

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 15 February 2018

Present:

Attendance		
Ben Adams	Colin Greatorex	Jonathan Price
Charlotte Atkins	Michael Greatorex	Natasha Pullen
Philip Atkins, OBE	Gill Heath	Kyle Robinson
Ann Beech	Phil Hewitt	David Smith
David Brookes	Jill Hood	Paul Snape
Gill Burnett	Syed Hussain	Mike Sutherland
Ron Clarke	Keith James	Stephen Sweeney
Tina Clements	Julia Jessel	Simon Tagg
Maureen Compton	Trevor Johnson	Martyn Tittley
John Cooper	Jason Jones	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mike Davies	Ian Lawson	Ross Ward
Derek Davis, OBE	Alastair Little	Alan White
Mark Deaville	Johnny McMahon	Philip White
Alan Dudson	Paul Northcott	Conor Wileman
Janet Eagland	Jeremy Oates	Bernard Williams
Ann Edgeller	Ian Parry	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Kath Perry	Mark Winnington
Keith Flunder	Jeremy Pert	Susan Woodward
John Francis	Bernard Peters	

Apologies for absence: Dave Jones, Mark Sutton and Victoria Wilson

PART ONE

58. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

59. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 December 2017

Mrs Hood indicated that there was a typographical error on page 11 of the minutes in that the figure of "11,000" should in fact be read "1,000".

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above-mentioned correction, the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 14 December 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

60. Chairman's Correspondence

By-election Results – Codsall

The Chairman reported the election, on 8 February 2018, of Mr Robert John Spencer as Councillor for the Codsall (South Staffordshire) County Electoral Division.

Members extended their congratulations to Mr Spencer on his election to the County Council.

61. Connected Staffordshire - Strategic Plan 2018-2022

The Leader presented to the Council the Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

Members noted that the Strategic Plan was a high level plan, setting out the county council's vision, priority outcomes and the principles of how everyone connected with the county council would work. The Strategic Plan outlined the Council's ambitions for what Staffordshire would look like by 2023, and covered a period of four years. The Strategic Plan sat alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy which covered a time period of five years in accordance with best practice.

The Strategic Plan provided focus for the organisation and ensured that the Council's resources were being directed towards the delivery of its vision for a "Connected Staffordshire where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy", and also the three outcomes that had been agreed by Cabinet in August 2013, i.e. the people of Staffordshire will be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth; be healthier and more independent; and feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community. The five priorities in the Plan were:

- Create the right conditions for economic **growth** across the whole of Staffordshire that produces more, better paid jobs for residents.
- Support the construction of more **housing** to meet the growing needs of our families and people young and old.
- Improve **Education and Skills** provision in our schools, colleges and universities so that more people gain the training and qualifications they need to succeed.
- A joined up approach to **Health, Care and Wellness** that encourages people to take responsibility for their own health and plan for their future, so that we can support those who really need it.
- Ensure **Children and Families** have a network of support to help manage their own problems and stay safe and well.

These priorities were underpinned by the following "enablers":

- (i) Our **workforce** is the greatest asset we have for improving the lives of Staffordshire people, so we need to give our employees the skills, tools and confidence to do their jobs well.
- (ii) **People Helping People** is how we support citizens to help themselves and one another to improve their communities and act on the things that matter most to them.

- (iii) Our **digital** programme will make greater use of technology and data to work in more modern, effective and lower cost ways.
- (iv) Work with and through our **networks** of public, private and community organisations to achieve our ambitions.

Members noted that the vision, priority outcomes and principles set out in the Strategic Plan would be delivered through the county council's Delivery Plan which contained more detailed measures, targets and activities. Performance against the Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan would be addressed by relevant Cabinet Member and Senior Leadership Team leads. Progress made against the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan would also be scrutinised by the County Council's Select Committees.

Several Members expressed their support for the Plan and in particular the priority of supporting the construction of more housing as this would generate additional revenue for the Council through increasing the Council Tax base and would also have a positive impact on health and wellbeing. Mrs Woodward also referred to the need to improve the existing housing stock in the County. Mr Parry added that the provision of housing could not be left to the market and that the County Council needed to use its influence to ensure that the adequate and the right mix of housing was provided e.g live/work spaces. Mr Winnington also indicated that the County Council could influence housing provision through the local plan process and by making sure that the appropriate infrastructure was in place.

In response to a question from Mr Davis about using the Staffordshire Local Government Pension Fund to invest in housing provision, Mr Colin Greatorex and Mr Parry indicated that the County Council, as the Fund Manager, had a duty to act in the best interest of Fund Members and that if the Fund were to invest in such schemes a sound business case would need to be made.

Mr Smith referred to the influence the County Council has on other bodies in Staffordshire and how this could be utilised to persuade them to invest in the County.

Mrs Atkins enquired as to what "levers" the County Council would use to influence the spending of other bodies. She also enquired as to how the County Council, in its duty to improve schools, would influence independent academies. In response, Mr Atkins referred to how the County Council could use its influence to encourage schools to work together to improve performance. He also spoke about the role of the Schools Forum.

Mr Atkins thanked Members for their expressions of support for the Plan and indicated that he would take on board the comments which they had made.

RESOLVED – (a) That the Strategic Plan 2018-2022, including the vision, outcomes and priorities for Staffordshire and our people, be adopted.

(b) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the County Council, be authorised to make any minor amendments to the Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

62. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/23 and 2018/19 Budget and Council Tax

The Council received a joint report by the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2018/23 and 2018/19 Budget and Council Tax proposals.

Mr Sutherland expressed his thanks to the Director of Finance and Resources, the Chief Accountant, those other members of staff who had assisted in the development of the MTFS, the Chairman and Members of the Corporate Review Committee's Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group for the robust manner in which they had challenged and questioned Cabinet Members during their scrutiny of the MTFS/budget proposals, and also to his Cabinet Colleagues and Members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Members noted that the MTFS had been prepared in conjunction with the Strategic Plan and contained the framework for the preparation of detailed revenue and capital budgets, decisions on council tax and savings and investment plans. Mr Sutherland expressed the view that this had been the most challenging budget to date but a balanced budget for 2018/19 had been achieved, although this was not without risk, and there still remained a significant estimated gap from 2019/20. He explained that there was no single answer to addressing this gap and therefore the developing Strategic Plan proposed six strands of activity which together set out the approach to balancing the MTFS over the medium term i.e. –

- Grow Council Tax
- Grow Business Rates
- Lobby Government
- Leverage Balance Sheet
- New Offer – Digital, Smart Staffordshire Project and People Helping People.
- Reduce Costs

He also outlined the schemes included in the Capital Programme including investment in the Stafford Western Access Route and Lichfield Bypass, investment in the Keele IC6 Smart Innovation Hub, and the creation of a new primary school in Cannock and a new secondary school in Burton.

Mrs Woodward referred to the Government's austerity measures which had resulted in inadequate funding being made available to support social care. She also expressed the view that the Council's proposed MTFS was "risky, fragile and vague on all of its savings targets" and that, for those reasons, she could not support it. In response to Mrs Woodward's concerns about the "fragility" of the budget, Mr Parry indicated that this had been necessary but the proposals included an additional £36m in funding for social care and £10m for Children and Families. Mr Alan White added that the County Council was facing the issues "head-on" and, although it did not like increasing Council Tax, this had been necessary. He added that the Council was constantly striving to improve its efficiency and over the past eight years had achieved between £120m and £130m in savings

Mrs Woodward spoke about the role and effectiveness of the Community Cabinet Support Members and enquired as to what projects and savings they had delivered to

date. She also referred to the savings detailed in the MTFs and asked whether more detailed reports on the impact of each of these proposals would be submitted to Cabinet for consideration. She concluded by opposing the proposed increase in Council Tax as she felt this took no account on a person's ability to pay and would adversely impact the most vulnerable members of the community. In response to Mrs Woodward's comments about the effectiveness of the Community Cabinet Support Members, Mrs Heath indicated that they were working hard on the remit they had been given and that they were assisting in the delivery of a number of projects including local libraries, highway schemes and local transport.

Mrs Atkins expressed concerns around the delivery of the Better Care Fund and the adverse impact this could have on the Council's budget should the targets not be achieved.

Mr Robinson expressed the view that the Council should have done more on consulting the general public on the budget proposals to gain their views.

Mr Adams expressed the view that the Government needed to be lobbied to find a new way of funding health and social care whether this be through income tax, insurance or other means.

Mr Atkins indicated that he wished to echo the thanks Mr Sutherland had expressed to officers and fellow Members. He added that he would continue to lobby Central Government on ensuring local councils were given adequate funding to tackle the pressures they were facing.

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

Those Members voting in support of the recommendations:

Ben Adams	Phil Hewitt	Natasha Pullen
Philip Atkins, OBE	Jill Hood	David Smith
David Brookes	Keith James	Paul Snape
Gill Burnett	Julia Jessel	Mike Sutherland
Tina Clements	Trevor Johnson	Stephen Sweeney
John Cooper	Bryan Jones	Simon Tagg
Mike Davies	Jason Jones	Martyn Tittley
Mark Deaville	Ian Lawson	Carolyn Trowbridge
Janet Eagland	Alastair Little	Ross Ward
Ann Edgeller	Johnny McMahon	Alan White
Helen Fisher	Paul Northcott	Philip White
Keith Flunder	Jeremy Oates	Conor Wileman
John Francis	Kath Perry	Bernard Williams
Colin Greatorex	Jeremy Pert	David Williams
Michael Greatorex	Bernard Peters	Mark Winnington
Gill Heath	Jonathan Price	

Those Members voting against the recommendations:

Charlotte Atkins
Ann Beech
Ron Clarke

Maureen Compton
Derek Davis OBE
Alan Dudson

Syed Hussain
Kyle Robinson
Susan Woodward

RESOLVED – (a) That the following be approved:

- a net revenue budget of £495.463m for 2018/19 as set out in Appendix 9 to the report;
- planning forecasts for 2019/20 to 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 9 to the report;
- a contingency provision of £3.5m for 2018/19;
- a net contribution from reserves of £6.383m for 2018/19;
- a budget requirement of £489.080m for 2018/19;
- a council tax requirement of £336.534m for 2018/19;
- a council tax at Band D of £1,210.52 for 2018/19 which is an increase of 5.95% when compared with 2017/18;
- this results in council tax for each category of dwelling as set out in the table below:

Category of dwelling	Council Tax rate £
Band A	807.01
Band B	941.52
Band C	1,076.02
Band D	1,210.52
Band E	1,479.52
Band F	1,748.53
Band G	2,017.53
Band H	2,421.04

- that the Director of Finance and Resources be authorised to sign precept notices on the billing authorities respectively liable for the total precept payable and that each notice state the total precept payable and the council tax in relation to each category of dwelling as calculated in accordance with statutory requirements;
- the Capital Programme set out in Appendix 12 to the report;

- the Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix 13 to the report;
- the Authorised Limit for external debt determined for 2018/19 as detailed in Appendix 13 referred to above will be the statutory limit determined under Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 2003;
- the Financial Health Indicators set out in Appendix 14 to the report;

(b) That the Director of Finance and Resources' comments in respect of the adequacy of reserves and the robustness of the budget as set out in the report be noted.

(c) That the Director of Finance and Resources be authorised to adjust the contingency provision to reflect any grant changes announced in the final 2018/19 Local Government Finance Settlement;

(d) That the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Director of Finance and Resources be authorised to begin the MTFS process for 2019/20 in March 2018 and that they be authorised to challenge services to identify further cost reductions and income generation opportunities.

63. Statement of the Leader of the Council

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

Lichfield Southern Bypass

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Mr Colin Greatorex and Mr Adams welcomed the news of the proposed construction of the final section of the Lichfield Southern Bypass and added that the scheme would bring a number of benefits including improved traffic flows and the construction of additional housing and office space. In response, Mr Winnington extended his thanks to officers, the district Council and the developer who had been involved in the design and delivery of the scheme.

Enlargement of St Stephen's Primary School, Fradley

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Mrs England extended her thanks to the Cabinet for their approval to the increase in school places at St Stephen's Primary School, Fradley. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that the provision of appropriate infrastructure was vital to the creation of new homes.

Enlargement of Baldwins Gate CE (VC) Primary School

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Mr Philip White indicated that the proposal to increase capacity at Baldwins Gate CE (VC) School, along with other similar proposals, showed the County Council's commitment to investing in the education of Staffordshire's children.

National Funding Formula implementation for Staffordshire Schools (Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Several Members indicated that although there had been significant progress on the fairer funding for Staffordshire Schools, there was still more work to do on this issue.

Carers Campaign (Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Mr Alan White referred to the initiative to join forces with care providers to recruit more than 400 carers in the County. Mr Davis also referred to the important role played by those people who cared for a family member. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that, in financial terms, the contribution made by unpaid carers in Staffordshire was equivalent to £1.6bn.

Mr Robinson enquired as to whether there were plans for changes to the personal wellbeing budget. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that he did not have the relevant information to hand and would therefore respond to Mr Robinson after the meeting.

Broadband Roll Out (Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Mr Robinson expressed concerns that some utility companies were failing to properly reinstate roads and footways when undertaking works. In response, Mr Winnington indicated that the County Council was working with the utility companies to ensure the proper reinstatement was undertaken following works. Mr Atkins added that this was a national issue and not restricted to Staffordshire.

HS2 Progresses (Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

In response to concerns from Mrs Hood in relation to the potential adverse impact on local residents of the proposed railhead at Stone, and from Mr Tittley in relation to the disruption which would occur during the construction works and the potential negative impact this could have on the local economy, Mr Winnington and Mr Atkins indicated that each County Councillor whose division was affected by Phase 2a of HS2 had been allocated a budget of £3,500 to support the communities affected by the route. This funding could be used to pay for venues for public meetings and for the production of mitigation documents and plans. Mr Winnington added that he shared Members' concerns about the potential impact the construction works could have on local communities along the route and that the County Council would be petitioning to try to mitigate the impact of the route through Staffordshire, including during the construction works. In response to comments from Mr Francis concerning engaging with HS2, Mr Winnington indicated that consultation with them was ongoing.

Growing the Economy

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mrs Woodward concerning the Constellation Partnership, Mr Atkins indicated that this was formerly the Northern Gateway Development Zone.

Potholes

(Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Mr Bryan Jones indicated that he welcomed the recent announcement that, despite the financial challenges, the County Council will once again be investing a further £5 million in this coming year for repairing potholes. Mrs Woodward added that although she also welcomed the announcement, she was disappointed that the MTFS did not contain a similar commitment in subsequent years.

Mrs Jessel referred to the need to ensure that repairs to potholes were carried out properly so that the potholes did not reappear over a short space of time. Mrs Jessel and Mr Hussain also indicated that when undertaking a repair, the highway teams should tackle other potholes in the immediate vicinity. In response, Mr Deaville indicated that this was done as it was common sense to repair other potholes in the immediate vicinity when undertaking repair works.

Mr Tagg also requested that grit bins be replenished as required. In response, Mrs Fisher indicated that there were over 4,000 such bins and that a replenishment programme was in place. She added that Members should notify her if they were aware of any grit bins in need of re-filling.

In response to a question from Mr Dudson concerning flooding, Mr Atkins stated that the Council was working on the further development of the programme of gully emptying which should help to alleviate some flooding issues.

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

64. Recommendations to Council

(a) Pay Policy Statement 2018/19 - Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011

The Council were informed that it was a legal requirement of the Localism Act 2011 for the County Council to have a Pay Policy statement which must be published annually before 31 March.

In response to a question from Mrs Woodward, Mr Atkins confirmed that the County Council was being reimbursed by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council for the cost of the support currently being provided to them by the Council's Director of Strategy, Governance and Change.

RESOLVED – That the Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19 (as set out in Annex A to the report) be approved.

65. Outcomes of Overview and Scrutiny Work May - December 2017

Mr Brookes paid tribute to the contribution made by his vice-chairman and fellow Members of the Corporate Review Committee for their work on the development of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. He also acknowledged the work undertaken by the Chairmen and Members of the Council's other Select Committees. Mrs Woodward added that she would also like to commend the work of the officers who supported the Council's Select Committees.

In response to a question from Mrs Beech concerning progress on the Council's consultation on the possible introduction of self-service libraries, Mr Parry indicated that the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee may wish to look at the findings arising from the consultation once it had been concluded.

Mr Alan White added his thanks to the contribution made by the Council's Select Committees and referred to how their work supported the work of the Council's Executive to the benefit of the people of Staffordshire.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

66. Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel

In response to a question from Mr Robinson, Mr David Williams indicated that the Police and Crime Commissioner was still awaiting the Government's response on the Business case relating to the changes in Police and Fire and Rescue Services' Governance in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting until 2:00 pm

Present at 2:00 pm:

Ben Adams	Gill Heath	Bernard Peters
Charlotte Atkins	Jill Hood	Natasha Pullen
Philip Atkins, OBE	Syed Hussain	Kyle Robinson
Ann Beech	Keith James	David Smith
David Brookes	Julia Jessel	Paul Snape
Gill Burnett	Trevor Johnson	Mike Sutherland
Ron Clarke	Bryan Jones	Stephen Sweeney
John Cooper	Jason Jones	Simon Tagg
Alan Dudson	Ian Lawson	Carolyn Trowbridge
Janet Eagland	Alastair Little	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Johnny McMahon	Philip White
Helen Fisher	Paul Northcott	Bernard Williams
John Francis	Jeremy Oates	David Williams
Colin Greatorex	Kath Perry	Mark Winnington
Michael Greatorex	Jeremy Pert	Susan Woodward

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

Mr Sweeney informed the Council that the Chief Fire Officer, Becky Bryant, had been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Keele University.

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

68. Questions

Mrs Compton asked the following question of the Cabinet Support Member for Learning and Employability whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Given the claim that more than half of the biggest multi-academy trusts (MATs) have issued warnings about funding deficits, is the County Council aware of any academy trusts which are in financial difficulties in Staffordshire?

Reply

MATs are accountable to the Secretary of State for Education through the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The RSC, Christine Quinn and her office, work closely with ESFA who would highlight any major concerns to her.

The RSC would make the county council aware of any such concern so we could work together on local issues.

The county council and RSC hold regular strategic meetings and I can confirm that, to date, we have not been made aware of any such concern for an academy trust in the county.

Mr Brookes asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Commercial whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Would the Cabinet Member give the County Council an update on Entrust and our share partner Capita?

Reply

Capita has recently appointed a new chief executive who has reviewed the business and said that the company is currently spread too thin and needs to consolidate and take a longer term view of the business.

There was a recent announcement to the City that no dividend payments will be made this year, there is a pension fund deficit payment required and there will be a share issue later in the year to raise more capital.

This had an immediate effect with investors and hence a reduction in share price by around 40%.

Entrust's view was that this is a reaction from the market based on these short term issues and tied up with nervousness in the outsourcing market following the Carillion collapse.

In the longer term Capita's current position on Entrust is that this should be a "beacon" company/service for Capita and something to promote and replicate.

So my summary at the moment is that Entrust will be part of Capita's long term business plan and there isn't any immediate risk to Entrust.

I will continue to monitor the situation closely and continue to have close dialogue with the company.

Supplementary Question

Can this information be communicated to Members and also the public so that they can feel reassured?

Reply (by Mr Winnington on behalf of Mr Deaville)

Yes.

Mr Hussain asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Commercial whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Which County Council's properties are ear marked for sale in Burton upon Trent in the next three financial years?

Reply

At the present time the following properties are identified for sale. However our holdings are periodically reviewed as services and demand changes and as we look to make our use of properties and ways of working more efficient.

- Tutbury Rd – Housing Development Site
- Former Burton Day Services Shobnall Street – Sale agreed
- Burton Area Offices St Pauls Square
- Short Street Accommodation – Sale agreed.

Supplementary Question

Will the County Council consider the use of these buildings by local charities or social enterprises?

Reply (by Mr Winnington on behalf of Mr Deaville)

Whenever we dispose of a property we do look at potential alternative uses. However, we do have a responsibility to the taxpayer to ensure that we get the best value possible from our property disposals and where we are not doing so, we need to explain the reasons why.

Mrs Woodward asked the following question of the Leader of the Council whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

In the light of last week's report by the cross-Party working group on sexism in Parliament, can the Leader tell me please what steps he is taking to address sexism at Staffordshire County Council?

Reply

The big issue in Parliament was that people who were subjected to inappropriate behaviour didn't have a good way to bring this to light.

Staffordshire County Council is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to operating with integrity. All colleagues are expected to operate on this basis and adhere to our policies, procedures and code of conduct.

In respect of changes to policies and services, Equality Impact Assessments are prepared as a guide to help us make sure that we are having the intended effect and are not inadvertently having a negative impact on any particular groups.

I believe that it is important that our staff have the facility to raise any grievances relating to their employment and that these are dealt with promptly, fairly, consistently and without delay. Our grievance policy and procedure gives colleagues the opportunity to raise a grievance either informally or formally.

For elected members the same expectations of acting with integrity apply. In addition to informal mechanisms for resolution of issues any member of staff, member or member of the public may raise concerns with the monitoring officer under our standards regime. The issues are then investigated and considered not just by the monitoring officer but also by independent persons appointed to ensure impartiality. There are also avenues available within the Conservative Party to investigate issues and take action on and I hope there are with other Political Parties.

Supplementary Question

Would you support a scrutiny inquiry into this issue?

Reply

Whatever it takes to get there.

Mrs Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Employability whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

When will the S106 monies allocated to Westwood First School Leek be transferred to the school?

Reply

The Section 106 monies negotiated by the county council have been allocated for an agreed project at Westwood First School. A legal agreement is now being drawn up to enable the monies to be transferred to the school. It is anticipated that this would be concluded week beginning 26 February 2018.

Supplementary Question

Why has there been a delay in transferring this money?

Reply (by Mr Winnington on behalf of Mr Sutton)

I do not have the relevant information to hand and will ensure that you receive a reply from officers after this meeting.

Mr Robinson asked the following question of the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Does the Cabinet Support Member agree with me that utility companies should always ensure our pavements and highways are left in a high quality condition after they've carried out work? Therefore will the Cabinet Support Member ensure highways officers urgently inspect the diabolical state Virgin Media has left pavements in on Lynn Avenue, Milton Crescent, Barrie Gardens and Browning Grove in my division? Will the Cabinet Support Member also assure local residents and me that the County Council will immediately pursue this matter with Virgin Media and ensure they rectify the mess they've left?

Reply

Highway officers are working closely with Virgin Media at Talke. Virgin Media have issues nationally with their delivery of Project Lighting, the delivering of superfast fibre direct to the premise. All Utility Companies have to comply with the specification attached to New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991. Due to the level of non-compliance with the specification for the reinstatement of the highway within

Staffordshire, Virgin Media have entered into a self-imposed improvement plan and meet monthly with the County Council to manage progress. The pavements identified in Talke will be discussed further at the next meeting with Virgin Media on Friday 16th February 2018. Specific localised issues can be raised directly to the Cabinet Member and do not need to wait for County Council Meetings.

Supplementary Question

Can you assure me that you will update me following your meeting with Virgin Media?

Reply

Yes.

Mr Robinson asked the following question of the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Does the Cabinet Support Member agree with me that with ever dwindling resources it is counterintuitive for this authority to neglect to repair minor road defects, leaving them to deteriorate into major structural defects on the carriageway, even after they've been reported by the local County Councillor and residents? Will the Cabinet Support Member take urgent action to ensure the sinking and cracked road surface on High Street in Talke Pits receives the urgent repair work it desperately needs before a passing vehicle is completely bottomed out?

Reply

We recognise that good roads are important not just for getting people from A to B, but for attracting investment and growing a strong economy and that's why we invested an extra £5m last year – and will be doing the same once again this year.

This has helped us tackle almost 35,000 potholes, compared to 20,000 in a typical year as well as increase the amount of high-value long-term preventative maintenance treatments that help to reduce the number of potholes from appearing in the first place.

However, the number of potholes always increases over the winter period. We ask residents to report defects through the MyStaffs App or County Council website and to drive carefully during this period. There will never be enough money to do everything, but our highways team are currently pulling together next year's maintenance programme using Cabinet approved criteria for prioritisation to bring about the biggest benefit for road users.

Once again I would encourage any local members to utilise the MyStaffs App or County Council website to report and chase up any repairs. I would also encourage you to approach me directly if you have any urgent concerns rather than waiting for the council meetings.

Supplementary Question

Can I invite you to come any visit my Division to have a look at this issue?

Reply

Yes, I would be happy to do so.

Mr Clarke asked the following question of the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Four years ago Councillors were informed that a two year survey would be undertaken in the whole of Staffordshire to examine all drains. The purpose of the exercise was to identify those drains which needed to be cleared more often than others and to record those drains which were be in need of repair.

Has the County Council drawn up a chart and a schedule of all the drains in Staffordshire, this would save unnecessary cleaning of some drains and give more time for others to be cleaned on a regular basis?

Reply

You will be pleased to hear that we have now captured nearly all the information on the 185,000 gullies and drains in Staffordshire. As you can imagine this has been no small feat. We actually took an update to this to the Prosperous Select Committee on 14th November 2017.

We now have a database that holds the relevant information for each gully and is allowing us to begin a new risk based approach based on: the category of road, silt levels, flood risk, current condition (e.g. what capacity is it running at) etc. and will lead to a mixed approach to emptying frequencies.

Depending on what we find/have found on the condition of the gullies some may require further investigation before prioritising work. The cleansing of gullies will now happen once a year, once every 2 years and once every 3 years depending on the data we have collected and the factors detailed above.

These schedules are currently being loaded on the member's portal and will be available by the end of March 2018 at the latest.

Supplementary Question

Would you please check your records regarding the number of times flooding incidents have been reported in Burton as this is of great concern and we need to look at this issue in more detail?

Reply

Can you let me know which gullies in particular you have concerns about so that I can arrange for this matter to be investigated further.

Mrs Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

What lessons has Staffordshire County Council drawn from the so called Preston model which aims to ensure that a greater share of the money the Council spends stays in the local economy?

Reply

The Deputy Opposition Leader of the Labour and Co-operative Party raises an interesting question in terms of the role of the UK and Staffordshire economy in a post-Brexit future. It is becoming increasingly clear from the referendum that we need inclusive growth with an economy that works for all.

The Staffordshire economy benefits from local, regional, national and global trade, and is part of the defining nature of our great shire market towns across the County.

I understand that in Lancashire, Preston's brand new Market Hall opened for the first time last week (February 12), underneath the recently renovated Victorian canopy, and the community have a lot to be proud of.

In Staffordshire however, we are forging our own way to support our communities; with a tailored economic strategy to build on our place-based industrial strengths. This is led by the business community with globally competitive advanced manufacturing and agri-tech sectors such as JCB in the North of the County, and the automotive sector illustrated by the JLR Engine Plant based at i54 South Staffordshire.

Nationally, Central Government are playing their part through the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, with the Secretary of State Greg Clark, supporting the Industrial Strategy, with the Automotive Sector Deal announced early this year (10 January 2018). The Ceramics Sector is also looking to take forward an ambitious Deal with the support of local partners.

Regionally, Staffordshire County Council are supporting agglomeration economics through Midlands Engine and forging new transport and connectivity links east to west through the Midlands Connects. Likewise, HS2 services at Stafford, Stoke-on-Trent and Crewe are set to reinforce Staffordshire as the Connected County with improved North to South links to Manchester, Birmingham, and London.

Locally, we are seeking to reinvigorate our changing High Streets through our bespoke District Deals and Town Deals, using a collaborative approach to working through complex regeneration proposals. In particular we are supporting anchor

institutions to help support the 'Staffordshire Pound' such as the approach we have taken to the Keele Deal. Neighbourhood Planning is another way that we are supporting our more rural and parished areas so they are better prepared to secure infrastructure and shape development.

The Growth Hub services provided through collaboration between the Local Enterprise Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce and Local Authorities are continuing to provide our preferred delivery model in which entrepreneurs can receive tailored support to establish or grow their own business. The Growth Hub will often refer to local guilds or subscription based services, such as the Staffordshire Business & Environment Network and Chamber of Commerce 'Finest' network for professional services.

We as Staffordshire County Council Administration takes a commissioning approach to service design and delivery to secure the outcomes set out in our Strategic Plan. We will continue to take such a well-considered approach as we decommission and recommission services in the future as appropriate.

Without doubt the policy of this County Council of promoting prosperity for all residents which allows those who are able, to look after themselves, gives Staffordshire County Council the ability to focus its resources on the most vulnerable of our society.

To engender a policy which precludes skills, investment and intellectual input is one we could not support and is intrinsically centralist in its nature.

This administration welcomes input from responsible local, national and international sources and is proud of its position as a growth generator within the UK.

Supplementary Question

What exactly is the County Council doing to use its procurement to boost the economy of Staffordshire?

Reply

Whenever we enter into a contract we stipulate that, where possible, local goods and services should be used.

69. Petitions

(a) Resurfacing Works – Woodlands Avenue and Pickwick Place, Butt Lane

Mr Robinson presented a petition from local residents calling on the County Council to prioritise the resurfacing works along Woodlands Avenue and Pickwick Place, Butt Lane.

(b) Clough Hall Playing Fields and Barnett's Field

Mr Robinson presented a petition opposing the potential development of Clough Hall Playing Fields and Barnett's Field and calling on the County Council, as landowner, to protect the future of Barnett's Field.

(c) Provision of a pedestrian crossing to Blake Street Station, Sutton Coldfield.

Mr Smith presented a petition seeking the County Council's support regarding a request to Network Rail for the provision of a pedestrian crossing to Blake Street Station, Sutton Coldfield.

Chairman