

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 12 December 2013

Present:

Attendance

Ben Adams	Terry Finn	Sheree Peuple
George Adamson	John Francis	Kath Perry
Margaret Astle	Bob Fraser	Trish Rowlands
Charlotte Atkins	Michael Greateorex	Jeff Sheriff
Philip Atkins	Sandra Hambleton	David Smith
Ann Beech	Gill Heath	Alison Spicer
Len Bloomer	Ian Hollinshead	Mark Sutton
Frank Chapman	Derrick Huckfield	Stephen Sweeney
Ron Clarke	Kevin Jackson	Simon Tagg
Maureen Compton	Keith James	John Taylor
Chris Cooke	Brian Jenkins	Martyn Tittley
Tim Corbett	Philip Jones	Diane Todd
Mike Davies	Mike Lawrence	Alan White
Peter Davies	Ian Lawson	Conor Wileman
Derek Davis, OBE	David Loades	David Williams
William Day	Robert Marshall	Mark Winnington
Carol Dean	Geoff Martin	Susan Woodward
Mark Deaville	Shelagh McKiernan	Caroline Wood
Alan Dudson	Christine Mitchell	Mike Worthington
Janet Eagland	Mark Olszewski	
Brian Edwards	Ian Parry	

Apologies for absence: Geoff Morrison

PART ONE

12. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 10 October 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Meeting held on 10 October 2013 be confirmed.

13. Chairman's Correspondence

Nelson Mandela

The Chairman referred to the death on 5 December 2013 of former South African President, Nelson Mandela and indicated that a Book of Condolences had been placed in the Shirehall Gallery in Stafford. He also indicated that he had written to the South African Embassy to convey the Council's condolences.

Municipal Journal Future Leader Award 2013

The Chairman informed Members that Darryl Evers, the County Council's Head of Economic Planning, had been commended in the Municipal Journal Future Leader Award Category. The Award was aimed at recognising and promoting talent among young staff members whose expertise and professionalism showed that they were destined for senior leadership roles within local government and the wider public sector. The commendation recognised Darryl's input into promoting economic development across the Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership as well as his wider contribution to corporate improvement and innovation.

Jordan Publishing Family Law Awards 2013

The Council noted that Kate Loader of the County Council's Legal Services Team had won the Local Authority Lawyer of the Year category at the Family Law Awards 2013. The Awards were launched by Jordan Publishing in 2011 to recognise the important work of family lawyers, and celebrate their many successes and outstanding achievements.

Society of Procurement Officers Awards - Local Government Procurement Professional of the Year 2013

The Chairman informed the Council that Paul Timmins of the County Council's Procurement team had won the Society of Procurement Officers' Local Government Procurement Professional of the Year Award for 2013. Submissions for the Award were judged on the procurement contribution entrants had made to their organisation and for forward-thinking and innovative approaches that had resulted in a positive, on-going, legacy for colleagues and/or the beneficiaries of procurement services. Paul's work in projects such as the Procurement Partner, ESS and Infrastructure Plus, together with his recent attainment of a Master's in Business Administration, were highly contributory to this award.

Society of Procurement Officers Awards - Outstanding Achievement in Procurement – County Council Category

Members noted that Staffordshire had also won the 'County Council' category in the Outstanding Achievement in Procurement awards hosted by the Society of Procurement Officers for its work on the Education Support Services (ESS) Joint Venture procurement. The project involved a spend of £4bn, the letting of a 20 year service delivery agreement with Entrust, and the protection / TUPE transfer of up to 5,000 Council employees to the Joint Venture Company.

Social Enterprise West Midlands Inspire Award

The Chairman informed Members that Ian Simpson, the Council's Head of Procurement, had been awarded the 2013 Social Enterprise West Midlands Inspire award. The award recognised an individual or body who was leading the way and breaking new ground and who had demonstrated how they had led innovation, championed new approaches and been bold in their leadership and direction. Ian won the award for leading

Staffordshire`s work around the Social Value Act and particularly for his work in creating nearly 300 apprenticeships for Staffordshire Citizens in the Council`s supply chain.

Guardian Public Service Awards 2013

Members noted that the County Council`s Communications Team had recently been recognised at the Guardian Public Service Awards 2013. The Team won the “Communications Excellence” category of the Awards for their recent ‘Fostering First’ campaign which beat all of its recruitment targets and saved the council over £1million. The judges described the campaign as an ‘innovative’ and ‘ground breaking approach that could be easily adapted to work across local authorities.’

14. Statement of the Leader of the Council

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

“Living My Life, My Way” – A Strategy for Disabled People 2013 - 2018 (Paragraph 1.3 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Taylor in respect of consultation on the strategy, Mr White indicated that there had been twice as many people responding to the consultation on the strategy than there were users of the service. He added that the strategy proposed a shift in focus from “service based” to “outcome based”. Mr Atkins added that the proposals would give service users more choice and would bring about a shift away from the traditional method of service delivery whereby the County Council dictated what services it would provide as opposed to what service users wanted.

Keeping Staffordshire Moving: Highway Permit Scheme (Paragraph 2.1 of the Statement)

Mr Wileman indicated that he welcomed the proposals set out in the review and added that this was another example of the County Council listening to, and responding to, residents’ concerns.

In response to questions from Mr Jenkins and Mr Hollinshead relating to year on year reductions in the budget for highway maintenance, Mr Parry indicated that, over the past four years, there had been an additional investment of £30m in highway maintenance in Staffordshire. Mr Tagg added that the County Council was continuing to take steps to improve the condition of the County’s roads and that the proposals set out in the review would be implemented within 12 months. Mr Atkins also indicated that that a recent audit had highlighted a 10% improvement in the condition of the County’s highway network and that Staffordshire was now in the top quartile of authorities with regard to the condition of its roads. He also referred Members to the Divisional Highway Programme through which local members were able to prioritise highway works within their respective districts.

Keeping Staffordshire Moving: Civil Parking Enforcement Review

(Paragraph 2.2 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Ms Woodward, Mr Tagg confirmed that Members at both County and District levels would be kept informed of progress during the review. He also indicated that he welcomed the recent announcement by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire regarding measures to tackle obstructions on the highway. Mr Lawrence added that it was intended that the new parking enforcement arrangements would be more cost effective than the current system and less of a burden on the Council Tax payer.

Changes to Cabinet Member Portfolios

(Paragraph 3.1 of the Statement)

Mr Taylor informed the Council that he had appointed Charlotte Atkins as an additional Member of his Shadow Cabinet (as Shadow Cabinet Member for Care).

Recommendation for Member Seat on the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Partnership Trust

(Paragraph 3.5 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Taylor as to whether, if the Council were to be successful in gaining a seat on the Partnership Trust, that seat would be allocated to a Cabinet or a non-Cabinet Member, Mr White and Mr Atkins indicated that this was still to be determined but it was likely that the seat would be allocated to a Member of the Cabinet.

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

(b) That the announcement by the Leader of the Labour Group indicating that he had appointed Charlotte Atkins as an additional Member of his Shadow Cabinet (as Shadow Cabinet Member for Care) be noted and that the position receive a special responsibility allowance.

15. Recommendations to the Council

Revised Annual Investment Strategy 2013/14

Members were informed that, each year, the Council was required by Government regulations to publish an Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) for its treasury operations in advance of the start of the financial year. The AIS for 2013/14 was approved by Cabinet on 16 January 2013. There was scope in the regulations to amend the AIS at any time where this was necessary. Following the appointment of a new treasury advisor, Arlingclose, it was proposed to adopt their credit worthiness assessment and to consider new options for managing the Council's long-term loans position. As a consequence of this, it was proposed that changes be made to the AIS for 2013/14.

In response to questions from Members in relation to investments with the Co-operative Bank, Mr Parry indicated that the bank had announced its intention to withdraw from the

local government sector and that, as a result, the County Council would be looking for a new provider for its “current account” banking activities.

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with regulations, the revised Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) 2013/14, as set out in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the report, be adopted.

16. High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Bill

The Council considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Place concerning a proposal to petition against the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill through the Parliamentary stages in order to attempt to secure improvements to the scheme and to safeguard the interest of Staffordshire’s residents and businesses.

During the debate on the report, Members raised a wide range of issues in relation to the HS2 proposals including the detrimental impact the scheme would have on the Staffordshire landscape and the need to secure appropriate mitigation measures; the need to secure adequate compensation for those directly affected by the scheme; traffic congestion issues during the construction period; alternative solutions for increasing rail capacity including improvements to existing infrastructure such as the West Coast Main Line; affordability and spiralling construction costs; and the lack of public support for the scheme.

Mr Davis indicated that one of the positive impacts of HS2 would be the creation of employment opportunities during the scheme’s construction phase. He also indicated that he was opposed to the proposal for the County Council to provide financial resources of up to £200,000 to petition against the Bill. Several other Members also expressed concern at the cost of opposing the Bill as they were of the view that the Government would proceed with HS2 irrespective of the opposition to the scheme. Mr Taylor also enquired as to whether the proposed allocation of £200,000 to petition against the Bill was only for Phase 1 and would an additional sum of money be required to oppose Phase 2. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that the County Council did not have the power to stop HS2, that decision rested with Central Government, but it was essential that the County Council petitions against the Bill in an attempt to secure the mitigation measures that were required to reduce the scheme’s impact on local communities and on the County’s environment. Petitioning against Phase 1 would also help to set out the County Council’s position when Phase 2 of the scheme came under consideration. He concluded by indicating that it was imperative that the views of Staffordshire residents were heard by Central Government and that petitioning against the Bill was the best means of achieving this.

Following a vote, in which 36 members voted in support of the recommendations set out in the report, 0 voted against and 24 members abstained, the Chairman declared the recommendations carried.

RESOLVED – (a) That the County Council reaffirms its position in opposing High Speed 2 as there are no clear or confirmed economic benefits for Staffordshire and it will have significant impacts on our environment and countryside.

(b) That, in the judgement of the Council, it is expedient for the Council to oppose the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill deposited in the 2013-14 session of Parliament.

(c) That the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure along with the Director for Place and Deputy Chief Executive be authorised to develop the scope of the County Council's petition to Parliament and take all necessary steps to carry the foregoing Resolution into effect.

(d) That a budget provision of £200,000 be allocated to provide the financial resources needed to petition against the High Speed Rail (London – West Midlands) Bill.

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

Ms Atkins extended her congratulations to Rebecca Bryant on her recent appointment to the post of Deputy Chief Executive / Executive Director of the Fire and Rescue Service. Mr Deaville also extended his congratulations to James Russell from the Service's Business Intelligence Team who was presented with a Highly Commended in the North West Finals of the 2013 Apprenticeship Awards.

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

18. Questions

Ms S. Woodward asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Can the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing tell me what help is available for older or disabled people who have difficulty in completing an application form for a Blue Badge disabled parking concession in Staffordshire, where they may get that help and what is the nature of it?

Reply

There are a number of ways someone can apply for a Blue Badge, online, by phone or by calling into one of the access points.

For those with access to the internet the online application form is available on the main website, the applicant can complete the form themselves or friends and family can assist them.

If a resident calls the County Council contact centre the application can be completed by the advisor during the call.

If residents prefer to discuss their application in person, the contact centre can provide a list of customer access points where residents can be given help to

complete the application. There are access points located in District and Borough Council offices and local libraries.

Supplementary Question

It seems to me that the perceptions from the centre as to what is going on in localities does not reflect the reality of the situation. I have heard of cases whereby people have gone into their local district council office or library and have been unable to get direct help to fill in the Blue Badge application forms and are just put in front of a computer screen. That can be extremely daunting for someone who does not know how to use a computer. Therefore, I would ask the Cabinet Member if he will undertake to review what is actually happening in district council offices and libraries in terms of the support given for the completion of Blue Badge applications.

Reply

Yes, I most certainly will undertake this review. My understanding is that anybody who is disabled who can use the internet is left to do so. If they can't, they can go to any of these access points and they will receive assistance to complete their Blue Badge application. Our duty in this county is to support the most needed and vulnerable.

Mrs M. Compton asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

How much funding did Staffordshire County Council receive for the Local Crisis Support Scheme? How many people have applied for goods and services under this scheme and been successful and what percentage of the fund has been spent so far?

Reply

The new crisis support scheme provides support to people in severe hardship, where all other support has been exhausted. This support is in the form of white goods, clothing food and utilities.

This replaces cash grants and loans previously paid by the Department for Work and Pensions, which were abolished under changes brought about by the Welfare Reform Act.

All residents who have met the criteria and applied for support have received this. Since April 266 applicants have received support.

The Council received a grant of £1.4 million for the year 2013/14 as to date has spent £35k – which equates to around 2.5 per cent. The rest of the funding will be used in 2014/2015.

This is a picture which is reflected nationally and as with any newly established scheme we are currently looking at ways to improve the scheme, including eligibility and access.

This fund is a last resort for people. Although the scheme will be improved, the spend so far this year is not a reflection of poor administration of the fund.

We are, however, looking at improvements as a priority at how we can promote the scheme further and also help support people in areas such as food budgeting for their families.

Supplementary Question

I must admit that you have not promoted this scheme very well at all. I personally did not know anything about this scheme at all until I saw a programme on Midlands Today. I think you need to promote this scheme amongst community and faith groups. My question to you is which partners are you, or will you be, working with to promote access to this fund?

Reply

This Council is similar to a lot of other upper tier authorities in this Country where the take-up of the crisis support scheme has been very low. We have therefore commissioned a multi-agency task and finish group to help us to try to publicise this scheme better. One of the points I would like to make about this scheme is that the whole purpose of it is to support the most needy in emergency situation. What we would like to do is proactively invest some of this fund in preventative measures to try and help people before they need this emergency fund. This is going ahead and I believe that the money we are initially investing is £200,000. The crisis support scheme runs for two years and any underspend this year will be ring-fenced and rolled forward to next year.

Ms C. Atkins asked the following question of Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Is Staffordshire County Council following best practice in respect of its Local Crisis Support Scheme by ring fencing the budget and offering gas and electricity vouchers to relieve fuel poverty?

Reply

Information from the DWP highlighted that we would need all of the budget for the Crisis Fund, which is why the ring-fence was put in place. As a grant for a new scheme, this follows best practice.

However, through our on-going monitoring of the fund we understood a rising need for the prevention of hardship, and are helping those in need in additional ways. A number of projects are now underway, to help people eat on budget, for example.

Vouchers are not the only way the fund helps people in fuel poverty. We also contact the Fuel provider directly and make arrangements on the client's behalf.

Supplementary Question

Your reply does not answer the second part of my question which was about offering gas and electricity vouchers to relieve fuel poverty. You will be aware, given your health portfolio, of the alarming rise in excess winter deaths when people have to choose between eating and heating. So why are you not considering the issue of vouchers for gas and electricity or for oil if that is the type of fuel used?

Reply

Excess winter deaths increased across the whole country rather sharply last year, mainly due to the bad weather. The fact of the matter is that that is no excuse. This crisis fund is there for emergencies and if somebody was to apply and can prove that they are in need, there are ways that the County Council can contact that person's energy provider and pay for the gas or electricity to get the individual through that emergency.

Mrs S. Peuple asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Will the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing join me in applauding the excellent work being done by local charities and not for profit organisations, such as Tamworth Food Bank and Tamworth Starfish project, in helping to provide for needy and homeless people in Staffordshire?

Reply

It goes without saying that the excellent work done by the voluntary and community sector across Staffordshire should be applauded.

In Staffordshire we have a voluntary sector that we can and should be very proud of. I understand from colleagues in Tamworth that there are many voluntary and community organisations that are at the forefront of delivery of much needed services to local communities.

I'm also proud that as a County Council we are actively supporting our Voluntary and Community sector and work alongside them to ensure that they have the capacity to grow and continue to provide the support that is much needed.

Supplementary Question

Do you agree with me that, given that there is still, by my estimation, £1.365m in the local crisis support scheme, is this not cold comfort for the people queuing up at local food banks this Christmas, the needy and the hungry, who are not able to access that money now when they actually need it?

Reply

In emergency cases, the crisis fund is available to help people who have no money to buy food, pay for heating, or who are unintentionally homeless. I am a great supporter of food banks and the volunteers who run them. The whole concept of food banks and the crisis fund are where this county and its many volunteers join together to support the most needy. Certainly, the fact that the crisis fund has not had very much spent out of it so far is not in any way a criticism of the way it has been administered, but it does prove the point that we need to publicise it more. Members of this Council have a duty to ensure that their residents, especially the most needy, know about the fund.

Ms C. Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Care whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

What progress has been made on securing centres of excellence for dementia within Staffordshire?

Reply

As you know, Staffordshire County Council is committed to providing the best possible care for people with dementia in Staffordshire. We are determined that people in the county who have dementia, and their families and carers, will have choice, control and dignity in the care and support they receive.

As part of this, we are exploring the possibility of creating Centres of Excellence, which will ensure a better quality of life for those that require specialist dementia services and will support a holistic care approach.

We have been talking to selected providers of dementia services, prior to those companies submitting a bid to run Centres of Excellence. Following recent developments we now have one remaining bidder in the process.

We are determined to ensure that this process achieves the best care for people in Staffordshire with dementia, and provides good value for money for taxpayers. As a result, in October we decided to extend the project timescales so that we can work with partners to examine the changing landscape in health and social care provision and local needs.

We believe that this extension, and review of progress, will enable us to ensure that the project is the right way to proceed, given the changes to health and social care

arrangements since the start of the project, and will reaffirm that we will achieve great standards of care at the best value for money.

Service users, carers and health care professionals have been consulted during the project and have been informed of progress.

We hope to have completed our discussions with partners and review of progress shortly and will keep you informed as we move forwards.

Supplementary Question

It was over 3½ years ago that the Leader of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Sybil Ralphs, and former County Council Cabinet Member, Matthew Ellis, signed an agreement to develop a Centre of Excellence for Dementia on the former Springhill/Kniveden site in Leek. Since then, there has been much toing and froing yet we still have not got plans for that site. Can the Cabinet Member assure me that there will be a Centre of Excellence for Dementia on that site in the very near future?

Reply

I am aware of the conversations that took place between the Sybil Ralphs, the Leader of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, and Matthew Ellis, and the concordat that was signed at that time. You are absolutely right that we do have more and more people locally and nationally suffering from dementia. It was announced just yesterday that Central Government are going to put more money into the care of those with dementia. We are also going to respond to that across Staffordshire by creating Centres of Excellence for Dementia Care; and Kniveden is one of those sites we will be considering. However, we have to make sure that we do the right thing, and sometimes doing the right thing takes a little longer than might have been anticipated.

Mr G. Martin asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Following on from the announcement in August that Staffordshire County Council is spending half a million pounds to upgrade Horsefair in Rugeley to a public realm, I have been very concerned about the impact that the proposed miners memorial sited on the Globe Island would have on road safety.

Working in partnership with Rugeley Town Council, we have through leaflets canvassed local residents about their thoughts around the proposal. I have presented the Cabinet Member for Economy and Infrastructure with the results which shows a majority in favour of the proposed Globe Island location. I give full backing to this decision the residents have made but would like reassurance on a couple of issues.

Can the Cabinet Member give me assurance that:

- (a) A refreshed safety audit has been done in the light of the proposed public realm work?
- (b) Will a safety audit be done once the public realm work has been completed?
- (c) Who will pay for the maintenance of the memorial once in situ?

Reply

(a) A refreshed Road Safety Assessment of the miner's memorial proposal has been undertaken and I have recently received a copy. The report is not a refreshed safety audit on the public realm project, it is a report which appraises and comments on the proposed miner's memorial, considering the proposal against the existing built environment and comparing it against the outputs desired through the public realm project. Subject to certain recommendations, I have been advised that there will not be unacceptable risk at this road junction.

(b) With regard to the wider public realm project the road safety issues will be considered as part of a more holistic Quality Audit regime. Quality Audits are undertaken at key stages in the life of the project, including: initial design; detailed design; post construction; and finally 12-18 months after project completion to help identify any emerging issues once the works are in full operation.

(c) The memorial features will not be adopted by the County Council (Local Highway Authority) and will remain in third party ownership of the miner's memorial association or District Council. As part of the highways consent for these features the County Council requires that a number of conditions are met. These include obligation for on-going maintenance, demonstration of safe methods of working and indemnity of the County Council for any claims or costs. The Memorial Society has agreed to insure the structures on an on-going basis against damage and Cannock Chase District Council has agreed to adopt the structures in a similar way to other pieces of public art on traffic islands e.g. miners memorial on Queens Square island, Cannock.

Supplementary Question

I would ask you to allow the citing of this memorial on Globe Island to proceed.

Reply

I am pleased about the process we have gone through to get the views of local people and I would like to extend my thanks to those who commented on the proposals for the citing of the memorial. Subject to the recommendations of the Road Safety Assessment being complied with I am quite happy for the proposals to go forward.

Mr J. Francis asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Can the Leader explain why four members of the County Council are known as Labour and Co-operative Councillors?

Reply

I understand that the four Members concerned are members of both the Co-operative Party and the Labour Party. The Co-operative Party is a sister party to, and works in partnership with, the Labour Party.

Supplementary Question

Are the people who have contributed to the Co-operative movement aware that their money was being used for political purposes; and considering the financial difficulties that the Co-op is experiencing, will those members, and indeed MPs, refund their expenses to the organisation?

Reply

That is a matter for the four Members concerned to consider.

Mr G. Morrison asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

I welcome the A50 infrastructure announcement. Will the Leader explain to the rest of the Council the background and the reasons for the A50 infrastructure investment by the Government and the County Council's involvement?

Reply

The announcement of new investment by the Government to upgrade the A50 in Uttoxeter stems from a number of reasons.

(a) A considerable amount of housing and job growth is already planned to take place in Uttoxeter, either on sites already consented, sites allocated in the emerging local plan and potentially on other sites as well. Over the plan period this could include up to 1800 new homes and 4000 new jobs.

(b) In addition, JCB have announced major expansion plans for several of their plants in and around Uttoxeter, which could create a further 2500 new jobs and 7,500 jobs in the supply chain. Significantly, engines and transmissions which are made outside Staffordshire have to be brought to Rocester for assembly, putting additional traffic on the A50.

(c) There is an existing traffic congestion problem in Uttoxeter particularly at the central 'McDonalds' roundabout. The A50 is a trunk road and is a main 'artery'

of the strategic road network. The congestion in Uttoxeter affects a wide range of companies both within Staffordshire and beyond the County boundary.

The County Council's involvement in the project will be subject to agreement with the Highways Agency as the A50 is a Trunk Road. Based on the success of the i54 site, and the excellent working relationship between the County Council and the Highways Agency, it is likely that the County will be responsible for the delivery of the infrastructure works, subject to a legal agreement with the Highways Agency.

Mr D. Williams asked the following question of the Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Community Safety whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Can I congratulate the Safeguarding Board in commissioning the free provision, offered to every Staffordshire School free of charge, of the play "Chelsea's Choice"? I had the opportunity to observe this play recently and felt that this performance will go a long way to protecting our vulnerable children when interacting on-line from "child exploitation" and "Domestic Violence", allowing them to understand the methods of those who would do them harm, and allow them to report those to relevant authorities to allow for investigations and potential prosecutions of this type of criminal?

Reply

"Chelsea's choice" has been a great success and has been delivered in over 71 of Staffordshire's schools, primarily with a focus on year 8 pupils. Around 10,500 pupils have seen the play. Members from across the council recently saw the play at the Kingston centre and were very impressed with how the play was presented but also the impact it could have on young people.

Initial evaluation has shown an overwhelming 99% of young people felt more aware and understood the threat of grooming young people for sexual reasons. They were also made aware of how to raise the matter through schools, with the police and social care teams.

As you know Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is an evil crime but this council through its Children Safeguarding Board and Families First are doing their utmost to tackle CSE across the county and are working extremely hard with partners (Police and Health) to raise the profile and identify the risks with CSE.

There has been a lot of good work in this area but there is more to do and both the County Council and partners are committed to tackling this matter with the utmost vigour.

Supplementary Question

Following the success of "Chelsea's Choice" in Staffordshire schools, will the Cabinet Member be offering this valuable resource in the future and, if so, how will he make sure that every school in Staffordshire takes up the offer?

Reply

The Safeguarding Board have provisionally approved a proposal to continue to pilot this scheme next year for Staffordshire schools. With regard to those schools who, so far, have not allowed their Year 8's to see the play, I and the chairman of the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee will be writing to those schools to explain why we believe that this is an excellent way of highlighting the issue of child sexual exploitation.

Mr T. Finn asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Care whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Will the Cabinet Member agree that people with disabilities and learning disabilities should be given every opportunity to live their lives away from Day Services Centres and encouraged to make use of ordinary and universal services in their own local communities, so that they can begin to be seen as valued members of their local communities, rather than being hidden away from it.?

Reply

In 2006 the then Labour administration set out an ambitious agenda to move 'away from separate and segregated day centres towards community based support'. They envisaged 'disinvesting in day care and reinvesting those monies in community support'. This administration has agreed 3 key outcomes that it wants to achieve for the people of Staffordshire. We intend for the people of Staffordshire to 'be healthier and more independent' and to 'feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community'.

There is in my view broad cross party support for the principle that we need to change the way day opportunities for people with Learning Disabilities are provided.

In January the Cabinet will be asked to consider the findings of the public consultation on this matter and make a decision on the future of day opportunities for people with Learning Disabilities. Although I do not wish to pre-empt that decision, I can tell you that we had over 700 responses to that consultation. The majority of these responses were from people with learning disabilities, their carers with a variety of other interested parties also responding including local, district and county members. The findings of the consultation will also be presented to the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee for their consideration and comment

Supplementary Question

Can Cherry Orchard Garden Services (COGS), of which I am Chairman, be considered in any work that is done to help the disabled?

Reply

I would be happy to support COGS in any way that we can in the future in fulfilling the objectives of the County Council.

Mr S. Sweeney asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Many people, including myself, are concerned with the damage that alcohol is causing to our society. What is the latest situation in Staffordshire, both for young people and the population as a whole, and what are the latest plans for dealing with this issue?

Reply

The latest situation in Staffordshire - the facts:

There are 28,000 dependent drinkers across Staffordshire County, 27% in the North, 34% in the South East and 39% in the South West.

Approximately 1800 adults received services (advice, brief interventions, treatment etc.) for alcohol problems in 2012/13, 30% of which were recorded as being parents and / or living with children. The average age of those in treatment in Staffordshire is 43 with many of these experiencing complex and wide ranging problems such as mental health issues, high unemployment, drug use, and housing problems.

Young Peoples structured treatment services see approximately 300 individuals per year (and many more through outreach and brief interventions) with 58% citing alcohol as a primary or secondary problem. Substance misuse is often a symptom rather than a cause of vulnerability among young people. As with those in adult services many have broader difficulties in their lives that are compounded by alcohol and drugs that need addressing at the same time.

Plans to deal with the issue of alcohol

Treatment Services - In order to respond to and reduce the harm experienced by those who have already developed problems we are currently re-tendering adult community treatment services for alcohol and drugs. The results of which will lead to more capacity in the treatment system for dealing with alcohol issues; a better joined up approach to service delivery; and the ability to address people's wider ranging problems to ensure that treatment is successful.

Targeted prevention and early intervention - Plans are also in place to expand targeted prevention and early intervention work including the following:

- Increase in hospital liaison services to reduce the unnecessary burden on the NHS

- Brief interventions in primary care and other settings to reduce the impact of alcohol on health
- Prevention programmes to reduce people's alcohol consumption, including young people's such as social awareness and behaviour change campaigns
- Clear links with the Strengthening Families programme and targeting 'at risk' young people
- Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) programmes.

Other approaches within partnership working that are currently being investigated include the following:

- Effective use of local authority licensing powers to reduce alcohol- related harm
- Local responsibility deals
- Joined up local services to build resilience in communities
- Action on the night time economy and town centre drinking
- High Harm Local Alcohol Action Areas (LAAAS)

Supplementary Question

Can you give me an update on how you are working with Stoke-on-Trent City Council on tackling this issue?

Reply

Partnership working is essential. As you know, the Health and Wellbeing Board is a partnership of a number of organisations with the common goal of improving all aspects of health across Staffordshire. It goes without saying that although there are separate Health and Wellbeing Boards for Stoke-on-Trent and for Staffordshire, it is mutually beneficial for the two Boards to work together on shared priorities such as tackling alcohol and drugs issues. The closer we can work with Stoke the better as we can share costs and avoid duplication.

Mr I. Hollinshead asked the following question of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Transformation whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

In view of the recent announcement of the new primary school academy being built in the library at the university site in Stafford, could the Cabinet Member tell us who will actually own the site and building?

Reply

This site is presently in the ownership of Staffordshire University. The County Council have agreed "Heads of Terms" with the University for the purchase of the library building and land forming approximately 3 acres. This is subject to a successful planning permission for the conversion of the land and building to a 2 form of entry (2FE) academy primary school. Legal services are presently finalising

the agreement. The County Council will retain ownership of the land and buildings, however they will be leased to the academy sponsor on a 125 year lease, once all building works have been completed.

Supplementary Question

How much are we gaining from leasing the Academy and, in these times of austerity, would we not be better off allowing the Academy to purchase the land and property outright rather than entering into the leasing arrangement?

Reply

All academies have the same leasing arrangements.

Mr I. Hollinshead asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

The Leader of the Council stated that we are one of the leading counties in the country in fact the best in the world. With this in mind could he please enlighten us then on why we do not take the advice of our Fire Authority and fit fire suppression systems in our new builds when we have chance?

Reply

For County Council building projects we always follow the Council's policy on fire protection which is a joint County Council/Staffordshire Fire and Rescue risk based assessment of need and installation as necessary

Supplementary Question

In light of your reply, should we not be looking to change Council policy as it is a well known fact that the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service have made recommendations that this Council have chosen not to apply?

Reply

The County Council has a policy on fire protection based on risk to property as well as risk to life. It is a balanced policy based on assessment of risk, not on cost.

Mr M. Tittley asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Care whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

I would like to have my colleague's assurance that, with any changes to the care packages, the practice of needlessly putting vulnerable people on buses for hours at a time both to and from day care centres will be done away with?

Reply

Since 2006, and across both Labour and Conservative led administrations, the Council has been working to support all disabled people to be more independent and less reliant on statutory services, with the aim of ensuring they are safer happier and more supported in and by their communities. Where possible, people have been supported to make more use of public transport when going out and about. Where possible people have been supported to find purposeful activities closer to home so reducing the amount of purposeless travel time.

There remains a smaller group of people with more complex needs, who can not use public transport, who do need to go to specialist resources to get the support they need and to give their carers a proper break. When Cabinet meet in January to discuss the future of day opportunities for people with learning disabilities the needs of these people and their carers must be at the heart of any decision we make.

19. Petitions

(a) Reinstatement of the Roads and Footpaths in the Shoal Hill area of Cannock

Ms. Spicer presented a petition from local residents of the Shoal Hill area of Cannock seeking the proper reinstatement of the roads and footpaths in the area following recent public utility works.

(b) Consultation on the Future of Day Services for People with Learning Disabilities

Ms. Atkins presented a petition from local residents opposing the possible closure of the Moorlands Day Service in Leek.

(c) Proposed Sale of County Council Owned Land in Gnosall

Mrs. Mary Booth, a member of the public, presented a petition from local residents opposing the proposed sale of County Council owned land in Gnosall for housing development.

20. Exclusion of the Public

RESOLVED - 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.

21. Inward Investment in Staffordshire: Powerhouse Central - A Wave 2 City Deal for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire (Exclusion paragraph 3)

The Council considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Place concerning the progress of the negotiations with Central Government on the Wave 2 City Deal for Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire

Following a short debate, during which members expressed their support for the proposed City Deal, Mr Atkins moved, and Mr Taylor seconded, that the recommendations contained in the report be approved. Following a vote, the Chairman declared the recommendations carried.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Council agrees to a Wave 2 City Deal with Central Government, as outlined in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire City Deal document titled 'Powerhouse Central', to support the creation of jobs and accelerate economic growth across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

(b) That the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation and the Chief Executive, be given delegated authority to make any final amendments to the final City Deal agreement and sign on behalf of the County Council.

(c) That the County Council enters into a partnership with the SSLEP and SOTCC to deliver the objectives of the City Deal.

(d) That the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation and the Chief Executive, be given delegated authority to sign a Collaboration Agreement on behalf of the County Council.

Chairman