the Cabinet have approved policy changes to control the use of the Council's HWRC network and minimise both operational and financial pressures and to reflect operational changes since the network came in-house. These changes also aim to address the issue of queuing on HWRC sites due to trade waste vehicles taking space and considerable time to offload waste. Permits will be issued to Staffordshire residents with vans or trailers and sites will only accept trade waste from within Staffordshire. There will be no change to Staffordshire residents disposing of waste in cars and disposal of non-chargeable items will remain the same for both residents requiring and not requiring permits.

(Cabinet 17 May 2023)

3. Household Support Fund (HSF)

On 30 September 2021, the DWP announced a new HSF Grant which will be made available to County Councils and Unitary Authorities in England to support those most in need this Winter. The County Council has the discretion on exactly how this £11,013,096.00 funding is used, providing it

adheres to the funding criteria. These conditions have changed each time but there remains a commitment to:

- The majority of funding being targeted at low-income households; however support is not restricted to those households in receipt of benefits.
- Prioritise the support for households in the most need with food, energy, and water bills.
- More recently a referral route must be available to allow for targeted residents to benefit in addition to the identified schemes.

The Cabinet have considered the impact of the delivery of the Household Support Fund (HSF) grant on local residents to date and have approved the planned proposals for the usage of the HSF in Staffordshire for the financial year 2023/24.

(Cabinet 17 May 2023)

4. Volunteering for Staffordshire County Council

The Council currently has over 500 regular volunteers who support the work of the Authority. Following feedback and learning from our response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Communities Leadership Group undertook a review of how we support people who volunteer for the Council. The Task & Finish group included representatives from our VCSE Capacity Building Framework Partners, Support Staffordshire, and Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS), as well as commissioning leads and managers from across the authority who support volunteers.

As a result of this review, the Cabinet have agreed that the Council should adopt the following nine new 'volunteering principles' together with practical guidance documents for staff, ensuring that everyone who volunteers with the Council is supported to have a positive and consistent experience:

- Have clearly defined expectations, roles, and boundaries for all our volunteers.
- Be inclusive and accessible for all residents who want to get involved.
- Be flexible where possible, with different opportunities depending on how much time people can offer.
- Be personalised, taking into account the different experiences, skills, motivations and capabilities of each volunteer.
- Ensure our volunteering opportunities are mutually beneficial for both volunteers and the Council's work within communities.
- Ensure volunteers have the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences with the Council.
- Have volunteer focussed policies and processes, including recruitment, induction, and training.

- Recognise the positive contribution of our volunteers.
- Co-ordinate our approach to volunteering with existing Council resources, such as Open Door, Staffordshire Connects, and #DoingOurBit.

(Cabinet 21 June 2023)

5. Joint Coroners Service - Legal Framework and Financial Protocol

The Cabinet have approved the Heads of Terms for the Legal Framework for Staffordshire County Council to enter a partnership with Stoke on Trent City Council to allow the operation of a joint Coroner's service through the Joint Executive Committee, subject to a similar resolution being passed by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, and subject to Ministerial sign off, be approved.

It is expected that the merger will not only help improve services for bereaved families, but would also provide opportunities for efficiency savings, ensuring that the service is sustainable and fit for the future. Inquests will continue to be heard in both Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent, however there will be the potential to use other sites and locations under the new joint service.

The proposal links in with wider Ministry of Justice aspirations to merge smaller services which helps create a more consistent service and results in more coroner's areas being of a similar size and population.

The Director of Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, has been given delegated authority, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture, to take all steps necessary to enable the Joint Agreement.

(Cabinet 21 June 2023)

6. Community Learning Ofsted Inspection and Accountability Agreement 2023-2024

Ofsted carried out a 'full' inspection of the Council's Community Learning Service between 31 January to February 2023. The Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders and examining documentation and records. Key judgements were applied as follows:

- Overall effectiveness - Good
- The quality of education - Good
- Personal development - Good

- Leadership and management - Good
- Safeguarding - Effective

The Cabinet have commended the outcome of the inspection which provides an assurance that we are providing a quality service to our learners; and has also helped us identify ways in which we can further develop and improve our provision. The findings will also be used to set out our plan for the service for the coming year in the accountability agreement, including key aims, targets and outcomes that demonstrate our contribution to local skills needs.

(Cabinet 21 June 2023)

7. Integrated Performance - Performance and Finance Final Outturn Report 2022/23

The Cabinet have received an overview of the Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against its Strategic Plan, Delivery Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). They noted that the final outturn position was an overspend of £11.294m. (The Quarter 3 forecast was an overspend of £11.635m).

Significant progress was made across the organisation during 2022/23, with inflation and cost of living pressures continuing to be responded to, whilst also delivering key programmes of work. Levels of demand presented challenges, particularly in Children and Families and Adult Social Care, including responding to adult social care market pressures and cost pressures within the Children's Social Care market.

(Cabinet 21 June 2023)

8. Framework Agreement for Maintenance and Minor Works

The Cabinet have given their approval to the commencement of a procurement exercise to procure a framework agreement for the provision of planned and reactive maintenance and minor works. (The scope of the framework agreement also includes for, Building, Electrical and Mechanical works). The total procurement will be qualified for up to £50 million to consider flexibility in the council's spend and to accommodate any potential additional spend of public sector partners. There is an appetite from Stafford Borough Council, Cannock Chase District Council and South Staffordshire Council to use the framework once it is live.

(Cabinet 21 June 2023)

9. Centre for Asylum Seekers in Stafford

Following a public inquiry, an appeal by Serco to accommodate asylum seekers in former student accommodation has been upheld.

While we are awaiting further details of timescales etc our priority now is to work with Serco, Stafford Borough Council and other partners to ensure local services can manage and that the asylum seekers receive the support they need during their time in the county.

This is a large-scale proposal and will be able to accommodate around 500 people, which is likely to be young, single adults, on a temporary basis.

10. Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire

As a county council, we were proud to introduce the first Ironman 70.3 to Staffordshire and it has become a regular feature in our calendar. This year was once again another fantastic event.

We were therefore sorry to hear that the Ironman Group has decided to discontinue the event and this year's will be the last.

As a former competitor myself, I know many people will share in the disappointment but, I would like to take this opportunity to thank residents, businesses, organisers and volunteers who have been involved over the years for their support.

11. Coronation

The Coronation seems some time ago now, but recently we had the chance to meet our own Staffordshire Coronation babies.

Babies born on the day of the Coronation received a special commemorative cup and I was delighted that so many of the families were able to join us here in County Buildings to receive their gift.

12. Armed Forces Day and Windrush 75

In Staffordshire, we have a special relationship with our armed forces – and with the people who served in them.

Armed Forces Day last month presented the county with an opportunity to show its support for the services with an event at Shire Hall to showcase the support that is available to armed forces communities.

Last month also marked 75 years since the arrival of the HMT Empire Windrush in Tilbury Docks in 1948, bringing 800 passengers from The Caribbean.

We joined the nation in recognising the huge contribution the Windrush generation played in shaping modern day Britain.

13. Fostering Communities

Another of our Staffordshire communities which we are incredibly proud of is our fostering community. These families make an immeasurable difference to the lives of children and young people.

Many of these were honoured at our long service awards ceremony recently, including Jeanette McInnes who has fostered for an amazing 40 years and welcomed more than 70 children into her home. I am delighted to hear too that Jeanette has no plans to give up just yet.

Our foster families do wonderful work and I would encourage anyone who is interested to contact us to find out more.

14. School Crossing Patrols

Our school crossing patrol service celebrates its 70th year. Established in 1953, The fashion may have slightly changed over the years, but the team's dedication day in and day out remains as strong.

We have more than 200 patrols ranging in age from 26 to 83. So, a huge congratulations and huge thank you to them all.

15. The Samaritans

Looking forward a little, and talking of wonderful work, The Samaritans will be celebrating their 70th Anniversary in November this year.

They currently have around 22,000 volunteers and more than 200 branches and locations across the UK and Ireland. Every 10 seconds, Samaritans respond to a call for help.

To show appreciation and recognition of their work in Staffordshire, I would encourage all members to work with their local communities to plant a tree in all 60 of the County's Electoral Divisions.

County Council – 20 July 2023

Independent Remuneration Panel – Appointment

The County Council is required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on its Members' Allowances Scheme. Any decision on the nature and level of allowances are a matter for the full Council, but the Council must have regard to any recommendations submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel before establishing or amending the Members' Allowances Scheme.

The Panel meets each year to consider the recommendations to be made to the Council in respect of the level and nature of the forthcoming year's allowances.

The Independent Remuneration Panel currently has three Members who were appointed by the County Council. The minimum number of people permitted to sit on the Independent Remuneration Panel is three and a maximum of five. Members of the Panel usually serve a term of four years, but this may be extended where it is expedient to do so.

Further to interviews taking place on Monday 10th July 2023, a panel of members from the Audit & Standards Committee successfully appointed the following candidates to serve on the Independent Remuneration Panel.

- Colin Agar
- Gemma Shepherd-Etchells

Recommend – That Colin Agar and Gemma Shepherd-Etchells are appointed to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a four year term.

County Council – 20 July 2023

Audit and Standards Committee - Tuesday 11 July 2023

Updates to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to Staffordshire County Council's responsibilities under Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

Recommendation

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Support the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to the Council's responsibilities under s53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as set out in paragraphs 4-9 of this report; and recommend to full Council that the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation be updated accordingly.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services

Report

Background

1. Staffordshire County Council, as surveying authority, has responsibility for maintaining the Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way as laid out in section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Carrying out the duties of the Council in respect of s53 falls within the Terms of Reference of the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel.
2. The Countryside and Rights of Way Panel has to consider Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) applications submitted under s53 for modifications to the Definitive Map, which can be the addition, modification or deletion of a right of way. On receipt of an application the council has to investigate all evidence, including documentary and user evidence as soon as practically possible, determine if an Order should be made, carry out public consultation and, if necessary, submit the application to the Secretary of State which may lead to a Public Inquiry. If a DMMO application is not determined within 12 months of receipt the applicant can appeal to the Secretary of State against this

non-determination which can result in a direction to the council to determine the application within a fixed timescale.

3. Each application involves an extremely labour intensive, lengthy period of researching, collating and examining evidence. The Council has committed considerable resources to address the backlog of DMMO applications. At the time of writing there is a backlog of 290 applications requiring determination. That number includes 67 which the Secretary of State has determined should be dealt with within 6 -12 months and a further 3 direction applications pending with the Secretary of State. I should highlight that research has shown that Staffordshire is in a similar position to many authorities in respect of the backlog although it has been directed by the Secretary of State in considerably more cases than any of the authorities surveyed. The reasons for this difference are unclear.

Proposed Changes to Scheme of Delegation

4. To address the backlog of applications I am constantly reviewing the processes for handling DMMO applications and at its meeting on 16 June 2023 the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel supported my proposals relating to:

(a) Revision of the existing Priority Scheme

5. The existing and proposed Priority Schemes are attached to this report as Appendix A and Appendix B respectively. One of the aims of the revised criteria is to enable prioritisation of those applications which would be considered to have a benefit to the public, such as those which meet certain council objectives (e.g. in relation to improving connectivity) and those which would be lost as a consequence of development.
6. Implementation of the criteria requires me to have delegated powers '*to exercise the County Council's discretion' as set out in section 3 of the proposed Priority Scheme detailed at Appendix B'.*

(b) Delegation of Staffordshire County Council's surveying authority powers in respect of any cross-boundary application to the appropriate neighbouring authority.

7. Occasionally, a DMMO application involves an alleged right of way that crosses the county border. In many cases it is beneficial for the whole of the application to be dealt with by one authority. Currently the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel has to approve the delegation of our surveying authority powers to the neighbouring authority. To help

speed up processes I am requesting *'authority to delegate the County Council's surveying authority powers in respect of any cross-boundary application to the appropriate neighbouring authority as and when such action would prove beneficial both in terms of the effective use of resources and processing of the s53 application'*.

(c) Update to existing delegation

8. As part of my review of the processes I have taken the opportunity to review my existing delegated power in respect of s53 applications.

I am currently authorised to:

*'determine applications for Modification Orders under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 unless, after consultation with the local County Councillor(s) for the area concerned and the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills, they decide that the matter in question ought **properly** to be determined by the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel'.*

9. Members are asked to *approve the deletion of the word 'properly'* as I am concerned that it implies that there are some criteria that inform the decision as to which matters should or should not "properly" be determined by the Panel. In reality the decision is based on the important consideration of whether the relevant local member(s) wishes the matter to be determined by the Panel.

Resource and Financial Implications

10. The proposals, particularly in relation to the delegation of powers to neighbouring authorities aim to make best use of the councils' resources.

Risk and Legal Implications

11. The delegation of decision-making powers need to be properly justified and authorised to avoid challenge to any proposed action on a DMMO application.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix A – Existing Priority Criteria (s53 DMMO applications)

Appendix B – Proposed Priority Scheme (s53 DMMO applications)

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APPENDIX A

Existing Priority Criteria

The Countryside and Rights of Way Panel have resolved that applications for Modification Orders should be investigated and determined in the order in which they are received, except where there are exceptional circumstances, which would warrant a claim receiving priority consideration.

For an application to be given priority status the person requesting such would need to provide evidence that it falls within one or more of the criteria set out below. If the material provided is not sufficient to support the claim Officers have the power to reject the request. The decision on a request supported by relevant evidence is reserved to the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel.

Further, applicants or owner/occupiers should be aware applications will only be afforded priority in rare and exceptional circumstances.

Additionally, that where the Council has been directed to determine applications by a set date by the Secretary of State an application afforded priority status will be dealt with after such directions have been satisfied unless the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel decides otherwise.

These exceptional circumstances are as follows: -

1. Where the land over which the route runs has received permission for development and
 - (a) the implementation of such would mean the claimed way would be lost as a consequence of being built over, and
 - (b) all attempts to divert or otherwise cater for the route within the development have been exhausted.
2. Where there is evidence of severe financial hardship caused by the existence of an application for an addition of a route to the owner/occupier of the land

APPENDIX B

Proposed Priority Scheme

The Countryside and Rights of Way Panel have resolved that applications for Definitive Map Modification Orders should be investigated and determined in the order in which they are received, except where there are circumstances which would warrant priority consideration. All undetermined Definitive Map Modification Order applications will be prioritised using a scoring matrix based on the following circumstances.

1. Directions by the Secretary of State

- A. Where the County Council has been directed by the Secretary of State to determine an application within a specific timescale.

2. On application to the County Council

An owner or occupier of land which is affected by a modification order application may make a request to the County Council for priority consideration based on one or more of the following four circumstances (B-E). The owner or occupier would need to provide evidence to support their request. If the material provided is not considered to be sufficient to support the priority request, officers have the power to reject the request. The decision on a priority request which is supported by relevant evidence is reserved to the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel.

- B. Where the land over which the route runs has received permission for development and
 - a. the implementation of such would mean the claimed way would be lost as a consequence of the development AND
 - b. all attempts to divert or otherwise cater for the route within the development have been exhausted.

- C. Where there is evidence of
 - a. detrimental financial implications, and/or
 - b. detriment to the health

of the owner or occupier of any land affected by a modification order application, AND that either C(i) or C(ii) above has been caused by the existence of a modification order application for an addition of a route over their land.

- D. Where there is evidence that the sale of land is being prevented by a modification order application for an addition of a route over that land.
- E. Where the applicant has identified that there is more than one application which are in close proximity to each other and/or are supported by the same documentary

evidence and it would make more efficient use of resources to investigate those applications together.

3. County Council Discretion

Where in the sole opinion of the Director for Corporate Services, any of the following criteria (F-I) are satisfied, the Director for Corporate Services shall have the discretion to prioritise those modification order applications without the need for a decision from the Countryside and Rights of Way Panel.

- F. Where, unless already accounted for by the application, the land over which the route runs has received permission for development and the implementation of such would mean the claimed way would be lost as a consequence of the development
- G. Where, unless already accounted for by the application, there is more than one application which are in very close proximity to each other and/or are supported by the same documentary evidence and it would make more efficient use of resources to investigate those applications together.
- H. Where the subject of the application would assist in meeting one or more corporate objectives and is considered to offer a significant benefit to users of the Rights of Way network by enabling or improving:
 - 1) Connectivity of the overall highway network
 - 2) Access to services
 - 3) Physical and mental health and wellbeing
- I. Where an existing path is subject to enforcement but the status or alignment of a route which is currently on the Definitive Map is in dispute and a resolution would enable the County to deal with enforcement with more certainty.

Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report

2022-23



Chairman's Foreword

Welcome to Staffordshire County Council's Annual Scrutiny Report.

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

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

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

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



Councillor Mike Wilcox

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairs 2022-23



Councillor Colin Greateorex

Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Jeremy Pert

Chairman of the Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Tina Clements

Chairman of the Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Councillor Bob Spencer

Chairman of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Introduction

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

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

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

How Scrutiny Makes a Difference

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

Holding a matter up to scrutiny raises awareness

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

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

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

Identifies good practice and share this more widely

Initiates 'the difficult conversation' between interested parties

Questions the issues, barriers or blockages

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

Makes comments and recommendations to decision makers based on evidence gathered

Scrutiny Activity in 2022-23

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

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

How Has Scrutiny Added Value in 2022-23?

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Pre-decision scrutiny:

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



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

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

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



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

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



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

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

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Developing Healthier Communities:

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



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

Integrated Care Hubs Working Group:

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

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

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

Adult Social Care and Integrated Care System Workforce Planning:

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

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

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

Primary Care Access:

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

ICP Strategy:

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

NHS System Pressures:

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



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

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

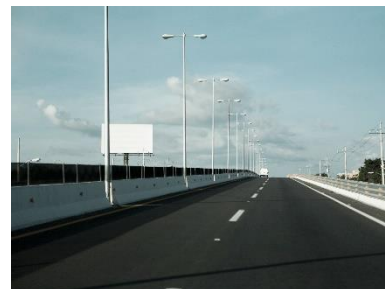
The Committee's work programme for 2022/23 continued to be aligned to the responsibilities of five Cabinet Members' and was therefore busy and wide-ranging. As a result, it was necessary for us to meet three extra times in addition to the seven calendared meetings fixed at the beginning of the year.



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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

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



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

The Committee considered the following pre-decision scrutiny items:

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

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

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

Work programme items requested by the Committee this year include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

What's Coming Up In 2023/24?

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

Effective Overview and Scrutiny should:

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

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

Appendix 1: Items considered during the year 2022-23

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Staffordshire Corporate Parenting Panel

Annual Report 2022-23

Chairman's Foreword

For children who are in "Our Care", the council has a legal and moral duty to try to provide the kind of loyal support that any good parents would give to their children. We should all do our utmost to make sure that all children in our care get a good start in life, and this remains the primary driver behind the Corporate Parenting Panel's work.

This is the fifth year that the Corporate Parenting Panel has produced an annual report, and this is the seventh year that I have had the pleasure to have chaired the panel.

Our primary focus remains the children in our care, and in order to ensure that the child's voice is at the forefront of every decision made we implemented a new meeting process in March 2022. This solidified the work programme of the Corporate Parenting meetings and ensured a continuity of panel members throughout the meeting process of a specified topic theme.

This new meeting approach has been in place for 12 months and has proved to be very successful. The fact that corporate parents panel members, children in our care, care leavers, carers and professionals are all involved in the meetings that take place means that there is an inclusive approach to the development of action plans.

Panel members have continued to provide an invaluable service to our children, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them, and our support officers, for their hard work over the past 12 months. I anticipate that new District and Borough Council co-opted members will join the corporate parenting panel following the election in May 2023. I look forward to welcoming them to the panel in June.



County Councillor Mark Sutton
Chairman of Corporate Parenting Panel
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

1. The Corporate Parenting Role

- 1.1.** Children and young people in our care should be cared about and not just cared for; they have a unique place in society. They have a special relationship with the State because they have been taken into our care either by a court order or by voluntary agreement with their birth parents. Central Government, local authorities, partner agencies, individual professionals and carers all share responsibility for ensuring the best for these children and young people – as they would for their own children.
- 1.2.** We, as the corporate parent of children in care, have a special responsibility for their well-being and to put them first.
- 1.3.** These children and young people's circumstances will have already placed them at a disadvantage. Therefore, we should be their champions in the fight to get what they need and to make sure they are safe. That also means being a powerful advocate to ensure they receive the best of everything and helping them make a success of their lives.
- 1.4.** Corporate parenting is most effective when everyone involved in the lives of those in our care by the County Council work together to improve their experiences and outcomes. By becoming interested in the issue of corporate parenting and promoting the welfare of children in our care and care leavers as part of all of our various roles, we will be helping to discharge the overall responsibility of ensuring the best outcomes for all children and young people in the county.

2. Purpose of Corporate Parenting Panel

- 2.1.** The Corporate Parenting Panel is how the Council discharges its responsibility as a corporate parent and brings together councillors, senior officers in children's services and partner agencies to consider key issues which affect children in our care and care leavers.
- 2.2.** The panel actively engages with and challenges key partners to provide good support and is ambitious for the children in its care.
- 2.3.** The panel works closely with our Children in Care Council and Care Leaver forums to ensure all children in our care have the best possible care, are safe, healthy, happy and achieve. To achieve this, we have an annual thematic work programme in which all partners are called to account.

3. Governance and membership

3.1. The panel provides a key role in supporting members to play their role in ensuring accountability for children in our care. Whilst all members of the County Council are corporate parents, members of the Corporate Parenting Panel champion and challenge on behalf of Children in our Care and Care Leavers. The panel is proactive in challenging service delivery and advocates for children in our care and for strong governance principles.

3.2. The panel looks to see that the voice of the child is imbedded in all bodies and informs decision-making.

3.3. The Work Programme is a working document and as such the panel have requested supplementary reports to further explore any areas of concern or challenge. The current Work Programme can be found in **Appendix 1**.

3.4. The panel comprises 15 elected members of the County Council, including the Chair who is the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Members are appointed annually at the Council meeting in May.

3.5. The 2022-23 members were:

Gill Burnett	Peter Kruskonjic	Samantha Thompson
Janet Eagland	Philip Hudson	Victoria Wilson
Ann Edgeller	Carolyn Trowbridge	Syed Hussain
Keith Flunder	Jill Hood	John Francis (vice-chair)
Thomas Jay	Phil Hewitt	Mark Sutton (chair)

3.6. Members of Staffordshire's District/ Borough Councils are co-opted onto the panel as champions for children in our care particularly in areas of housing and leisure facilities. The 2022-23 co-opted members were:

Bryan Jones	Rosey Claymore	Gillian Heesom
Janice Silvester-Hall	Chris Baron	Barbara Hughes
Wendy Sutton		

3.7. Representing Foster Carers continue to attend the meetings to provide invaluable "lived-experience" insight.

3.8. The panel is supported by the Assistant Director - Children's Social Care, the Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Partnerships, the Head of Children in Care and Care Leavers and the Head of Performance, QA & Engagement.

3.9. A member of the Voice Project attends every meeting to ensure the voice of the child feeds into the panel's agendas. The Voice project are a dedicated team responsible for listening to the views of families, parents, carers, children and young people who are part of our Families First Service.

3.10. The panel calls on professional advice and assistance/holds to account:

- The Headteacher of the Virtual School.
- Designated Doctor and Nurse for Children in our Care.
- County Managers for Fostering, Leaving Care and Adoption.
- Independent Reviewing Officers.
- Senior practitioner colleagues.

3.11. The panel regularly receives first-hand experience accounts from:

- Children in Care and Care Leavers.
- Care Leaver Ambassadors.
- Foster Carers.

3.12. The panel's Terms of reference updated in 2022 is attached as **Appendix 2.**

3.13. All panel members are required to complete Level 1 Child Protection Training as a minimum.

4. New Corporate Parenting Strategy Development

4.1. Stage 1 – Strategy development process

4.1.1. At the May 22 Corporate Parenting meeting the process to develop a new Corporate Parenting Strategy was discussed. Whilst the key objectives remained relevant the current strategy was out of date and no longer reflected the way in which the Corporate Parenting Panel operated.

4.1.2. Officers spent some time considering the items and key objectives that would be included in the development of a more succinct and purposeful document. It would also consider links to complementary work that was taking place elsewhere within the organisation.

4.2. Stage 2 – Workshop development

- 4.2.1. At the July 22 Corporate Parenting meeting a workshop was held with panel members regarding the development of the new corporate parenting strategy.
- 4.2.2. Members were informed of the progress that had been made to date and the commitments that had been given to children, young people, practitioners and carers. Officers proposed the format for the new strategy, key items that could be included, and some potential areas of focus.
- 4.2.3. Panel members broke into groups and were asked to consider a number of questions and provide feedback that would be used to develop the strategy. In summary it was agreed that the strategy would contain 4/5 key themes which could include:
 - Raising Profile / Awareness
 - Education
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Housing
 - Care Leavers / Independence

4.3. Stage 3 – Draft strategy

- 4.3.1. At the business meeting held in March 23, members were presented with a draft version of the proposed Corporate Parenting Strategy. The draft strategy had been developed in line with feedback received at the strategy development session that took place in July 2022. Panel members broke into four separate working groups and were asked to share ideas and feedback that would be used to finetune the Strategy.
- 4.3.2. Following this a final “Task & Finish” session took place on Tuesday 25 April 23, to finalise the strategy, incorporating all of the feedback that had been provided during the development stages.

4.4. Stage 5 – Final Strategy

- 4.4.1. The final document was shared with partner organisations and presented to Panel members at the July Corporate Parenting Panel meeting. A copy of the final Strategy is included at **Appendix 3** to this report.

5. Meetings

5.1. The panel met 12 times throughout 2022/23, as outlined below.

5.1.1. Four working group meetings – Members, in their allocated groups, attend meetings with a variety of council officers, carers and practitioners to focus on a specific theme that affects our young people. The purpose of these meetings is to consider ways in which the issues can be changed or improved to better support them.

5.1.2. Four hot topic meetings – Members, in their allocated groups, attend meetings with a variety of council officers, carers, practitioners and representatives of children in our care and care leavers. The feedback from the working group meetings is further considered at the hot topic meetings and a number of action plans and recommendations are developed to support improvement of the specific topics that are being considered.

5.1.3. Four business meetings – All Corporate Parenting members attend the business meeting. The results of the working group and hot topic meetings are presented to the wider membership for consideration. The business meeting also focusses on quality and performance of our children's service and regularly receives presentations from service providers from within the authority, such as the Headteacher of the Virtual School, Designated Doctor and Nurse for Children in our Care, County Managers for Fostering, Leaving Care and Adoption.

6. New Meeting Arrangements

6.1. In March 2022 a new meeting process was introduced to solidify the work programme of the Corporate Parenting meetings. This ensured a continuity of panel members would have a consistent involvement in a specified topic theme throughout the process, from the initial "Working Group" meeting to the "Hot Topic" meeting, and finally to the "Business" meeting, where the final action plans and recommendations are discussed by all panel members.

6.2. The new approach has been in place for 12 months and had proved to be very successful. The fact that corporate parents, children in our care, care leavers, carers and professionals were all involved in the meetings that took place, meant that there was a truly holistic approach to the development of action plans, and it

ensured that the child's voice remained prominent in the recommendations that were being made.

7. Meeting Topics for 2022-23

7.1. Understanding their past – May 2022

7.1.1. The Corporate Parenting Panel worked with a group made up of children in care council, care leaver and practitioner representatives to consider the subject of 'Understanding our Past'. This was one of the top issues young people felt they needed more help and support with. The outcome of this topic was to develop a process that provided children with a method that:

1. enabled them to save information that explained why they came into care.
2. helped them to understand what had happened during their time in care.
3. proposed a means by which children in care would be able to access the information more easily in the future.
4. considered ways in which the information would be stored.

7.1.2. The recommendations from this topic centred on improvements to the way in which information was stored and the ease with which it could be accessed.

7.2. Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers – July 2022

7.2.1. Working group meetings took place at the Amity Hub in Newcastle under Lyme, and at a Corporate Parenting working group in Stafford to consider the situations and issues affecting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).

7.2.2. It was agreed that a toolkit of useful information would be created and added to the Document Library that could be accessed to improve the support provided to all UASC.

7.2.3. The feedback received, and subsequent recommendations focussed on how a UASC could get support in accessing housing and understanding how to manage their own tenancy and feel, and be, safe in the places where they now live.

7.2.4. There was also a focus on the level of support provided to UASC to support them to integrate into the community, whether this be by helping with the language barrier, improving the continuity of family support to help build relationships,

accessing places of worship, accessing education and employment opportunities.

7.3. Delegated Authority – October 2022

7.3.1. Delegated authority relates to a person who can make a decision on behalf of a cared for young person. This was a top issue for the young people, as it wasn't always clear to the young people or their carers who can make a final decision on certain activities.

7.3.2. The action plan and recommendations centred around ensuring appropriate information was available to allow the relevant person to make the correct decision. A fact sheet was to be created that clearly defined the decisions that were delegated for a carer to make, and the decisions that would need to be escalated.

7.4. Topic review and future topic planning - December 2022

7.4.1. As part of the new meeting arrangement process highlighted in section 4 of this report, a topic review and future topic planning session had been introduced to allow the panel the opportunity to see how the implemented action plans were progressing.

7.4.2. At the same time it also gave the young people, practitioners and corporate parenting panel representatives the opportunity to suggest topics that they would like to see considered over the next 12-month period.

7.5. Physical Health – March 2023

7.5.1. A Hot Topic session made up of, corporate parents, children in care council, care leaver, practitioner and Commissioned Health Services for Cared for children representatives, had taken place to consider the topic of physical health.

7.5.2. The agreed actions focussed on the production of a digital Health Information sheet that would be used to explain what to do when dealing with certain illnesses or ill health situations, and also the production of a Health Assessment (HA) leaflet that would be used to explain what an HA was and what would happen during an HA.

7.5.3. Additional work would be undertaken to raise staff awareness to ensure all practitioners were doing the same thing when completing the various health forms, this would also provide quality assurance. An audit would be arranged to take place to ensure health details and forms were being compiled fully and correctly.

8. Service Annual Reports

8.1. The panel regularly received reports and presentations from colleagues and partners who provide services to the children in our care, to support it to fulfil its duties. In 2022/23 updates were provided by the Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO), Virtual School, Foster Service, and Complaints team.

8.2. Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO)

8.2.1. The challenges faced by the IRO team centred on the increased numbers of children entering care and a decrease in the number of adoptions. Quality Assurance (QA) alerts were very low and there was a need to evidence informal as well as formal QA alerts & resolutions.

8.2.2. Positively the service had worked hard to deliver on the core priorities and had maintained links with the local authority and partner agencies. There had been a slight drop in the timeliness of reviews from 97% to 95%, but this was still well within the required target.

8.2.3. The Service Priorities for 2022-2023 were to focus on the stability in the service and increase the capacity of IRO's to bring deeper and greater scrutiny and challenge to the local authority. This would further improve outcomes for children. There would be a focus on permanency for children to ensure exit planning was considered and evidenced.

8.3. Virtual School

8.3.1. The Virtual School Head Teacher outlined the roles of the team as being responsible for the education of children in our care and for children previously in our care, and to support children who had a social work care plan.

8.3.2. The five future priorities for the Virtual School and future working groups for 2022/23 were:

- **Priority 1** - Covid-19 recovery planning to ensure that all our looked after and previously looked after children return to full-time education.
- **Priority 2** - To ensure that all our Looked After Children receive an appropriate education and are supported to make good progress in their education.
- **Priority 3** - To ensure that the child's journey into and leaving care, including the impact of attachment and trauma, is understood and supported to ensure children with a social care involvement thrive in education.
- **Priority 4** - To expand the opportunities for our children to engage in accredited wider learning opportunities shaped by their talents and interests.
- **Priority 5** - We listen and respond to the voice of our children to inform practice and plans.

8.4. Foster Service

- 8.4.1. The Head of Service for Fostering joined the Panel to update on the Fostering Service between 2021/22.
- 8.4.2. Within the last twelve months there had been significant changes within the Fostering Service following the whole service transformation within the children and communities' services.
- 8.4.3. On the 31.03.22 the service had 426 Approved Fostering Households. 253 were general Fostering Households, 138 were Family and Friends Households, 11 were Temporary Fostering Households, and 24 were Disability Short Break Households.
- 8.4.4. The agency had experienced capacity challenges over the past year. The agency had provided fostering families for 745 children and young people within the year with an increased number of teenagers. Despite the challenges, the prioritisation of placement support meant that the number of children living with Staffordshire carers had significantly increased over the year.
- 8.4.5. Applications to Foster had fallen significantly following the Covid-19 pandemic both nationally and within the West Midlands. Staffordshire had followed a similar trend in the number of applications received.

8.5. Complaints

- 8.5.1. The panel received a presentation from the Complaints Manager to accompany the Children's Complaints and Representations Service and the Corporate Feedback Procedure for the Children in Care and our Care Leavers service, for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 8.5.2. The report showed that there had been no significant increase in complaints for the service since the service transformation. Responses to complaints within timescale had increased from 65% to 70% compared to the previous reporting year, and only 7% of complaints were found to be fully upheld. Minimal complaints had been received from young people directly, following the trend of previous reports.
- 8.5.3. The team had received 55 compliments. During what has been a year involving change and adaptation, the fact that more compliments had been received than complaints was positive.
- 8.5.4. The Challenges faced by the team relate to the difficulty experienced when responding to complaints within published timescales given the ongoing pressures the service faced. A response rate of 70% in timescale was commended and it was also noted that, although it was difficult for a service to acknowledge fault, it was commendable when officers accepted fault and put learning in place to improve practice.

8.6. Next Steps of the Corporate Parenting Panel

- 8.6.1. The Corporate Parenting Panel continues to play a key role in promoting, monitoring and challenging service improvement and achievements.
- 8.6.2. It is anticipated that new District and Borough Council co-opted members will join the corporate parenting panel following the election in May 2023.
- 8.6.3. An induction session has been arranged to take place in June 2023 to ensure that all relevant information and training is made available to the new cohort of members.

County Councillor Mark Sutton
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel

Implications

1. **Equalities implications:** it will be an ongoing responsibility for the panel to promote, support and respect the identity of children in our care and care leavers.
2. **Legal implications:** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.
3. **Resource and Value for money implications:** There are no direct financial implications arising from this annual report. Financial performance, namely resources, budget and spend in relation to discharging the panel's responsibilities is regularly reported through the Council's budgetary procedures.
4. **Risk implications:** The key issue facing the panel in its oversight and challenge function is the capacity and financial pressures posed by the increase of the children in our care population on all service areas supporting children in our care, and ensuring that as effective corporate parents, this does not hinder the care, support, aspirations or continued improvement in outcomes for our children in care.
5. **Climate change:** There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report.
6. **Health Impact Assessment screening:** There are no health impact assessment implications arising from this report.

Contact Officer

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Appendix 1



Corporate Parents Meeting Forward Plan May 23 – March 24

Corporate Parenting is the means by which the County Council fulfils its responsibilities as a corporate parent and brings together councillors, senior officers in children's social care and partner agencies.

If you would like to know more about our work programme, please get in touch with Simon Humble, Governance and Democracy Officer, 01785 276961 or

simon.humble@staffordshire.gov.uk

Cycle No	Cycle Topic	Working Group Voice Project – Northfield	Hot Topic Voice Project – Northfield	Business Meeting Oak Room – County Buildings
2023				
3	Stigma and Identity	10 May 23 – 10am Group 1	5 Jun 23 – 4:45pm Group 1	12 Jul 23 – 1pm All members
4	Preparing for Adulthood	12 Jul 23 – 10am Group 2	18 Sept 23 – 4:45pm Group 2	19 Oct 23 – 10am All members
5	Reviewing Current Action Plans and Future Themes	NA	6 Nov 23 – 4:45pm 2 reps from each group	28 Nov 23 – 10am All members
2024				
1	TBC	XX Jan 24 – 10am Group 3	XX Feb 24 – 4:45pm Group 3	13 Mar 24 – 1pm All members
2	TBC	XX Mar 23 – 10am Group 1	XX Apr 23 – 4:45pm Group 1	14 May 23 – 10am All members

Other activities	Provider	Date and Location
Summer Funday	Voice Project	XX August 23

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
County Members	Gill Burnett Janet Eagland Ann Edgeller Keith Flunder	Peter Kruskonjic Philip Hudson Alex Farrell Jill Hood Thomas Jay	Phil Hewitt Samantha Thompson Victoria Wilson Syed Hussain John Francis
Co-opted Members	Janice Silvester-Hall Wendy Sutton Alan Hudson	Anne Hobbs Rosey Claymore Gillian Heesom Alan Hudson	Barbara Hughes Julie Easton Alan Hudson

Wednesday 12 th July 2023 – 1:00pm
Children's Voice Project and Children in Care Council update
Topic Update and Action Plan
Induction / refresher training
Performance Data
Corporate Parenting Strategy
Work Programme – Simon Humble

Tuesday 17 th October 2023 – 10:00am
Children's Voice Project and Children in Care Council update
Topic Update and Action Plan
Health and Wellbeing of Children in our care (12-month update)
Performance Data
Work Programme – Simon Humble

Tuesday 28 th November 2023 – 10:00am
Children's Voice Project and Children in Care Council update
Review of recent topics and plan of future topic themes
Fostering Service Annual Report – Brian Johnson
Adoption Service Annual Report – Nicola Hope
Performance Data
Work Programme

Wednesday 13 th March 2024 - 1:00pm
Children's Voice Project and Children in Care Council update House Project (care leavers)
Topic Update and Action Plan
Independent Review Officer – Angela Banks
Complaints Annual Report – Kate Bullivant
Performance Data
Work Programme

Tuesday 14 th May 2024 – 10:00am
Children's Voice Project and Children in Care Council update
Topic Update and Action Plan
Virtual School Update – Sarah Rivers
Corporate Parenting Panel – Annual Report
Performance Data
Work Programme – Simon Humble

Appendix 2



Corporate Parenting Panel - Terms of Reference

Context

Corporate parenting is the collective responsibility of the Council to prioritise the needs of children in care and seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children. The Corporate Parenting Panel is designed to provide the necessary leadership that drives an ambitious and multi-agency approach to improving outcomes for children in care and care leavers by raising aspirations, building stronger relationships and taking time to listen to the voice of the child.

The panel is a non-political advisory body to the Children's Executive and is chaired by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families. The panel does not take executive decisions but provides leadership and a governance structure for corporate parenting in order to drive forward outcomes for children in our care and care leavers.

Objectives of the panel

- To provide strategic leadership and hold partners to account for performance against strategies to improve all outcomes for children in our care and young people.
- To act as advocates for children in our care and young people and to ensure that the commitments to children in our care and young people set out in the panel's Strategy are delivered.
- To act as champions for corporate parenting influencing other councillors, officers and partners.
- To ensure that children in our care are protected and supported to develop as healthy citizens, able to participate in their community.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the Virtual School in improving the educational attainment of children in our care and young people, to narrow the gap of achievement between them and their peers and to maximise opportunities for training and career placements.

These objectives will be delivered by the panel in the following ways:

- Make sure the whole Council and partner agencies commit to the principles of excellent corporate parenting and to hold partners to account for their role in the delivery of services to children in our care and care leavers.
- Ensure children and young people in care, leaving care and their carers are getting the support they need.

- Lead on the development, review and promotion of the Corporate Parenting Strategy across the Council and involve partners in order to improve services and respond to changing need.
- Be well informed on Government legislation, guidance and policy concerning children and young people in care and receive assurance that the local authority is fulfilling its statutory duties for children in care, leaving care and their carers.
- Ensure a dialogue with the Children in Care Council to enable participation of children in our care and care leavers in the corporate parenting agenda and in influencing service re-design.
- Receive regular reports, as appropriate, on the level and quality of services and scrutinising performance management information to ensure that any shortfalls are properly addressed.
- Attend any training needed to support the role (minimum of two per year).
- In accordance with regulation 44 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 accompanying the independent visitor on their visits to children's homes each month to facilitate communication between children in our care, front line staff and councillors.
- Meet children placed in foster homes and hear from their carers and to monitor the ongoing commitment to providing support, training and clarity of expectations to foster carers to achieve excellent and high-quality care.
- Celebrate the achievements of children in our care and care leavers.
- Link as appropriate with the Safe and Strong Select Committee and develop a relationship with the Safeguarding Children's Board.
- Encourage all partners whether health, education or social care services or the voluntary sector to work in an integrated way in the best interests of children in our care and care leavers.

Membership

The panel shall comprise **15 County Councillors** and may include any member of the County Council representing a county-wide spread and be appointed at the annual meeting of the Council. Representatives from partner organisations may be co-opted onto the panel as appropriate. The Cabinet Member with responsibility for Children and Families is chairman of the panel.

Co-opted membership is invited from:

- the eight District/Borough Councils;
- a foster carer.

The panel will be supported by:

- the Assistant Director - Children's Social Care;
- the Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Partnerships;
- the Head of Service - Children in our Care and Care Leavers;
- The Head of Performance, QA & Engagement;
- a Voice Project staff member;
- a representative from commissioning and partnerships;
- an Independent Reviewing Officer;
- a representative from the NHS Integrated Care Board.

Arrangements for Meetings:

The panel shall meet eight times per year as set out below, agree a work programme annually and review it at each meeting. The meetings of the panel are held in private session.

- Four Business meetings – to focus on quality and performance and held in county buildings (all members to attend).
- Four Discussion meetings - these meetings to be held from 4.30pm-6.30pm to discuss priority items identified by young people (panel members will attend on a rota basis).
- Members will attend working focus groups on a rota basis which will focus on outcomes for children and young people and barriers and will feedback to the wider panel.
- Members will be expected to attend a minimum of one engagement activity per quarter to directly hear the views of children, young people or carers (shadowing staff; 1-2-1 meetings with foster carers/families; attending a Voice Project event; or a Foster Carer Support Group).

Meetings of the panel shall be conducted in accordance with the Procedural Standing Orders in Section 11, of the Councils Constitution although meetings may comprise a range of different formats and locations.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will report to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board as necessary.

Staffordshire's Corporate Parenting Strategy 2023 - 2028

Children in Care Council and Care Leavers Forum.

We are a group of young people who are cared for and have joined together to form the Children in Care Council.

It is important to us that our voice is heard in shaping the services that support us through our care journey. We require support to ensure we are happy, healthy, safe and have access to a good education.

We want those supporting us to share our ambitions and support us to thrive, to join us in celebrating our successes and guide us when we are struggling.

The Corporate Parenting Panel work alongside us and help us to influence positive change through the consultation and action plans we work on together.

Staffordshire Children in Care Council

Welcome

It is our shared privilege to introduce this strategy which is a cumulation of conversations with children and young people who are experts in their experience, and with the families, carers and partner agencies who are involved in their journey. It sets out our vision for improving the experience of children in care and care leavers through corporate parenting.

Using a partnership approach, we will remain relentlessly focused on helping keep children and their families together. Our approach will continue to be responsive and respectful and when children and young people do need to come into our care, we will be committed to ensuring they have opportunities to experience:

- › a home where they feel loved, valued, and nurtured
- › loving and lasting relationships
- › a quality education
- › fulfilling work and training opportunities
- › good health

We aim to build on the great progress and achievements made so far (see Appendix 1 for the detail) and continue to strive to be the best corporate parents we can be for our children and young people. We will remain aspirational in everything we do and ensure children, young people and their families' voices are heard during their care journey with us.

Their views will also help shape future direction and services. We will also continue to build children and young people's emotional resilience in readiness for their transition into adulthood and beyond.



Mark Sutton,
Cabinet Member
for Children and
Young People



Neelam Bhardwaja,
Director for Children
and Families



Claire Cartwright,
Head of Children in our
Care and Care Leavers

Who are corporate parents?

For those children and young people who are unable to live with their parents or guardians, it is our legal duty under the Children Act 1989 to act as corporate parents when they become cared for.

This duty is not just for social workers, it is everyone's responsibility. For example, professionals working with the child/young person, and everyone who works at the council including all councillors. It is also the responsibility of all our partners such as health, police, education, and housing.

It takes a whole team to support a cared for child/young person and care leaver, not just one person.

Everyone needs to be concerned about the child/young person as if they were their own, and it is important that our partners understand how they too can support our shared corporate parenting responsibilities.

"I would like the same approach to be applied to children in care as any good parenting would involve. Recognising the individual, providing opportunities for holistic developing of social, spiritual, physical, psychological and educational growth as a rounded response."

Staffordshire Foster Carer

"Immensely important and meaningful responsibility for people's lives – it can't be a dry paper/business response."

Staffordshire Care Leaver

Who are the Corporate Parenting Panel?

The Corporate Parenting Panel's role is to raise awareness and promote a shared responsibility of corporate parenting with all councillors, County Council and partner colleagues.

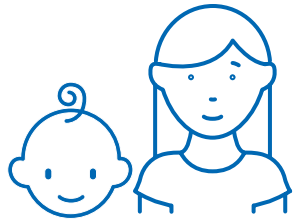
They are a critical friend to help and challenge the whole system to improve outcomes for our cared for children, young people and care leavers.

The Panel will be working throughout the life of this strategy to raise awareness of corporate parenting so that they can influence colleagues and partners to help address the challenges that are being identified.



Corporate Parenting principles

In Staffordshire we will:



Make sure children and young people have access to:



loving stable homes



quality education



fulfilling work or training opportunities

any other services that they need.



Act in the child's best interest.



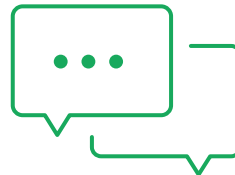
Prioritise and promote relationships in our interaction.



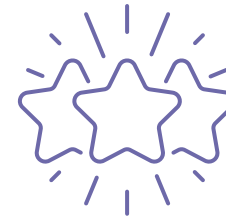
Be attachment aware and trauma informed understanding children's lived experience.



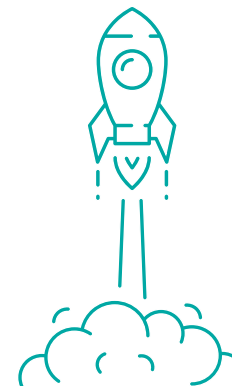
Promote the physical, mental health and wellbeing for children and build their emotional resilience.



Find creative ways to encourage children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings.



Always celebrate your successes



Be inspirational and aspirational in planning for our children and young people.



Embed a culture of reflection and learning.



Appropriately prepare children and young people for adulthood and independent living throughout their care journey.

Making it happen

We will **SUPPORT** children and young people in our care or leaving care to **GROW WELL** and **LIVE WELL**.

Together with our cared for children/young people, care leavers and their carers, the Corporate Parenting Panel has developed four promises which set out how it will support them and deliver the vision.

A key focus will also be to work with our partners to help them understand their corporate parenting responsibilities and use our influence to make sure our children in care and care leavers receive the services they need at the time they need them.

“Corporate parenting is also about being the voice and the advocate to ensure the child’s wishes, views and feelings are heard, and to also champion ways and strategies for children to have positive experiences throughout their care journey and to achieve better outcomes.”

Registered manager
at children’s home



Our four promises

We promise to
ALWAYS LISTEN

We promise to support
your **HEALTH, HAPPINESS**
and **WELLBEING**

We promise to **SUPPORT YOU**
to **FEEL VALUED** at home,
in school, and live in a
LOVING STABLE HOME

We promise to **ENCOURAGE**
you to **SUCCEED** in your goals
and **CELEBRATE** with you

We promise to ALWAYS LISTEN

Having your
voice heard

Trusted
relationship

Keeping
the right
information

Keeping you at
the heart of
decisions

Making
plans
together

Continually
improving

You said:

It's important to me to have the chance to speak to my social worker on my own, over the phone and face to face.

"I need to see who they are (faces and names) and understand what they can do."

Care experienced child talking about corporate parenting

The Voice Project encourages young people to join its forums to have their say on the services supporting them.

Delegated Authority needs to be clearer to young people and communicated in very simple terms.



Having your voice heard

You have someone you feel able to talk to.

You are aware of your rights from the moment you become cared for, including how to hold us to account.

You, your parents, and carers know how to make a compliment or complaint and we'll ask for feedback on how well we are doing from time to time.

You have access to advocacy, independent visitor and children's rights services. Ensuring everyone involved is aware of how to feed back about your experiences.

You get invited to join the Children in Care Council, or Care Leavers Forum.

Keeping you at the heart of decisions

We will always think about what is right for you and do our best by you.

We will involve you when planning for your future.

We review how we work with and those who care for you, to make sure our approach consistently meets your needs.

We explain decisions to you in a way you and your family understand.

We visit you when we say we will visit.

Trusted relationship

We strive for a consistent approach to building trusting relationships.

We see you alone to hear your wishes, views and opinions on matters important to you.

Your assessments and plans are written to you in a way that you understand.

Making plans together

We ask you and those who support you your views about the things that matter to you, including the support you're provided.

You have opportunities to influence, shape and work with us to develop services that are provided to you.

We take your views into account when support is reviewed or developed.

Keeping the right information

We always keep a true record of our visits and contact with you.

You know your right to access the information we hold about you.

The records about you are always kept up to date.

The Corporate Parenting Panel will keep you at the heart of its decisions. As corporate parents we will use information gathered to ensure the services meet your needs.

Continually improving

We support our staff to think about and learn from the way we work with you, your family, carers and partners.

Look at opportunities to work with and improve relationships with partners.

We are continually looking at ways to make the service we provide to you better.

You and your carers' feedback is used when we are planning new services or changes to existing ones.

We always think creatively about ways to gain your views.

When we look at how well we've done at delivering our promises to you, you work with us to see what we have done and what we still need to do.



We promise to support your HEALTH, HAPPINESS and WELLBEING

Good health

Understand who you are and develop your own identity

Support you to succeed

Healthy and safe relationships

Build emotional resilience

Support you to be a good parent when the time comes

You said:

"The corporate parents need to be made aware that it is a big issue, and that young people need support through it, even when they are in an unstable placement."

Care experienced young person talking about mental health

"It's important for young people to know where they have come from, their past and their identity."

"Make sure I'm happy."

"Support me with my health conditions, taking me to appointments and asking how I am feeling."



Good health

Before you come into care, ask your family about you and your family's health history (this is to find out if there are conditions such as diabetes in the family).

Ask you to have a basic health check when you come into care - helping us and you understand how healthy you are (really informal and you won't need to undress or talk about things you don't want to). You can have a health check every year for as long as you are in our care if you want to.

You are registered straight away with a doctor, dentist and optician.

Talk about your health at every cared for/ pathway plan review. Making sure all your plans are joined up.

Help you attend appointments if you are a care leaver.

Provide information and advice for you and your carers on how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Provide a leisure allowance for care leavers.

Create a health passport for when you leave care which lists things such as the injections you've had.

Healthy and safe relationships

Help you to develop and maintain relationships with people that are important to you.

Promote family time that meets your needs.

Help you to maintain or regain contact with people important to you.

Help you to understand the dangers of risky relationships and misusing drugs and alcohol.

Understand who you are and develop your own identity

During assessments before you come into care, we will gather as much information about you and your family as possible.

Help you to understand your past and what's happening in your future.

Ensure you have access to support to help you develop your identity, including social activities.

Create opportunities for you to meet other cared for children or care leavers through the Children in Care Council, Care Leavers Forum and other events.



Build emotional resilience

Continue to work with you and your family during your care journey to see if there are any opportunities for you to safely return home.

Provide you with access to advocacy and independent visitor service when you need it.

Help you to manage your mental health by making sure you know which services can support you.

Make sure, every year, your foster carers (if you are aged between 2 and 17) complete a strengths and difficulties questionnaire which helps us understand how you are feeling emotionally.

Support you to succeed

Support you to feel happy and healthy.

Support you to do well at home and at school/ college.

Support you to have friends and a strong support network.

Support you to be a good parent when the time comes

Provide you with the support you need at the earliest opportunity.

Provide you with a mentor who has parenting experience if you want one.

We promise to **SUPPORT YOU** to **FEEL VALUED** at home, in school, and live in a **LOVING STABLE HOME**

Safe place to live

Sense of belonging

Clarity in decision making

Loving stable home

Prepared for adulthood

Living independently

You said:

Supportive housing: to give me more training to manage own tenancy.

“Make sure they are always in contact and make the effort to stay in contact with the young person. To make sure that the young person knows they can trust them.”

Care experienced young person talking about corporate parents

The social workers call me out the blue to check in and see if I am alright.

Young people wanted someone in their local community for advice on the local area and any local issues they were experiencing.



Safe place to live

Before you come into care, fully assess your needs so we understand who is best to care for you.

Wherever you live, ensure it is safe and you have opportunities to have loving relationships with, feel valued and are nurtured by those people.

We visit you regularly and talk to you alone to ask if you feel safe. If you don't, we will work with you to understand why and what needs to happen next.



Stable home

We continue to work with you and your family during your care journey to see if there are any opportunities for you to safely return home.

If it is not safe for you to return home, ensure that your forever home is planned for quickly.

We only change your school, college or university if we absolutely have to. If there are any concerns identified with your school or college, we will address them quickly.

Sense of belonging

You are supported to build new relationships where you are now living, whilst making sure you can keep in touch with the people who are important to you where you used to live if you are unable to continue living in or near your community.

If you are living outside of Staffordshire, we offer you the same support as if you were living in Staffordshire.

Protecting you from harm

The people who work for us are safe adults.

We provide regular training for our staff, foster carers and residential care workers on how to keep you safe.

We provide information and advice about the risks you may face whilst growing up, such as drugs and alcohol misuse, criminal and sexual exploitation.

You have someone to talk to if you are worried.

You are made safe, as quickly as possible if you are at risk.

Clarity in decision making

When decisions need to be made about you, they are done in a timely way.

The people looking after you know what decisions they can make for you from the moment they start to look after you, such as having a sleepover (delegated authority).

Our staff, foster carers and residential care staff receive a good level of training to help them to understand your needs and have the confidence to make decisions.

Preparation for living independently

You are prepared for adulthood at the earliest opportunity and support you to complete the independence programme as soon as you are ready.

This gives you the skills to live independently. There is a clear plan for your future which allows time for you to get ready for independence.

You are supported to live independently when you leave care. You are provided with opportunities to 'stay put' with your foster carer or 'stay close' to your residential home when you turn 18.

You are provided with opportunities to move into supported accommodation or your own tenancy.

We continue to work with housing providers to enable you to have a permanent and safe home. We provide a smooth transition to adult services where this is appropriate.

Our care leaver offer remains ambitious and inspirational.

We promise to ENCOURAGE you to SUCCEED in your goals and CELEBRATE with you

High aspirations

Good education

Range of experiences

Ambitious plans

Opportunities and support

Celebration events

You said:

“Treat them as individuals and ensure their care plans reflect their individual needs”.

Staffordshire foster carer

“Involve me in activities which I find interesting and fun so I can learn.”

Care experienced child

Support from secondary school to help me choose the right course to help me reach my career goals.



High aspirations

We will ensure everyone has high aspirations for you. You are supported to “reach for the stars” in everything you want to do.

We will think big and want you to do the same. If things don’t work out, we will always be there for you and never give up on you.

We will all celebrate your successes.

We will support you to have a stable education.

We will aspire for our education settings to be trauma informed and attachment aware.

Ambitious plans

When we write your plans with you, you feel inspired by the opportunities you have.

Your plans are aspirational, regularly reviewed and joined up.

Your plans have clear actions, you understand what is happening and when.

When there are any changes in your situation, they are fully planned for and you always know what is happening next (this includes your care plan or pathway plan, placement plan, personal education plan and an Education Health and Care Plan if you have one).

We support you to learn from your mistakes (because there will be some) and help you to grow from those experiences.

Schools, colleges and universities know about Raising Attainment for Disadvantaged Youngsters (RADY) and encourage them to take part in it.



Good education

You attend nurseries, schools or colleges that are ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’.

You have regular Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and we address any needs that you might have.

Education settings follow the corporate parenting principles.

You attend school regularly and take part in your lessons.

You receive the support you need in school or college to be the best that you can be.

A mentoring scheme is provided for care leavers.

Care leavers are supported to progress to further or higher education.

Opportunities and support

You are supported to attend educational trips.

We create good work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for you.

You have a passport so you can travel abroad. We will ensure you have a wide range of experiences such as going to the theatre, eating out at a restaurant, having a holiday and enjoying a hobby.

Celebration events

When you have achieved something, this is always recognised.

There will be a celebration event for you and your carers every year if you wish to attend.

We will ensure your education achievements are celebrated if you wish.





Implementing the strategy

Each year the **Corporate Parenting Panel**, alongside the **Children in Care Council**, the **Care Leavers Forum**, and our **partners and carers** will measure how well we have delivered against the promises and an **annual delivery plan** will be created.

The Head of Service for Children in Our Care and Care Leavers will manage the delivery of the plan, bringing a progress update to the Corporate Parenting Panel every three months.

The strategy will also be shared with all those involved in children and young people's lives.

Appendix

Progress against the corporate parenting priorities from the previous strategy

Page 107

Senior mental health leads in education network.	District representative for 7/8 councils on Corporate Parenting Panel. All volunteered to be district champions for Children in Care and Care Leavers.	PSHE co-ordinators in post.	Changed the language for how we refer to children in care and launched Language That Cares Dictionary.	Positive focused visit by Ofsted in May 2022.
Place on Corporate Parenting Panel reserved for and attended by a foster carer.	Commissioned psychological services to help us better understand needs of care experienced children.	Commissioned framework arrangements for placements.	Implemented long-term savings policy.	Annual Easter Egg and Christmas present appeal for care leavers and their children.
Training for Foster Carers.	Big Fostering arrangements.	Launched Mockingbird.	Virtual school activities developing access to cultural and sporting opportunities through the West Midlands Children in Care Foundation.	Attachment aware and trauma informed training for schools.
Hot topic events about physical health, understanding your past, delegated authority and young parents.	Catch 22.	Partnership has improved timeliness of health assessments.	Children in Care Council, Cared For and 2 Care Leaver and out of county forums held.	Regular surveys and newsletters.
Shared stories from care leavers about their experiences, including being gender neutral, with the workforce to develop their awareness and understanding.	Launched Care Leaver Offer and Children in Care Action Plan.	Provided access to T3 services for substance misuse issues.	Improved partnership communications through Kind Minds Newsletter, senior mental health leads network meetings and promotion of Emotional Wellbeing Pathway.	Planning for a House Project in Tamworth
Corporate Parenting Panel members are raising the profile in committees and groups they attend.	Improved incentives for care leavers to take part in the Foundations to Employment.	Improved responses to systematic issues such as access, shared understanding of performance and prevention of poor mental health.	Provided access to YOS prevention programme.	Expanded capacity of Virtual School to cover Early Years and Post 16.
Joint commissioning of early help emotional wellbeing support through Action for Children.	Provided memory boxes for children in care.	Adoption of the (NHSE) Midlands Children in Care Out of Area Mental Health Good Practice Principles launched.	Established care experienced children and young people mental health task and finish group.	Annual foster carer BBQ.
Improved partnership co-ordination of services and support seeking to bring a coherent offer to national programmes of support delivered locally (Mental Health Support Teams and the DfE / DHSC Wellbeing for Education Return / Recovery projects).	Developed homelessness protocol between SCC and partners.	SEND and Inclusion Hubs in place to support graduated response.	Continued Staying Put Offer. Provided Independence Programme module on relationships and support networks.	Christmas meal for care leavers.
Launched the children and young people in care out of area Midlands mental health principles of good practice (Oct 21).	Provided £160,000 worth of grants for community organisations to help young adults with mental health conditions.	Offer guaranteed apprenticeships interviews for care leavers.	Commissioned Action for Children to support children and young people with low to moderate mental health needs.	Social value clause included in commissioning requirements
Activity days for care leavers (beach trip, Alton Towers, celebration date and residential trip for UASC).	Health representative attends Corporate Parenting Panel at least once a year.	Housing advisors for homelessness (externally funded).		
	EPEPS revised to strengthen the voice of the child.			



Working Together
Artwork by Summer, aged 12



2022 Community Fund

2022/23 Report and Next Steps

Introduction – County Councillor Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

Staffordshire county councillors have a key role in their divisions. We are here to listen to and support residents, to help local knowledge shape the county council's work, and to strengthen the communities in which we live. One of the tools we have to help our communities is a small grant fund which we can use to invest in initiatives and projects for the benefit of local people across Staffordshire.

We were able to broaden our funding criteria for 2022/23, whilst still focusing on the key principles of supporting projects aimed at helping residents look after themselves, the people around them, and the places where they live. This means that the 2022 Community Fund has helped some of our voluntary and community partners to implement new initiatives, whilst also supporting others to develop plans and projects they had already implemented in 2021.

One of the major successes of last year's Fund, was that we were able to support communities to come together and celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. This was an incredible accomplishment, achieved by an extraordinary lady, and it was only right that the occasion was celebrated so enthusiastically. I am immensely proud that we were able to support some of these celebratory events to take place. Building on this success we are pleased that the 2023/24 fund has already been used to support local celebrations and activities centered on the Coronation of King Charles III.

This report gathers only some of the examples from the huge range of projects and organisations that the funding supported, but I hope that it gives you a sense of how our members continue to support communities in ways that make a real difference. As always, I am grateful for your hard work in engaging with and supporting your local community groups with this successful Community Fund.

Finally, many of you will be aware that Pete Barker left the Member and Democratic Services team in April 2023. Pete has administered the fund since April 2019, and I'm sure you will all join me in giving our thanks for all the support he has provided over the years, and in wishing him well in his future role in the Strategy team. The day-to-day administration of the Fund is now in the capable hands of Chantelle Denham and Simon Humble. If you have any issues, please get in touch with them and they will be ready to help with any queries you may have.

County Councillor Victoria Wilson
Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture



Background

The 2022 Community Fund launched on 19 April 2022 and ran for new applications until 31 October 2022.

It saw £2,500 allocated to each County Councillor. Councillors were able to use as much or as little of this as they wanted to support projects which needed it, or to work together with other councillors and jointly support bigger projects.

The criteria for the 2022 Community Fund was broadened to make it easier for community groups to access funding for a wide range of projects, including around the Queen's Jubilee. Funding was made available to applicants fulfilling one of the following three criterion:

a. Community projects about looking after ourselves

For example:

- i. Projects which will support and enhance personal physical health.
- ii. Projects which will support the improvement of wellbeing, resilience and independence.

b. Community projects about looking after those around us

For example:

- i. Projects to connect people in communities to support, or to each other.
- ii. Projects to give children and young people the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential.
- iii. Projects which will support those who need additional help.

c. Community projects about looking after your place

For example:

- i. Projects which will enhance the places where we live.
- ii. Projects which will further develop our community spaces.
- iii. Projects that will bring people together to increase community spirit, including celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III.

Success of the Fund

Whilst the Covid pandemic was no longer affecting the everyday lives of residents in the way it did in 2020 and 2021, the long-term effects were still being felt by our community and voluntary groups. Many had been established in response to the pandemic, filling the gap left by businesses or organisations that, sadly, closed their doors and were unable to reopen them.

This funding has been a direct part of supporting the communities of Staffordshire in the delivery of a range of projects that included:

- Jubilee parties
- Children's activities
- Holiday activities
- Sports clubs
- Support for the older generation
- Support for the lonely
- Seasonal celebrations
- Equipment purchases
- Remembrance Activities

A wide range of projects received funding. County Councillors have played a huge role in promoting and encouraging applicants, with a final total of £120,523 allocated, supporting 180 different groups and organisations. The total cost of projects supported equated to £932,240.23.

As in the 2021 Community Fund there was no financial minimum match funding for applications to the 2022 Community Fund, other than in applications made from Parish Councils or businesses. Staffordshire's communities continue to need flexible support, and the fund allowed county councillors to use their investment to help.

Below are some examples of the types of projects that have received funding through this year's fund.

Community projects about looking after ourselves

Ashley & Loggerheads Community First Responders

The Community Fund grant of £1000 was put towards a new Responder vehicle for the Ashley & Loggerheads Community First Responder group, to replace their aging vehicle which was becoming expensive to keep on the road. As the group receives no funding from West Midlands Ambulance Service they can only continue with generous donations from the local community and grants and awards from Community Funds.



Burntwood Town Council - Dementia Friendly Walk

Burntwood Town Council received funding to support the town's first Memory Walk, organised in partnership with Burntwood Dementia Friendly Community. Over 50 people attended the 1.2 mile walk despite the torrential rain!



The walk generated interest locally and raised some much needed awareness of the challenges of living with or caring for someone with dementia. Walkers heard about the importance of supporting those in our local community affected by

dementia, and walkers remembered loved ones by writing the names of who they were walking for and attaching them on our Memory Tree which is now displayed in the foyer at the Old Mining College.

Moorlands Voluntary and Community Transport

Moorlands Voluntary and Community Transport (MVCT) is a small charity that provides transport to those in need across the Staffordshire Moorlands. They run a voluntary car scheme that enables people to attend medical appointments, and a community transport scheme that has three wheelchair accessible minibuses that enable community group members to attend activities. The grant was used to provide the volunteer minibus

drivers with new high-vis coats and vests complete with the MVCT logo; these are vital for the warmth and safety of the volunteer drivers and give reassurance to the often older, vulnerable passengers.

Stafford Friends of the Donna Louise Hospice for Children and Young People - Gazebo and tables for fund raising events

The Stafford Friends of the Dougie Mac Hospice for Children and Young People (Formerly The Donna Louise) raise funds for the Hospice which provides outreach, respite and end of life care for children and young adults and their families who live in Mid Staffordshire, North Staffordshire and South Cheshire.

As a group they sell a variety of home-made jams, marmalades, pickles, chutneys, and at their events they also sell home-made cakes and desserts, seasonal gifts and 'everyone a winner' tombola. The grant from the community fund, which was supported by four Councillors, enabled them to purchase a robust gazebo and three sturdy tables.

Community projects about looking after those around us

Lichfield Arts Fuse Festival 2022

The Fuse Festival took place over the weekend of Friday 7 to Sunday 9 July 2022. More than 15,000 people attended over the three days, over 20 community groups were represented in the arena along with a joint dance project with the Lichfield Festival, more than a thousand volunteering hours were expended over the weekend.



Hidden Warriors CIC - Support for Cost of Living



The Community Fund received by Hidden Warriors CIC allowed them to purchase a storage shed to support their Food and Clothing Bank that has been set up in Silkmore. The storage shed is a secure place where dry foods and clothing can be stored, and the project has directly helped individuals and families within the Community.

The Ridwares Women's Institute Community Allotment

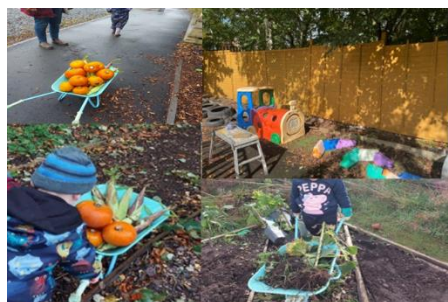
As part of the Community Spirit initiative in the village of Hill Ridware, members of the Ridwares WI took on half an allotment with the other half being cared for by the pupils of Henry Chadwick School.

The allotment was divided into sections for growing vegetables, fruit bushes and flowers, and a small pond was also added which encouraged a lot of wildlife on the plot. A large bug hotel, a hedgehog house and bird boxes were put up and a compost bin was also purchased. Various wildflower seeds were planted and provided a riot of colour and interest throughout the summer.



This project encouraged people to work together and the fresh produce that was grown was shared out. Pumpkins were grown and members of the youth club did some carving for Halloween, and they also made soup at one of their meeting nights.

West Chadsmoor Family Centre - Grow with us



West Chadsmoor Family Centre received the Community Fund to help update its garden area and to buy equipment to be used in the garden and allotment.

They were able to purchase bark for the garden and a set of wheelbarrows which have been used in the allotments by most of the children who attend. They also purchased small trowels for the children to use when helping to plant flowers for the garden and vegetables for the allotment. Further to this they purchased benches for adults which matched the children's benches purchased the year before. They generally improved both the look of the garden and the facilities available. This enabled the families attending to have a more positive experience in their outside area.

Life Stream Church - 'Coffee House' Toddlers

The Community Funding received was put towards the purchase of a 'Pack Away' Soft Play Kit which is used to provide an exciting and enhanced play facility for the benefit of families in the community. Weekly 'Coffee House Toddler' sessions see babies and toddlers enjoying the soft play and a local SEND group has been delighted to use the soft play on a monthly session basis, providing a much-needed facility.



In the very near future the church will be opening its 'Coffee House' where the soft play will be an integral part of providing a safe environment for babies and toddlers to play whilst parents/carers enjoy a relaxing cuppa!

Community projects about looking after your place

Tatenhill Memorial and Thanksgiving Hall

Following support from the Fund the Tatenhill Memorial and Thanksgiving Hall have taken delivery of 100 new chairs and a new stage system, all on easily moveable trolley systems.

The new chairs replace plastic stacking chairs and the staging provides multiple options for concerts, theatre, fashion shows and other events. We have re-engaged with Live & Local and expect to be hosting our first events in the Autumn following the recent release of the latest Menu of shows.



Meanwhile, 50 of the replaced chairs were passed on to a local fundraising team to support their outdoor and barn dance events.

Roots Larder CIC - Community Room Refurbishment



With the funding received Roots Larder were able to purchase lockable storage cabinets and signage for our new community room. The CIC provides a wide range of services and activities on its site; the new cabinets have enabled them to store

numerous items that help us carry out our activities.

Other groups use the community room and it is helpful for them to be able to safely store their equipment.

Many of the activities support members of the public from diverse groups, including, the elderly, those isolated, suffering poor mental health, anxiety / depression, young people with emotional difficulties and those experiencing financial hardships. The groups and activities have helped provide a safe comfortable space to come together, share skills and learn new skills.

Wombourne Parish Council - Queen's Jubilee Music Concert

Wombourne Parish Council held a free outdoor concert for residents on Friday 3rd June 22 - the event ran from 1pm to 8pm. Six bands of varying genres played throughout the day. The Parish Council felt it was important to ensure the Commonwealth was represented as well as local talent, so the bands included a reggae band, jazz band, local rock choir, bhangra group, war time/nostalgic group and local mod group. It is estimated some 5000 visited during the day. As the event was completely free for residents, the grant funding was put towards the cost of running the event. Please see this link for a video from the day: <https://youtu.be/hFm6yyq6a1s>



Longdon Village Jubilee Celebration

Longdon Community Group secured funding last year to support its Jubilee celebrations.

Many groups from within the village joined together to help to celebrate the occasion. The overs 60's held a Tea dance, the Flower club decorated the bridge in the village, the WI produced cream teas by the hundred. An afternoon of family events including bouncy castles, tug of war, adults v kids football, and a mobile Buckingham palace with dressing up stage took place.



These case studies demonstrate a handful of the projects the Community Fund has supported throughout the year. You can find more information on all of the projects we have supported at the following link: [2022 Community Fund - Staffordshire County Council](#)

2023/24 Fund Promotion

Members' Community Fund – Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS) Funding and Networking Event 2023

In April 2023 officers from Member and Democratic Services attended a funding and networking event organized by SCVYS to promote the Members Community Fund 2023.

The event was well attended by representatives of voluntary organisations and Charities from all areas of Staffordshire, seeking funding for initiatives ranging from arts projects to substance abuse prevention. All interested parties were advised that the Fund opened on 9 May 2023 and that they should contact the appropriate County Councillor(s) for the area of their Project prior to submitting an application.

Next steps

Following the success of the 2022-23 Community Fund, and the fact that the principles aligned with the Council's #DoingOurBit campaign, it was clear that there was no need to make wholesale changes to the focus for the 2023-24 fund. This means that it will continue to support projects aimed at helping residents look after themselves, the people around them, and the places where they live.

The success of last year's support for Platinum Jubilee projects guided us to the conclusion that the 2023 fund should also be used to support local celebrations and activities centering on the Coronation of King Charles III. However, the major scale of local elections taking place across Staffordshire in May 2023 meant that the Community Fund would not open for new applications until 9 May 2023. Because this missed the Coronation weekend, it was agreed that retrospective applications would be permitted, but specifically and only for costs related to Coronation activities. This was also time limited, with retrospective Coronation-related applications only accepted until the end of June 2023. This meant that projects and parties could still proceed in the knowledge that they would likely receive support from the Community Fund after the event, subject to the support of local members and all other points of the application and funding request fitting within the rules of the fund.

Conclusion

The 2022 Community Fund played a successful part in helping communities to look after themselves, the people around them, and the places they live. By #DoingOurBit, we intend to build on this success in 2023-24, with councillors continuing to use their fund to help groups, activities and communities across Staffordshire to develop and thrive.

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice, I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 3 July 2023 at 10am.

The main items of business were:

Councillor Bernard Peters was **appointed Chairman** of the Panel for the ensuring year.

Councillor Richard Cox was **appointed Vice Chairman** of the Panel for the ensuring year.

Councillor Williams **declared an interest** in the Commissioners annual report item as his employer had provided services to the SPACE scheme in the past.

Details were submitted of **decisions published by the Commissioner** since the last Panel meeting.

The Panel considered the **questions ask by members of the public** and the Commissioners written response.

Consideration of the Commissioners Annual Report 2023/24.

The Annual report was presented by the Commissioner who explained the progress made against his strategic plans.

The Commissioner highlighted the following from his report:

- Commitment to the SPACE programme had been made for a further two years.
- Road safety, including safe vehicles, ANPR Cameras, speeding and vehicle crime remained a priority.
- New Leadership in both the Police and Fire Service was leading to improved confidence in local services.
- Financial forecasts and resources, as highlighted in the annual report, were promising.
- The recruitment of additional police officers was on track to increase by 250 by the end of May 2024.

The Commissioner thanked the Fire and Rescue and the Police Services; all their staff; volunteers; his Deputy; and the Commissioners team for their support over the past months and helping to provide services in challenging and demanding times.

Following the Commissioners presentation and questioning from the Panel, the following summary of information was shared. This was in addition to that provided in the written report:

- Demand for Police services had been managed locally based on knowledge of the area, its challenges and work force capacity.
- Work was taking place with partners to ensure that the right and most appropriate services attended incidents. The Commissioner assured the Panel that emergency services would continue to respond to call outs but it was hoped that specialist services would be able to assist in a more timely way. When more detail was available, all partners, including local authorities would be consulted.
- It was felt that to mention the behaviour of other forces in the Commissioners foreword, was inappropriate as there were also issues locally which needed addressing. The Commissioner agreed to revisit the wording in the annual report as it was not the intention to downplay any problems which Staffordshire services may have. There was a need to reassure the community that these issues were being addressed.
- The recruitment of officers was reflecting the community in terms of ethnicity and gender and it was essential that people felt comfortable in their workplace.
- Anti-social behaviour was a priority and full access to CCTV and surveillance equipment was critical. There were many operating systems and managing the amount and type of information coming into the system was challenging. The project this year would be to understand and develop ways of working together to establish what was available and how it could be used. It was felt that Community Safety Partnerships were in an ideal place to understand local issues and through working together could focus on local solutions.
- Technology and consistency within the Fire service was highlighted as a particular issue by the panel, with some local teams having to print out information before they could respond to incidents as they didn't have smart technology. The Commissioner explained that different information storage systems meant that it might be some time before all information was available electronically, but it was confirmed that all front-line services now had smart phones and the service was working its way through the other issues raised in the inspection report.
- Fire crews of three were being piloted in South Staffs, for on call crews. These were normally used as a backup response

and wouldn't normally be expected to be working alone. The results of the pilot would come to the panel in due course.

- Public perception and the need to address incorrect social media was raised.
- The Commissioner felt that the service had improved but was not yet where he wanted it to be. The engage process and support offered was welcomed but the speed of change was frustrating for all concerned, this was despite all the hard work and effort from those involved. Economic factors also had an impact on delivery.
- The need to build public confidence in the 101 system was discussed. The Commissioner reported that a web site was being developed to enable non urgent issues to be reported on line. Work was continuing on the answering calls withing a responsible time.
- The need for the public to see base line data, so that they could see improvement, was raised. Members were reminded that the Commissioner held regular meetings with the Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer to hold them to account. There were also public performance which could be viewed or watched via [Public Meetings - Staffordshire Commissioner \(staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk\)](https://staffordshire-pfcc.gov.uk)

The Panel agreed to respond formally to the Annual report including the feedback provided during the meeting, particularly relating to the public perception, performance and fire service pilots and technology. Information on the pilot scheme in South Staffs (three member crews) would be reported back to the panel at an appropriate time.

The Panel received the annual report which provided information on the **Home Office grant (2022/23)** allocated to the Host authority which was intended to meet the costs of the administrative support and management services of the panel and Panel member expenses.

The Panel received the annual report which provided information on the **number of complaints** referred to the panel which relate to the personal conduct of the Commissioner and/or his Deputy.

The Panels work programme was considered. It was suggested that the panel training dates should be added to the work programme to ensure transparency.

Webcast can be found at [Browse meetings - Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel - Staffordshire County Council](#)

For more information on these meetings or on the Police, Fire and Crime Panel in general please contact Mandy Pattinson
e mail mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk

Details of Panel meetings are issued to contact officers in each of the District/Borough Councils in the County and Stoke-on-Trent City Council for posting on their own web sites.

Councillor Bernard Peters (Chair)
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel

Report of the Chairman of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel

To Staffordshire County Council

In accordance with agreed practice, I am reporting on matters dealt with by the Police, Fire and Crime Panel at its meeting on 3 July 2023 pm.

The main item considered was:

Consideration of proposed appointment to the post of Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer)

The Secretary to the Panel's report explained that the Panel was required to hold a Confirmation Hearing following receipt of formal notification by the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner of his wish to appoint his preferred candidate for the post of Director of Finance Section 151 Officer.

The report explained that guidance on the role of the Panel, recommended that through questioning of the candidate they should consider the 'professional competence' and 'personal independence' of the individual. To assist, the Panel had been provided with the preferred candidates CV in advance of the meeting and a job description/person specification was attached to the agenda.

The Commissioner reported on the detailed and lengthy process followed by him to recruit a new Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer for the Commissioners Office. He reported that Katharine Ross was his preferred candidate.

Ms Ross briefly summarised her career, work experience and achievements to date.

The Panel questioned her on various issues including her experience of managing change, delivering results, working with partners, agencies and the public and measuring performance.

The Panel adjourned to consider their decision. Upon reconvening, they informed the Commissioner that they recommended that he proceed with the appointment of Ms Ross as the Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer.

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Councillor Bernard Peters (Chair)
Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel