

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 22 March 2018

Present:

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

Apologies for absence: Martyn Tittley

PART ONE

70. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

71. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 15 February 2018

RESOLVED – That, subject to the inclusion of Mr Bryan Jones in the list of attendees, and Mr Worthington in the list of Members submitting apologies for absence, the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 15 February 2018 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

72. Chairman's Correspondence

The Chairman indicated that there were no items of Chairman's Correspondence on this occasion.

73. Statement of the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council presented a Statement outlining his recent work since the previous meeting of the Council. In moving consideration of his Statement, the Leader circulated to Members the following additional item:

9. Gender Pay Gap

By the end of this month all large employers in England must by law publish a report on their Gender Pay Gap. It forms a major part of the Government's work to eliminate the pay gap within a generation. Here at Staffordshire County Council we fully support the measure, the transparency it provides and how this will encourage employers to act faster to close the gap between men's and women's earnings. It is important to stress that this is not about equal pay. At the county council there is no difference between the pay of men and women employed in the same or equivalent roles. However, there is a difference between the average hourly pay of men and women employed here when looking at the entire workforce.

Our pay gap is 12% because we have more men employed in higher-paid senior roles. This is significantly lower than the national average of 17.4% and the average for the public sector of just under 18%. This is the result of our fair and consistent approach to pay, and how we encourage employees to take advantage of our family friendly policies and flexible working options. However we need to do more analysis to understand what is causing the pay gap here and what we can do to close it. As part of our strategic plan, we are currently developing a workforce strategy for the organisation – our staff remain our most important asset for delivering that plan - and this will look at what steps we can take, from promoting family-friendly policies to talent and succession planning, to ensure that everyone who works for us regardless of their gender, age or background, has the same opportunities to progress in their career.

Third Quarter Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

In response to a questions from Mrs Woodward and Mr Adams in relation to implementing the new Children's System and changes to HR Terms and Conditions, Mr Atkins confirmed that there had been delays in the implementation of the new Children's System and revisions to HR Terms and Conditions but plans were in place to take these matters forward. He also indicated that proposals were in place for the development of a new Workforce Strategy.

Quarter 3 2017/18 Performance Report

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Mr Robinson, Mr Adams and Mr Atkins referred to school improvement and children's attainment and the valuable role played by School Governors and teachers.

In response to a question from Mrs Atkins in relation to delayed transfers of care and whether the County Council was be able to meet the targets contained in the Better Care Fund, Mr Alan White indicated that the County Council was meeting with colleagues in the NHS to tackle this issue.

Mr Hussain spoke about pockets of deprivation in his Division and gave details of a number of cases he had encountered recently. He stressed the need for local authorities and the Government to take robust action to address such issues.

30 Hours Childcare

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Several Members spoke about the success of the 30 Hours Childcare pilot in Staffordshire and the positive impact this had had on people's lives. Mrs Woodward and Mr Jones referred to the need to ensure that the scheme was sustainable and expressed concern that the funding provided to Providers by the Government was insufficient. Mr Sutton paid tribute to the staff who had worked with Providers to make the pilot scheme in Staffordshire a success.

School Places

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Members welcomed the recent announcement that of the 7494 applications made for transfer at age 11, just over 92.5 per cent of parents had been allocated their first preference school. Mr Philip White paid tribute to the team who had been involved in the administration of the allocation of school places.

In response to a question from Mr Robinson relating to new housing developments and the need to secure Section 106 and 278 contributions from developers to facilitate the provision of additional school places, Mr Adams indicated that the County Council liaised with the local planning authorities on such issues. Mr Sutton added that Members would shortly be receiving briefings on school places via their local priority meetings. Mr Atkins also indicated that the Cabinet, at their meeting in May, were to receive a report in relation to proposals to construct a number of new schools across Staffordshire over the next five years in order to meet the anticipated demand for places.

Highways Operations

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Mr Davis referred to the need for additional funding from central government to tackle the deterioration in the condition of the highway network. In response, Mr Colin Greatorex indicated that this was a national problem and not just confined to Staffordshire. He added that an additional £5m had been allocated by the County Council to tackle highways maintenance issues during 2018/19 and that progress was being made in tackling the backlog of repairs.

Several Members paid tribute to the work of the highways team who had been responsible for keeping the County's roads clear of snow and ice during the recent adverse weather. Mrs Fisher added that around 30,000 tonnes of salt and grit had been used over the winter period which was double the amount used over an "average" winter.

Mrs Heath also referred to the valuable contribution made by farmers who had assisted in the snow clearing operations in some rural areas.

Mr Atkins asked Members to encourage their constituents to report potholes and other highway maintenance issues through the MyStaffs app.

Housing

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Several Members referred to the need to work closely with partners in the district and borough councils to ensure the provision of appropriate infrastructure to support housing provision in local plans and thus to avoid issues such as “rat-running”.

Mipim

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mrs Woodward concerning the costs to the Council in attending the International Property Professionals Conference in Cannes, the number of representatives from the Council who had attended the event and what benefits had arisen from the Council’s attendance in previous years; Mr Winnington indicated that he was accompanied to this year’s conference by Anthony Hodge, Commissioner for Business and Enterprise, and Chris Kirkland, Senior Investment Manager. He added that the event had attracted around 26,000 attendees and that the County Council representatives were part of a wider delegation from the Midlands Engine which had welcomed 4,700 visitors to its exhibition at the Conference. He indicated that he would supply Mrs Woodward with details of the costs incurred by the County Council in attending the event but added that the Council had also received funding for its attendance through sponsorship.

Several Members spoke about the Council’s success in creating employment sites within the County and in enabling them to expand their businesses as could be seen by Gestamp’s decision to relocate from its premises in Cannock to a new site at Four Ashes.

Oscars

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Members paid tribute to actress, Rachel Shenton from Caverswall, and Director, Chris Overton, from Cannock who had been awarded an Oscar for the best live action short film with “The Silent Child”. Members referred to how their success at the Oscars would help to raise awareness of the affect deafness can have on individuals and families.

Mr Dave Jones expressed the view that more needed to be done to raise awareness of this issue including making “signing” a compulsory part of the school curriculum and a subject which could lead to the award of a G.C.S.E. In response, Mr Philip White indicated that he would be happy to meet with Mr Jones to discuss these suggestions further.

Mr Alan White indicated that he would take on board Members’ comments and he also highlighted some of the voluntary work Rachel Shenton had undertaken to raise

awareness of this disability. Mr Atkins added Rachel's aim was to have at least one person in every school who had the ability to sign.

Mrs Atkins referred to the North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's decision to cease funding the provision of NHS hearing aids and indicated that they were out of step with other CCGs and needed to rethink their position.

Gender Pay Gap

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward indicated that although she was pleased that Staffordshire's pay gap of 12% was significantly lower than the national average of 17.4% and the average for the public sector of just under 18%, there was more work to do to address this issue and she suggested that it be included in the proposed scrutiny into sexism.

Learning Disability Residential Accommodation Re-Provision in the Lichfield area

Mrs Woodward referred to the decision of the Cabinet at their meeting on 21 March 2018 relating to Learning Disability Residential Accommodation Re-Provision in the Lichfield area and sought an assurance that there would be full consultation with stakeholders to ensure the adequate provision of supported living accommodation. In response, Mr Alan White indicated that the County Council was in the process of re-crafting its learning disability strategy and that this issue would be the subject of a debate at Scrutiny in May and would be the subject of a wide consultation process. He added that there was currently around 300 units for supported living across Staffordshire.

74. Recommendations to the Council

(a) Treasury Management, Annual Investment and Minimum Revenue Provision Strategies 2018/19

Members were informed that the management of the County Council's cash flows and borrowing had a significant impact on the budget. The Cabinet, at their meeting on 17 January 2018, approved the proposed strategies for the 2018/19 financial year. Adoption of the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the adoption of the Minimum Revenue Provision policy were, however, matters that were reserved for the Full Council to determine.

RESOLVED – That, in accordance with the regulations:

(a) The Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) 2018/19 be adopted.

(b) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy 2018/19 be adopted.

(b) Members' Allowances Scheme - Independent Remuneration Panel Report

Members were informed that the County Council was required to establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to provide advice and recommendations to the Council on its Members' Allowances Scheme. Any decisions on the nature and level of

allowances were a matter for the Full Council, but the Council must have regard to any recommendations submitted by the Independent Remuneration Panel before establishing or amending the Members' Allowances Scheme.

The Panel met on four occasions from October 2017 until the conclusion of its review of members' allowances in January 2018.

As part of their deliberations and in response to feedback from Members of the Council, in addition to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Opposition Leader, the Panel proposed a change to the County Council's Constitution to include three new roles of Opposition Select Committee Vice-Chairmen created from the single Shadow Cabinet Member Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). Under these proposals, the Opposition Deputy Leader would hold a vice-chairmanship on the Corporate Review Select Committee and the three Opposition Select Committee posts would hold a vice-chairmanship on the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee, Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee and the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee.

In their report, the Panel also proposed to the Council that the Chairman of the County Council, in consultation with the relevant group leader, be given delegated authority to increase the allowance paid to the Vice-Chairmen of a Committee to the level of the corresponding Chairman's allowance if they were required to take on the responsibilities of the Chairman for a sustained period. The Special Responsibility Allowance paid to the Chairman of the Committee would be suspended during this period.

In addition to reviewing the SRA's paid to members, the Panel also reviewed the allowances paid to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the County Council and made recommendations thereon.

Mr Atkins moved, and Mr Alan White seconded, "That –

- (i) The Council's thanks be extended to the Independent Remuneration Panel for their report.
- (ii) The Council accepts their recommendation for an increase in overall allowances of 1% in line with the NJC pay award to staff.
- (iii) That, as the Council is minded that the new Executive arrangements are still relatively new and that it is at this point in time premature to make changes to the levels of remuneration, the consideration of the other recommendations of the Panel be deferred for further consideration in their report for 2019/20.

Mrs Woodward indicated that she supported the motion as it would allow a further opportunity to discuss appropriate levels of remuneration with the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

RESOLVED – That –

- (i) The Council's thanks be extended to the Independent Remuneration Panel for their report.

- (ii) The Council accepts their recommendation for an increase in overall allowances of 1% in line with the NJC pay award to staff.
- (iii) That, as the Council is minded that the new Executive arrangements are still relatively new and that it is at this point in time premature to make changes to the levels of remuneration, the consideration of the other recommendations of the Panel be deferred for further consideration in their report for 2019/20.

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

RESOLVED – That the report be received.

76. Questions

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

Question

The roads and pavements on the new development of Mitchell Gardens in my division are yet to be adopted. Despite repeated requests for grit bins to be installed on the estate which is hilly and steep, the County Council's response has simply been one of refusal to act. Can some common-sense be brought to bear in order to assist affected residents - will the County Council urgently step in and install a few grit bins to ensure residents can go about their daily lives safely during periods of severe weather?

Reply

Our highways crews do a tremendous job, working in the harsh winter weather, day-and-night, to help keep over 2,400 Kms of Staffordshire's busiest roads free from the dangers of ice and snow.

In addition we also have over 50 local communities that are engaged in the local ice buster's activity and around 4,000 local grit bins/piles that have been located using strict criteria at key positions across the County's remaining 4,000 Kms of adopted roads.

Mitchell Gardens is a private housing development. It is still very much in the building stages, with unsurfaced roads and the builder's construction plant moving around daily. Until the development is complete and the application for public adoption of the new roads is approved consideration of any necessary winter gritting activity remains a matter for the developer and early residents of the site.

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

Question

Nearly 8 million tonnes of plastic are dumped into our oceans every year. Plastics are an integral part of daily life in the 21st century but the proliferation of single-use-plastics is having a devastating impact on our environment. The Government must act now to stop the excessive use of single-use-plastics, which often end up in our waters and are severely harming marine wildlife. Councils must also play their part in tackling this problem. Therefore will the Leader of the Council commit to working with the Labour Group to make this County Council one of the first plastics clever councils in the country? Will he meet with me to discuss further and agree to establish a cross-party member working group to lead on this initiative?

Reply

The issue of single use plastic and its impact on the environment has been in the news recently, however the problem is one we're already aware of and recognise that it is not the only waste material that is causing problems with the environment. Environmentally speaking it is micro plastics that cause the most significant damage in marine environments and the government has acted on this through restricting the use of micro beads.

Waste collection from households in Staffordshire is carried out by District and Borough Councils and they collect the majority of dry recycling materials, including a range of plastics, to be processed under their own contracts. As you may know we also accept plastics at our Household Waste Recycling Centres.

However I would say that Staffordshire County Council becoming Plastic Clever, while achievable, is a little limited in ambition. The household waste service across all Staffordshire is jointly overseen by the Joint Waste Management Board and is the most appropriate place to raise the issue.

Working in partnership with our Districts and Boroughs, we provide a range of opportunities to capture various plastics (kerbside & HWRCs) and have multiple local and UK based disposal and reprocessing options. In addition, the authority is represented on a number of national policy and lobbying organisations, and will continue to use these channels to challenge the broader environmental and waste management issues.

Supplementary Question

Would the Leader be prepared to meet with me to discuss this issue further?

Reply

I believe that the proper way to take this matter forward is via the All Party Member Group on Improvement and through the Joint Waste Management Board.

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

Question

The Tamworth/Amington road in my division is one of the most used but also has been left for many years without adequate maintenance. As a result it has become severely dilapidated with sunken areas, potholes and general use damage. Could the portfolio holder confirm that this road will be in the 2018 summer programme for a resurface and that the 7.5t restriction will remain in place following any works?

Reply

As has been confirmed previously, Tamworth Road / Amington Road is included in the draft 2018/19 highway capital maintenance programme, subject to Cabinet approval early in the new financial year.

Advance structural repairs were carried last summer at the junction with Florendine Street and through the adjacent pedestrian crossing. Later this summer the works will be completed with a new micro asphalt surface course applied along the whole length from Bolebridge Street to Brindley Drive / Mercian Way.

There are currently no proposals to amend the existing 7.5T environmental weight restriction.

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

Question

2018/19 Planning Forecasts for the Families and Communities budget shows that the Culture and Communities sector will face a cut of £513k and Children's Services will lose out £1.830m. Can the Cabinet Member specify which services will be affected by these changes?

Reply

Please see the below information which summarises a breakdown of which services will be affected by the changes.

Culture & Communities Movement in Base Budget 2018/19 & 2019/20

	2018-19	2019-20	Movement in Budget
MTFS Savings	£.	£.	£.
(1*) Reduction in William Salt Library Running Costs	-	- 75,000	- 75,000
(2*) Implementation of Libraries Framework	500,000	- 750,000	- 250,000
(1*) New Staffordshire History Centre Staffing Model	130,000	- 260,000	- 130,000
(2*) Mobile & Travelling Libraries Review	-	- 300,000	- 300,000

(3*) Surrender of Shugborough Lease to the National Trust	- 45,000	88,000	233,000
(4*) Redesign of the Arts Service	- 74,000	- 74,000	-
(3*) Further Shugborough Operating Model Savings	-	- 75,000	- 75,000
	-	-	
	849,000	1,446,000	- 597,000
Inflationary Uplift on the Base Budget	161,000	324,000	163,000
Additional Pay Award	79,000	-	- 79,000
	-	-	
Movement in Base Budget 2018/19 to 2020/21	609,000	1,122,000	- 513,000

- (1) *Savings related to the redesign of Staffordshire Archives & Heritage Service into the new Staffordshire History Centre (SHC) including a staffing establishment review.*
- (2) *The Final phase of the libraries framework implementation including potential Self Service option; the transfer of more libraries into Community Managed Libraries and a review of mobile/travelling libraries (subject to public consultation)*
- (3) *The removal of the remaining Shugborough revenue budget following payment of redundancy costs post lease transfer to The National Trust.*
- (4) *Redesign of the County's Arts Offer.*

Children's Services has seen pressure arising from increased Looked After Children's numbers which has been partially funded, with additional savings set against the wider Children's transformation work including formal early help and our work with those children at the "cusp of" statutory intervention. Whilst there are pressures from rising demand on our children's services we continue to focus on Outcomes i.e. corporate responsibility for child safety and protection.

Children's Services Movement in Base Budget 2018/19 & 2019/20

	2018-19	2019-20	Movement in Budget
	£.	£.	£.
MTFS Savings			
Spending Pressures approved February 2017			
LAC number changes	-	- 350,000	- 350,000
Looked After Children increased number and costs	-	-	-
SEN transport relating to number of school days in a financial year.	100,000	50,000	- 50,000
Expected changes in SEN pupil numbers and diversity in destination bases.	90,000	190,000	100,000
SEN Transport - Higher costs due to an increase in operator prices.	-	-	-
New Service Projected Pressures			

SEN Home to School Transport	823,000	823,000	-
Looked After Children - increased number and costs	6,011,000	7,511,000	1,500,000
Children's Direct Payments inc. NLW increase	156,000	184,000	28,000
Part year impact of loss of DSG for LSTs	1,170,000	650,000	- 520,000
SEN Transport - school days adjustment	- 40,000	70,000	110,000
SEN pupil number changes	60,000	60,000	-

Total Service cost reductions approved in February 2017

Intensive work with LAC using dedicated multi agency team.	- 122,000	- 122,000	-
Joint initiative with Public Health in respect of targeted interventions	- 699,000	1,144,000	- 445,000
Engagement with partners to work differently together to build greater resilience in families and communities across Staffordshire	- 413,000	1,643,000	1,230,000
Termination of the Evolve Young People contract.	- 50,000	- 50,000	-
Non delivery of additional MTFS saving in relation to Children's System	100,000	100,000	-
To reshape support plans for children transitioning into adults	- 280,000	- 280,000	-
Reduction in budget following a review of all age disabilities policies and practices	- 200,000	- 500,000	- 300,000
Children's placements review and prevention	- 50,000	- 100,000	- 50,000

Projected changes to Original Service Cost Reductions

Non Delivery of historic MTFS savings for Children's System	3,300,000	-	3,300,000
Changes to existing MTFS saving for transformation costs	227,000	227,000	-

New Service Cost Reduction Options

Higher income for Education Psychologists and Respite Services	- 200,000	- 200,000	-
Savings from Intensive Prevention Initiatives	- 750,000	- 750,000	-

	9,233,000	4,726,000	4,507,000
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Inflationary Uplift on the Base Budget	2,375,000	5,172,000	2,797,000
Additional Pay Award	452,000	332,000	- 120,000

Movement in Base Budget 2018/19 to 2020/21	12,060,000	10,230,000	1,830,000
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Supplementary Question

Can the Cabinet Member assure me that before the implementation of these cuts there will be a proper impact assessment?

Reply

Please can you email me and the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People with your concerns?

77. Petitions

(a) Improvements to the junction of Eastern Avenue and Grange Lane, Lichfield

Mrs Pullen presented a petition from local residents seeking improvements at the junction of Eastern Avenue and Grange Lane, Lichfield.

(b) Improvement to Broadband to Properties along Dunwood Lane, Endon

Mrs Heath presented a petition from residents of Dunwood Lane, Endon, seeking improvements to their Broadband speed and reliability.

Chairman