

COUNCIL AGENDA

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 am on Thursday, 14 October 2010 to deal with the matters set out on the agenda.

Nick Bell
Chief Executive
6 October 2010

AGENDA

(Note: The meeting will begin with prayers)

Part One

General Housekeeping and declaring an Interest

1. **Apologies for absence (if any)**
2. **Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16.5**
3. **Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 July 2010 (Pages 3 - 14)**
4. **Chairman's Correspondence**

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

5. **Leader's Statement (Pages 15 - 24)**

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. **Petition Regarding the Closure of Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre (Pages 25 - 28)**

7. **Electoral Review of Staffordshire (Pages 29 - 40)**

Report of the Chief Executive

8. **Report of the Audit Committee (Pages 41 - 52)**

9. **Proposed Changes to the Constitution (Pages 53 - 58)**

Report of the Director of Law and Democracy

10. **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 non-Scrutiny 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.

11. **Notices of Motion**

Mr. P .E. B. Atkins to move the following motion:-

“Staffordshire County Council recognises that there is a need for fundamental reform of the relationship between central and local government if we are to reduce public spending, tackle entrenched social, economic and environmental problems and rebuild trust in democratic accountability. The council supports the Local Government Association’s detailed proposals for Place-based Budgets which would bring together different streams of public spending into a single

budget at the local level. It believes that this proposal would: save public money; cut waste and bureaucracy; allow for better decisions to be made transparently and accountably; and increase local communities control over spending in their area. It recommends that the Government begins the process of reform immediately by implementing Place-based Budgets throughout England and Wales as part of the 2010 Spending Review.”

12. **Report of the Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority** (Pages 59 - 62)

13. **Petitions**

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

14. **Exclusion of the Public**

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

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

PART TWO

(All reports in this section are on pink paper)

Nil

1. Fire/Bomb Alerts

In the event of the fire alarm sounding, leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs. Do not stop to collect personal belongings, do not use the lifts, do not re-enter the building until told to do so.

2. Attendance Record

Please sign the Attendance Record Book, which will be located at the top of the main staircase. Please ensure that the book is signed again in the afternoon if you are attending the adjourned Council meeting.

3. Mobile Phones

Please switch off all mobile phones before entering the Council Chamber.

4. Tea/Coffee

Refreshments will be available from 9.30 am.

5. Questions

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 delivered to the office of the Chief Executive at least three clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council i.e. **by not later than midnight on Sunday, 10 October 2010**. All questions and answers will be circulated around the Chamber before the commencement of the meeting. The questioner will be invited to read out his/her question. Similarly, the person responding will read out the reply. The Chairman will then permit the questioner to ask one supplementary question on each question/answer. Further information on Questions can be found in Paragraph 8 of Section 11 of the Constitution.

NB. Under the new arrangements approved by the Council on 20 May 2010, questions for the County Council meeting on 9 December 2010 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Sunday, 5 December 2010.

6. Notices of Motion

A Notice of Motion must reach the Chief Executive nine clear days before the relevant Meeting of the Council, i.e. **by not later than midnight on Monday, 4 October 2010**. Further information on Notices of Motion can be found in Paragraph 11 of Section 11 of the Constitution.

NB. Under the new arrangements approved by the Council on 20 May 2010, Notices of Motion for the County Council meeting on 9 December 2010 must reach the Chief Executive by not later than midnight on Monday, 29 November 2010.

GUIDANCE ON DECLARING PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS AT MEETINGS - WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY

DEFINITION OF WHAT IS A PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTEREST

A PERSONAL INTEREST is one where your well-being or financial position, or those of a relative or a friend would be affected by the decision.

You automatically have a personal interest if you have given notice in the Register of Members' Interests under Paragraph 14 and 15, eg. if you are a School Governor appointed by the Council.

A PREJUDICIAL INTEREST is where a member of the public knowing the facts would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it would prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

WHAT SHOULD YOU SAY?

If you have a **PERSONAL** interest you can stay but you must disclose its existence and its nature to the meeting.

An example of what you should say

"I have a personal interest in item number..... on the agenda. The interest is"

If you also have a **PREJUDICIAL** interest you must withdraw from the room when the matter is being discussed.

An example of what you should say

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

PLEASE MAKE IT CLEAR WHETHER IT IS A PERSONAL OR PREJUDICIAL INTEREST.

It would be helpful if, prior to the commencement of the meeting, members informed Democratic Services Unit of any declarations of interest, of which they are aware. This will help in the recording of the declarations in the minutes of the meeting.

DECLARING INTERESTS AT FULL COUNCIL

The Code of Conduct only requires that personal interests (or personal and prejudicial 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 - 22 July 2010

Present:

Attendance		
Ben Adams	Matthew Ellis	Geoff Morrison
Philip Atkins	Terry Finn	Barrie Mycock
Ray Barron	John Francis	David Nixon
Erica Bayliss	Bob Fraser	Michael Oates
Brian Beale	Gill Heath	Ian Parry
John Bernard	Mark Heenan	Kath Perry
David Billson	Christina Jebb, FRSA	Steve Povey
Len Bloomer	Ivan Jennings	Robert Reade
Henry Butter	Phil Jones	Rex Roberts, OBE
Frank Chapman	Philip Jones	John Rowley
John Cooper	Mike Lawrence	Liz Staples
Pat Corfield	Ian Lawson	Stephen Sweeney
Dylis Cornes	Frank Lewis, MBE	Simon Tagg
Peter Davies	Geoff Locke	Steve Tranter
Derek Davis, OBE	Robert Marshall	John Wells
William Day	Geoffrey Martin	Alan White
Veronica Downes	Mike Maryon	
Ray Easton	Mary Maxfield	

Apologies for absence: Paul Atkins, Lee Bates, Peter Beresford, Tim Corbett, Janet Eagland, Derrick Huckfield, Kathy Lamb, Jeremy Oates and Mark Winnington

PART ONE

19. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

The following Members declared interests in accordance with Standing Order 16:-

Member	Minute Nos.	Interest	Reason
D. Billson P. Jones M. Lawrence R.J. Marshall Mrs. K. Perry	22	Personal	Governor of Pendrell Hall College

20. Confirmation of the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 20 May 2010

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2010 be confirmed.

21. Chairman's Correspondence

Queen's Birthday Honours 2010

The Chairman informed the Council that Anne Beer, Senior Consumer Advice Officer within the Council's Social Care and Health Directorate, had been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for her services to consumers.

She also indicated that the Lord Lieutenant for Staffordshire, Mr. James Hawley had been appointed as a Knight Commander of the Victorian Order (KCVO) in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Members extended their congratulations to Sir James Hawley and Anne Beer on their achievements.

Training Quality Standard

The Chairman informed Members that the Council's Quality Learning Services (QLS) had gained the Training Quality Standard (TQS) award. The award was given to the best organisations delivering training to employers. The Standard highlighted high quality, high impact training, by looking at an organisation's responsiveness, flexibility, expertise and commitment to continuous improvement. Following rigorous assessment in March this year, QLS was advised that it had met all of these components of the Standard for both its general responsiveness to customers and for its services to the children's workforce in schools. Whilst one other county authority had to-date achieved TQS recognition for its own internal staff training, QLS within Staffordshire County Council was unique to have achieved it for its external facing services as well.

Chairman's Support for Charities

The Chairman informed the Council that, during her current year in office, she had decided to support a range of Staffordshire based charities, particularly those involved with carers and young people, and also "Help the Heroes".

Completion of works in the Council Chamber

The Chairman informed the Council that the works in the Council Chamber were progressing well and it was anticipated that the Chamber would be back in use in time for the Council meeting in October.

22. Leader's Statement

The Leader of the Council presented a Statement outlining his recent work; his plans for the Council; and an overview of decisions taken by the Cabinet (and Portfolio Holders) since the previous meeting of the Council.

Waste Facility Procurement – Project W2R

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr John Rowley concerning the difference between the standard and variant bids for the W2R project, Mr Robert Marshall explained that, under the standard bid, the County Council took the risk with regard to variations in the price of electricity whilst, under the variant bid, the price to the County Council was guaranteed by the contractor and it was therefore the contractor who took the risk if the price was to fall below the guaranteed price.

Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

In response to questions from members, Mr Robert Marshall indicated that the proposal to close Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre had been placed on hold whilst a review of Household Waste Recycling Centre provision across the County was undertaken. He also confirmed that, as part of this review process Lichfield District Council and Burntwood Town Council would be consulted in respect of any proposals relating to the Burntwood site.

Government's Emergency Budget and Spending Review

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Mr Derek Davis indicated that he was disappointed with the announcement that Cabinet were seeking savings in excess of those requested by Central Government. He added that the £120m to be saved over the next three years equated to approximately 5000 jobs.

Mr Steve Povey indicated that he echoed the concerns raised by Mr Davis and expressed disappointment that the proposed cuts were announced to the press before members of the County Council had been informed.

Mr Simon Tagg added that the Assets and Budget Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 July had received a presentation from the Director of Finance on the medium term financial strategy including details of where proposed savings were to be made.

Mr Ray Easton indicated that he was disappointed that the proposed savings included the withdrawal of financial support for the Hednesford – Walsall Railway.

Mr Ben Adams responded to members concerns by explaining that there would be considerably less funding available to the County Council over the next few years and that the Authority needed to take urgent action to deal with this. Mr Parry added that the current financial crisis was not of the County Council's making but that the Authority would "defend to the hilt the meeting of people's basic needs". He added that the way services were delivered may change and that the County Council needed to cut out waste and duplication.

The Leader of the Council thanked Members for their views and constructive comments. He indicated that the County Council was committed to the principle of "localism" and through this would identify what communities needed as opposed to dictating what

services were to be provided. The Council's main priority was to protect vulnerable children and adults.

He added that the anticipated savings of £7.9m in 2010/11 could be met through efficiencies and although achieving savings of approximately 30% over the next three years sounded high, it was hoped that these would be achieved through flushing out inefficiencies and through innovation in the way in which the services were provided.

He concluded by indicating that Members would still be able to assist their local communities through the monies made available via the Staffordshire Local Community Fund.

Local Health Services

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

In response to questions from Members in relation to the government's Whitepaper on Health, Mr Mathew Ellis indicated that the thrust of the Whitepaper was a shift of power away from Primary Care Trusts to GP's directly and to local NHS Boards. It would therefore be a local focus on local needs and the County Council would have a role in supporting GP's by helping to integrate its services seamlessly with those provided by the health sector.

Mr Ellis went on to explain how, under the White Paper the County Council would have a greater responsibility for public health and he also outlined the arrangements for overview and scrutiny of health services through the creation of a new body called "Health Watch".

The Leader of the Council undertook to bring a further update on progress in relation to the White Paper in his Statement to the Council meeting in October.

Organisational Redesign at Leadership Level

The Leader of the Council informed Members that, since April, he had been working with key Members and senior officers to review every aspect of the Council's work and to develop an operating model for service delivery which would transform the way in which the Council delivered its services and would deliver better outcomes for residents.

This work marked the beginning of a transformation agenda through which, over the next 2 – 3 years, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would be required to take responsibility for effectively developing strategies and commissioning outcomes in support of those strategies.

Dynamic and visionary leadership was essential to drive forward the development of strong and effective partnerships with other public, private and third sector organisations in support of the delivery of those strategies and plans and to commission effective services that would see the desired outcomes being implemented.

As a result, it was proposed that the senior leadership team be reshaped to be fit for the future. The Cabinet at its meeting on 21 July 2010, approved the proposed new structure and it was therefore proposed to recommend to the Council:

“(i) That a Special Committee be established to deal with all the recruitment and human resource issues relating to the establishment of the new structure in replacement of the existing leadership team structure.

(ii) That the Special Committee consists of seven members (in accordance with the political balance of the Council) with the following membership:

- The Chairman of the County Council (or nominee)
- The Leader of the County Council plus two Cabinet Members nominated by the Leader of the County Council
- The Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Staffordshire Independent Alliance Group (or nominee)
- Two further non-Cabinet Members appointed by the Leader of the County Council”

Mr. Povey moved, and Mr. Locke seconded, the following amendment:

“That paragraph “(ii)” of the recommendations be amended by the deletion of the words “the Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Staffordshire Independent Alliance Group” and their replacement with the words “a leader of one of the opposition groups.”

Following a vote, the Chairman declared the amendment lost.

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

(b) That a Special Committee be established to deal with all the recruitment and human resource issues relating to the establishment of the new structure in replacement of the existing leadership team structure.

(c) That the Special Committee consists of seven members (in accordance with the political balance of the Council) with the following membership:

- The Chairman of the County Council (or nominee)
- The Leader of the County Council plus two Cabinet Members nominated by the Leader of the County Council
- The Leader of the Liberal Democrat and Staffordshire Independent Alliance Group (or nominee)
- Two further non-Cabinet Members appointed by the Leader of the County Council.

23. Questions

Mr. David Nixon asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Question

The Conservative/Liberal Democrat government is abolishing most of the Building Schools for the Future Programme as being wasteful (£600 million spent on consultants alone and tax-payers having to pay borrowed money back during the next 30 years). Does the portfolio holder welcome this news as a return to sanity?

Reply

I do not welcome the news that Staffordshire has lost a significant investment in Tamworth and Rugeley schools. The package that Staffordshire has worked hard to put together is a compelling and robust plan to transform learning and outcomes for young people. It is disappointing that this was halted at the 11th hour.

We have always said that we believed that the BSF process was ludicrously over-bureaucratic, expensive and time-consuming. I firmly believe that as an Authority we could procure school building programmes at far lower cost and much quicker than the previous Labour Government BSF system. Therefore to review the BSF programme does signal a return to sanity. I will though, continue to fight for additional capital to invest in our unfinished projects in Tamworth and Rugeley and future projects where replacement or refurbishment of school estate is necessary.

I believe it is the Government's intention to continue to invest in school building renewal as soon as a sensible and affordable process can be constructed.

Supplementary Question

Would the Cabinet Member therefore welcome proposals by schools to opt out of local education authority control?

Reply

We have no prescription about school governance arrangements as, in Staffordshire, there has long been a "mixed economy" as far as school governance arrangements are concerned. We have a number of schools which already have trust status and others who are applying for such status. What we are interested in is good schools and if changes to governance can contribute to that, we very much support them.

Mr. David Nixon asked the following question of the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Question

The Conservative/ Liberal Democrat coalition now wishes many schools to opt out of L.E.A. control. Swedish free schools now get Grade Point Average scores 20 points higher than in state schools. Swedish free schools improve standards across the local authority by leading the competition. Parents, as consumers of education are happier with free schools (92%) compared to state schools (63%). Charter schools (free from L.E.A. control) in the USA also have higher standards than state schools. If schools free from L.E.A. control bring higher standards is Staffordshire County Council going to push schools into becoming free, seeing that the clarion call is always, 'we must raise standards'?

Reply

We support any governance model that will offer improvement. It is perhaps worth noting that state schools already have a very high degree of freedom and autonomy, through devolved budgets and LMS, which empowers them to target all aspects of performance improvement. The County Council holds a strategic and supportive role. Whilst we have many outstanding schools in Staffordshire, and many which are rapidly improving, we are aware of the need to support schools that are coasting or not satisfactorily improving. We are by no means complacent about raising attainment in our schools.

Supplementary Question

Is the County Council going to push for grammar schools contrary to the wishes of the new conservative/liberal government?

Reply

It is unlikely as it really does not matter how you “badge” a school. What really matters is how those schools manage teaching and learning and target attainment.

Mrs. Dylis Cornes asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment

Question

In our local Evening Sentinel last Thursday there was an article re the spending cuts to be implemented by the County Council. It reads:

£7.9 savings programme includes:

£2.5 million from children’s services;

£2.2 million from highways;

£650,000 cut from road safety

£1.5 million from council reserves

Further down the article it also states that the cuts will affect Staffordshire's Safer Routes to School programme.

In view of the fact that the schools in part of my division have, after many years of promises, started our Safer Routes to School, can you tell me how this will affect this programme? I have already been told that there is not a budget for my area as has been the practise in the past, but we would have to see what we wanted, and what could be found. How do I tell my young people that their safety no longer matters? In some schools, in particular the High School, the pupils have been involved in deciding what they would like to see for their safety.

Reply

This year's grant allocations to local authorities for highway improvements have recently been reduced by 25%. In Staffordshire, this means that schemes in the highways capital programme to the value of some £2.5M have had to be deferred. Obviously this has involved difficult choices and some elements of the Safer Routes to School Programme have been delayed. Having said that, the Programme has been running for many years and has largely achieved its original purpose with all priority schools; that is those with a record of accidents on the school journey, having been completed. Of course, the safety of our young people is of the utmost importance and they are the primary focus of our road safety teams who continue to deliver tailor made programmes in schools. Additionally, we are pressing ahead with our 20mph plans and the deployment of speed indication devices to reduce speeds around schools..

Supplementary Question

Is there going to be any money for safer routes to school schemes?

Reply

I have had a look at your division and I have noted that there has been significant expenditure on road safety schemes over the past few years including travel plans, road safety education, cycle training, erection of a permanent vehicle activated speed sign, support to introduce a community speed watch scheme and therefore I think that you will agree that we see that the safety of children is paramount and that your division is getting its fair share of road safety funding.

Mrs. Christina Jebb asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

Question

The Home office requires a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to be operating within every police force area by 2011.

(i) Would you confirm whether and when the County Council agreed to be part of a partnership project to provide this?

(ii) When does the County Council intend to fully commit financially to the partnership scheme to provide a SARC in Staffordshire, as most of the scheme's other partners have already done?

Reply

(i) The County Council has agreed to be part of a partnership project to provide a SARC in Staffordshire by August 2011. The County Council was approached in December 2008 to be part of the partnership. Other partners had already been approached and the County Council was invited later, once it had been realised that a key partner had been omitted from discussions. (The six partners involved are NHS Stoke, North Staffs PCT, South Staffs PCT, Staffordshire Police, Stoke City Council and Staffordshire County Council.)

(ii) The County Council has made a financial commitment to the SARC. It has paid the full amount requested in 2009-10 (£10,000) and the full amount requested in 2010-11 (£11,000). The County Council has also offered to make an ongoing financial commitment to the SARC of £11,000 per annum ie maintaining the level of funding paid in 2010-11. Discussions are taking place with the other partners about funding the amounts requested for 2011-12 (£25,000) and 2012-13 and beyond (£55,000 per annum for at least 25 years). The County Council has not committed to funding these higher amounts given the current financial uncertainties. It has, however, offered to pay an amount that it feels is reasonable and which it could realistically find in future years. Whilst other partners may have verbally committed to funding the higher amounts quoted, it is understood that to date only two partners (NHS Stoke and South Staffs PCT) have made that commitment in writing.

The County Council's Chief Executive will be meeting with the Chief Executive of NHS Stoke and the Assistant Chief Constable of Staffordshire Police with responsibility for the SARC on 3rd August to discuss the finances of the SARC in more detail.

Supplementary Question

Would you confirm that should there be any change in partnership arrangements such as the abolition of PCT's, the County Council remains firm in its commitment to victims of sexual assault?

Reply

I do not think I am in a position to offer guarantees of any sort but I can absolutely confirm our commitment to a multi-agency approach to this issue and many other aspects of community safety that are of concern to the whole community

Mr. Ray Easton asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Environment

Question

What procedures are in place to ensure that Parish Councils, heritage groups and the owners and occupiers of buildings are consulted when street lights are repositioned close to Listed Buildings and in Conservation Areas?

Reply

Anything that involves the amendment / improvement of street lighting within conservation areas is included within the service delivery requirements of the street lighting PFI (Private Finance Initiative) contract. The PFI service provider, EON, should consult with the local district / borough conservation officer. They are best placed to understand the local conservation issues and to liaise with the parish council and other interested groups to deal with local concerns.

If the district or borough does not have a conservation officer then the PFI contractor should liaise direct with the parish council.

No direct consultation is undertaken with individual property owners, as any conservation issues should have been addressed through the parish consultation. The contractor should notify all residents affected directly by the proposed works one month in advance of the start date.

Supplementary Question

I believe that the existing procedures do not work. Therefore, what procedures are you going to put in place to improve this situation and when?

Reply

I think this issue can be best resolved by a round table discussion between you, I and the officer responsible for street lighting at which we can address the particular issues to which you refer. I will put the necessary arrangements in place.

24. Notices of Motion

Mr. Philip Atkins moved, and Mr. Mike Lawrence seconded the following motion under Standing Order No. 11:

“The County Council believes a Local Enterprise Partnership, principally based on Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, led by business with public and private sector partners, local universities and colleges is the right vehicle to drive forward the regeneration of our Staffordshire economy and will put democratic accountability at the heart of the partnership, combined with the knowledge, expertise and drive of the private sector and provision of skills critical to our economic future.

The Council also believes that by all working together, using all our resources and skills we will achieve the long term changes needed in our economy and the Council will write to all these partners inviting them to join with the County Council in focusing their efforts to achieve our common economic goal.”

Several members spoke in support of the motion and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED – That the motion be carried.

25. Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police Authority

The County Council were informed of the proposal by the police authority to appoint a new Chief Executive on the retirement of the current post holder in October 2010. Several members expressed concern that the Police Authority had failed to take the opportunity to see whether savings could be made by sharing a joint Chief Executive, and back office arrangements generally, with another public body. They therefore requested the Leader of the Council to write to the Chairman of the Police Authority to express the Council’s concerns and to request that the Police Authority delay appointing the new Chief Executive until the possibility of joint working arrangements had been properly explored.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Periodic Report of the Staffordshire Police Authority be adopted.

(b) That the Leader of the Council be authorised to write to the Police Authority to convey the Council's real concern and disappointment that, before appointing the new Chief Executive, the Police Authority had failed to take the opportunity to see whether savings could be made by sharing a joint Chief Executive, and back office arrangements generally, with another public body.

26. Report of the Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority

RESOLVED – That the Periodic Report of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority be adopted.

27. Petitions

Request for the Introduction of a School Crossing Patrol on the A34 at Bridgtown

Mr. Pat Corfield presented a petition from pupils at Bridgetown Primary School requesting the introduction of a school crossing patrol on the A34 at Bridgtown.

Request for the widening of part of Gorse Lane

Mr. Ray Easton presented a petition from residents of Heather Close, Brereton, requesting the widening of part of Gorse Lane in order to improve access to Heather Close.

Request for Junction Improvements at Brocton Crossroads

Mr. Len Bloomer presented a petition from local residents requesting junction improvement works by the provision of a roundabout or traffic signals on the A34 at Brocton Crossroads.

Request for the introduction of a 40 mph Speed limit between the A500 and Audley Village

Mrs. Dylis Cornes presented a petition from local residents requesting the introduction of a 40 mph speed limit between the A500 and Audley village.

Objections to Proposed Extraction of Gravel at Wychnor and Alrewas

Mr. Robert Marshall, on behalf of Mrs. Janet Eagland, presented a petition opposing the proposal to extract gravel from sites at Wychnor and Alrewas.

Chairman

Documents referred to in these minutes as Schedules are not appended, but will be attached to the signed copy of the Minutes of the meeting. Copies, or specific information contained in them, may be available on request.

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Staffordshire County Council's Community Engagement Framework

The County Council aims to give its communities a greater influence over local decision making and public sector delivery via more appropriate engagement activities. Currently the Council faces two significant issues in its community engagement work. Firstly, there is a lack of consistency in the way that services approach community engagement, with communities being engaged to varying standards. Secondly, a culture has developed whereby many services undertake community engagement in isolation which, in turn, has led to duplication.

The Cabinet has therefore approved a Community Engagement Framework which contains a set of common standards through which we can be sure that communities will get the same standard of engagement regardless of the service area.

In addition, the framework provides clear guidance to ensure we engage in a way that will contribute to the delivery of the county council's priorities and comply with national policy requirements. At the heart of this framework is the role of the elected member which is integral to the engagement process.

(Cabinet – 21 July 2010)

2. Staffordshire Compact Update incorporating the Third Sector Commissioning Standards

One of the key themes that now runs through County Council policy is the desire to support the essential work done in Staffordshire by community, voluntary and not for profit organisations ("the third sector"). The County Council, its public sector partners and the third sector have already agreed the Staffordshire Compact which sets out how we are going to work with each other. We are now looking to build on this by agreeing common commissioning standards which will apply to all future commissioning between the public sector in Staffordshire and the third sector. The Cabinet have therefore recently approved a set of standards that set out how we will work with each other in terms of:

- Analysing local need
- Planning a service to meet the need
- Finding a provider to deliver the service and
- Monitoring and evaluating the service against desired outcomes.

They will enable us to be even more effective when working together in future in designing innovative and effective services that are better matched to the needs of our local communities.

(Cabinet – 21 July 2010)

3. Joint First Quarter Performance and Budget Monitoring Report

The Cabinet has received the joint finance and performance report covering the first quarter of 2010/2011 which focuses on the delivery of the new Strategic Plan – “Staffordshire Unites 2010 – 2015” and the associated Medium Term Financial Strategy. Based on these three months it is predicted that the Council is on course for a budget overspend for the year of £9.177m (2.3%). The projected overspend has occurred in two specific areas, Children’s Services (£1.5m) and Social Care and Health (£8m)

The Cabinet has also considered the implications of the £7.9m cut in grants that the County Council receives from Central Government (as previously announced by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 10 June 2010) and has noted where reductions to existing budgets are proposed. This will have an impact upon the County Council and the services and outcomes that it is able to deliver.

(Cabinet – 21 July 2010)

4. Treasury Management Outturn Report for the Year ended 31 March 2010

The Cabinet has considered details of the Council’s investment and borrowing activity during 2009/10. As at the end of March 2010, the County Council’s overall level of borrowings - “its mortgage” – stood at £532.239 million and it had investments of £131.835 million.

In relation to borrowing, the Public Works Loan Board has revised its policy on early repayment penalties. As a consequence, it is more advantageous to repay longer term loans (with interest rates of between 4.50% and 5.00%) and raise replacement loans for a shorter duration and at lower cost. The Cabinet have therefore approved Debt Rescheduling to allow scope to repay all debt between 4.5% and 5% (up to £99 million) if the circumstances allow.

The Treasury Investment Strategy currently doesn’t explicitly allow investment in Treasury Bills and it would be beneficial to allow this to be added to the list of specified investments carried out in-house

RECOMMEND TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL - That an amendment to the Investment Strategy be approved to allow investment in UK Government Treasury Bills for up to 1 year maturity to be added to the list of in-house specified investments.

(Cabinet – 21 July 2010)

5. Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/16

The announcement by Central Government of a £7.9 million reduction in the County Council’s budget and the anticipated cuts in future spending undoubtedly impact upon the way in which we establish our priorities, set our budgets and decide upon which services are required to meet residents’

needs. In addition the County Council faces significant challenges in terms of increasing demands from our customers through the impact of external pressures such as demographic change and economic conditions.

It is important that we set a "good and balanced" budget". In order to do this we are proposing a savings target of 30% to be achieved within 3 years. This equates to £120 million. This is more ambitious than the Government's stated aim of cutting spending by 25% in all non-protected areas. This will give us some financial leeway to invest in priority areas.

The Cabinet have approved the framework for updating the Strategic Plan and development of the MTFs and have also requested the Innovation and Efficiency Board to work with services to identify appropriate plans to deliver savings of 30% by year 3 of the MTFs.

(Cabinet – 21 July 2010)

6. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

On 29 June 2010 the Secretaries of State for Business Innovation and Skills, and Communities and Local Government wrote to Local Authority and Business Leaders inviting them to work with the government to help strengthen local economies through the establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). LEPs will replace the existing Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and will have the responsibility of leading the economic regeneration of their area, and may also take over many of the roles and functions currently carried out by the RDA.

The County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council have submitted proposals for the formation of a LEP for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. This will be of a sufficient scale to secure resources and will fit within the proposed structure for other LEPs in the West Midlands, based on the agreed sub regions of Shropshire, Telford and Herefordshire, the Black Country, Worcestershire, Birmingham and Solihull and Coventry and Warwickshire.

The private sector have been consulted and are broadly in support of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire proposal, but recognise the need to work across boundaries with adjoining LEPs where this is required.

(Cabinet – 18 August 2010)

7. Home-to-school transport: Discretionary Denominational Transport Policy

Under the Council's discretionary transport policy, free transport is currently provided to pupils attending Catholic schools and St. Peter's CE Collegiate School where the child or their parent adheres to the religion or denomination of that particular school. This policy was seen to operate unfairly as parents who choose a non-faith school as an alternative to their catchment or closest school do not have the same entitlement to free transport. Accordingly, the

County Council has recently consulted interested parties on proposals to withdraw free denominational school transport in 2012.

Following the public consultation, the Cabinet have agreed changes to the original proposals so that:

(i) Those pupils who benefit from free travel under the Council's denominational transport policy as at July 2011 will continue to receive free travel whilst they remain at their then current primary or secondary school or until they move address.

(ii) Pupils starting at denominational primary and secondary schools in the 2011/2012 school year onwards will no longer be offered free travel to their school except for those who are statutorily entitled to free travel or where there are exceptional circumstances.

(Cabinet – 18 August 2010)

8. Consultation on the Provision of Magistrates and County Courts in Staffordshire

The Courts Service has consulted on proposals to change Magistrates and County Court arrangements in Staffordshire. Among other things, these proposals, if implemented, would result in the closure of the Magistrates and County Courts in Tamworth and the closure of the County Court in Burton. This raises significant concerns with regard to access by large numbers of Staffordshire residents to the civil and criminal justice systems. The Communities Scrutiny Committee have scrutinised the proposals in detail and their findings has assisted the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture in formulating the Council's response to the consultation.

(Cabinet – 18 August 2010)

9. Supporting the Staffordshire Economy – Staffordshire Business Support Fund

In October 2009, Cabinet approved the investment of £500,000 from County Council funds, matched with £500,000 from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to create a loan fund to support small businesses in Staffordshire. In the first nine months, loans with a total value of £563,000 have been made to 21 businesses across Staffordshire. These businesses employ 166 people, and 70 of those jobs were considered to be at risk prior to loan finance being agreed. It is anticipated that the balance of the funding will have been lent to businesses within the next six months. The Cabinet have recently agreed to invest a further £500,000 in the Fund, to be matched by an additional £500,000 of ERDF monies, increasing the total finance available to Staffordshire businesses through the Staffordshire Business Support Fund to £2,000,000.

(Cabinet – 15 September 2010)

10. Staffordshire County Council – New Operating Model

A recent review of the Council's current ways of working has identified the need for improvements and changes, including structural, if the Authority is to continue to improve the quality of life for Staffordshire people whilst facing a period of significant financial challenge. The Cabinet have therefore approved proposals to transform the operating model of the County Council, based upon the following principles:

- Placing the County Council's customers and Staffordshire communities at the heart of our business
- Developing a "one council" model for dealing with our customers
- Improving customer knowledge and insight to identify the key outcomes and better inform the commissioning of services
- Streamlining decision making processes
- Organising the commissioning of services around the two key themes of "People" and "Place"
- Commissioning services from the most appropriate source whether that be internal teams, partner authorities, third sector organisations or the private sector.

The transformation of the organisation will obviously take some time but the sooner this happens the sooner the benefits will be felt by the people of Staffordshire.

(Cabinet – 15 September 2010)

11. Making a Difference – The Staffordshire Health & Wellbeing Strategy

One of the big issues facing this country, and facing us here in Staffordshire, is the fact that people are living longer. Unfortunately this extended lifespan does not always equate to an equivalent number of healthy years.

As a result of these demographic changes the social care and health systems are unsustainable in their current form. To address this, the Cabinet has agreed that the Council should change its approach to social care and health. The Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy proposes a big shift towards the preventative agenda and sets out what needs to happen over the medium to long term. It also highlights some quick wins which will ensure that the new strategy starts to have an impact very quickly.

This is not the first time that the County Council have agreed a Health Strategy. But this one is different in at least one key respect. This time the level of support for this strategy across the whole of the public sector in Staffordshire is truly unprecedented. All our partners are solidly behind this strategy, are signed up to the priorities, and are committed to working together to deliver the outcomes.

(Cabinet – 15 September 2010)

12. Business Case for Setting up a Trading Company

From time to time opportunities arise for the Council to sell its services to bodies outside the public sector but it is prevented from taking advantage of these opportunities by virtue of its legal status as a local authority. In order to avoid this limitation the Cabinet have agreed that the Council should set up a trading company as a vehicle through which it sells its services. The Council already operates several large successful trading services such as County Fleet Care, Print Commissioning, Catering, Cleaning and Grounds Services, who primarily provide services to the authority and schools but who have won a variety of contracts by tender for Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue, Borough/District Councils, Primary Care Trusts, etc. It is not known as yet how extensive the use of such a company might be, but it would open up avenues that have so far been closed to the Council.

(Cabinet – 15 September 2010)

13. Portfolio Holder Delegated Decisions

Portfolio holders have recently taken decisions in respect of the following matters:

- .Fixing the level of Foreign Exchange Rate to be applied to the W2R contract with Veolia ES Aurora Limited.
- The settlement to be paid to two adjacent landowners in respect of proposed improvements to the junction of the A5 and Vicarage Road, Gailey.
- The publication of proposals under Section 28(1) of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998 to:
 - (i) Remove the pre-reception (nursery) places at Western Springs Community Primary School, Rugeley from maintained provision from 31 August 2011.
 - (ii) Lower the age limit at Henry Chadwick Community Primary School, Hill Ridware to create a Foundation Stage Class from January 2011.
 - (iii) Remove the pre-reception (nursery) places at Manor Hill First School, Stone from maintained provision from 31 August 2011.
- Entering into a 25 year lease of 544 square meters of land on the site of Rocester Village Hall to enable the County Council to construct and operate a children's centre.
- The sale of 3.08 acres of land at the former Castle Park Infants School, Burton upon Trent.

- Passing a resolution to allow non-teaching staff at schools obtaining Foundation or Trust status to have/retain membership of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

14. Forward Plan

The Cabinet have approved the Forward Plan for the period 1 October 2010 to 31 January 2011, which contains details of the decisions which the Cabinet are expected to take during that period.

15. Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Our Local Enterprise Partnership submitted its bid to Whitehall on 6 September following widespread consultation with the public and business sectors across the county. The bid identifies Staffordshire, including Stoke, as the relevant geographical area for the partnership. We are awaiting feedback from the offices of Eric Pickles and Vince Cable on this initial proposal.

16. Staffordshire Strategic Partnership

On 22 September I hosted the Staffordshire Hundred partnership event at Shugborough Hall. Many Staffordshire organisations attended, including those from the worlds of business, social housing and GPs. The event outlined the future vision for the partnership and explained which cross cutting priorities we would be concentrating delivery upon over the coming years. Those who attended heard an inspiring speech from David Moorcroft around ambition, vision and team work.

Our job now is to make sure that the countywide strategic partnership focuses on delivery rather than bureaucracy and governance. We will be stream lining our partnership arrangements both at a county and at a local level to make sure that we deliver exactly what is required to improve the quality of life for Staffordshire people and Staffordshire communities.

17. National government proposals for changes to the health service

The proposals in the white paper "Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS" and the associated consultation documents are part of the government's emphasis on localism, which it defines as "pushing power away from Whitehall out to those who know best what will work in their communities". The proposals are also intended to strengthen the role of patients and the public in shaping health services as well as supporting the increased integration between health, social care and other council responsibilities such as housing.

The "Local Democratic Legitimacy in Health" consultation proposes that:

- **Local authorities take on local public health improvement functions** - This would involve local authorities leading joint strategic needs assessments (JSNA) across health and local government whilst

promoting joint commissioning between GP consortia and local councils. Staffordshire County Council has, for some years, played a key role in producing the county JSNAs by working closely with the Directors of Public Health and the Staffordshire Observatory to achieve a shared evidence base to inform priority setting and business planning. The Staffordshire Joint Commissioning Unit has successfully worked across health and social care boundaries to deliver integrated services and work is now underway to build close links with the GP consortia located across the county.

It is also proposed that the responsibility and funding for health improvement activity will transfer to local authorities from 2012. This includes the prevention of ill health by addressing life style factors such as smoking, alcohol, diet and physical exercise. Local Directors of Public Health will be jointly appointed by local authorities and the national Public Health Service and employed by local authorities. In truth, this approach builds on the solid foundations we have already seen in Staffordshire. The county council has taken an active role in leading the public health agenda over the last 16 months with our work in helping to develop a new public health strategy and our commitment to tackle alcohol abuse as a cross cutting priority. The Director of Public Health is already a joint appointment and sits on the Senior Leadership Team of the county council.

- **There is a lead role for local authorities in promoting integration –** This includes the extension of personal budgets in the NHS and social care, with joint assessment and care planning. The consultation suggests that statutory partnership boards, described as “health and wellbeing boards” be set up to co-ordinate joint working. They would also lead the JSNA, support joint commissioning and undertake a scrutiny role in relation to major service redesign. There would be provision for the involvement of different tiers of local government and for cross-authority collaboration. The board would have a lead role in determining the strategy and allocation of any local place based health budgets. Its members would include the Leader of the local authority, representatives of social care, NHS commissioners, patient champions, including a representative of “HealthWatch” (see below) and Directors of Public Health. We would need to ensure that the new board operated strategically and exerted the necessary influence rather than developing as a “talking shop” with the real decisions being taken elsewhere.

It is proposed that the current statutory functions of health overview and scrutiny committees would transfer to this board, which would be tasked with ensuring that local disputes about health services were only referred on in the most exceptional circumstances. The consultation suggests that a separate formal health scrutiny function would remain within the local authority to scrutinise the work of the new board but without the current statutory powers. There is the potential for confusion of roles between the new board and our health scrutiny

committee and the possibility of duplication of effort. If this model is adopted, we will need to manage this closely.

- **Local Involvement Networks are reconstituted into “Local HealthWatch” organisations, acting as independent consumer champions, accountable to local authorities** - The new local “HealthWatch” organisations will act as local consumer champions across health and social care. They will have responsibilities and funding for supporting individuals, for example, in choosing a GP and for NHS complaints advocacy services. This approach builds on our current arrangements with Local Involvement Networks as local authorities would continue to fund “HealthWatch” and contract for their services. It provides an opportunity for us to reflect on how the Local Involvement Networks have operated and to make proposals to ensure the greater effectiveness of the new organisations. The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Health has been involved in national discussions concerning the details and practicalities of establishing these bodies.

We welcome the greater recognition of local authorities' roles in tackling the social and economic determinants of health. It is an acknowledgement of the need to “upstream” investment in public health and the prevention of ill health as a way, not only of improving the health of Staffordshire people and reducing inequalities across the county, but also of reducing the cost ultimately of health treatment services. However, it is hoped that with the transfer of responsibility comes the appropriate transfer of resources, as public health is an enormous area of work, impacted on by almost every local authority function. The public health white paper, due later this year, will clarify exactly how much discretion councils will actually have to carry out the new public health function.

18. JCB Academy, Rocester

Over the August bank Holiday weekend, I was pleased to accept an invitation to have a preview of the transformation of the Arkwright and Tudor Mill in Rocester into the JCB Academy. The renovation of the mill is absolutely stunning and the education facilities on offer are first class. The Academy opened its doors to its first students in September who eventually will progress to meet the growing need for engineering and manufacturing skills.

19. Raising the profile of Staffordshire

Over the last few weeks I have been out and about raising the profile of the county. I have attended a number of Question Time events including a BBC “State of the Region” debate on the spending review, and a more local event, organised by REFORM, held at Cannock.

I am now a member of the Executive of the Local Government Group of the Local Government Association. I will be representing Staffordshire and the West Midlands region in my capacity as Chairman of the West Midlands

LEADER'S STATEMENT

Councils. I also sit on the Economic and Transport Board which develops strategic policy around these issues. This role will enable me to champion to a national audience the excellent work we deliver in Staffordshire and also learn from others.

P.E.B. Atkins
Leader of the Council

County Council – 14 October 2010

Petition Regarding the Closure of Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 That Full Council debates the petition regarding the proposed closure of Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre in accordance with the County Council's Petitions Policy.

Report of the Director for Law and Democracy

2.0 Format of Debate

- 2.1 The format for the debate at Full Council is as follows:

Local Member(s):	5 minutes
Mr Paul Atkins (Petition Organiser) ¹ Mr Steve Tranter	
Cabinet Member response to the petition:	5 minutes
Mr Robert Marshall	
Council Debate	15 minutes

¹ Mr Atkins has submitted his apologies for the meeting but has issued a written statement which is attached at appendix 2

3.0 Background

- 3.1 A 12,222 signature petition was received by the County Council on the 29 June 2010. The petition objected to the proposed closure of Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre. Specifically the petition stated that:

“This facility is scheduled to close its gates permanently on the 5 July 2010, unless Staffordshire County Council can be persuaded otherwise. If it closes, it will not be re-opening. Burntwood residents will have no alternative but to take waste to Cannock, Lichfield or Rugeley. The problem of fly tipping in our countryside can only become worse. Please register your objection to the closure.”

The decision to close the centre was called in and considered by the Corporate Review Committee at its meeting on the 29 June 2010. The outcome of the Call In was reported to Cabinet on 21 July 2010. The decision from Cabinet was to postpone the closure of the Burntwood site pending a wider review of Household Waste Recycling Centres, including Burntwood, which would be undertaken by the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure.

- 3.2 The County Council’s Petitions Policy states that a petition that includes more than 5,000 signatures automatically prompts a debate at the next available Full Council meeting. Following the debate Full Council may agree the response to the petition or the relevant steps that should be taken. Where the Cabinet or Cabinet Member has to make the final decision in response to the petition they are asked to take into account the debate and recommendations of Full Council to inform their decisions.

Appendix 1

Link to Strategic Plan

The County Council's Strategic Plan sets out specific outcome measures around reducing the amount of household waste that goes to landfill and to increase the rates of recycling. There is no specific reference in the Strategic Plan to Household Waste Recycling Centres as a means of achieving these outcomes.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

The Call In of the decision to close Burntwood Household Waste Recycling Centre was considered by the Corporate Review Committee on the 29 June 2010. It recommended to Cabinet that the decision be postponed and that a Policy Advisory Group be established. Cabinet agreed to the postponement of the closure of the site and the establishment of a review, but that the review should be undertaken by the Cabinet Member.

Equalities and Legal Implications

The wider review of Household Waste Recycling Centres will need to give consideration to equalities and legal implications.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

The wider review of Household Waste Recycling Centres will need to be within the context of consideration of resource and value for money implications.

Risk Implications

There are no direct risk implications arising from this report.

Climate Change Implications

The wider review of Household Waste Recycling Centres will need to give consideration to climate change implications.

Report author: Duncan Whitehouse, Head of Scrutiny and Support
Telephone No: 01785 276154
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Appendix 2: Written Statement from Mr Paul Atkins

I am pleased that the County Council, through Councillor Robert Marshall, has instigated a full review of all recycling sites in Staffordshire. It will I hope give a much more comprehensive and comparable judgement than just looking at one location and will be seen to be fairer in the Burntwood publics eyes with its conclusions.

The arguments for the retention of the Burntwood site are well documented and I still support the need for the site to be retained for all the reasons given. Please remember there was a petition of over 12 thousands people in support of the site being kept open and I hope you listen to those people whose support was not based on emotion but need.

Mr Paul Atkins.
County Councillor for Burntwood South (Lichfield)

County Council – 14 October 2010

Electoral Review of Staffordshire**Recommendations of the Leader of the Council**

1. The views of Members are requested on the attached draft response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on Council size.
2. That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to update the draft response to take on board Members' views and to then forward the response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by the consultation deadline of 25 October 2010.

Report of the Chief Executive**Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The first stage in the Electoral Review process is to determine the appropriate size of the Council (the total number of Councillors). This figure will then be used as the basis for consultation on the other stages of the Review which will consider the possible electoral arrangements including the number of Councillors per Electoral Division; the boundaries of each Division; and the names of Divisions.

Background

4. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England is currently carrying out an Electoral Review of Staffordshire. This is due to the fact that, since the last review (200/2003) the electorate in our Divisions has changed to the extent that 42% of those Divisions now have electorates which vary by more than 10% from the average. (The threshold for a review is 30%). The aim of the Review will be to correct this so as to ensure that each County Councillor represents approximately the same number of electors as his or her colleagues.

5. The Review will be divided into the following stages:

- Consultation on overall number of councillors (the Council size) –14 Sept 2010 to 25 Oct 2010
- Commission publishes its recommendation on Council size – Nov 2010
- Consultation on possible electoral arrangements – 30 Nov 2010 to 21 Feb 2011
 - Number per division
 - Number of divisions
 - Boundaries of divisions
 - Names of divisions.
- Publication of proposals – circa May 2011

- Consultation on proposals – May to August 2011
- Publication of final recommendations – October 2011.

The proposals should be in effect for the 2013 elections.

6. As indicated in paragraph 5 above, the first stage in the Electoral Review process is to determine the appropriate size of the Council (the total number of Councillors). This figure will then be used as the basis for consultation with interested parties on the other stages of the Review which will consider the possible electoral arrangements including the number of Councillors per Electoral Division; the boundaries of each Division; and the names of Divisions.

7. The attached draft response to the Local Government Boundary Commission's consultation on Council size has been prepared following a survey of Members' views and meetings with Political Group Leaders. A copy of the draft response has also been circulated to the Council's key partners and any responses received will be reported orally at the Council meeting.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications: None

Legal implications: The Boundary Commission's recommendations in relation to the Electoral Review of Staffordshire will be implemented by a Parliamentary Order

Resource and Value for money implications: If the Boundary Commission were minded to recommend an increase in the size of the Council this would be likely to increase costs through, for example, the payment of additional Basic Responsibility Allowances, travel and subsistence allowances, provision of equipment (Smartphone and Computer), and additional training required by new Members.

Risk implications: Since the last Electoral Review (200/2003) the electorate in County Council Divisions in Staffordshire has changed to the extent that 42% of those Divisions now have electorates which vary by more than 10% from the average. Failure to address these variances will result in inequalities in the number of constituents each County Councillor represents.

Climate Change implications: None

Report author:

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Room No: Room 4, County Buildings

List of Background Papers

Papers	Contact/Directorate/ext number
Letters from Local Government Boundary Commission dated 28 July and 14 September 2010	Michael Bradbury Law and Democracy (01785) 276133

Electoral Review
Preliminary Consultation on Council Size
DRAFT County Council Response

Introduction

1. The County Council was notified on 28 July 2010 that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) would be conducting an electoral review of Staffordshire, starting in September 2010 and concluding in August 2011. The County Council has been selected for a review as the levels of electoral representation in individual divisions had changed since the last electoral review, completed in 2004.
2. When the 2004 review had been conducted, it had been predicted that electoral quality would increase in Staffordshire and that – by 2006 – only 15 of the 59 County Divisions would have an electoral variance greater than 10% from the mean number of electors per Councillor. In December 2009 25 divisions showed a variance greater than 10% including 2 Divisions showed a variance of more than 20% and thus triggering the review by the LGBCE.
3. The review will cover the entire county and the review process is governed by statutory criteria which set out the principles for determining the total number of Councillors and the number, boundaries and names of the divisions required. These criteria include establishing patterns of representation that provide electoral equality both between individual divisions and districts (including an improvement over 5 years), provide effective and convenient local government and reflect community identities and interests.
4. There are distinct stages to the review process, where the LGBCE will consider evidence from a range of stakeholders, including the County Council before making recommendations to Parliament. At this preliminary stage submissions, backed up with evidence, need to make proposals on the total number of Councillors required to ensure the statutory criteria for the review are met.
5. This submission sets out the County Council's view that the geographic and socio-demographic characteristics of the county, allied with the role requirements for elected Members within the County Council's political management arrangements and communities mean that a total Council size of 62 Councillors would continue to provide effective and convenient local government for Staffordshire that reflects the distinct identities and interests of our communities. This view has been endorsed by the current Members of the County Council, a majority of whom when surveyed agreed that 62 remained the optimum number of Members.

About Staffordshire – the context

6. Staffordshire is a county with a long history and one of many contrasts, all of which have had an impact upon the county, its landscape and its people. It covers an area of 1,012sqm (2,623KM²) and has an estimated population of 828,900 people and it is estimated that the population will rise to approximately 909,000 people by 2026.

7. Staffordshire's communities are extremely diverse, over 80% of the area of the county is classed as rural with specific needs around rural deprivation, access to services and transport that need to be addressed. Conversely, around 75% of the population live in the county's towns and large villages and, although the county is on the whole relatively affluent, there are areas of deprivation, particularly in Newcastle-under-Lyme, East Staffordshire and Tamworth, although there are pockets of deprivation across the county, which can be very intense and highly localised.
8. This diversity, particularly between rural and urban areas, has a direct impact on how patterns of representation need to be established to fit with the statutory criteria of the review, particularly around reflecting communities' identities and interests and providing effective and convenient local government. The total council size provides a framework for how this can be achieved.
9. Whilst there are unique local circumstances and needs that will ultimately influence the review for Staffordshire it is useful to make a comparison with other similar authorities to provide some context. The current County Council size of 62 gives an average of 10,656 electors per Member. This is an above average ratio amongst the shire counties that make up the County Council's statistical 'nearest neighbour' group (Table 1) and the council size of the other authorities in the group ranges from 52 to 84. The nearest neighbour model takes into account similarities not only of population but also geographical size, population density and socio-economic factors and the County Council's comparative position within this group suggests that the current council size of 62 is well within an appropriate range to reflect the County's particular needs.

	Electorate	Members	Electorate per Member
Essex	1,045,682	75	13942
Kent	1,033,206	84	12300
Lancashire	893,179	84	10633
Staffordshire	660,683	62	10656
Leicestershire	504,149	52	9695
Derbyshire	593,571	64	9275
Nottinghamshire	593,213	67	8854
Worcestershire	486,593	57	8537
Norfolk	650,961	84	7750
Gloucestershire	461,461	63	7325
Lincolnshire	541,513	77	7033
Northamptonshire	508,549	73	6966
Somerset	399,560	58	6889
Cambridgeshire	448,688	69	6503
Warwickshire	400,000	62	6452
Cumbria	392,931	84	4678

Table 1 – Electorate to Member Ratios – Nearest Neighbour Group

The Role of Staffordshire County Councillors – Introduction

10. Staffordshire County Council is a Member led organisation, the 62 elected Members are at the heart of setting and driving the authority's overall policy and for taking the key decisions to implement that policy. Council Councillors provide the key link with residents and communities that the County Council

provides services for by giving them a voice into the formal decision making processes.

11. The roles that Members undertake are essential to how the Council achieves effective and convenient local government. As well as filling the required places on the Council's committees and other decision making bodies, Members play a key role in their individual divisions. This work has a several strands, including the County Council's developing devolved budget arrangements, community engagement work and their representative role through their contact and casework with individual residents. In addition, most Members are part of a political group which will require them giving up their time to attend group meetings and to take part in campaigning activity, which Members estimate takes up around 10 hours of their time in a given month.
12. These different roles for Members are formalised in the role descriptions that the County Council has developed for elected Members; these cover both specific areas of responsibility such as Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs and set out some of Members' responsibilities in taking a leadership role in their Division. This includes championing the interests of the local community, regular liaison interested parties and providing a channel for two way communications about council decisions affecting the local community. The role descriptions are appended to this submission.
13. Fulfilling these roles requires significant commitment from Members, who give up their time voluntarily and, other than receiving allowances, on an unpaid basis. For some Members, particularly those who undertake Cabinet or Civic roles, this commitment is at least the equivalent of a full time job, for others they fit their Council duties around employment or other responsibilities (including with District and Borough Councils). Any change in the total number of Members will have an impact on the demands on individual Members. Further detail is provided below to demonstrate how the County Council's political management arrangements and community roles for Members mean that the current number of 62 Members ensures that the demands on Members are at an appropriate level to ensure efficient and convenient local government.

The Role of Staffordshire County Councillors – Political Management Arrangements

14. The role of a County Councillor is a complex one. To support members, they are invited to participate in the Member Development programme. There is a rolling programme of development activities for Councillors which is predominantly based on the needs identified through the member Personal Development Plan (PDP) process, where members are encouraged to look at their skills, experience, personal goals and areas for development.
15. The Member development process also requires significant time commitment for elected Members. Following the June 2009 County Council elections the County Council ran a comprehensive induction programme for newly elected Members which included a range of full and half day sessions covering a range of essential issues which involved a total time commitment for elected Members of around 7 or 8 full days over their first six months. In addition, since September 2009 the Member development programme has included 23 half day sessions run by Member and Democratic Services and other Directorates also run a range of briefings and other sessions. Members are also given the

opportunity to take part in external development events such as the Leadership Academy programme and have access to online learning modules and one to one IT support and training.

16. The Member development programme is supported and actively promoted by the political group leaders and there has been very positive engagement by Members. Some essential sessions – such as training for quasi-judicial roles or code of conduct – are highlighted as compulsory for Members. Other sessions are provided on an optional basis or are targeted towards specific groups and there is normally an opportunity for Members to attend at least one session, with a half day commitment every month.
17. The County Council has adopted the Leader with Cabinet model of Executive arrangements with a Leader appointed by the Council every four years and a Cabinet appointed by the Leader. The maximum number of Cabinet Members is set by the Council and there are currently 10 Cabinet Members (including the Leader). The decisions of the Cabinet are scrutinised by eight overview and scrutiny committees with between 8 and 13 Members and the Council's regulatory functions are covered by an Audit Committee, Planning Committee (with specialised panels to deal with particular areas of work), Pensions Committee and Standards Committee.
18. There are a range of additional responsibilities involved in being a Cabinet Member which result in them dedicating a significant quantity of time to their County Council duties. As well as attending formal meetings of the Cabinet and any scrutiny Committees they are asked to attend, Cabinet Members attend regular informal meetings with the Council's Senior Management Team, meet regularly with the senior managers and play an active role in developing policy for the services under their responsibility. Cabinet Members also represent the County Council locally, regionally and nationally through partnership arrangements, outside bodies and through working with other organisations including with central government. Cabinet Members estimate that their time commitment can be up to 50 hours a week and is certainly at least the equivalent of a full time job.
19. Cabinet Members may not sit on overview and scrutiny committees and do not as a rule sit on the County Council's regulatory committees. Under the current arrangements, this leaves 52 Members to fill the council's 138 committee places. In addition Members also take part in other arrangements such as Policy Advisory Groups, which are short 'task and finish' working groups that form part of the Council's scrutiny arrangements and the Corporate Parenting Panel, which advises the Cabinet on the Council's responsibilities in respect of looked after children.
20. In the 2009/2010 Municipal year there were 181 places available on 23 non-executive committees, panels or working groups meaning there were – on average – three appointments for each Member. There were 144 meetings that took place during the year and a recent survey of Members has shown that Members estimate that they attend, on average, three or four Committee meetings a month, that they spend about two hours travelling to and from each meeting and around three hours preparing for a meeting. In total, allowing for the fact that most committee meetings occupy around two to three hours, it is reasonable to assume that most non-Executive Members spend around 28 hours directly involved in Committee work in every month. This commitment will

increase further for those Members who chair committees, with attendance at agenda planning and other briefing meetings an essential aspect of this role.

21. In addition, all Members may represent the County Council on outside bodies which cover a range of issues from the regional level such as West Midlands Council to local liaison committees relating to developments such as quarries as well as the Police and Fire and Rescue Authorities. Across all of the 91 bodies which the County Council appoints to there are 252 seats, so on average each member sits on four outside bodies however in practice, Cabinet Members tend to sit on more outside bodies than non-executive Members.
22. The frequency with which outside bodies meet varies from one or two meetings a year for some of the local bodies to the requirements for the Police and Fire Authorities, which may involve as much, or indeed more, as their County Council committee work. Police Authority Members attend 5 meetings of the Police Authority per year, plus four development days and will also be a Member of several of the Authority's 15 Committees, panels and groups. Similarly, Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority attend six meetings of the Authority a year plus five Development Days and attend meetings of the nine committees, panels and groups. Members of the Police and Fire authorities also undertake locality based work and responsibilities on these authorities' behalf.
23. A reduction in the number of elected Members would make it extremely difficult for the County Council's current political management arrangements to continue to operate. A reduction in the number of elected Members would make it difficult to fulfil the required Committee places and other appointments; an effect which could well be exacerbated through the political balance rules. This would either then place an unreasonable additional burden on those Members who remained or there would need to be a reduction in the number of committee places which would compromise the County Council's ability to operate efficient and convenient local government.

The Role of Staffordshire Members – Community Work

24. A key aspect of the work of Members is the role that they play directly in the communities that they represent. This is at the heart of how the identities and interests of these communities are provided for by the County Council and is part of the current Administration's commitment to Members being at the centre of the relationship between the Council and local communities. This is demonstrated by an organisational shift to provide stronger focus around customer service and insight and a community engagement framework that articulates a strengthened role for Members. Other recent shifts in the responsibilities of Members include a greater role in budgetary decision making in areas such as highways and youth service provision through the Staffordshire Local Community fund. All of these different strands of work represent a growth in the time commitment for Members in undertaking a community leadership and liaison role as well as the traditional calls on their time in representative roles.
25. Members are increasingly becoming more directly involved in the County Council's consultation activity taking place within their divisions and districts. This may take the form of written or face to face briefings and the intention is to become more sophisticated about joining together public consultation

processes and ensuring Members have a full picture of what is happening in their area. This also becomes a two way process as the Members' local knowledge will be used to contribute to and facilitate access to relevant community groups.

26. Members estimate that they spend, on average, around nine hours a month involved in meetings with County Council officers relating to their division. This has increased through the expansion of local budgeting work Members are involved with, particularly with highways and youth provision. Members may also take up roles such as becoming school governors or being involved in other County Council local delivery bodies such as Community and Learning Partnerships, which support local delivery of the extended schools agenda. In addition, Members also spend an estimated three hours a month dealing with grant funding applications through the Staffordshire Local Community Fund.
27. A number of Members hold regular surgeries in their division in addition to their contact details being available to their constituents through the County Council's website. Members estimate that they spend around 15 hours a week dealing with queries from local residents either by telephone, email or in person. Members in parished areas also spend around 8 hours a month attending parish council meetings and some rural Members, whose divisions cover large geographical areas, spend considerably more time. Many rural Members also find it necessary to hold multiple surgeries in different parishes or areas of their divisions. In addition to parish councils, Members also meet on a regular basis with other organisations such as residents associations and community groups. Much of this work is, by its nature, in the evenings and may, particularly in rural areas of the county, involve a considerable amount of travel.
28. It is worth noting that the diversity of the County's geography also has a significant effect on how Members' represent their individual divisions. Some of the issues highlighted above demonstrate that there are clearly different challenges for those Members who represent large, rural areas with a low population density than for those who represent urban areas. In order to effectively represent their division, rural Members have to undertake a considerable amount of travelling between different parts of their division and have to deal with the often quite distinct needs and characteristics in these different areas. While urban Members do not face the same challenges in respect of travel, due to the fact that the areas of greatest deprivation are generally found in these urban areas, they do face challenges in reaching and understanding some of the issues in the communities they represent. The current electoral geography of the County also means that there are some areas where Members represent divisions that have both an urban and rural element which not only means they have to deal with their distinct challenges they may have, on occasion, to balance competing demands for their time and resources.
29. As well as the primary purpose of resolving individual residents' issues, Members are encouraged to feed in trends in case work and local concerns as a vital source of local intelligence for the County Council itself. This contributes to the County Council's approach to providing efficient and convenient local government by informing the work of scrutiny, strategic planning and the council's response to local concerns. Regular events titled Our Place, Our Priorities provide opportunities for Cabinet Members and local Councillors to

work through key issues around certain themes and the actions being taken to address these.

30. Any reduction in the number of Members would have a significant impact on their ability to effectively represent their local communities. The time commitment, particularly during evening hours, for elected Members is significant without compromising the key principle that serving as a County Councillor should be as accessible to as much of the eligible population as possible. A reduction in the number of Members, and the consequent additional representational demands would place a severe strain on the individuals concerned. The current council size of 62, as well as ensuring the workload for individual Members is not beyond what is achievable, provides an adequate number to ensure that individual communities and their interests are effectively represented.

Conclusions

31. The evidence above shows that Members spend in excess 100 hours a month on their County Council duties, a figure which will be significantly higher for Cabinet Members. Any reduction in the number of Members would not only have an impact on the workload of the individual Members themselves but will also directly affect the communities they represent. A reduction of the number of Members would mean that, under a new scheme of representation that ensured electoral equality, individual Members would be required to represent an electorate in excess of the current average of 10,656. It is the County Council's view that this would not only put an intolerable burden on the capacity of Members to effectively undertake its work but that it would not be possible to provide a coherent scheme that effectively represents community interests and identities.
32. It is possible to argue that there is a case for an increase in Council size; the current elector-member ratio is significantly higher than many similar sized County Councils; in fact if the ratio was to reduce to the average level for similar County Councils (around 8500 electors per Member) council size would need to increase to 77. As demonstrated above, Members face significant time pressures that an increase in their number would help to alleviate. There also are some areas within the County where the last boundary review, in order to ensure electoral equality, created some additional challenges by combining different communities with different needs. However bearing in mind all of the factors outlined, in particular that the County Council is demonstrating that it can operate effective arrangements with 62 Members; it is the County Council's view that an increase is not required at this stage.
33. In order to have a meaningful impact on how Staffordshire's communities were represented, an increase in council size (or in fact a reduction) would have to result in a significant reduction in the elector to Member ratio which can only be achieved by moving to between 70 and 80 Members which would lead to an unreasonable increase in the 'cost of democracy'. If the Council size was to increase by 15 Members, this would increase in the cost of Members allowances – which was £778,136 in 2009/10 – in the region of £181,000 based on the current basic allowance and an average of current mileage and other allowances claimed by Members. The Council also provides Members with a range of IT equipment and there would also be an increased initial set up cost in 2013 following the County Council elections of around £7,500 for the 15 new

Members in addition to any changes resulting as seats changing hands as a result of the election.

34. As well as these direct and measurable costs, the Council would also incur additional indirect costs as a consequence of having to support an influx of additional new Members on an ongoing basis. It is likely that any increase in the number of Members would also lead to changes in the County Council's political management arrangements such as an increase in the number of committees. This would mean additional Special Responsibility Allowances and an increase in the workload of officers who support Members directly, particularly those in Member and Democratic Services both in terms of committee support and through the one-stop-shop support offered to Members.
35. The County Council is committed to ensuring that the office of Councillor is accessible to as much of the population as possible and actively promotes the opportunities available. However, it is also recognised that it is political parties that provide the vast majority of candidates for elections. At the last County Council elections in June 2009 only 23 of the 267 candidates did not represent a nationally recognised political party with 181 standing for one of the three main parties. Local parties already sometimes face challenges in finding people who are willing to stand for election, which is evidenced by the fact that 45 Members elected in June 2009 were already serving on District and Borough Councils. An increase in the number of Members would put further pressure on political parties and could lead to more 'dual hatted' Members facing excessive demands on their time. There is also the possibility that parties would be unable to nominate a full slate of candidates and would have to concentrate their resources where they were most likely to be effective; there is a risk that this could lead to the uncontested elections, which would render improvements in electoral equality irrelevant.
36. It is the County Council's view that the evidence set out above demonstrates how the current council size of 62 provides efficient and convenient local government for Staffordshire. By taking into account all of the outlined geographical, political and representational factors that impact on the work that elected Members undertake, it is the County Council's view that this shows that this size continues to be sufficient to represent the interests of the county's local communities and that any change would compromise either the efficiency and convenience of the County Council's operation or would have an adverse effect on the coherence of the identities of the communities Members represent.
37. The County Council's current electoral arrangements include three divisions with two Members, which were established following the previous review of electoral arrangements in 2004. The County Council's view, based on the experience of how this has operated in practice, is that these arrangements do not provide the most efficient and cohesive scheme for representation. This view is endorsed by Members who represent dual divisions who have commented on the particular difficulties that they face representing a larger area with a greater population and electorate. Having two Members makes it difficult for the public to easily identify who 'their Councillor' is and Members find that there can be difficulties in equitably dividing case work between them, particularly where representation is split across different parties. As a result of this, the County Council believes that the future scheme of representation should be based on 62 Members representing 62 divisions.



AUDIT COMMITTEE

Report to Council October 2010



Introduction

Staffordshire is a vibrant and dynamic area, full of extraordinary variety and opportunity. The County Council has a key role in ensuring the continuing vitality and success of Staffordshire, and we are working hard to provide excellent services that meet the needs of local people.

To achieve this, it's important we have clear, organised and water-tight systems of governance. The Audit Committee has the job of keeping the Council's governance systems under regular review to ensure that the Council is managing its finances and services in a prudent, effective and secure manner.

As part of this role it is important that we report back to the County Council, and to the public who provide the Council with its funding, to give assurance that public money is being properly and effectively managed.

We intend to do this on an annual basis and we are pleased to introduce the 2009/10 Report of Staffordshire County Council's Audit Committee.

Who are we?

In order to make this report timely and relevant it covers the period 1 June 2009 – 30 June 2010. During this period, Membership of the Committee changed following the Annual Meeting of the Council on 20 May 2010. Consequently, we detail below both past and current Membership.

1 June 2009 – 20 May 2010

Councillor Henry Butter (Chairman)

Councillor Geoffrey Martin (Vice- Chairman)

Councillor Frank Chapman

Councillor Ray Easton

Councillor Geoff Locke

Councillor Jeremy Oates

Councillor Rex Roberts OBE

Councillor Liz Staples

Councillor Alan White

=====
Cabinet Member

Councillor Mark Winnington

21 May 2010

Councillor Rex Roberts OBE (Chairman)

Councillor Henry Butter (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Lee Bates

Councillor Veronica Downes

Councillor Ray Easton

Councillor Frank Lewis, MBE

Councillor Geoff Locke

Councillor Philip Jones

Councillor Alan White

=====
Cabinet Member

Councillor Mark Winnington



What do we do?

The purpose of the Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process.

The functions and responsibilities of the Audit Committee are many and varied and now include those performed by the former Regulatory Committee (e.g. to oversee, review, and make any recommendations on the effectiveness and operation of the Constitution). However, in terms of our **core** work, the following are reproduced for information:

- To approve, monitor, review and amend from time to time the Council's Code of Corporate Governance to ensure that it is adequate and effective
- To advise on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control environment
- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's risk management processes and to:
 - (i) approve the Risk Management Policy Statement and monitor its implementation;
 - (ii) approve the content of the Corporate Risk Register and proposed Risk Mitigation Action Plan and monitor its implementation
- To approve, on behalf of the County Council, the Annual Statement of Accounts, and the Annual Governance Statement.
- To receive and consider external audit reports and Management Letters, to monitor the implementation of recommendations and advise the County Council as appropriate



- To monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the Internal Audit service and Corporate Directors' responsibilities for ensuring an adequate control environment and to:
 - (i) Receive an annual internal audit plan from the Assistant Director (Audit and Risk Management Services)
 - (ii) Monitor progress against the plan through the receipt of periodic progress reports and an annual Internal Audit report;
 - (iii) Receive and consider major Internal Audit findings and recommendations;
 - (iv) Monitor the response to major findings and the implementation of key recommendations.



Are we effective?

Members of the Audit Committee are expected to attend and participate constructively in meetings and to contribute to the development of its work programme. In order to do this, the following skill sets are desirable:

- Experience and/or knowledge of financial, audit and governance arrangements
- A knowledge of the structures, systems and processes in place within Staffordshire County Council
- An understanding of the Council's and Committee's policies, service delivery and government legislation.

Following on from the above, training is very important. That said, it is about making the Committee members more effective as lay members and is not about attempting to turn them into experts. Reference to “**Who are we?**” indicates that Membership changes were made following the Annual Meeting of the Council on 20 May 2010. Consequently, a programme of awareness training for “new” Members is currently underway.

Given the nature and scope of the issues submitted to the Audit Committee, reports can be lengthy and agendas very full. In order to manage this, we have agreed to receive certain reports by e-mail and only debate issues arising at formal meetings if deemed appropriate. We have also brought forward the start time of meetings to ensure effective challenge.

During the year, we have received a number of “Limited Assurance” and “Special Investigation” reports and in order to assure ourselves that the appropriate actions have been taken we have requested that the appropriate Director is represented to answer questions direct.

In recognising the importance of embedding risk management into the culture of the organisation we have requested that the Corporate Risk Register is submitted to the Audit Committee Bi-Annually as opposed to Annually.

Work Done

In terms of the work done by the Audit Committee during the period May 2009 – June 2010, we have:

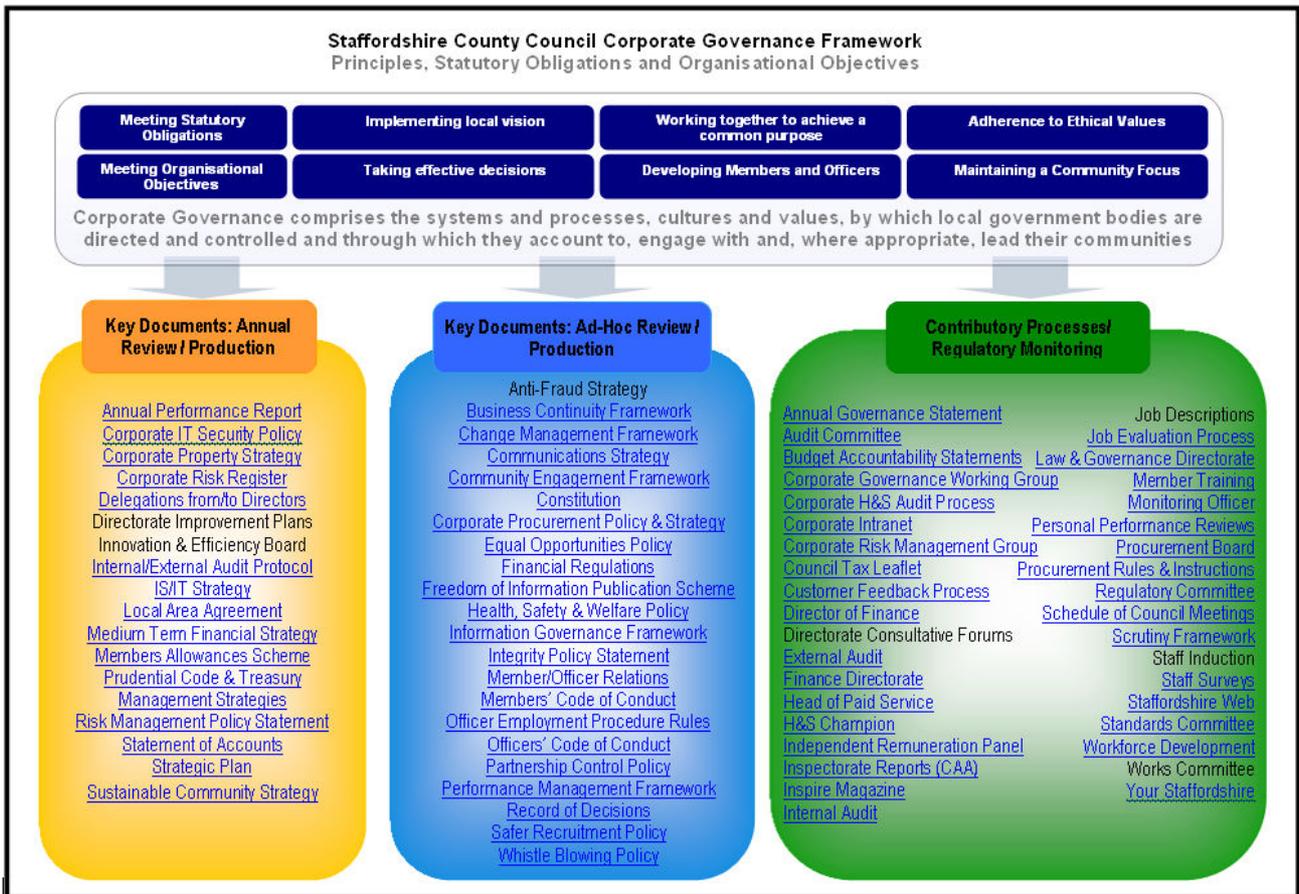
- Reviewed the management of risks in relation to closer integration with Health and the cost pressures arising from Building Schools for the Future
- Reviewed the Corporate Risk Register
- Approved the Council's Internal Audit Strategy and Internal Audit Plan for 2009/10 setting out how the internal audit team operates and what areas it is to look at during the year.
- Reviewed the External Audit Plan for 2009/10 proposed by Price Waterhouse Coopers, and discussed with the external auditors the transition from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework to Comprehensive Area Assessment
- Reviewed a number of "Limited Assurance" and "Special Investigation" reports to make sure that the risks and issues identified were being properly managed.
- Reviewed the Effectiveness of the System of Internal Audit
- Reviewed the internal audit outturn report 2009/10
- Reviewed the outcome of the National Fraud Initiative 2008 and its implications for the Council.

- Approved the Council's Risk Management Policy Statement incorporating the 2009/10 Action Plan
- Reviewed the Annual Report on Health and Safety – Performance Report 2009/10



Key Outputs

Code of Corporate Governance Framework- We reviewed the Framework and approved the unique single sheet diagram that has been developed and posted on the Council’s Intranet (see below).



For each document and contributory process detailed, an appropriate hyperlink has been established and this allows employees and members to drill down to the source document. Contact details of the relevant Corporate Management Team and Operational Lead are also shown so that advice on specific issues can readily be obtained.

Following on from the above, not only has the council brought all of its governance related documents and processes together in the one place but has ensured effective “version” control



and communication to its large workforce who operate across a large geographical area. In addition to promoting the Corporate Governance Framework through regular bulletins on its “Home Page”, a specific training module has been created and forms part of the Staffordshire Manager Development Programme.

The draft Statement of Accounts for 2009/10 – The draft accounts covered the County Council and the Staffordshire Pension Fund. We reviewed the revenue and capital outturn position, and movements in the Balance for both the Council’s Accounts and the Pension Fund. Following questions, the draft accounts were approved and we asked the Director of Finance to make any changes to the wording necessary so that they can carry the Plain English Crystal Mark.

The Annual Governance Statement 2009/10 – This Statement is a key document. This document details the arrangements in place that give the Council assurance that the Council’s finances and business affairs are being properly managed. It draws together the outcome of many of the reports presented to the Committee during the year.

Our review of the Statement concluded that an effective governance framework is in place across the Council.

Our conclusion was based upon a number of factors, including:

- The content of the Annual Audit Letter from the External Auditor which included an unqualified opinion on the Council’s final accounts for 2008/09 and the outcome of the Use of Resources Assessment, where we were given a score of three out of four for the way we use our resources
- The content of the internal audit outturn report 2009/10 which gave us the required level of assurance on the overall standard and effectiveness of our internal controls

- The fact that the Monitoring Officer (Director of Law and Governance) and Chief Finance Officer did not have to use their official powers on intervention
- An update on Risk Management showed that good progress had been made in implementing the majority of Mitigating Actions albeit the overall risk score increased by virtue of the unstable economic climate
- Our Standards Committee did not investigate any complaints about the behaviour of our elected Members and the Ombudsman did not uphold any complaints about governance issues

A number of improvement actions were identified and these have been endorsed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive:

- Put into effect an action plan aimed at improving governance awareness across the council to include how best to communicate important issues to staff and a review of the corporate induction process
- Continue to make sure our partnerships are well controlled, perform strongly and show value for money
- Respond to the changing financial climate arising from the Government's deficit reduction programme; and
- Develop a new business model (and bring our governance arrangements in line with that model) that best meets the priorities of the council determined by the needs of our customers and communities.



Work to do

Issues for consideration in the forthcoming months include the following:

- Update on Information Governance
- Review of Corporate Risk Register
- Review of Annual Audit Letter
- Assessing the governance implications associated with the introduction of the Council's new business model

In addition, we intend to hold a joint meeting with the Assets and Budget Scrutiny Committee to review Financial Regulations, Procurement Policy and Strategy, Contract Standing Orders and Procurement Regulations.

How to contact us

If you would like any further information about what we do please contact us as follows:

**The Audit Committee,
Staffordshire County Council,
16 Martin Street,
Stafford,
ST16 2LG**



PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

County Council – 14 October 2010

Proposed Changes to the Constitution

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Constitution as revised be approved by Council and the Director of Law and Democracy be authorised to make the necessary amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

2.0 Report of the Director of Law and Democracy

- 2.1 At its meeting on 22 July 2010 County Council approved the introduction of a New Operating Model (NOM) for the Authority which aims to develop the 'one council' approach, better providing for the delivery of key outcomes to the benefit of the people of Staffordshire.
- 2.2 The revised structure for the Senior Leadership Team was approved and, more latterly, proposals for the second tier of management have been firmed up. Details are attached at Appendix 3.
- 2.3 There is a consequent need to amend Section 10 of the Constitution (relating to Officers) to ensure that the necessary authorities are in place to enable the delivery of services and decision making by officers to continue without risk of challenge. The required amendments are detailed at Appendix 2 to this report. It should be noted that the importance of the Statutory Chief Officer roles has not been diminished by the changes.
- 2.4 As the NOM develops there will be a need for a more comprehensive review of the Constitution, details of which will be submitted in due course.

Appendix 1

Equalities implications:

None

Legal implications:

The amendments to the Constitution are required to ensure the relevant authorities to Directors to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

Resource and Value for money implications:

None

Risk implications:

It is important that the Council reviews its Constitution regularly to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

Report author:

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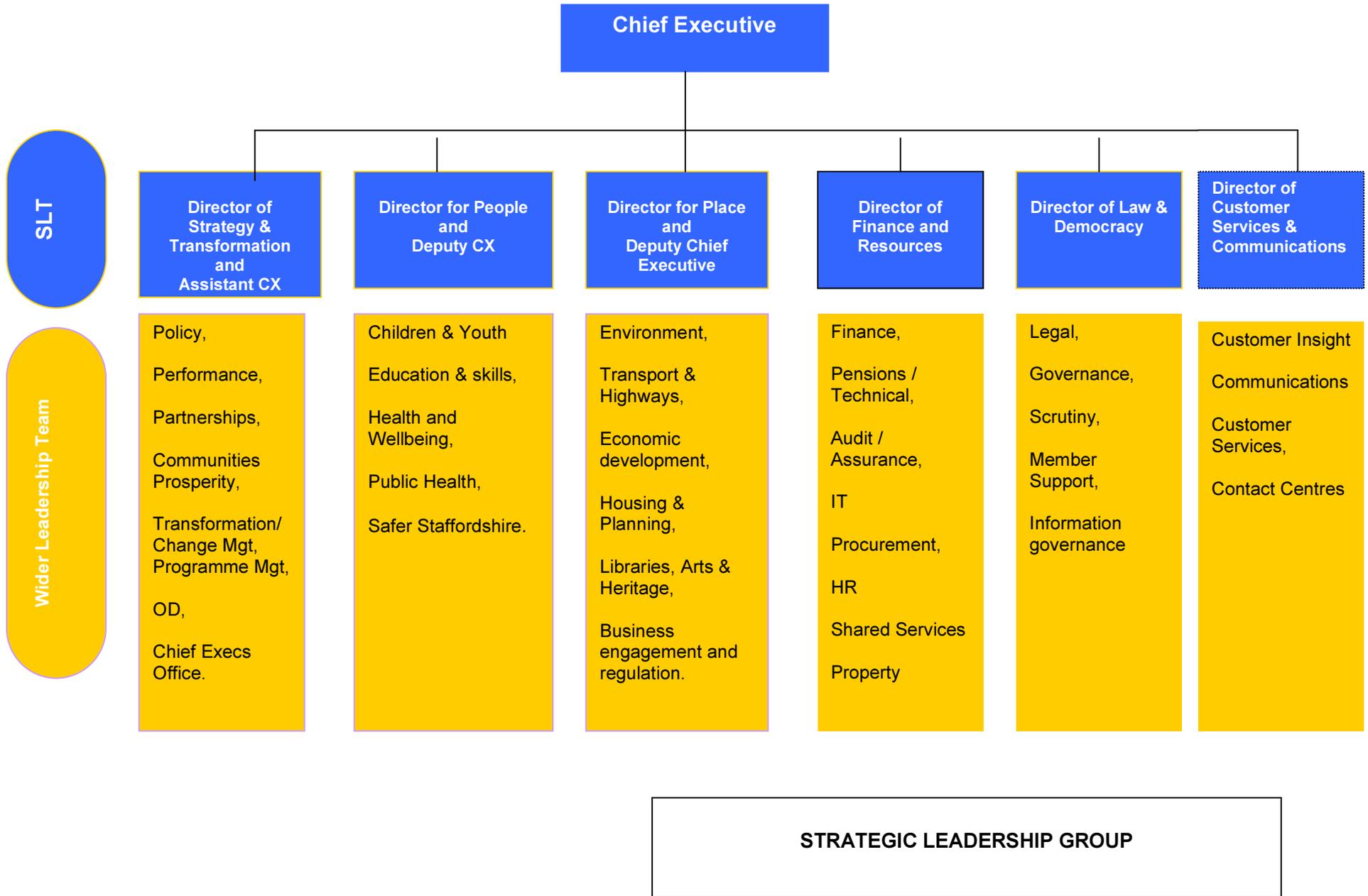
Schedule of amendments to Section 10 (Officers) of the County Council Constitution

Existing	Amendment
<p>Section 1 – Management Structure Para 1.4 list of Corporate Directors of the County Council And, as a consequence, all references throughout the Constitution.</p>	<p>To be amended to read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive • Director of Strategy and Transformation and Assistant Chief Executive • Director for People and Deputy Chief Executive • Director of Children’s Services • Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive • Director of Finance and Resources • Director of Law and Democracy • Director of Consumer Services and Communications
<p>The whole of Section 10 and Appendices Reference to the following Statutory Officers/Corporate Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer/Director of Law and Governance • Chief Financial Officer/Director of Finance • Director of Children’s Services/Corporate Director (Children, Young People and Families) • Director of Adult Social Services/Corporate Director (Social Care and Health) 	<p>To be amended to read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring Officer/Director of Law and Democracy • Chief Financial Officer/Director of Finance and Resources • Director of Children’s Services/Director of Children’s Services • Director of Adult Social Services/Director for People and Deputy Chief Executive

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

Section 4 - Employment	
Para 4.3 List of Officers with specific provision in the Officer Employment Procedure Rules	To be amended to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The officer designated as the Monitoring Officer

Appendix 1 – Scheme of Delegation to Officers Delegated powers to Chief Officers to be reallocated between the members of the Strategic Leadership Team (including the Director of Children’s Services) as required to reflect the areas of responsibility under the new operating model.



Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority Periodic Report of the Chairman on Authority Matters

Rising Brook Community Fire Station

1. Rising Brook Community Fire Station in Stafford was opened on 3 September 2010 by the Chairman of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Cllr Len Bloomer. The opening ceremony was attended by local dignitaries, including Borough and County Councillors, community leaders and MP Jeremy Lefroy. The firefighters based at the station and their families were also invited to the event, which included a tour of the new facility.

Since "going live" on 2 August firefighters have already attended over 100 incidents and over 550 members of the public have passed through the doors, as part of the "meet the neighbours" events that have been held.

The state of the art facility is the first of ten brand new community fire stations to open in Staffordshire being built under a private finance initiative (PFI) project. The building comes complete with a community room and houses one fire engine. The new station is staffed by firefighters contracted to the retained duty system, meaning that they are within five minutes of the station and respond to incidents when their pager alerts them. A total of 18 firefighters are working from the station.

Rising Brook Community Fire Station is one of only two fire stations nationally to receive the 'Secured By Design' Award. The Award recognises buildings which are designed to help combat crime by identifying and designing-out any potential crime opportunities, it pays particular attention to windows, doors, car park layout, landscaping as well as security measures such as cameras and locks. Research has proven that certain buildings are more susceptible to crime than others and that risk and the fear of crime are significantly reduced where Secured By Design standards are applied. This standard is supported and managed by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and has the backing of the Home Office. Staffordshire Police had worked very closely with officers from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service throughout the build process and were delighted to present this award.

Report of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

2. Fire casualties for the period April 2009 to March 2010 saw an increase of three when compared to 2008/09. As a result, the seasonally adjusted target had not been reached for this year. There were six fire deaths and 35 injuries in 2009/10, with two separate incidents resulting in nine of the casualties.

Primary fire activity between April 2009 and March 2010 saw a decrease of 50 when compared to the same period in 2008/09. Although the figures had reduced by 2.46%, the seasonally adjusted target had not been reached for 2009/10. The performance at year end was 1984 primary fires. By comparison in 2003/04 there were 3183 incidents.

2009/10 saw an increase of 82 accidental dwelling fires when compared with 2008/09, a 27% increase. Consequently, the seasonally adjusted target had not been met this year. During 2009/10, there had been a 47% increase in cooking fires (excluding chip pans) from 134 to 197. This was the highest figure for the last seven years. Although there was no particular trend in the types of fires, most were occurring in vulnerable/disadvantaged households ie the elderly and families with young children. The work of the 0800 Team was therefore being targeted at these vulnerable households.

Grass fires increased by 147 in 2009/10 when compared to 2008/09. However, small fire activity (excluding grass fires) saw a decrease of 291 when compared to 2008/09. With regard to secondary fires, 2009/10 saw a reduction on the previous year of 290 incidents (a 14% decrease).

An increased number of Home Fire Risks Checks (HFRCs) have been carried out in each Area Command although, as indicated above, fire deaths and injuries have, unfortunately, seen an increase. The need for HFRCs to be targeted at the most vulnerable groups has therefore been reaffirmed.

The target for unwanted fire detection signals (UwFDs) has been met. A further reduction in these calls will mean reduced cost, lower risk to the public and firefighters, and better protection to communities.

2009/10 saw an increase in the number of attacks on firefighters. There were 11 physical and 13 verbal attacks. A profile of types of offenders included persons from areas of deprivation, alcohol abuse, exclusion etc.

The Authority has also discussed Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and the various measures that had been undertaken to reduce them. Approximately 3000 people die per year on Britain's roads compared to around 350 people who die in fires. The Service is involved in partnership working with the County Council at high risk locations to give road safety advice ie Biker Breakfasts. Crash Course, which is used in Schools and colleges, is another partnership initiative showing real life experiences and real footage of accidents and plays an important part in reducing RTCs. Other examples of partnership working include the identification of accident black spots, an example of which was on the Lichfield A38 road where a number of trees were removed in order to improve road safety.

The provision of sprinklers in housing where there are vulnerable people has been discussed by the Authority. Members have expressed their concerns that there is currently no legislative requirement for these premises to contain sprinklers. As a result, the Service's influence can only go so far in requesting that sprinklers be fitted at the build stage. However, the Authority is working with Lord Harrison of Chester to progress a Private Members Bill through the House of Lords seeking updated research on the cost benefit of sprinklers which it is expected will assist in achieving a change in Building Regulations.

Corporate Plan and Strategic Objective Review

3. The Authority has considered its approach to reviewing the current Strategic Objectives within the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority Strategic Plan 2008/11 and developing a new Corporate Plan for 2011/13. The new Corporate Plan will be developed to provide overarching strategic direction and performance management to the Authority. The current planning assumptions and timelines align the Corporate Plan with the development of the Safety Plan to provide an integrated approach *'...to protect, support and respond to the needs of our communities to make them stronger and safer...'*

Members of the Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee have attended an inclusive and participative joint Members' and Principal/Senior managers' workshop to undertake a review of the existing strategic objectives and develop a set of draft objectives for the new Corporate Plan. This workshop also reviewed the outcomes of preliminary work from two additional workshops held for managers and employees representing a cross section of the organisation to ensure the appropriate strategic level leadership.

The new Corporate Plan will provide the required performance management framework to:

1. Ensure that the Authority's approach to corporate planning embraces and is driven by the Leadership Message
2. Provide and define the processes for managing and reporting performance against strategic objectives
3. Provide and define a framework for informed decision-making and prioritisation of resources at strategic, area command and department/station level
4. Provide the framework for local and individual performance plans to align planning and day-to-day activities to achieving the Authority's strategic outcomes

The current Strategic Plan articulates a 'two tier' approach to its objectives. There are a suite of Core Objectives (for Community Protection, Staff Centered and Organisational Performance, Development and Communications) in addition to Strategic Objectives which are more transactional in their nature. Indeed, there have been a number of internal and external impacts on the Authority and the public sector as a whole which are not reflected within the existing Strategic Plan.

The process to review the Strategic Objectives has been based on extensive consultation from around the organisation, in line with the Leadership Message. A preliminary workshop was held in May to gain the views of members of staff from across the organisation. A further Strategic Workshop took place on 8 July for Senior Managers, Department Heads, Area Commanders and Area Managers to build upon the feedback received from the preliminary workshop. .

The workshops have considered the implications of a number of pertinent factors on the Strategic Objectives such as the Safety Plan, National Framework and Local Area Agreements. The outcomes from these preliminary workshops was distilled and consolidated and was considered at the workshop which took place in August for Members and Principal Officers. The workshop was facilitated by the Improvement and Development Agency with support from Officers. A Peer Member also assisted in facilitating the day.

The draft Corporate Plan once developed will be presented to the full Fire and Rescue Authority prior to going out for consultation

Business Transformation Sounding Board

4. The Business Transformation Sounding Board (“the Board”) has been set up to challenge the work carried out by the Business Transformation Team (“the Team”) which will make proposals for improvements to service delivery and deliver efficiency savings. The Team is led by Mr. Bob Russell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer/Assistant Chief Executive (Service Delivery) and it has a wide range of skills and experience to successfully drive the future requirements of the Service in line with the budget. The Board consists of officers and representative bodies which will meet on a monthly basis. The benefit of having an Authority Member as part of the Board has been recognised and due to the nature of the work of the Team Mr. Russell, formally requested that the Chairman of the Service Development Panel, Mr. Finn be put forward as the Member as he is aware of both the Service’s current and proposed service provision through the Safety Plan and comprehensively understands the Area Command structures and community needs. Changes recommended by the Team will be reported to the Authority in due course.

Proposed Abolition of the ‘Standards for England’ organisation

5. There has been no detail as to the process that will replace Standards for England to oversee the Code of Conduct and ethical issues connected with the role of Members however it is thought extremely unlikely that the Code of Conduct will be removed and until such time as any detailed proposal is known Authority Members have been reminded that the Code remains in full operation.

**L. W. BLOOMER
CHAIRMAN**