

## **Council Agenda**

Thursday 14 March 2024

**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 14 March 2024 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  
6 March 2024

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## **Agenda**

(Note: The meeting will begin with prayers)

### **Part One**

1. **General Housekeeping and Declaring an Interest** (Pages 5 - 8)  
**Apologies for absence (if any)**

2. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

3. **Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 February 2024** (Pages 9 - 32)

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 33 - 40)

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. **Pay Policy Statement 2024/25** (Pages 41 - 54)

7. **Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Panel** (Pages 55 - 68)

8. **Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees**

9. **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

10. **Petitions**

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

## 11. **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”.

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### **Part Two**

(All reports in this section are on pink paper)

## 12. **Employment Tribunal Matter**

(Pages 69 - 72)

(Exemption paragraph 1)

## **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 Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services ([michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto: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, 11 March 2024**. 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](mailto:michael.bradbury@staffordshire.gov.uk)) nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 4 March 2024**. 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 16 May 2024 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 6 May 2024.**

## 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 Members 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 of relatives and close associates within the following descriptions:

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
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 8 February 2024**

<b>Attendance</b>		
Jak Abrahams	Philip Hudson	Bob Spencer
Arshad Afsar	Syed Hussain	Mike Sutherland
Charlotte Atkins	Graham Hutton	Mark Sutton
Philip Atkins, OBE	Julia Jessel	Stephen Sweeney
Tina Clements	Peter Kruskonjic	Simon Tagg
Richard Cox	Tom Loughbrough-Rudd	Samantha Thompson
Mike Davies	Johnny McMahon	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mark Deaville	Paul Northcott	Jill Waring
Janet Eagland	Gillian Pardesi	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Ian Parry	Philip White
Keith Flunder	Kath Perry, MBE	Mike Wilcox
John Francis	Jeremy Pert	Conor Wileman
Colin Greatorex	Bernard Peters	Bernard Williams
Philippa Haden	Jonathan Price	David Williams
Gill Heath	Robert Pritchard	Victoria Wilson
Phil Hewitt	Janice Silvester-Hall	Mark Winnington
Jill Hood	David Smith	Mike Worthington
Derrick Huckfield	Paul Snape	Nigel Yates

**Also in attendance:**

**Apologies:** Gill Burnett-Faulkner, Alex Farrell, Thomas Jay and Jason Jones.

**Part One**

**8. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

**9. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 December 2023**

**Resolved** – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 14 December 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**10. Chairman's Correspondence**

**His Majesty King Charles III**

On behalf of the Council and the residents of Staffordshire, the Chairman extended best wishes for a speedy recovery to His Majesty following the announcement earlier this week that he has been diagnosed with cancer.

## **Staffordshire residents recognised in His Majesty The King's New Year's Honours**

The Chairman extended his congratulations to the following Staffordshire residents who had received honours in His Majesty The King's New Year's Honours:

### **Officers of the Order of the British Empire OBE**

- Mr Kenneth Paul Newton, Stafford, services to Public Service
- Professor David Foskett, Burton-on-Trent, services to Hospitality Industry and Inclusivity

### **Members of the Order of the British Empire MBE**

- Mrs Jacqueline Mary Gange, Cannock, services to Community in Cannock
- Mr Rowan Edwin Crozier, Lichfield, services to Manufacturing and Enterprise
- Mrs Jill Alcock (Clewes), Staffordshire Moorlands, services to The Arts and Charity
- Professor Miriam Bernard, Newcastle-under-Lyme, services to Ageing Research and to Older People
- Dr Catherine Emma Baxter, services to Higher Education

### **Medallists of the Order of the British Empire BEM**

- Mr Martin Peter Wild, Barton under Needwood, services to Community in Tamworth
- Mr Herbert Proctor, Stoke-on-Trent, services to Community in Audley
- Mr Stephen Roger Lees JP, South Staffordshire, services to Community in Himley, Swindon and South Staffordshire
- Mrs Elaine Hutchings, Lichfield, services to Community in Lichfield during Covid-19
- Mr Peter Stewart Clemson, Burton-on-Trent, services to Performing Arts and the Community in Burton

## **Recognising Our Unsung Heroes**

The Chairman informed the Council of the introduction of his "Unsung Heroes" initiative to recognise the contributions made by volunteers across Staffordshire. The first of these events took place on 15 December and included representatives from eight voluntary groups from the Cannock and Lichfield areas, all of whom had been nominated by local Members. The next Unsung Heroes event is to be held on Friday, 19 April to which local voluntary groups from Stafford and South Staffordshire are to be invited. Over the next 12 months it is proposed to hold a further two events covering the Newcastle, Staffordshire Moorlands, East Staffordshire and Tamworth districts/boroughs.

## **Gift from former Chief Executive, John Henderson CB**

On behalf of Members, the Chairman extended the Council's thanks to its former Chief Executive, John Henderson CB, for his generous gift to the Council of a framed Staffordshire County Council Coat of Arms painted on Vellum by Frau Doktor Marianne Voss. Mr Henderson's gift is now hanging on the wall at the top of the main staircase in County Buildings. Upon retirement from Staffordshire County Council, John Henderson received a gift from Members and Officers of the Council of a bespoke Stafford Knot cast in bronze and plated in silver.

## **Former County Councillor David Nixon**

The Chairman informed Members of the recent death of Former County Councillor David Nixon.

Mr Nixon was first elected to the County Council in 2001 representing the Thistleberry Electoral Division (Newcastle) until 2005. He served on the former Social Care Scrutiny Committee and was also a member of the Regulatory Committee.

In 2009 Mr Nixon was re-elected to the County Council representing the Cross Heath and Silverdale Electoral Division (Newcastle) until 2013. He served on the former Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee and Planning Committee.

Councillor Tagg and Councillor Philip Atkins paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr Nixon during his time on the County Council, following which Members stood and observed a one minute silence in his memory.

## **11. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-29 and 2024/25 Budget and Council Tax**

The Council received a joint report by the Leader of the Council and the

Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2024/29 and 2024/25 Budget and Council Tax proposals.

Cllr Ian Parry moved, and Cllr Alan White seconded, the recommendations contained in the report before the Council.

In presenting the report, Councillor Parry informed Members that, despite the well-documented financial challenges facing local authorities, thanks to long-term planning, imaginative change, and careful management of its resources, the Council remained financially stable. It was that stability which enabled the authority to meet its statutory responsibilities and also to look to the future by investing in the County's economy, infrastructure and communities.

Councillor Parry indicated that, in line with most other local authorities, the County Council was requested to approve a 4.99 per cent council tax increase for 2024/25, comprising 2.99 per cent for general purposes and 2 per cent ringfenced for social care. This meant that the increase for a Band D property would be £73.41 per annum.

Councillor Parry also extended his thanks to the Council's Director of Finance and his team, his fellow Cabinet Members, the Council's Senior Leadership Team and the Members of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the MTFS Working Group for their support in compiling the MTFS and Budget proposals.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins, together with Councillor Yates, also extended their congratulations to the Council's Finance Team in achieving a balanced budget whilst facing huge financial challenges; but added that it was not sustainable, in the long term, to continue to use reserves to fund gaps. They added that the pressure from social care, both for adults and children, and also from special educational needs and disabilities, could not be discounted. They, together with Councillor Hussain, also referred to the need for the central government to find a long term solution to the funding for social care and the dedicated schools grant and added that it was estimated that one in five local authorities would submit a Section 114 notice either this year or next unless these issues were addressed.

Councillor Sutton referred to the Council's funding for children and family services which stood at £194m for 2024/25.

Councillor Yates also referred to the financial impacts of climate change and the need for more funding to be allocated to the Divisional Highways programme Budget. Councillor Yates moved, and Councillor Charlotte Atkins seconded, the following amendment by way of an additional recommendation:

“That the Council redistributes any Council Tax levy (e.g. empty houses premium, second homes premium) imposed within their district or borough proportionately to their Members (of the District or Borough raising the levy) as an enhancement to each of those Members’ Divisional Highways Programme budget.”

On consideration of the amendment, the Council’s Monitoring Officer, after consulting the Director of Finance, declared that the amendment was invalid as it did not fall within the remit of the County Council.

The Council then debated the substantive recommendations as contained in the report during which, Councillor Loughborough-Rudd, Councillor Sutherland, Councillor Snape, Councillor Philip Atkins, Councillor Deaville and Councillor David Williams spoke in support of the proposals and how the Council was using its funding wisely and prudently.

Councillor Wilcox spoke about the role played by the MTFs Working Group in scrutinising the budget proposals and explained how they had undertaken this work. He also extended his thanks to those officers who had supported the working group’s deliberations.

Councillor Pardesi referred to the construction of the new Staffordshire History Centre and indicated that this was a flagship project for the County which she hoped other Members would support.

Members also paid tribute to Rob Salmon, the Council’s Director of Finance, who had recently announced his intention to retire.

Councillor Alan White thanked Members for their comments and added that the Council’s ability to present a balanced budget was as a result of the authority taking difficult decisions over many years.

In accordance with statutory requirements, the Chairman called for a named vote to be taken in relation to the approval of the recommendations contained in the report, the result of which was as follows:

Those Members voting in support of the recommendations:

Jak Abrahams	Graham Hutton	Mike Sutherland
Philip Atkins, OBE	Julia Jessel	Mark Sutton
Tina Clements	Peter Kruskonjic	Stephen Sweeney
Richard Cox	Thomas Loughborough-	Simon Tagg
Mike Davies	Rudd	Samantha Thompson
Mark Deaville	Johnny McMahon	Carolyn Trowbridge
Janet England	Paul Northcott	Jill Waring

Ann Edgeller  
Keith Flunder  
John Francis  
Colin Greatorex  
Philippa Haden  
Gill Heath  
Phil Hewitt  
Jill Hood  
Derrick Huckfield  
Philip Hudson

Ian Parry  
Kath Perry  
Jeremy Pert  
Bernard Peters  
Jonathan Price  
Robert Pritchard  
Janice Silvester-Hall  
David Smith  
Paul Snape  
Bob Spencer

Alan White  
Philip White  
Mike Wilcox  
Conor Wileman  
Bernard Williams  
David Williams  
Victoria Wilson  
Mark Winnington  
Mike Worthington

Those Members voting against the recommendations: Nil

Those Members abstaining from voting:

Arshad Afsar  
Charlotte Atkins  
Syed Hussain

Gillian Pardesi  
Nigel Yates

**Resolved** – (a) That the following be approved:

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

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

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

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

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

(b) That the following recommendations, which are included within the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2024/25, the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 and the Commercial Investment Strategy 2024/25 (Appendices 9a to 9c to the report), be approved:

- i. Approve the Minimum Revenue Policy for 2024/25 as contained within the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2024/25 in Appendix 9a to the report;
- ii. Approve the Prudential Indicators as set out within the Capital and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategy 2024/25 at Appendix 9a to the report;
- iii. Approve the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy, based on the 2021 CIPFA Codes (Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code), and 2018 MHCLG (now DLUHC) Guidance (on Local Government Investments and on Minimum Revenue Provision);
- iv. Adopt the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) 2024/25 detailed in paragraphs 63 to 109 and Annex A and Annex B of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report);
- v. Approve the policies on reviewing the strategy, the use of external advisors, investment management training and the use of financial derivatives as described in paragraphs 110 to 120 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report);
- vi. Approve the proposed borrowing strategy for the 2024/25 financial year detailed in paragraphs 41 to 62 of the Treasury

Management Strategy 2024/25 (Appendix 9b to the report);

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

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

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

## **12. 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.

In moving consideration of the Statement, Councillor Alan White updated the Council on the following matter:

### **Electoral Review of Staffordshire County Council: Further Limited Draft Recommendations**

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has opened an



additional public consultation in its review of Staffordshire County Council's electoral division boundaries. The Commission is now undertaking a further limited consultation on proposals for Lichfield District. The Commission is satisfied with the evidence received for the rest of the County and is therefore not seeking further opinions and comments (submissions) on areas other than Lichfield District.

The Commission would welcome submissions on the further draft recommendations by 12 March 2024. Their final recommendations for the whole of the council area will now be published on 14 May 2024.

As the deadline for the consultation falls before the date of the next Council meeting (14th March), it was recommended that the Director for Corporate Services, in consultation with the County Councillors from Lichfield (as a collective) are given delegated authority to respond to the consultation on behalf of SCC.

### **Older People Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy 2024-2029**

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Councillor Charlotte Atkins enquired as to how the Council intended to attract sufficient care staff in order to fulfil the aims of the Strategy without increasing rates of pay. She also referred to the Council's proposals to develop two new care homes in the south of the County and enquired whether there were any proposals for new care homes in the north of the County. In response, Councillor Jessel indicated that the Council was working with care providers which had led to significant improvements in the market. She also explained how the Council was working hard to improve the status of the care industry in order to attract more people into the sector. With regard to the provision of care/nursing homes, Councillor Jessel indicated that a business case was being prepared and, in due course, would be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

### **Staffordshire Means Back to Business**

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Councillor Flunder referred to the success of the recent Tourism and Hospitality Conference held at Alton Towers which had attracted over 100 businesses.

Councillor Yates spoke about the need for more business units for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Councillor Philip Atkins referred to the claimant count rate in Staffordshire which continued to be one of the lowest in the West Midlands and was far

lower than the average for the region; and that over the last year, the average earnings of the County's residents had increased by over 12% compared to just 5% across the West Midlands Region and England as a whole.

Councillor Smith informed the Council that Lichfield District Council had recently granted planning consent for 30EV charging points and 30 acres of hi-tech manufacturing which would bring high value jobs to the area. He also spoke about the high cost of connecting electric vehicle charging stations to the National Grid.

In responding to Members' comments, Councillor Philip White spoke about the Council's ongoing work to bring about improvements to the local economy including increasing the number of better paid jobs. He also referred to the national recognition of the County's tourism sector.

### **Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation**

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Councillor Smith commended the report of the Working Group but indicated that there needed to be a wider plan for the County and, by way of an example, he indicated that the report did not refer to the value of hedgerows in capturing carbon. Councillor Yates added that he supported the comments made by Councillor Smith and he also enquired as to whether the Council was aware of a "competition" relating to the creation of a new forrest. He also enquired as to which other agencies the Council was engaging with regarding extending tree cover in the County. Councillor Yates also referred to how the authority could take a lead by, for example, planting trees on land which was not economically farmable in the Council's Farms Estate. In response, Councillor Tagg indicated that the Council worked closely with the National Forrest and also looked at opportunities for planting trees on Business Parks.

Councillor Thompson and Councillor Tagg extended their thanks to the Members who served on the working group and also to the officers who supported them.

Councillor Francis spoke about the opportunities for tree planting as part of new housing developments but added that the cost of ongoing management of those areas was an issue which needed to be taken into consideration. Councillor David Williams added that the Council was trialling tree planting and wilding on highway verges but there were additional cost to be considered such as in maintenance and inspection.

Councillor Winnington referred to the need to improve the electricity distribution infrastructure in the UK.

Councillor Huckfield enquired as to the number of trees which had been planted in the County in recent years; and, along with Councillor McMahon, expressed the view that the planting of trees could help to improve air quality and public health. In response, Councillor Tagg indicated that around 850 trees had been planted in the Silverdale area.

Councillor Heath and Councillor Philip Atkins spoke about the implications of planting trees on agricultural land, particularly in relation to food production/food security.

### **Natural Environment Strategy**

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Councillor Tagg commended the Strategy to Members and also highlighted some of the case studies set out in the document.

Councillor Alan White extended his thanks to Councillor Tagg for his hard work in bringing forward the Strategy.

### **Here to Help - Progress Update**

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Councillor Sutton and Councillor Wilson highlighted some of the Council's activities as part of the Council's support for local communities including the work of the Family Hubs, the Holiday Activity and Food Programme, the Warmer Homes Scheme, the Community Support Fund and the information advice and guidance available on the Council's website.

### **Ofsted Report**

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Councillor Loughborough-Rudd enquired as to the timeframe for addressing the recommendations in the Ofsted report; would those recommendations be dealt with in the order of priority; and, with regard to partnership working, would there be direct input from young people.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins referred to Ofsted's findings regarding the lack of effective partnership working and enquired as to what the Council intended to do to address this.

In response, Councillor Sutton indicated that the Council accepted Ofsted's findings and was fully committed to improving its services. Plans were being put in place to address the findings in the report and would be overseen by the Children's Improvement Board. He added that, at no point did Ofsted raise any concerns about the safety of children in the Council's care.

Councillor Alan White commended the work of those staff working in Childrens' Services who were involved in looking after those 5,000 children in the Council's care.

### **Highways Investment**

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Several Members commended the excellent work of their local highway teams and their swift response to issues raised. Members also welcomed the additional investment in the County's highway network.

### **Branston Interchange Project**

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Councillor Jessel and Councillor Philip White spoke about the benefits arising from the Branston Interchange project including the infrastructure for new homes and employment development at Branston Locks.

### **National Apprenticeship Week**

(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Councillor Philip White highlighted the importance of apprenticeships and indicated that the county council had more than 100 apprentices covering 35 different subjects and a further 100 apprentices working in the County's grant-maintained schools.

### **Dignity in Care Awards**

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

Councillor Loughborough-Rudd, Councillor Pardesi and Councillor Jessel welcomed the Awards and added that they were important in recognising the contributions made by those working in the care sector and also unpaid carers.

Councillor Northcott indicated that, over the last ten years, in excess of 1,000 people had been nominated for the awards. He, together with Councillor Jessel, asked Members to encouraged people to nominate individuals for the Award.

Councillor Alan White paid tribute to Councillor Jessel for the contribution she had made whilst serving as the Council's Cabinet Member for Health and Care and indicated that, following her recent announcement of her intention to retire from the post, Councillor Mike Wilcox had been appointed to lead the portfolio.

### **Extra Support for Children in Schools**

(Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Councillor Hudson welcomed the increased support for early intervention which had been launched for children needing support in the classroom.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins expressed her disappointment that, whilst some schools “stepped-up to the plate”, others did not want to be known for supporting pupils with SEND and enquired as to what the Council was doing to ensure that schools were meeting the needs of all of their pupils.

Councillor Edgeller spoke about how early intervention was important in helping to address children's mental health issues.

Councillor Francis referred to the excess demand for places at Marshlands Special School in Stafford and the need to expand the school.

In responding to Members’ comments, Councillor Price spoke about the importance of children with SEND being supported in their local school where appropriate.

**Resolved** – (a) That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

(b) That the Director or Corporate Services, in consultation with the County Councillors from Lichfield (as a collective) are given delegated authority to respond to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s consultation on behalf of SCC.

### **13. Questions**

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

#### **Question**

Last week I came across a vehicle parked on Zig-zag lines adjacent to a pelican crossing on Biddulph High Street. This is an all too frequent occurrence. I took a photograph and logged the time and date in order to report it. Unfortunately, I could not find an appropriate reporting form on either the Staffordshire County Council or Staffordshire Police Website. On conducting an online search to ascertain how to proceed I was directed to “Fix My Street” which does have the reporting capability for such an offence. Unfortunately, Staffordshire County Council do not accept reports from this organisation – can the Cabinet Member please confirm the policy for accepting reports of Highways (and parking issues) from third party organisations and whether they will consider accepting reports from these “user friendly” options?

## **Reply**

As part of the county council's digital strategy the ability to accept reports from third-party applications has previously been investigated and at that time was considered unsuitable. Whilst they do offer some advantages, such as nationwide application, there are also many added complications to these systems, including:

- Allowing users to report issues on private and unadopted roads.
- Limited customisation with no ability to provide users with further information about the issue, including self-help advice.
- Low user rating on both Apple and Google platforms; and
- Having significant set-up cost and ongoing operating costs, which at that time were up to £62,000 per year.

However, as part of the ongoing highways transformation programme a new Customer Relations Management (CRM) solution is currently being developed and as part of this work it is right that should review the case for accepting reports from third-party applications. This work will be conducted over the summer months with the findings available later in the year.

In the meantime, we will also review the front-end of the Report-It system to see if we can make it easier for users to navigate to the relevant parking report pages. The ability to report parking offences on pedestrian crossing zig-zag lines does exist on the county council's webpages for enforcement by our Civil Parking Enforcement officers, however enforcement of this offence by local Policing units allows endorsement with 3 penalty points.

## **Supplementary Question**

What I'd like to see is an improvement to our reporting system. Can you benchmark with other authorities as I am aware that Kent County Council has a very good app?

## **Reply**

We will always look to see what we can do to improve the system.

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

## **Question**

The noxious stink from Walleys Quarry Landfill in Newcastle under Lyme has been causing distress and concern to residents in my Division and

beyond for a number of years. In recent months it has returned with a vengeance with complaints from residents numbering into the hundreds since November 2023.

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm that Staffordshire County Council stands shoulder to shoulder with Newcastle Borough Council and local residents in holding the Environment Agency and site operator to account for their failings over a long period? Does he also agree with me that the landfill should be closed down, capped off and restoration be carried out to the site?

### **Reply**

From the outset Staffordshire County Council has been adamant that our communities should not have to suffer the consequences of the operator's failings at Walleys Quarry Landfill while the Environment Agency tried to find solutions in its role as statutory regulator.

In June 2021 this Council wrote to the then Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling for the Government to take immediate action, using emergency powers, if necessary, to intervene on residents' behalf.

The Environment Agency remains the body responsible for regulating the site's operation and closing it if necessary. Since 2021, the County Council has worked closely with partners, including Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and constituency MP Aaron Bell, to press for the Environment Agency and the Government to act and bring this problem under control if the operator could not.

In October 2023 the Leaders of both Staffordshire and Newcastle Councils wrote to then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs calling not only for a public inquiry into the Environment Agency's performance at Walleys Quarry, but to investigate the wider issue of how landfill sites are managed, regulated and how the community may seek redress for the breaches.

That call remains and we continue to do all we can to support residents frustrated, disappointed, and angered by recent events.

As a local member I do agree with Cllr Sweeney that it is now well past time for the Environment Agency to issue a Closure Notice on Walleys Quarry Landfill.

### **Supplementary Question**

Newcastle Borough Council are arranging a meeting with a view to calling on the Environment Agency to suspend the licence for Walleys

Quarry and also close the quarry. Does the Cabinet Member agree with me that this proposal is in line with residents wishes?

### **Reply**

Yes, as the local member and resident in Newcastle, I agree with you.

Councillor Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

After the County Council's substantial investment in the Transformation of Children's Services, why have Children's Services been downgraded from good to requires improvement? How much did the Transformation cost the Council, including the redundancy costs of all the senior managers?

Has the Transformation of Children's' Services achieved the savings that were promised or have reinvestments been required to refill posts/re- establish posts deleted in the Transformation Plan?

How much is the Council paying in interim/agency/non-Staffordshire employed managers, social workers and support workers per month compared to before the Transformation?

### **Reply**

#### **Ofsted Outcome**

Staffordshire Children's Services was inspected by OFSTED in November 2023 and received an overall rating of requires improvement to be good:

- The quality and effectiveness of management oversight of contacts, referrals and assessments in the 'front door'.
- The effectiveness and impact of performance data and quality assurance to drive practice improvement.
- The effectiveness and oversight of allegations against those in positions of trust undertaken by the local authority designated officer (LADO) service.
- The effectiveness of partnership working, particularly with housing and health partners, to improve children's access to dentistry and for children in care with more complex health needs to get timely assessment and support and ensure that care leavers are not placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation.



Whilst the inspection outcome is not what we would have wanted there were many positives acknowledged including:

- Our arrangements to determine the suitability of elective home education (EHE) and to ensure children missing full-time education are able to access education as quickly as possible. The inspection concluded that these are well-considered, well-implemented and ably managed. As part of the overall transformation, additional resource was provided for EHE as this was identified as an area for improvement at the previous inspection.
- The effective partnership between education providers and our virtual school help children make good progress from their starting points. The inspection recognised that children in care attend school regularly.
- There were examples of excellent practice for UASC such as the Amity Hub which supports children with a broad range of skills and services for Children in Care which maintained good overall.
- The inspection recognised that no children were found to be unsafe in Staffordshire and the majority had their plans progressed in a timely manner, these are massive achievements given the scale of change that we have experienced.

## **Transformation**

- The Children's Transformation was a significant change which we anticipated would take five years to embed. We recognise that we have more work to do and remain confident that the next inspection will demonstrate the scale of activity and staff commitment to get us to good.
- All of our District Leads and first-line managers in Social Care are now permanent (this was not the position prior to the transformation), the number of permanent social workers is increasing (this is different to the position across most local authorities in England), staff satisfaction rates are increasing, staff sickness rates are decreasing.
- For children and families, the district model of combining our social care and education offer reduces duplication and ensures we have a holistic approach to providing the right services and support which we remain committed to securing.
- Between 2016 and 2019 Cabinet received papers outlining proposed changes to the wider children's system to develop a whole system approach, bringing together children's social care, SEND and Inclusion, the Place Based Approach and commissioning. This approach was informed by best practice, an evidence base from outstanding local authorities, research and performance data.
- In order to facilitate that change, additional investment was

required and provided for c £8.1m over the years 2019/20 – 2025/26.

- The majority of this was temporary short term funding front loaded for the initial years 2019/20 to 2022/23 for £6.3m that has now been removed; however, there is also an on-going amount of c £0.6m for the continuing provision of family group conferencing and additional support for virtual school.
- The savings were estimated to be £17 million based on reducing the number of children in care. During 2023 there has been a steady reduction however the anticipated financial impact is yet to be realised.
- This was exacerbated by covid and the significant change that followed the staffing restructure. The number of children in care have not reduced as initially intended, however as the changes we made have been embedded and staff retention has improved the number of children in our care has reduced over the past 12 months seeing a reduction virtually every month during 2023, as we are able to work more restoratively with families keeping them together and return more children to their families when it's safe to do so.

### **Redundancy Costs and Agency Staff**

- 11 Senior managers (members of WLT or OMT) including associated actuarial strain was £1.3 million. None of these positions have since been reestablished.
- 10% of the current staff overall within Children's Services are agency staff.
- Nationally Children's Services have struggled with the recruitment and retention of Social Workers, Staffordshire comparatively performs well overall in the use of agency staff.
- In 2020/21 Childrens Service spent £3.8m on circa 70 temporary agency staff but in 2022/23 that had increased to £7.9m covering vacant positions within our structure this includes maternity and staff absence.
- This was recognised in the MTFS and significant additional resource brought into the budget this year (23/24) of £5.7m to address those concerns to provide for both additional resource and an increase in funding for social workers. The service has secured people within the majority of those roles and is actively recruiting to the remaining positions; however for the majority of this year Childrens services has continued to rely on more expensive agency support for essential service delivery.
- Whilst this has reduced from last year, the service continues to employ around 90 agency staff at present (includes c 20 staff for sickness/maternity cover) at a cost of c £0.5m / month. That is down from over 120 in the summer 2023 and we anticipate will reduce further over the next few months.

## Supplementary Question

It is worrying that the Childrens Transformation project has neither delivered the expected savings or a positive Ofsted verdict; there is also a reliance on agency staff. Why do you think this is?

## Reply

There is an awful lot of factors in this, including the delay in implementing the transformation, negotiations with the Trade Unions, the Covid pandemic and the complexity of cases. With regard to agency staff, they make up around 10% of the workforce at the current time which is a lot less than in other local authorities. Moving forward is the most important thing and we are working with partners to achieve this.

Councillor Pardesi asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People whose reply is set out below the question:-

## Question

What are the MMR vaccination rates within Staffordshire? Have they declined in recent years? Are there any concerns about the increased incidence of measles among Staffordshire children?

## Reply

As you probably know, the MMR vaccine is delivered as part of the routine childhood immunisation schedule. It is delivered in 2 doses: 1<sup>st</sup> dose at around 12 months, and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose around 3yrs 4 months (up to 5 yrs). One dose offers around 95% protection and 2 doses around 99% protection. Our uptake for dose one is pretty good, but we start to see this tail-off by the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. (This trend is not specific to Staffordshire and in fact, coverage for MMR vaccine in the UK has fallen to its lowest level in a decade).

### **Staffordshire MMR coverage**

Immunisation	Staffordshire 2022/23	Staffordshire 2021/22	Staffordshire 2020/21	West Midlands (22/23)	England (22/23)
MMR1 (1 <sup>st</sup> dose)	93.6%	93.8%	93.9%	88.9%	89.3%
MMR2 (2 <sup>nd</sup> dose)	89.3%	90.4%	90.6%	83.7%	84.5%

Coverage for MMR vaccine in Staffordshire is pretty good overall –

above the regional and national average. The latest full year data we have is for 2022-23, which shows **Staffordshire coverage for MMR (2<sup>nd</sup> dose) at 89.3%** (compared to England at 84.5%). This figure has remained fairly static for a number of years (see above table). The World Health Organisation target is 95% to reach satisfactory levels of 'herd immunity'.

However, there are pockets where we have much lower uptake, particularly in specific communities and populations. This is often seen in gypsy roma traveller communities, specific ethnic minority groups, children in care and migrant populations. We are working with the Integrated Care Board to review GP patient data and school data to identify pockets of lowest uptake across Staffordshire for targeted action.

There are also sections of our population who haven't been vaccinated for other reasons, such as children under 12 months and people who have weaker immune systems. This means we have pockets of susceptible children and adults who will be more vulnerable to catching measles and the potential for outbreaks in unvaccinated communities/populations.

### ***Are there concerns about the increase of measles among children in Staffordshire?***

During 2023 there was a resurgence of measles in England. Cases have predominantly been in Birmingham with smaller numbers in other West Midlands local authority areas. In the last few weeks, there have been a small number of confirmed cases in Staffordshire (<5). However, we do not get notified of every new case and there is a small lag in the release of this information (about a week behind). We know that measles is *the* most infectious disease that is spread through the respiratory route, therefore although every precaution is taken to minimise any further spread, it is likely we will see further cases amongst susceptible populations. We are doing what we can to minimise this risk.

### **Local action**

Having seen the rapid increase in cases in London and the West Midlands, over the last few months we have been working with partners across the local health system to identify where we have low vaccine coverage, understand potential barriers to coming forward for vaccination, and developing targeted community-driven messaging and alternative vaccine delivery mechanisms to overcome these barriers.

For now (as cases are still relatively low in Staffordshire), our focus is

on increasing MMR uptake in low coverage populations as we know this is the most effective protective factor. Vaccines are our best line of defence against diseases like measles and help stop outbreaks occurring in the community. In addition, we are taking steps to ensure the local system is as prepared and resilient as it can be if we were to see a rapid increase in cases. For example, last week we carried out a multi-agency table-top exercise with various possible scenarios to test our local measles pathways and outbreak mitigation/management arrangements.

### **Supplementary Question**

To what extent is it being taken into account that there is some suspicion by certain communities about the use of vaccines?

### **Reply**

MMR vaccinations are the responsibility of the ICB, not the County Council, and the question is better addressed to them; but I will endeavour to get an answer and will come back to you.

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

### **Question**

There is a serious concern for the safety of pedestrians, especially schoolchildren, due to the road barriers being damaged on Evershed Way and Uxbridge Street. In addition, there have been ongoing issues with blocked gullies in several streets including Uxbridge Street, Broadway Street, Blackpool Street, Oak and South Oak Street, and South Broadway Street, as well as the surrounding areas.

Could the Cabinet Member provide assurance that they will conduct a comprehensive investigation to improve the safety of the street?

### **Reply**

The safety of road users is taken extremely seriously and all damage to highway assets is prioritised for repair based on an assessment of the risk posed to the travelling public. Work to repair the guard rail at Evershed Way is planned and will be scheduled as soon as resources allow.

Extra resources are being brought in to undertake additional gully emptying as part of the increased investment into road maintenance. This work is planned using robust asset management criteria and the

residential areas surrounding Uxbridge Street are routinely cleansed on a cyclical programme. The Community Highways team are available to work with the local Member to ensure areas are cleared of parked cars, when the cleansing takes place, and will ensure any isolated blockages are added to work schedules as necessary.

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

### **Question**

It has become an all too common occurrence for our Highways Contractors Amey, to selectively fix a singular pothole while overlooking nearby ones, some of which are in equal or worse condition.

Considering the substantial disruption borne by the residents of Burton on Trent owing to recent concurrent roadworks, leading to considerable traffic snarls and commuter delays, can the Cabinet Member for Highways please confirm that his much vaunted "whole place" approach to pothole repairs in a locality will actually be rolled out and when can we expect to see the benefits of such a policy?

### **Reply**

Staffordshire county council has committed an extra £50m into local road maintenance over the next three years. Through this investment we will deliver an enhanced programme of capital maintenance schemes to replace sections of life-expired roads and carry out around 100 miles of pothole prevention surface treatments and 30,000 individual pothole repairs each year.

A 'whole place' approach is adopted when delivering our capital maintenance schemes. This means that other highway issues, such as drainage, barrier and signage repairs are also attended to at the same time.

Similarly, the extra investment is enabling larger repairs as part of our pothole hot-spot and pre-surface treatment patching programme. This means that it's not just the offending pothole that gets repaired, but also any surrounding area that has started to deteriorate and if left unchecked will later become a new pothole on its own.

Elsewhere, and in accordance with national codes of practice, individual pothole repairs are prioritised on a risk basis. Experienced county council highway inspectors identify and categorise each pothole defect, stipulating its repair timescale and treatment type, which the scheduling team then group together for repair in the most efficient and

effective way.

Complimenting this the dedicated £2m Member's pothole fund enables local Members to identify and prioritise particular local potholes for more urgent attention.

However, despite all these efforts there can still be many reasons why some pothole repairs are completed one-day and other nearby potholes have to left until a future return visit. These include things like:

- A number of emergencies, category 1 and category 2 defects in the local area are approaching the end of their statutory repair timescale and must be given priority.
- Different types of pothole repair treatment or traffic management is required – this is more common when adjacent pothole defects are located on or close to road junctions.
- The capacity of the attending repair crew has been reached e.g. all repair material has been used or spoil collected from earlier repairs needs tipping; and
- Changing weather conditions puts a halt to pothole repairs midway through the day.

The recent rainfall and freezing temperatures has seen a huge rise in high risk pothole defects this winter. Even with all our extra investment resources are finite and crews are pulling out all the stops to undertake holding repairs to the worst and most dangerous to help keep our roads as safe as possible. The main programme of road maintenance will then start in the spring when weather conditions are more favourable to creating long-lasting repairs.

### **Supplementary Question**

Can you give me an update on the various trials of resurfacing technologies particularly in the use of JCB's Pothole Pro.

### **Reply**

Yes, of course, I will endeavour to get officers to provide you with the information as soon as possible.

## **14. Petitions**

### **Flooding along the access roads in Colton Parish**

Councillor Cox presented a petition from local residents calling on the County Council to take action to prevent the flooding of the access roads in Colton Parish.

**Chair**



### **Statement of the Leader of the Council**

#### **1. Staffordshire Means Back to Business**

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:

- This month saw an increase of 320 claimants in Staffordshire, whilst at the same time we have seen increases both regionally and nationally. The total number of claimants in the county now stands at 15,290 and the claimant rate has increased this month from 2.8% to 2.9% of the working age population. However, it is important to note that the claimant count rate in Staffordshire is still one of the lowest in the West Midlands, far lower than the average for the region of 4.9%, and also lower than the average for England of 3.8%. We will continue to support those residents that unfortunately find themselves out of work to access employment through our dedicated Jobs Brokerage service.
- The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw an increase of 60 claimants this month to a total of 2,895 young people. This is in line with increases also seen regionally and nationally. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit has increased this month from 4.5% to 4.6%. This continues to be lower than the national rate of 5.1% and far lower than the regional rate of 6.9%. Our focus continues to be to engage with our younger residents and support them to find employment or continue in education and training.
- Creating the conditions to support the growth of our economy remains one of our top priorities, including supporting the development of our key industrial sectors which continue to thrive within the county. This includes our visitor economy and ensuring that we are taking full advantage of the fact that Staffordshire is home to numerous nationally renowned attractions.
- Next month we will celebrate and champion these attractions and our tourism and hospitality businesses through our Enjoy Staffordshire Tourism & Good Food Awards, taking place at the National Memorial Arboretum. The awards have been growing year-on-year and in total we received a record number of entries for this year's awards, with over 140 entries received across nineteen categories. Our awards are now the largest tourism awards competition in the Midlands and the second largest in England, with only the South West competition, which covers the whole region and not just one county, receiving

more entries. The finalists for the event have recently been announced and many of the winners will go on to represent Staffordshire at the national VisitEngland Awards for Excellence in June 2024.

- At the end of last year I updated Cabinet on our success to secure a Local Visitor Economy Partnership for the area which will work to support and grow the visitor economy and has the potential to bring significant benefits to the county, including through access to support and future funding programmes. We are now recruiting for a chair for the board who will help set the vision for the partnership and will be integral to raising the profile and quality of our visitor product, delivering a green sustainable tourism offer and successfully positioning Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent as a great place to live, work, visit and enjoy. The deadline for applications is the 1st March and I hope to be able to further update Cabinet on the successful applicant and work of the partnership in the coming months.
- Next month I'll be making a number of recommendations to Cabinet related to the integration of the responsibilities of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership into the County Council. Since its inception in 2011, we have been a key partner of the LEP and acted as its accountable body, securing a great deal of national investment through the LEP that has helped to deliver some of our most successful programmes and create new jobs, invest in our infrastructure and greatly improve local skill levels. However, last year the Government made the decision to cease funding LEPs from April 2024 and to transfer their responsibilities to the local authorities, and the LEP has therefore already made an in-principle decision to close in the coming months. Firstly, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has been involved in making our LEP a success, including all the private sector business leaders who have given up their time for the benefit of the local economy. We of course want to ensure that we continue to engage with our local businesses on our plans for supporting the growth of the Staffordshire economy, and we are currently considering how best to do this in the future and I'll be updating Cabinet on our plans in due course.
- Over recent years the Council's Growth Hub has delivered many positive outcomes, but more recently issues including uncertainty over resources and the Government decision to no longer provide funding to LEPs has affected the effectiveness of the Hub. The County Council, working alongside Stoke-on-Trent City Council, has now taken over full control of the Growth Hub and a great deal of work has been ongoing to meet the requirements of Government for the current financial year whilst also ensuring we are developing our plans and putting the Hub on a sound footing for the future. The

integration of the responsibilities of the LEP into the County Council presents us with a significant opportunity to align our economic programmes such as the Growth Hub with our range of business support functions, ensuring that they are as effective as possible.

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

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

## **2. Homes for Children in our Care**

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

The Cabinet have therefore agreed to take steps to increase the options available in the market through supporting three key developments:

(a) Endorsing the West Midlands Residential Framework: This will see us sign up to the WM regional framework. This framework will ensure SCC continues to be procurement compliant and enable SCC to access a wider market to increase the number of foster carers.

(b) Endorsing the West Midlands Fostering Framework. This framework will ensure the County Council continues to be procurement compliant and enable the Council to access a wider market to increase the number of fostering carers and eradicate the use of unregulated residential homes being used.

(c) Invest in six internal homes to disrupt the market and provide a home for our most complex children.

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

### **3. Green Solutions - SCC Delivery of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service**

At the end of last year, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) launched a pilot programme for SMEs with combined Authorities around the West Midlands, and Staffordshire was approached to see if it could deliver this programme in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

The Cabinet have approved proposals for the Council to become the Primary Delivery Partner for the Stoke and Staffordshire region, to deliver Energy Assessments and Grants on behalf of the Pilot Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) programme in the Stoke and Staffordshire region. This will allow us to support 300 businesses with energy advice and £2M of grants to make improvements.

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

### **4. House Waste Recycling Centres - Equipment Replacement Programme**

The Cabinet have approved the undertaking of a procurement exercise in compliance with the requirements of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (the "Regulations") for 11 new wheeled excavators (JCBs) for the Household Waste Recycling Centre equipment renewal programme.

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

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

### **5. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3 2023/24**

The Cabinet have received an overview of Staffordshire County Council's progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against our Strategic Plan, Corporate Delivery Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

They noted that the latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £5.4m (0.9%), compared to the Quarter 2 forecast overspend of £7.7m (1.1%). Rising costs across the organisation, along with recruitment and retention pressures continue. Levels of demand and complexity of needs also remain challenging, particularly in children's and families services and in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities where transport costs are rising very significantly.

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

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

The Cabinet have approved the refreshed Civil Contingencies Policy along with a supporting new Business Continuity Management Policy.

The Civil Contingencies Policy has been updated, along with a supporting new Business Continuity Management Policy, to reflect current guidance, learning and ways of working and is once again based on ensuring that the Council's civil contingencies arrangements continue to deliver three key outcomes in the event of an emergency:

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

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

## **7. Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion - progress update**

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to show that they are advancing the equalities agenda under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). A great deal of work was undertaken during 2021 to review the Council's approach to delivering against the Public Sector Equality Duty. It was recognised that equality considerations were embedded across the organisation with a strong corporate focus on responding to, and addressing the Gender Pay Gap, together with improving collection and analysis of the workforce profile data. It was however acknowledged that more could be done to strengthen the Council's approach. Therefore, in December 2021 Cabinet agreed to adopt a new set of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles and objectives, along with an associated action plan.

The Cabinet have considered progress against those principles and have approved proposed areas of focus for 2024 to further strengthen the Council's approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion both within the organisation and across Staffordshire.

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

## **8. Procurement of Gas Supplies**

The Council's current contract for the procurement of gas supplies is due to end on 31 March 2025 and the Council are required to serve notice on the current provider 12 months prior to the end date of the contract. The Cabinet have approved the arrangement for procuring gas supplies from 1 April 2025 (to the 31 March 2029) and have agreed that a contract be

awarded to Total Energies Gas and Power Limited using the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework.

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

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

The Cabinet have considered proposals for procuring the supply of electricity for street lighting and Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) assets and approved the entering into of an Electricity and Associated Services contract through Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework for the period of 1 April 2024 until 31 March 2028, with EDF Energy. The contract will be for the supply of 100% renewable electricity.

*(Cabinet – 21 February 2024)*

## **10. Local Transport Fund**

As a county council, we know that a good, connected road network is important to the people and businesses of Staffordshire.

We have invested additional funding ourselves, but we are also committed to securing additional national funding which is being allocated after the changes to HS2.

I am pleased therefore that Staffordshire recently secured a further boost of almost £286million for local transport projects spanning over a seven-year period from 2025/26.

To mark the announcement, John Glen MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office, visited the Branston Interchange site - where we were able to showcase the improvements being made for the benefit of residents, businesses and the Staffordshire economy.

This project also secured a £6million allocation from the government's Levelling Up Fund and a £4million contribution from the main developer of the Branston Locks site, Nurton Developments. Work is set to be completed in spring 2025.

During the visit, the County Council's deputy leader Philip White also discussed wider plans including the fifty500 campaign to invest in the A50/A500 growth corridor.

## **11. Walleys Quarry**

While most of us are not directly affected by this issue, as a county council we have championed, together with partners, the cause of the local communities affected.

The Environment Agency, which is the principle regulatory body for the site, has issued a suspension notice to Walleys Quarry Limited to immediately stop the acceptance and disposal of waste, except for inert wastes which do not contribute to the odour.

The notice also requires additional work to be carried out on site by later this month, before the suspension can be reviewed.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely and carry on supporting residents as best we can until a permanent solution is found.

## **12. Foster Carer Awards**

We have spoken many times in this chamber about the amazing support our dedicated foster carers offer to children in the county.

So, I am delighted that we have launched our first ever Fostering Star Awards to recognise and celebrate the role of our foster carers.

There are five categories:

- Rising Star - For carers who have fostered for less than two years
- Inspirational Person - Someone who inspires the children in their care to achieve their potential.
- Making a Difference – someone making a difference in the fostering community.
- Above and Beyond - Someone who goes above and beyond to support the children in their care or to support other foster carers.
- Makes Us/Me Smile - Someone who is always there for other foster carers, even on a challenging day.

So if you would like to nominate a foster carer please do. Nominations close on March 31<sup>st</sup>

## **13. Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme**

Our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme is back for the Easter holidays, which this year falls at the end of this month.

The HAF programme is not only a huge success story for this council, but also for the eligible families it helps. Last year, the Staffordshire programme provided 73,164 places over Easter, Summer and Winter and made an incredible difference to so many parents, carers and children.

Booking opened on for this Easter on March 11 and more details of activities and how to apply are available [www.staffordshire.gov.uk/holidayactivities](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/holidayactivities)

#### **14. School Places**

Finally, more good news for Staffordshire families with nine out of ten parents learning this month that they have been allocated their first choice secondary school in Staffordshire.

Of the 8,482 offers made for a Staffordshire secondary school at age 11, 90.8% per cent were for a first-choice school. The national and regional average is around 83 per cent.

In fact, nearly 99 per cent have been allocated one of their top three preferred schools.

It is great that we have such an excellent track record of being able to allocate well above the national average for first preferences, especially as demand for places increases.

A huge thank you goes to our admissions team who have been working hard since October to make this happen.



## Recommendations to the Council

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### 1. **Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 - Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011**

1.1 It is a legal requirement of the Localism Act 2011 for Staffordshire County Council to have a Pay Policy statement. There is also a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for the local authority to prepare a pay policy statement on an annual basis.

1.2 The current procedure for special committee (recruitment) in appointing chief officers and the remit of the remuneration committee regarding senior leadership pay matters, involves elected members. These are transparent procedures contained in the Council's constitution. Therefore, the pay policy statement builds upon what is already a transparent process, under which elected members are fully accountable.

1.3 Nothing in the provisions of the act or draft guidance supersedes the Council's existing responsibilities and duties placed on the council as an employer under relevant employment legislation.

### 2. **Recommendation**

2.1 That Council approves the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025

2.2 That Council acknowledge the ratio between the lowest paid and highest paid employee has reduced from 1:11 to 1:9.



# Localism Act: Pay Policy Statement

March 2024

This information can be made available in a range of formats and languages, including Braille and large print. If this would be useful to you, please contact People Services



# Introduction

This Pay Policy Statement sets out our approach to pay policy as required under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.

The purpose of this Pay Policy Statement is to increase accountability in relation to payments made to senior employees in the public sector by enabling public scrutiny.

We seek to deliver our organisational objectives through our People Strategy; by attracting talented people, encouraging a positive working environment and focusing on learning and development. We are also committed to ensuring a fair and transparent approach in determining pay policy.

Once approved by the full Council, this policy statement will come into immediate effect and will be subject to review annually as a minimum and in accordance with the relevant legislation at that time.

## Our Pay Policy Statement

Our Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 will cover our policy on the following points:

- the level and detail of remuneration for each chief officer
- the remuneration of our lowest-paid employees (together with its definition of “lowest-paid employees” and our reasons for adopting that definition)
- the relationship between the remuneration of our chief officers and other officers
- other specific aspects of chief officers’ remuneration: remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, termination payments and transparency.

# Our People Strategy Principles

- To develop a Pay & Reward strategy that enables us to attract and keep retain talented people to achieve our business aims.
- To ensure we are focusing on individual and team contribution and how we recognise performance in a positive and supportive working environment.
- To be fair, open and transparent and ensure we consider the impact of our Reward policies for all employees.

## Pay and Grading

In determining the pay of employees, we will comply with all relevant and current employment legislation. With regards to equal pay, we will ensure that there is no pay discrimination within our pay structures and that all pay differentials can be objectively justified using our job evaluation system.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties & Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, we are required to publish an annual Gender Pay Gap report no later than 30 March annually. This report is a measure of the difference between the average hourly earnings of men and women.

### **NJC Pay structure**

For most of our employees our policy is to implement the pay framework and terms and conditions, unless locally agreed otherwise, prescribed by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services ('NJC').

The NJC pay framework currently comprises 42 salary points, between spinal column point (SCP) 2 (£22,366 pa) and SCP 43 (£51,515pa) for a full-time employee (based on a 37 hour week).

Our pay and grading structure was implemented by collective agreement with the Green Book trade unions in 2019. We have an established pay and grading structure which is based on a current 'points to pay' relationship, determined through our job evaluation system.

We use an incremental spinal column point progression approach linked to length of service for Grades 1 to 16. Increments are due on 1 April each year, or 6 months after appointment if less than 6 months in the new

grade by 1 April, i.e., an increment is paid after 6 months if the employee is appointed between 1 October and 31 March.

We currently follow national pay bargaining in respect of the national pay spine and any annual cost of living increases negotiated in the pay spine. Pay spine values referred to in this document may be subject to ongoing national pay bargaining and updated pending any agreed pay award.

Although the pay spines are agreed nationally, pay structures and pay grades are determined locally.

### **Other Terms and Conditions**

Other groups of employees are paid salaries or salary scales agreed by the relevant national negotiating bodies. These groups include such workers as NHS workers (statutory transfer from Primary Care Trusts), those falling within the group of the Soulbury Committee or School Teachers' Pay and Conditions agreements. There are also a small number of workers on different terms & conditions due to TUPE.

### **Salary on appointment**

Appointments are usually made to the lowest point of each grade. It is possible from time to time there is a market force/retention reason that may require consideration when making an appointment. Where necessary, we will ensure that any decision is objectively justified by reference to clear and transparent evidence of relevant market comparators, using appropriate data sources, including affordability, available from within and outside the local government sector.

### **Level and remuneration for each chief officer**

For the purposes of this statement, senior management means 'chief officers' as defined within S43 of the Localism Act we define senior managers as

- the chief executive
- the deputy chief executive
- directors
- assistant directors and any other direct reports to the directors

Our Chief Executive is paid a basic spot salary as detailed in **Appendix 1**. This increases in line with JNC Chief Executives pay awards, negotiated annually.

JNC Chief Officers are paid on one of two incremental scales/grades (Grade 15: £78,275 – £83,995 pa or Grade 16: £92,764 - £97,302 pa) which are reviewed annually under the JNC for Chief Officers annual pay award.

Single 'spot' salaries for chief officers exist above this range aligned to market rates, which are also reviewed annually in line with the JNC for Chief Officers pay award.

### **Appointment and pay of Chief Officers**

The process for the recruitment and appointment of chief officers is set out in the [Council's Constitution](#) document.

The salary levels of chief officers on appointment have been set by elected members, at the relevant council committee. The salary details for chief officers can be seen in Appendix 1 and will be updated as and when necessary, via the website ([www.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk)).

Between annual approval of the pay policy statement and in respect of chief officer posts (as defined within S43 of the Localism Act):

- In accordance with the constitution, decisions made in relation to the variation in number and/or nature of posts are reserved for the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council.
- Pay for chief officers other than those in the Senior Leadership Team must be dealt with in accordance with [Council's constitution and this Pay Policy Statement](#).
- We may agree through a Remuneration Committee, to resolve matters relating to pay for the Head of Paid Service and chief officers within the Senior Leadership Team including:
  - Resolution of any issues relating to remuneration and allowances during employment.
  - Agree changes to Senior Leadership Team remuneration strategy which may impact on remuneration.

## **Relationship between the highest and lowest paid employees**

Our definition of our 'lowest paid', are employees on Grade 1, SCP 2 who currently receive £22,366pa, or on a pro-rata basis if they work for less than 37 hours per week. This definition does not include those working as apprentices who are paid in compliance with the National Minimum Wage guidelines.

The current pay levels define the multiple<sup>1</sup> between the lowest paid (full time equivalent) employee and the [Chief Executive] as [1:9] and between the lowest paid employee and average chief officer as [1:5]. The multiple between the median (average) full time equivalent earnings and the [Chief Executive] is [1:6] and between the median (average) full time equivalent earnings and average chief officer is [1:4].

## **Car Allowance**

A car allowance is paid to JNC Chief Officers based on a 3-tier approach (Tier 3: £4,395, Tier 2: £5,483 or Tier 1: £8,375 pa). Chief Officers have the option use the allowance and enter the Councils Green Car Lease Car Scheme.

Chief officers in receipt of the car allowance are not authorised to claim business mileage.

## **Allowances**

Green Book (NJC) allowances are applied to both NJC and JNC posts. On occasion, it may be agreed to pay other allowances to chief officers which will be objectively justified.

## **Honoraria**

All honorarium payments are subject to local arrangements and criteria set out in the Green Book terms and conditions of service and will be objectively justified by reference to clear and transparent evidence, using appropriate data sources, including affordability, available from within and outside the local government sector.

All honorarium payments must be approved under the relevant scheme of delegation. Chief officer honorariums will be approved by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet member responsible for People Services (the Leader of the Council). All honorariums will be reviewed regularly.

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<sup>1</sup> Note – multiple or ratio rounded up or down where applicable



## **Pay Protection**

Employees who are displaced from their substantive post and redeployed to a lower graded role as a result of organisational change or for medical reasons receive pay protection (subject to meeting the eligibility criteria).

The period of pay protection is currently three years (Grades 1 to 11) or one year (Grades 12 and above) from the date of the change.

## **Market Supplements**

Market supplements are not currently part of the Council's pay and reward strategy.

## **Pensions**

All employees are entitled to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The LGPS is the occupational pension scheme available to Local Government Employers and other public sector employers such as colleges and academies. Employees are eligible to join LGPS provided they are not entitled to be a member of another Public Sector Scheme such as the Teachers, Police or Fire Pension Scheme. Eligible employees join the scheme automatically on commencement of their employment provided they are under age 75 and have a contract of more than 3 months.

Members have the right to leave the scheme or join the 50/50 Section of the scheme at any time. The benefits and contributions payable are set out in the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013. Both employees and employers contribute to the Pension Fund.

Further details of the employee and employer contribution rates can be found on the Staffordshire Pension Fund Web site:

<http://www.staffspf.org.uk/>

Employer Contribution Rates - <https://www.staffspf.org.uk/Finance-and-Investments/Actuarial-valuation-report/Actuarial-Valuation-Report.aspx>

Employee Contribution Rates - <https://www.staffspf.org.uk/Members/New-Members/Joining/How-muchwill-it-cost-me.aspx>

## **Payments on Termination**

Our approach to (statutory and) discretionary payments on termination of employment of chief officers, prior to reaching normal retirement age, is set out under regulations five and six of the local government (Early Termination Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006, and the Council's policy on increasing an employee's total pension scheme membership and on awarding additional pension under Regulations 31 of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations 2013.

Any other payments falling outside the provisions, or the relevant periods of contractual notice shall be subject to a formal decision made by the full Council or relevant elected members, committee or panel of elected members with delegated authority to approve such payments.

We will implement any proposed government changes to exit payments when they become law, however this may necessitate a review of current council policies.

## **Publication of and access to information relating to the remuneration of chief officers and other employees**

Our policy is to provide information on the remuneration of our Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Assistant Directors on our website ([www.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk)) keeping to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and as required by s.7 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

We will publish our Gender Pay Gap report no later than 30 March annually. This information will be available at [www.staffordshire.gov.uk](http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk) and also <https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk/Viewing/search-results>.

## Policy Revisions

<b>Revision Date</b>	<b>Summary of Changes</b>
February 2015	Reviewed for 2015/16
February 2016	Reviewed for 2016/17
February 2017	Reviewed for 2017/18
February 2018	Reviewed for 2018/19
February 2019	Reviewed for 2019/20
February 2020	Reviewed for 2020/21
February 2021	Reviewed for 2021/22
February 2022	Reviewed for 2022/23
February 2023	Reviewed for 2023/24
February 2024	Reviewed for 2024/25

## Appendix 1 – Chief Officer Remuneration 2023

Service	Position	Full Time Equivalent	Annual Salary	Honorarium (per annum) (i)	Car Subsidy Tier (ii)
	Chief Executive	1.00	£191,475		1
Children and Families	Director for Children and Families	1.00	£155,503		1
Children and Families	Assistant Director for Children's Social Care	1.00	£117,517		2
Children and Families	Assistant Director for Children's Wellbeing and Partnerships	1.00	£117,517		2
Children and Families	Assistant Director for Education Strategy and Improvement	1.00	£97,302		3
Corporate Services	Director for Corporate Services & Deputy Chief Executive	1.00	£155,503	£7,512	1
Corporate Services	Assistant Director for Commercial and Assets	1.00	£97,302		3
Corporate Services	Assistant Director for Communications and Marketing	1.00	£92,764		3
Corporate Services	Assistant Director for Corporate Operations	0.86	£83,680		3
Corporate Services	County Solicitor	1.00	£117,517		2
Corporate Services	Assistant Director for People	1.00	£97,302	£9,401	3
Corporate Services	Assistant Director for Strategy and Transformation	1.00	£92,764		3
Economy Infrastructure and Skills	Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills	1.00	£155,503		1
Economy Infrastructure and Skills	Assistant Director for Business and Enterprise	1.00	£97,302		3
Economy Infrastructure and Skills	Assistant Director for Connectivity and Sustainability	1.00	£92,764		3
Economy Infrastructure and Skills	Assistant Director for Culture, Rural & Safer Communities	1.00	£95,033		3
Economy Infrastructure and Skills	Assistant Director for Highways and Built County	1.00	£97,302		3
Economy Infrastructure and Skills	Assistant Director for Skills and Employability	1.00	£92,764		3
Finance	Director of Finance	1.00	£139,464		1

Finance	Assistant Director for Audit and Financial Services	1.00	£83,995		3
Finance	Chief Accountant	1.00	£92,764		3
Finance	Assistant Director of Finance Business Partnering	1	£97,302		3
Finance	Assistant Director for Treasury and Pensions	1.00	£97,302		3
Health and Care	Director for Health and Care	1.00	£155,503		1
Health and Care	Assistant Director for Adult Social Care and Safeguarding	1.00	£117,517		2
Health and Care	Assistant Director for Care Commissioning	1.00	£117,517		2
Health and Care	Head of Provider Services	1.00	£71,041		N/A
Health and Care	Assistant Director - Public Health and Prevention	1.00	£97,302		3
Children and Families	Chief Executive WME	1.00	£117,517		2
Finance	Chief Executive Midlands Engine	1.00	£139,464		1

- (i) Post holder is temporarily receiving an honorarium for undertaking additional responsibilities which is paid in addition to basic pay and approved.
- (ii) Car lease cash alternative is paid as a monthly allowance in addition to basic salary.



## **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 5 February 2024.

The main items of business were:

**Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC).** There were no decisions had been published on the Commissioners website since the last meeting.

### **Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public**

The Panel considered the questions ask by a member of the public and the Commissioners written response. It was noted that the questions were submitted prior to the last meeting but had missed the deadline for publication on that agenda so had been included today for information.

Mr Bradbury attended the meeting but had no supplementary questions.

### **Proposed Police Budget and Precept 2024/25**

The Commissioner introduced his report which set out the proposed budget and precept proposals for the Police and Crime element of his portfolio for 2024/25. He reported that the proposed budget/precept showed a total net revenue budget requirement of £264.824m for 2024/25.

The Commissioner proposed to part fund the balance from Council Tax funding of £100.091m with an increase of 4.99% per annum (an increase of £13 per annum) increasing the Council tax to £273.57 p.a. per Band D property.

The Commissioner stated that he believed that the budget was in a positive position and it allowed the Force to respond to incidents. More emphasis would now be on surveillance and organised crime and more proactive policing. Considerable investment in the service was needed however, particularly in Technology and Estates.

The Panel was informed that the Force would continue to strive for savings and efficiencies and had saved £7m during 2023/34 with more savings planned in future years. The Commissioner felt that there was still considerable uncertainty in terms of the economy; pay increases; and pension contributions.

The Panel received a presentation from the Commissioner's s151 Officer, which was considered along with the report which included the following:

1. Budget Report 2024/25 including Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)
2. Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25
3. Reserves Strategy update
4. Capital Strategy and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28

The **Treasury Management Strategy** for 2024/25 set out proposals for the management of the Commissioner's cash flows, borrowing and investments and their associated risks.

The **Reserves Strategy update** paper considered the overall level of reserves held at 31 March 2023 and the forecast position at 31 March 2024.

The **Capital Strategy and Capital Programme** (Including Minimum Revenue Provision Policy) set out the long-term capital investment and investment decisions.

A summary of the results of the public and stakeholder engagement survey which had been carried out by the Commissioner was included in the papers.

In addition to the information in the report, the following was gained during the discussion and questioning:

- The Panel was reminded that the budget for 2023/24 was forecast to achieve a small underspend and had saved all of the savings identified and included recruitment of an additional 60 officers.
- Investment in new technologies and infrastructure (e.g. Police stations, vehicles and custody facilities) was needed.
- Significant inflation pressures still remained. Uncertainty over future pay awards all meant that accurate financial predictions were difficult.
- The MTFS showed a budget gap of £19m by the end of March 2028. The process to address this had been started.
- Prior to any decisions being taken regarding projects or investments, a full governance programme was followed to ensure that the investment was still needed and the proposals were still the most effective and best value for money.
- Efficiency savings were mentioned in the report. It was explained that these included managing costs in contracts and better use of specialist services such as data analysis. The Commissioner explained that more productivity could be



achieved by using technology to collect data or intelligence more quickly. Investment in solar panels and heating systems would also lead to savings.

- There was an emphasis on investments leading to future savings.
- The Commissioner felt that the budget was realistic and reasonable.
- The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was viewed as an opportunity to achieve greater efficiencies. An example was given of AI surveillance equipment being used to spot behaviour trends or spot dangerous weapons which would pre-empt incidents.
- When asked what the public would see in return for the 4.99% precept increase, the Commissioner stated that investment to enable greater productivity and efficiency would lead to Officers having more time on the beat or with victims or solving crime.
- More investment was due in road policing.
- The Budget Support Reserves after 2025/26 were listed in the report at zero. It was explained that this was for specific projects/expenditure so the reserve may last longer if more efficiencies were found. The panel was informed that this type of reserve was unusual for a force to have and was a recent addition to the budget.
- Updates on progress on Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and Transformation projects would be included in future budget update reports to the Panel. It was asked that this should include what benefit the transformation project would add. The Panel was reminded that the performance meetings with the Chief Constable contained this information, and this would develop as the projects developed.
- The Commissioner agreed that it would be useful to link investment or transformation to demonstratable results.
- Following a question on why Estates/Building investment was taking place, but the Capital Earmarked Reserves was not being used, the Section 151 Officer explained that reserves were used wherever possible, but some of the reserves may be ringfenced for other projects. The detail of the projects was not available at the meeting. More information would be sent to the panel after the meeting.
- The Reserves budget showed a predicted £27.5m would remain by the end of the MTF period.
- It was explained that some investment was compulsory to meet required standards, as new tasers, firearms training and officer personal safety training.
- In the report, it stated that the MRP statement of 4% was a 'prudent provision'. The Panel asked for this to be explained at

the next meeting when the Panel considered the Fire and Rescue service precept.

The Panel adjourned to consider their response to the Commissioners budget and precept proposals. Upon reconvening, the Chair reported that the Panel would support the 4.99 % increase but that the transformation plans were key to the budget proposals being achieved. The transformation plans/projects therefore needed to be delivered and results needed to be seen in terms of reducing crime and improving service.

### **The Panel Resolved:**

#### **1. In relation to the Budget and Precept setting:**

- b) That the proposed budget and Precept increase of 4.99%, increasing the council tax to £272.57 for a band D property (£13.00 per annum, per household increase) be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.
- c) That the precept increase of below the 2024/25 increase in state pension (8.5% increase) working age benefits (6.7% increase) and below the recent ONS data for wage growth (7.2% increase) be noted.
- d) That the Council Tax base increase to 365,868 band D equivalent properties, equivalent to an increase of 1.55% be noted along with the council tax collection fund surplus of £1.239m.
- e) That the use of £1.621m of revenue reserves to balance the 2024/25 budget (in addition to use of other earmarked reserves to support identified purposes) be noted.
- f) That the MTFS summary financials and MTFS assumptions as contained in the report be noted.
- g) That the delegation to the Director of Finance for the Staffordshire Commissioners Office and the Chief Finance Officer of Staffordshire Police to make any necessary adjustments to the budget as a result of late changes to central government funding (including changes due to the final funding settlement being announced) via an appropriation to or from the general fund reserve be noted.
- h) That the proposed four-year Capital Investment Programme totalling £83.508m and the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme Paper be noted.
- i) That the outcome of the Staffordshire Commissioner's budget consultation within the Commissioners foreword which included a survey regarding the proposed level of precept for 2024/25 be noted.

## **2. Future Panel information items:**

Updates on progress on Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and Transformation projects be included in future budget update reports to the Panel. The Panel asked that this should include what benefit the transformation project has add.

## **3. Information requested following the Panel meeting**

Estates/Building investment - Capital Earmarked Reserves were not being used. Was the reserve ringfenced for other projects?

## **National Conference for Police Fire and Crime Panels - 9 November 2023**

The Panel received a report from its member representatives at the AGM of the National Conference for Police, Fire and Crime Panels, held on 9 November 2023. Workshops attended as part of the National Conference had included discussions on 'Public confidence in policing'; 'Measuring success' and Preparing for change'.

### **Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members**

Question 1 – Could the Commissioner provide an update on the project to replace the Firearms range?

Response: The Commissioner reported that the project was going through the planning process but the proposals were subject to review as discussed earlier to ensure that demand and need hadn't changed and that the scheme was still the best option for the force. It was hoped that a decision would be made soon.

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](mailto: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 12 February 2024.

The main items of business were:

**Decisions published by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC).** There were no decisions had been published on the Commissioners website since the last meeting.

**Questions to the PFCC from Members of the Public.** No questions were submitted in time for this meeting.

**Proposed Fire and Rescue Budget and Precept 2024/25.** The Commissioner introduced his report which set out the proposed budget and precept proposals for the Fire and Rescue Authority for 2024/25.

The Commissioners section151, Chief Finance Officer gave a short presentation which was considered along with the Fire Revenue Budget Report (including the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Precept).

It was explained that the total budget requirement for the service was £50.065m and including part fund the balance from Council Tax funding of £31.746m and a proposed increase of 2.99% (£2.52) per annum (£86.77 pa Band D property).

The Panel also considered the following documents:

- The Capital Strategy and Capital Programme Report.
- The Reserves Strategy
- The Treasury Management Strategy.

The results of the Commissioners consultation were included in the report.

During the meeting and discussion, the following information was shared in addition to that in the report:

- The Commissioner informed the Panel that at the present time, no transformation savings were needed. He felt that the budget was in a healthy and secure place.
- Investment was needed in essential maintenance such as new vehicles.
- There was still a level of uncertainty regarding pay costs, inflation, pensions and a further single year settlement which made planning longer term challenging.

- The service had delivered savings in 2023/24 and along with the additional s31 grant and a higher rate of interest received on the cash which the service held, had contributed to the need to use less reserves in 2024/25.
- It was noted that there was an assumption to increase the precept in 2025/26 by a further 2.99% and then revert back to the lower rate of 1.99%.
- The additional funding which had been announced on 24 January (listed in the executive summary) was noted.
- Risks were listed as pay awards; cost increases; pensions (employer contributions); and the funding guarantee.
- The main points in the Capital Programme and Reserves Strategy were highlighted along with the investment proposals for 2024/25. These were listed in the report.
- The Commissioner felt that Industrial relations were very positive locally.
- The Capital Programme was now on track but had been delayed and faced challenges due to events such as Covid, Brexit and product availability. Delivery of, for example, the ariel ladder platforms and other appliances as part of the Capital programme were due soon and good progress was now being made. The Commissioner felt that more may need to be done in the technology area in order to maintain service and stability in future years.
- The Commissioner sent his condolences to Wayne Browns (West Midlands Chief Fire Officer) family and friends and colleges at the Fire Service.
- A restructure of the Estates Team had taken place and projects around shared estates would be progressing.
- The Commissioner was confident that the finances available would enable the pace of change to continue.
- The budget included assumptions of pay increases of 5%. An agreement above that would put pressure on future budgets, but there was a reserves strategy to deal with such events if needed.
- Staff vacancies had been reviewed. On call staff was an area which always carried vacancies and was always recruiting.
- Workforce diversity had been discussed at the recent Commissioner/ Chief Fire Officer performance meetings. [COMMISSIONER'S PUBLIC PERFORMANCE MEETING STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE - Tuesday 14 November 2023, 1:00pm - Staffordshire County Webcasting \(public-i.tv\)](#)
- The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) was the provision of debt repayment which had historically been set at 4%. It was now set on an asset method basis to ensure that the amount was repaid during the life span of the equipment that the amount had been borrowed to purchase.
- In the Risk assessment of general reserves document, there was a provision of £550k for 'insurance loss data breach'. It was felt that if actions were taken to prevent a breach, then the reserve wouldn't be required.

- Council tax surpluses for each council, showed considerable differences. It was explained that this reflected individual councils' policy and collection rates. The Commissioner would ask for detail but felt that a consistent approach across the authorities would be fairer for residents.

The Panel adjourned to consider their response to the Commissioners budget and precept proposals. Upon reconvening, the Panel unanimously agreed:

### **The Panel Resolved: 1**

- a) The total 2024/25 net revenue budget requirement of £50.065m, including the council tax requirement for 2024/25 of £31.746m before collection fund surplus/deficits, be noted.
  - b) That the funding for 2024/25 is based upon the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement, and includes the estimated business rates information for the nine billing authorities, be noted.
  - c) That the proposed budget and Precept increase of 2.99% (£2.52 per annum equivalent to 4.8p per week, increasing the council tax to £86.77 for a Band D property be supported and the Commissioner be notified accordingly.
  - d) Council Tax base increase to 365,868 properties equivalent to an increase of 1.5% and the Council Tax collection fund delivering a surplus of £401k be noted.
  - e) The MTFs summary financials and MTFs assumptions be noted.
  - f) The MTFs balanced position for 2024/25 (£0.1m) and 2025/26 (£0.4m) be noted.
  - g) The proposed three year Capital Investment Programme be noted.
  - h) The business rates for 2024/25 based on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement be noted. This would be adjusted within the Earmarked Business Rates adjustment reserve when compared to the actual Non-Domestic Rates Income Returns (NNDR returns) from the nine local billing authorities.
  - i) That the outcome of the Staffordshire Commissioner's budget consultation be noted.
  - j) The delegation to the S151 Officer for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority, to make any necessary adjustments to the budget as a result of late changes to central government funding (including changes due to the final funding settlement being announced) via an appropriation to or from the general fund reserve be noted.
  - k) That the proposed fees and charges for 2023/24 be noted.
  - l)** That the Statement from the S151 Officer for the Staffordshire Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority on the robustness of the Budget and adequacy of the proposed financial reserves be noted.
2. **Commented** that more data would have been useful to show how the risk assessment and general reserves for 2024/25 (Appendix 3) had been arrived at. This could have included any mitigating actions.

**Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan - Update report.** The report provided the Panel with an update on the delivery of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Safety Plan (SP), Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The Safety Plan was designed to underpin the Staffordshire Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan and four priorities for the Service had been determined following consultation across Staffordshire in 2020. It was reported that the plan had been extended to December 2024.

The four priorities outlined in the current Commissioners Fire and Rescue Plan were:

- A flexible and responsive service
- Protect people and places
- Help people most at risk stay safe
- A fire and rescue service for tomorrow

The plan had been updated and the changes were listed in paragraph 3.6 of the report. Details on the progress to date was also contained in the report.

The main issues discussed by the Panel were:

- The three person crewing for on-call staff. The Commissioner felt that nationally the Fire Unions didn't generally like the concept of three person crews. However, locally their members supported it and no safety concerns had been raised. It was reported by members of the panel that they had heard locally of safety concerns. The Commissioner explained that the type of incident that the three person crews attended should not be high risk and no safety concerns had been raised locally through the Health and Safety system. Details of the number and type of incidents was included in the report. It was reported that the national trend was for crews of three particularly in rural/urban mixed areas such as Staffordshire. Members felt that was too early to say that staff felt safe as it was a relatively short trail, and many staff had not been call upon to attend as a team of three. Communication with the public on levels of safety was a message which needed to be considered. Questions raised by the Panel which could not be answered at the meeting were:
  - How had waiting times been affected?
  - How many times had crews had to wait for back up;
  - detail on the internal focus groups and their remits and findings;



- Information on the experiences of the local support groups.
- The Commissioner agreed to continue to share information with the Panel on this issue and to answer the questions above in their next report.
- With regard to the Falls Response Team and the Home from Hospital (HfH) scheme, it was confirmed that full training was provided to the Falls team and that calls were triaged by the NHS so if there was a medical need, the call would be attended by NHS staff. The Commissioner hoped that the HfH service would continue. It was currently due to run to the end of April 2024 to cover winter pressures.
- Defibrillators were now in all front line fire vehicles.
- The HMICFRS reinspection was currently taking place and would report back in summer. The Panel felt that the table in the report which tracked actions, would benefit from more detail to explain some of the actions which had not been met and what dates progress was expected by.

The HICFRS report findings and the progress made to address issues raised was noted. The Panel was reminded that the Commissioners performance meetings with the Chief Fire Officer were public and available on his website.

**The Panel Resolved** to note the report and asked for more information on the three person crewing for on call staff be reported back to the panel, and include responses to the Panels questions/concerns as listed above.

**Police Misconduct and Complaint Regulations 2020 - annual report.** The report updated the Panel on the implementation of Police Misconduct and Complaints Reforms, as set out in the Police (Complaints and Misconduct) Regulations 2020 which came into place on 1 February 2020. The Staffordshire Commissioner became the Appropriate Authority for reviews (formally known as appeals). The Commissioners office now received all reviews unless they were about a senior officer, criminal or misconduct proceedings, or article 2/3 (Human Rights), the review body for these was the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC).

The report outlined the type of complaint and the length of time taken to investigate. Lessons learned from the reviews were fed back to the force for organisational learning. Training in standards and the wearing of body cams was proving important.

Work was underway to bring the Fire and Rescue service under the review of the Commissioner in the same way as Police service.

The Commissioner thanked his officer, Mrs V Powell for the support she provided in this challenging role.

The Panel felt that although benchmarking information was available on line, it would be useful in future, if comparison information could be added to the report. Also examples of how complaints had helped to improve organisational learning.

**Questions to the PFCC by Panel Members.** Question: With regard to the Fire fighters pension scheme, when would the second option scheme (where on call fire fighters could buy back pension from when they first started) take place?

Response: The second option exercise had started and the service had until March 2025 to deal with this. The cost would be pickup by the Government.

**Appointment of Co-opted Independent Member.** A recruitment process had been followed and a panel of 4 members (Councillors B Peters, C Atkins, R Cox and independent member Mr A Bowen) had met to interview candidates for the vacant position of independent co-optee. The Interview Panel recommended that Rebecca Rendina be formally appointed for a four year period.

**Dates of Future Meetings and Work Programme.** The Chair informed the Panel that the reserved date of 19 February meeting was no longer needed and the 22 April meeting would fall during Purdah so needed to be cancelled. If an urgent item needed to be considered, a special meeting would be arranged.

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](mailto: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





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