

Staffordshire County Council

Annual Scrutiny Report

2019/20





Introduction

Welcome to Staffordshire County Council's Annual Scrutiny Report. I have pleasure in introducing this report which summarises the work that our Select Committees have undertaken over the last 12 months.

Good scrutiny is essential in any well governed local authority. It plays a vital role in influencing services and shaping plans which affect our citizens. It allows elected members to focus time and effort on issues that matter most. Scrutiny has given members the opportunity to hear from experts in a number of different fields who have helped to challenge performance and policy direction to ensure that we are getting the absolute most we can from the resources we have.

At the time of writing this foreword, we have entered into a period of national lockdown due to the Coronavirus, Covid 19. We, as a council, are having to operate differently and rise to the challenge and demands facing our citizens. Scrutiny is doing the same. We are meeting online for the first time and trying to find different ways of holding both the Executive and our partners to account. On behalf of the Chairman of our Select Committees, I would like to thank all Councillors and Officers for their continued support during these ever-challenging times.



Councillor David Williams
Chairman of Corporate Review Committee



Scrutiny Structure

Staffordshire County Council's Constitution allows for four Select Committees covering the following areas:

Corporate Review

This is the Council's Principal Scrutiny Committee, responsible for the overall management and coordination of Select Committees as well as; overall performance; Strategic Corporate Planning; improvement and transformation; the Local Enterprise Partnership; and the Council's support services. It also deals with any Executive decisions that have been called in.

Healthy Staffordshire

The Select Committee is responsible for scrutiny of matters relating to the planning, provision and operation of health services in the Authority's area, including public health and adult social care, in accordance with regulations made under the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and subsequent guidance.

Prosperous Staffordshire

The Select Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic ambitions for promoting prosperity and economic growth including highways infrastructure and connectivity and flood and water management, education, learning and skills.

Safe and Strong Communities

The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of safeguarding vulnerable people, community safety and localism.

The Select Committees investigate issues affecting the communities of Staffordshire. Each Committee is made up of County Councillors from the different political parties represented on the County Council. Some Committees also have several co-opted members who are either district or borough councillors or who are co-opted for their particular expertise. Each Select Committee has a Chairman, Vice Chairman and an Opposition Vice Chairman. Committee meetings take place regularly and are usually open for the public to attend. In addition, Select Committees are broadcast on the Staffordshire County Council website.

A key role of a Select Committee is to make recommendations that will lead to improvements in services. One of the ways that they will do this is to investigate a topic in depth, this is called a scrutiny review or working group. Review reports are usually reported to Cabinet or the lead for an external organisation, for example the Chair of a Clinical Commissioning Group.



Corporate Review Select Committee

The Corporate Review Committee is the Council's principle Scrutiny Committee and as such plays a key role in challenging and monitoring performance. Every year, the complaints report is considered and each quarter the performance report. This enables us to highlight any problem areas to refer them to the relevant Committee for further investigation ensuring poor performance doesn't go unchallenged.

The Committee set up a working group to look at the **Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)**. The County Council has significantly reduced its running costs, whilst spending a record amount on social care for a growing ageing population as national funding has reduced. The Working Group challenged the major risk assumptions within the MTFS. They met over several months and interviewed Cabinet members covering the greatest risk areas. The final report made recommendations that span 5 categories covering Health and Care; Digital and Community First; Children and Young People; Environmental Maintenance; and General issues. It also made a request to the Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee to monitor the Children's Transformation Plan in order to ensure savings are achieved and continue to transform the way it delivers services to meet the ever increasing demand for care services, best practice and ensuring value for money. The report also highlighted the four enablers to achieving MTFS as well as focusing on the risk areas. The group was widely viewed as a success in involving members of all Political Parties in pre decision scrutiny. It is due to reconvene in September to continue its pre-decision scrutiny brief prior to next year's budget setting.

In July, the Committee considered a **Call-In** involving changes to the **Your Staffordshire Card Scheme (YSC)** scheme.

The main concern and reason for the call-in was that not all areas of the County had alternatives to the scheme, and some bus operators were not offering affordable alternatives, which left some young people with only the YSC for subsidised travel. Staffordshire Youth Parliament made representations at the meeting and a Staffordshire Youth Union member was invited to speak on behalf of young people in the County.

Despite the Committee agreeing with the implementation of the decision, it was agreed that further scrutiny should take place to consider how best to address some of the geographical issues raised during the debate.

The Vision and Strategy for Public Services is a critical document for the County Council. Its aim is to develop a unifying vision for the County to enable better civic leadership and outcomes. It had been developed through Network Staffordshire, a group of senior leaders from across the County, including Councils, Universities, Police, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Fire and Rescue Service and the Commissioner's Office. Information gathered from a series of interviews with key systems leaders across the County had been fed into a workshop of Network Staffordshire, resulting in three emerging themes for collaborative working being agreed. These were: Smart Staffordshire and 5G; better use of data across Staffordshire; and, place branding. The Committees suggestions included; a more proactive use of new and developing technologies in exploring solutions rather than focusing only on identifying problems; Partnership working and climate change; and the opportunities for investment, were noted and agreed to influence future developments.

David Williams
Chairman

Corporate Review Select Committee

Items considered during the year

- Integrated Performance Reports at each quarter (4 reports per year)
- Review of Property Strategy, Property Sub-Committee to include an update on the Penda Property Partnership
- Overview of the Select Committee Work Programmes
- Call-In of the Cabinet Member Delegated Decision - Changes to the Your Staffordshire Card Scheme (YSC) - scheme to end on 31st August
- Scrutiny Outcomes Report - January - June 2019
- Feedback from SEND Working Group -
- Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2018 - 2019
- Vision and Strategy for Public Services
- Medium Term Financial Strategy Working Group - Final Report
- County Fleet Care and Transport
- Learning and Development Commissioning Plan

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:
<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=604>



Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee

To ensure that the whole of the County's geographical area is represented on this Select Committee, all eight District and Borough Councils are entitled to an elected member representative with full voting rights. We also invite a representative from Staffordshire Healthwatch to attend the meetings and offer evidence on whatever subject we are considering. This has been a busy year for the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. The main areas of business can be split into two main categories:

Social care:

- Pre decision scrutiny was carried out on the Adult Learning Disability Community Offer and the day opportunities purchased from the independent sector. The Committee recommended clarity on the marketplace service specification, quality standards and the delivery of safe, quality services.
- Patients with Complex Care needs and how and where their care is provided, was discussed following the BBC Panorama programme into Whorlton Hall. The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were questioned on their quality assurance checks and how they ensured that the best, appropriate care was provided.
- Pre decision scrutiny of the services and support that the County Council provides to carers, contained in the 'All together for carers', strategy was considered. The Committee recommended to Cabinet that further consideration of the options for young carers to contact service providers via technology should be given; better signposting to relevant sources of information or services; current engagement with schools being expanded to include liaison with Special Education Needs and Disabilities Hubs to support awareness raising and identification; and mitigation of the various risks highlighted in the report should be a priority.

- Consideration of the Autism Implementation Plan led to a range of recommendations being made to the Cabinet and partners around awareness raising and the need for culture changes.
- A new approach to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy was considered in some depth. Members expressed concerns over the proposed timescales and suggested more work takes place on the support needed into the prevention of negative consequences of social media and the link between physical health and the relationship with mental health. The Committee also suggested the introduction of exit interviews. They also felt that there needed to be closer links with early years identification, thus supporting people before issues escalate.

Health (NHS) issues.

There have been a number of events during the year which have led to the Committee scrutinising the delivery of health care services.

- One of these was a fire at the George Bryan Centre which led to the emergency closure of the Community and Mental Health Care Centre. The Committee strongly argued that a treatment centre should remain in the south of the county in Tamworth and are waiting to hear if this will be the case.
- The formation of One Single Strategic Commissioning Organisation was also considered in some depth. The Committee felt that the proposal was financially led, that the commissioning policies hadn't been considered and that the North and South of the county had very different population needs which should be recognised. Following the consultation, the proposals were withdrawn to enable further development.

- This year the CCGs Annual Assessments were published with five of the six CCGs receiving an overall rating of inadequate. The Committee invited the Accountable Officer to answer questions. One of the issues discussed at length was the financial issues suffered by both the CCG and the County Council and the extent of delayed discharge problems, particularly in the South of the County.

This discussion paved the way to a task group being set up to look at the whole urgent care provision. Unfortunately, this has been delayed due to the Covid 19 crisis, but this will be carried forward into next years' work programme.

Johnny McMahon
Chairman

Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee Work Programme 2019/20

Items considered during the year

- Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer
- University Hospital North Midlands - Quality/Improvement, Cancer targets, financial deficit
- Patients with Complex Care needs
- NEXXUS Care
- Healthwatch Performance report
- George Bryan Centre Engagement Plans
- Single Strategic Commissioning Organisation
- East Staffordshire CCG Community Services Procurement
- Integrated Urgent Care (GP Out of Hours and NHS 111 services)
- STP 5 Year Strategy refresh -Including STP workstreams and urgent care systems
- Adult Learning Disability 2022 Community Offer: Staffordshire County Council Learning Disability Services and the Carers Strategy 'All together for carers'
- Clinical Commissioning Groups Annual Assessments 2019
- Clinical Commissioning Groups Brexit preparations
- Children and Adolescent Mental Health Strategy - update - include a briefing on the Trailblazer bid.
- Emotional Health & Wellbeing for Children & Young People, Contract
- Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (MPFT)
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) - Child Care and Maternity services
- Autism Implementation Plan
- All Age Carers: Future Delivery Options
- Non-merger of CCGs and their commissioning intensions;

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=871>

Prosperous Select Committee

One of the most productive meetings that the Select Committee held this year was the one which considered the **Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy**. We invited expert witnesses from Amey, who assisted members in their questioning. With a high asset value of £7.5 billion the Staffordshire highway network is the largest and most visible asset for which the County Council is responsible. In recent years the investment in highway infrastructure and its performance has been increasingly under the scrutiny spotlight. The current financial challenges and increased public demands and expectations have meant the management of our highway assets has never been more important to ensure we achieve our outcomes. We asked questions on lobbying government for funding and what support would be given through HS2; the decline in customer satisfaction; and concern over communications with Amey; information on personal injury claims and the average response time from enquiry to inspection.

The Committee have also looked at the performance of two long-term highway service delivery contracts those being; **Infrastructure+ and the Streetlighting Private Finance Initiative**, the reporting system; the quality of repairs made by utility companies and the timetable of the streetlighting PFI asset replacement programme.

Whilst discussing the **Draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP)** we asked for expert advice from Professor Martin Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Staffordshire University and Matthew Lowe, Policy Manager at Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce, who helped to formulate questioning streams which we used to develop our response and shape the work around the SIP. It was felt that without links to other documents/strategies such as the Local Industrial Strategy, the Plan lacked direction and economic vision. The Committee will be considering this item again along with evidence of forging strategic relationships with key infrastructure providers and external funding providers.

Members had input into the Capital Funding for New Schools and the Education and Skills Strategy, requesting that more information on the role of governors be included in the document and asked if the size of the

geographic footprint could be raised with the Regional Schools Commissioner. These suggestions were taken on board.

We monitored the position of the County's 'alternative Education Provision' and commented on the Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025. We also received several Economic Growth Programme Updates which enabled us to keep on top of the level of activity in the county.

We have been actively engaged with the pre-decision scrutiny of the activities and projects surrounding Staffordshire Air Quality. We concentrated on the potential harm caused by airborne pollution, particularly from motorised traffic and the Councils key role in finding a Highways and Transport solution for roads and car usage. We were informed that the Council had been successful in putting in a joint bid with Stoke on Trent City Council and Newcastle Borough Council in Staffordshire for monies from the government's Clean Air Fund. This will continue to be scrutinised well into the next municipal year.

The Committee has three co-optees representing schools and they have full voting rights on all education matters.

Ian Parry
Chairman

Prosperous Select Committee

Items considered during the year

- Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Policy and Strategy
- Infrastructure+ and Lighting for Staffordshire Performance Review
- Staffordshire Air Quality Projects
- Education and Skills Strategy: A Partnership Framework for Staffordshire
- Capital Funding for New Schools
- Economic Growth Programme Update
- Draft Strategic Infrastructure Plan
- Update on Section 53 Applications
- Update on the Education and Skills Strategy
- Alternative Education Provision
- Staffordshire Library Service 2020-2025
- Mitigation Plans for Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation and Update on Countryside Estate Review
- Staffordshire Air Quality Projects

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:
<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=868>



Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee

A key area of scrutiny this year has been the **Children's Transformation Plan**, outlining the whole system model for change and highlighting expected outcomes. The system has been scrutinised as it developed, with Select Committee Members conscious of the significant changes to ways of working the Plan brings, considering the business case, values and anticipated impact. We plan to continue to scrutinise the implementation of this new approach, with its aspirational transformation and predicted subsequent savings. We will look at key milestones within the Plan's implementation, evaluating their timeliness, success and outcomes.

One of the significant findings of the **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** Ofsted report was around co-production, so ensuring a relationship developed that allowed relevant partners to contribute to the development of SEND was essential. To enable adequate time for detailed consideration of the issues involved with this, and because of the cross-cutting nature of SEND, we established a joint working group with representatives from both Prosperous and Healthy Staffordshire Select Committees to scrutinise this issue.

Contextual Safeguarding is the biggest change to child protection since the Laming report in 2009. It looks at harm to children and young people in a much broader context and is a significant rethink nationally on how to safeguard children. With this change being so important to future safeguarding we held a workshop with our lead safeguarding officers to enable a greater understanding of this new approach and how it will change safeguarding in Staffordshire. Members of the Corporate Parenting Panel were invited to join us for the workshop. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) had previously been included on our work programme on a quarterly basis. In future CSE will be considered as part of the broader Contextual Safeguarding agenda.

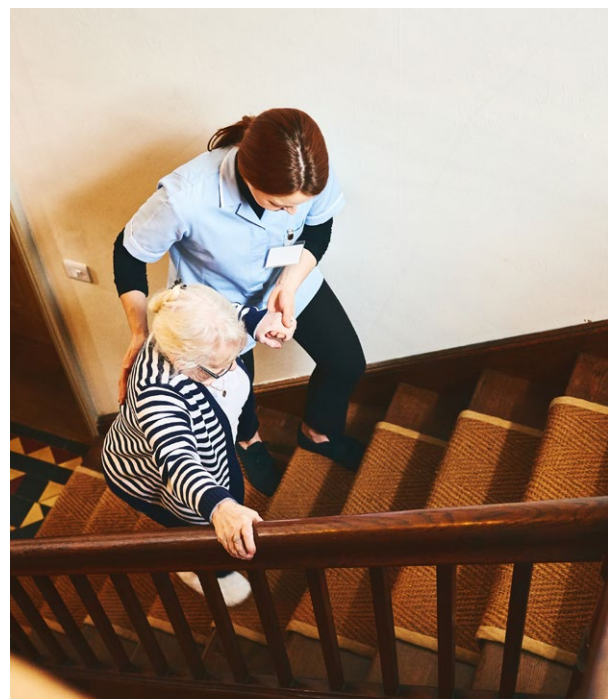
Several areas of scrutiny this year led us to raise the need for further consideration around the **assessment and referral of vulnerable individuals**.

The areas of scrutiny concerned were around: Missing Children and the work of Catch 22; new domestic abuse contracts. The Ofsted inspection which found that the first response service

“Thresholds are well understood among partners, but the quality of referrals received from other agencies varies, meaning that the needs of children are not always initially understood, and further information is often required.....”

As a result, the Vice-Chairman and Deputy Vice-Chairman met with representatives from the MASH to consider a range of issues, including how safeguarding referrals are made, how the MASH works within this process, and how referrals are made to Catch 22. We were particularly keen to ensure that there was consistency in referrals and sought reassurance that the decision-making process using the one front door approach had the right intelligence base to enable appropriate decisions to be taken. Whilst we are satisfied that referrals are made in a consistent manner and were impressed with the work of colleagues in the MASH and beyond, there are a number of areas for further work which are being considered as part of our future work programme around commissioned services.

**John Francis
Chairman**



Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee

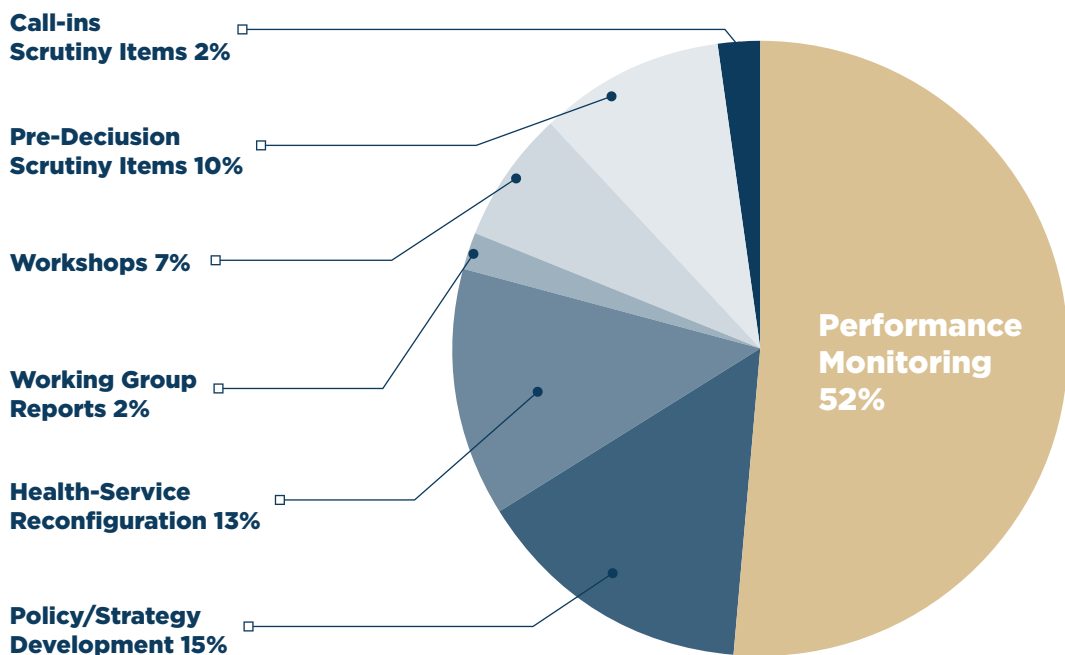
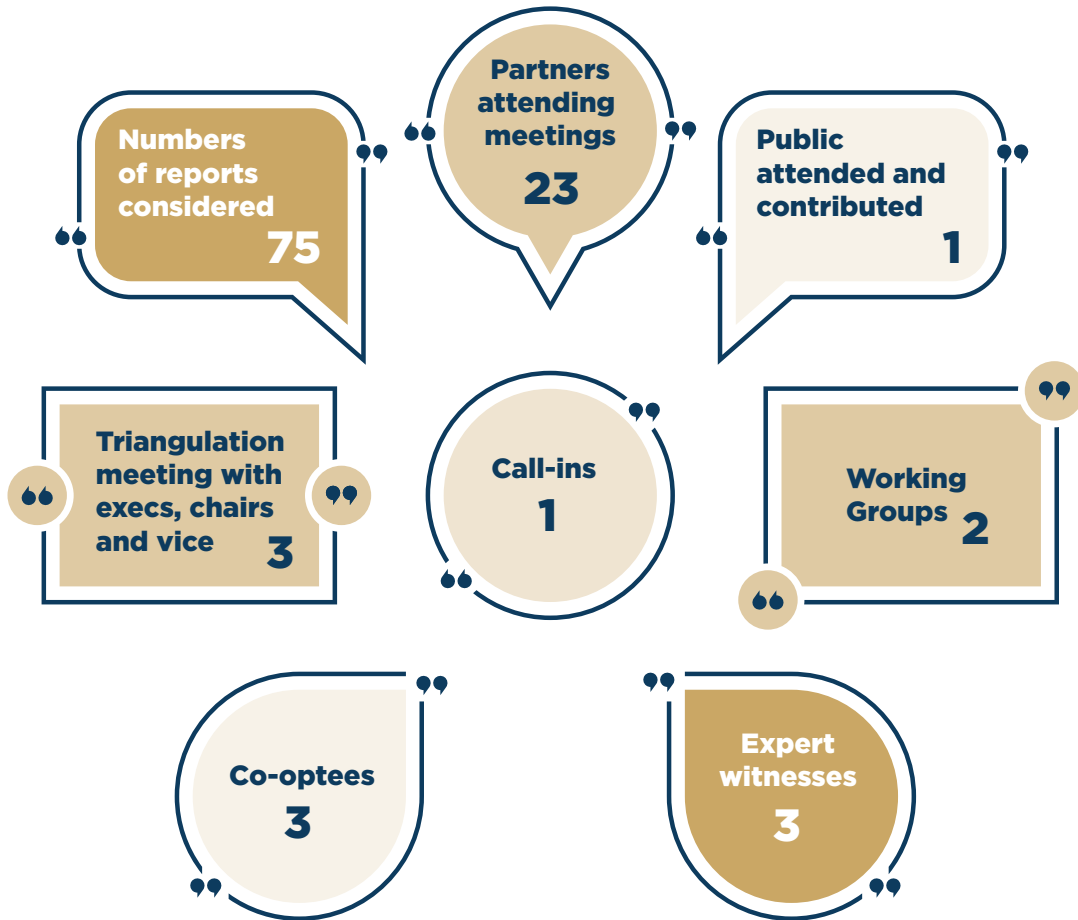
Items considered during the year

- Missing Children
- Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services
- Children's Improvement Plan
- SSCB New Arrangements
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Safeguarding in Education Policy
- Domestic Abuse
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Annual Report 2018-19 - Adults Social Care
- Customer Feedback and Complaints Annual Report 2018-19 - Children's Social Care
- Early Help Family Support (BRFC)
- Children's Transformation Part 2
- Regional Permanency Partnership
- Trading Standards, Rogue Traders & Doorstep Crime
- Adult Safeguarding Referrals - result of audit & developments
- Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Children's Improvement Board update
- Domestic Abuse
- Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Children's Safeguarding Board Annual Report
- Catch 22
- Safeguarding concerns around Taxi Licensing
- Progress with the Children's Services Improvement Plan

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=870>

Select Committee Activity



What's coming up in 2020/21

The Committees enter the municipal year 2020/21 operating under extremely challenging times. Lockdown continues and virtual meetings look a part of our life for the foreseeable future. This will see us working in different ways and engaging the public and partners with more technology-based solutions.

At the point of writing this, we aren't sure what the next six months holds for us or the challenges it will bring.

At the present moment in time, we have two reviews highlighted. Firstly, the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee has identified a need to look at Urgent Care provision and Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee would like to scrutinise local transport and what the authority can do to support local need.

Safe and Strong Select Committee will continue with its working group monitoring the implementation of the SEND Written Statement of Action and will scrutinise the aspirational Children's Transformation Plan and its predicted subsequent savings, many of which will be severely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along the same lines, the Corporate Review Committee will undoubtedly have to review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the impact the crisis has had on the authority's finances and ability to deliver services.

More information on the work of the Committee can be found at:

<http://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>





Staffordshire
County Council

