

Strategic Plan

2022-26



Foreword

Staffordshire is a great county, the nationally valued centre of Great Britain. We are an area with so much to celebrate, to inspire and to offer, with national attractions, jaw-dropping natural beauty, global brands, and towns and cities steeped in history. Our greatest asset though, is Staffordshire people: innovators and creators, earth movers and brewers, pioneers in energy and sustainable living, and much, much more. We are grounded, we work hard, we enjoy life, and we are a community.

Our Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 explains how we will build on these strengths and focus our resources on the things that matter most to the people we serve. The plan may cover a four-year period, but the ambitions it contains are about the Staffordshire we want to shape for decades to come, and for future generations. It is ambitious - as it should be.

We want to raise aspirations across our county, to unlock the true potential across Staffordshire and empower more people to strive, to succeed and to enjoy the lives they want for themselves and their families. And we want to do it in a way that protects our environment, reduces our impact on the planet, and promotes good health and wellbeing.

These ambitions are rooted in our track record of delivery, of achievement, and of capability. From business parks, broadband and roads, to schools, skills and training, we invest where there is real need. We deliver results, attracting more business to the county, creating more, better-paid jobs for our people, putting more money in people's pockets.

We do not do this alone. In Staffordshire we work best when we work together, with council partners, with the NHS, with business, education, and with our residents. Never has this been more evident than during the pandemic, when organisations and individuals came together to protect, support and care for one another. This collaboration will continue and be central to our plan over the next four years, as we recover from the pandemic, act on climate change, fight for Staffordshire's fair share of the Government's 'Levelling Up' approach, and tackle the health and social problems that Covid-19 has created.

One of our greatest challenges is in care. We will always step in when needed, whether to keep vulnerable children and young people safe from harm or to look after the frail elderly. However, over the next four years, through innovation and inspiration, we will work to reverse the numbers of children coming into care and shape a stable care marketplace, so that older people can access the support they need in the right place, at a cost we can all afford.

Most importantly, we will promote good health, wellbeing and independence, and continue our approach of empowering communities to provide more support to the people within them. Getting this right will mean more people living in good health, independently, for longer, which is something that we all want. It will also ease the burden of rising care costs on Staffordshire taxpayers.

There is much to do, and challenges ahead, but with such solid foundations to build on, we will strive to turn our ambitious vision into reality and continue making a positive difference for the people of Staffordshire.



Alan White
Leader of the Council



John Henderson CB
Chief Executive

Vision & Outcomes

We have a clear vision for Staffordshire - an innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

We want everyone in Staffordshire to:



Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth



Live in thriving and sustainable communities



Be healthier and independent for longer

We are hugely ambitious for Staffordshire. There is enormous potential in our people and places just waiting to be unleashed.

Our role, working with others, is to help create the conditions for more people to flourish, achieve their potential and live in good health for as long as possible. By focusing on the priorities outlined in this plan, modernising and improving how we work, and delivering against our financial pledge, we will continue to deliver for the people of Staffordshire.



Vision: An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes

Everyone in Staffordshire will:



Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth



Live in thriving and sustainable communities



Be healthier and independent for longer

Priorities



Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs



Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable



Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence



Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections



Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

How we work



Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other



Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered



Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire



Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county

Pledge: Live within our means and deliver value for money



Priorities





Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs

To achieve our vision we need a successful, vibrant economy creating opportunities for people to secure better-paid jobs, and to prosper.

Staffordshire's economy is diverse and our location in the centre of the UK is one of many economic strengths. We have a thriving and growing high-value manufacturing sector. While the county is home to many world-renowned businesses, most of our businesses are small and medium enterprises. They are the lifeblood of our economy. Entrepreneurs and start-ups are essential to Staffordshire's economic future, creating the jobs and prosperity for tomorrow, so we will do more to support new businesses to launch, grow and thrive.

We have a successful track record of investing to create the right conditions for growth. Since 2014, Staffordshire's Economic Growth Programme has created or safeguarded more than 10,000 jobs and enabled construction of more than 4,000 new homes. We have invested in sites to attract business and create more and better jobs, from i54 South Staffordshire and its extension, to Redhill Business Park, Stafford, and Liberty Park in Lichfield. We also continue to plan for and invest in the infrastructure needed for the economy to grow, such as the Stafford Western Access Route and Lichfield Southern Bypass, both opened in 2021. As part of our commitment to tackle climate change, we will encourage and support the shift towards a low carbon, clean economy. This will include embracing the opportunities that innovation in the green economy offers Staffordshire, including creating new jobs.

Our investment in skills is also delivering results. We have halved the number of people in Staffordshire with no qualifications since 2014, and significantly reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Creating opportunities for people to get higher skilled, higher value and higher paid jobs, is key to growing the economy and giving everyone more opportunities to get on, and prosper.

Covid-19 has affected every part of the economy. We created a range of support and targeted initiatives, to mitigate the impact on local businesses and support recovery. They include the Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme, Staffordshire Start-Up Loan Scheme and Plan for Jobs Programmes.

Whilst our economy continues to bounce-back quickly, economic recovery from Covid-19 will continue to be a significant challenge. It is essential that Staffordshire people have opportunities to learn new skills throughout their career, as the economy recovers and evolves.

Our town centres and high streets play a vital role in our economy. Working in partnership, we are committed to reimagining and reshaping Staffordshire's high streets, increasing their vibrancy and reflecting the unique circumstances of each place.

Staffordshire has an important role to play in helping the regional economy to grow. In fact, our location is one of our key strengths, which is why we will work with national and regional partners to ensure key strategic corridors in the Midlands can create the conditions for Staffordshire businesses to innovate and grow.

In the next four years, we will:

- **Work with our partners to regenerate our town centres**
- **Support more people to start and grow their business**
- **Develop investment-ready projects vital to the future of the county**
- **Enable people to benefit from better-paid, local jobs**
- **Make sure investment in activities such as highways supports economic growth and unlocks external investment**
- **Support businesses on their journey to net zero**
- **Develop an east/west strategic corridor project that enables businesses in Staffordshire to innovate and grow as part of the wider Midlands Region**

What will success look like?

- **More businesses start-up, grow and invest in Staffordshire**
- **Improved skills levels**
- **Improved wage levels**
- **People are proud of their town centres and local area**



Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable

Climate change is affecting more people's lives every year and we all need to act fast, to do our bit to slow and reverse the damage being done. We have a leading role to play in Staffordshire, by reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from our operations, as well as working with industry and other organisations to help lower their emissions and make our county more resilient to climate change.

In 2019 the county council declared a climate change emergency and set a target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. Since then, we have reduced our CO₂ emissions by 25%, and published annual action plans outlining how we will meet our net zero target. Our plan is ambitious, and not without challenges. The latest plan, agreed in October 2021, outlines five key themes for action:

- **carbon reduction**
- **air quality**
- **natural environment**
- **waste**
- **behaviour change**

Staffordshire is a county of breathtaking beauty, with a rich and varied natural environment. Our landscapes help improve health and wellbeing, and make the county an attractive place to live and visit. We directly manage a countryside estate of some 6,000 acres of country parks, open spaces and greenways, together with a 2,500 mile network of public rights of way. We are custodians of these natural treasures and will protect and enhance them.

We will:

- **Deliver, and continue to evolve, our Climate Change Action Plan**
- **Work in partnership across Staffordshire to tackle climate change**

What will success look like:

- **The county council's carbon emissions are reduced**
- **Staffordshire's total carbon emissions are reduced**
- **Staffordshire's natural environment is protected and enhanced**
- **Increased flood protection**
- **A county more resilient to the impact of climate change**





Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence

Our health and wellbeing are influenced by many things, by our environment, our living conditions, and our own behaviour. Inspiring and encouraging everyone to look after their physical and mental health is at the heart of our ambitions for Staffordshire. The homes we live in, the jobs we do, the food we eat, and how much exercise we take, are far more important to our health and wellbeing than health services.

Covid-19 has increased demands on health and care services, and widened health inequalities across the county. It is more important than ever, that people take more control over their health and wellbeing, so that they can live longer in good health.

Research tells us that when people need help, it is often most effective when it comes from their family and friends. We want more people to draw on their personal strengths and to find support in their communities when they need it.

Funding and ensuring a stable, quality social care market is one of our greatest challenges locally and nationally. We will always step in when needed, to look after those who need support. And we will innovate and collaborate with our health partners and beyond, to support Staffordshire's care market to be able to meet demand and tackle workforce challenges. For our most vulnerable residents, who do need care, we aim to assess their needs quickly and fairly, and provide the quality services they need, at a price taxpayers can afford.

We will:

- **Promote good health and independence so that people can take personal responsibility for their wellbeing**
- **Ensure effective and efficient assessment of care needs that offer fair access to services**
- **Maintain a market for care and support that offers good services at an affordable price**
- **Ensure best use of resources, people, data and technology**

What will success look like:

- **A healthier population**
- **Increased use of community support to help people stay healthy and independent**
- **Timely social care assessments that are strengths-based and look first at what people can do for themselves, to achieve the best outcomes**
- **A care market that offers quality services at an affordable price**



Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections

Great places enjoy great connections. Whether by road, rail or ultrafast broadband, we want to make sure the people and businesses of Staffordshire are well-connected to one another, to the UK and across the globe.

Roads and transport are essential to everyday life, enabling us to see family and friends, get to work and school, access healthcare, shopping and leisure activities. Smooth, efficient and increasingly greener transport supports our economy to grow. However, vehicle emissions play a significant role in climate change. We will work in partnership to reduce these emissions, promote greener travel, and increase cycling and walking.

We know that improving our 6,200km of roads and 4,500km of pavements and cycleways is one of the top priorities for Staffordshire people. Maintaining and improving this network is very challenging. We need to do it with less funding from central government, costs are rising, and the growing county is making the network busier. Despite this we want Staffordshire people to see an improvement in our highways over the next four years.

Covid-19 is revolutionising how we work and live. Modern business operations, the growth in remote working, and reliance on technology to stay in touch with family and friends, make digital connectivity more important than ever.

Great digital connections supercharge economic growth. Access to fast, gigabit broadband services is a must, especially in rural areas, for Staffordshire to compete as a place to live and work, and for Staffordshire people and businesses to embrace the opportunities and benefits of this digital age.

The Superfast Staffordshire programme has connected 97% of premises in the county to superfast broadband services. But we are not finished. As well as finding solutions for the final 3%, our work will expand bandwidths and support 5G roll-out, expanding connections and our digital economy.

In the next four years, we will:

- **Develop a new investment strategy to fix more roads**
- **Transform highways operations, improving customer service and community engagement**
- **Achieve value for money in all spend on our roads and footpaths**
- **Work with telecommunication suppliers, communities and businesses to secure investment in gigabit infrastructure and technology, and connect more premises**
- **Improve bus travel in Staffordshire through a Bus Service Improvement Plan**

What will success look like?

- **Improvement in the condition of our highways**
- **Improved customer satisfaction for highway maintenance**
- **All properties in Staffordshire have access to gigabit-capable bandwidth by 2030**
- **Improved digital infrastructure contributing to economic growth**
- **Increases in walking, cycling and public transport usage**





Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential

We want every child and young person in Staffordshire, whatever their background, to have the opportunity to live happy and healthy lives.

Good education is fundamental to creating opportunities for our children and young people and improving life chances. In Staffordshire there is a mix of types and sizes of institutions, from early years through to adulthood, from individual childminders caring for a few children, to universities with 15,000 students. All play an important role in improving outcomes for children and young people. We will work with them all to further improve access to high quality education, and provide the right support in the right setting.

The early years are critical for laying the foundations for a lifetime of good health and wellbeing. This time offers the greatest opportunity to make a long-term, positive difference on what can be achieved in later life. We want every parent in Staffordshire to form a close bond with their child. We want parents to talk lots as this early communication creates hungry little minds, ready to learn. For those parents who face difficulties, we will work with families on their independence and resilience.

In Staffordshire our strong track record of improving the uptake of early years places has achieved positive results. We will continue to develop and evolve the early years provision and support available to our children.

Stable, loving families give children and young people the best start in life. We want more Staffordshire families to have the strengths, skills and knowledge to support their children. Families have told us they do not want to be 'in services', but instead supported by their friends and community to tackle day-to-day challenges. We will continue to develop the right approaches that help families build on their strengths and find the support they need in their communities.

Some families will need more formal early help from professionals, and a few will need statutory services and interventions. Where required, this will be timely, stop a situation worsening, and focus on helping families get back on track.

We are committed to working with others to keep our vulnerable children and young people safe. When the only safe option is for them to come into our care, we will explore whether they can be cared for within their extended family, if possible. When it is not, we want children in our care to have the best possible experience that supports better lifelong outcomes.

We will:

- **Make sure there are enough high-quality early years and schools places, which are accessible to all, including those with special educational needs and disabilities**
- **Promote the physical and emotional wellbeing of children and young people**
- **Deliver effective early help that is focused on helping families to get back on track**
- **Work with partners, parents and carers to keep the most vulnerable children and young people safe, and support them to achieve their potential**
- **Develop our workforce to help us recruit and retain skilled, diverse and experienced professionals**

What will success look like?

- **Improved school attendance with more children educated locally, and fewer children excluded from school**
- **Improved educational attainment**
- **More children in early years places, and ready to start school at the age of 5**
- **A reduction in the number of children and young people in care**
- **Securing permanent, alternative carers for those children unable to remain within their family, at the earliest possible opportunity**
- **Better outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people**



How We Work





This plan sets out our ambitions for Staffordshire. To achieve them, we need to keep challenging and changing how we work, to make sure we deliver the very best for the people of Staffordshire. We believe the following four statements, need to be at the heart of everything we do as a county council.



Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered

We want everyone who works for the county council to live our values in all they do; to be ambitious for Staffordshire, courageous in their work and empowered to make a difference. They are critical to achieving our vision, outcomes and priorities.

In 2019 we launched our People Strategy which sets out goals and aspirations for attracting, retaining and developing our workforce. Since then, we have launched a programme of work to attract and keep more talented people, make sure our workforce have the skills they need for now and the future, promote a positive working environment, and develop our current and future leaders.

Covid-19 changed how we work overnight. As the county council began to adopt flexible working in 2010, we were able to respond quickly and positively to our workforce working remotely. We will continue to invest in technology that supports modern ways of working, attracts talented people, but most importantly, continues to deliver the very best for the people of Staffordshire.



Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other

People who are independent and in control of their lives are more likely to enjoy better health and wellbeing. We need to continue to empower and inspire our communities and people to help themselves and each other. We therefore take an approach that looks at the strengths of our people and communities, thinking first about what they can do for themselves and others, rather than what they might need from us or our partners. Often the best solutions to personal or social problems do not need public service involvement. Inspiring communities to help themselves and act upon the things that matter most to them, leads to greater social action, supporting people to thrive and become more resilient.

Staffordshire's response to Covid-19 was inspirational, with people across the county doing their bit to support each other and the most vulnerable in their neighbourhood. Some communities have been badly affected by Covid-19, and we will work with them and our voluntary, community and social enterprise partners, to maintain and increase community action as we recover from the pandemic.



Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire

In this digital age, technology is fundamental to how we live, work and communicate with each other. The county council must continue to review and develop our digital approach in everything we do, from helping the economy to grow to improving the lives and opportunities of the people we serve.

In February 2021, we refreshed our Digital Strategy and Plan, to focus on our key priorities. We want to improve how we connect, engage and communicate with the people of Staffordshire, including improving self-serve and self-help tools. Having the right digital infrastructure in place across Staffordshire is key to making the most of digital opportunities, and improving digital inclusion across the county.

We want to make the most of the opportunities that digital offers to support our front-line workforce to support our most vulnerable residents and promote independence. We want to ensure we have the right digital infrastructure in place across Staffordshire to make the most of digital opportunities, and improve digital inclusion across the county.



Engage and listen to our communities, partners and businesses, working together to improve our county

We cannot achieve our ambitions without listening to, and working with our communities, partners and businesses. Collaboration is at the core of everything we do in the county council. We have a strong track record in working with public and private partners locally, regionally and nationally to make Staffordshire a great place to live, work and visit. We are united with our district and borough councils in our desire to enhance and strengthen two-tier working in Staffordshire. We will pursue a County Deal with Government to accelerate our ambitious plans, and build on the significant strengths that we have in Staffordshire.

We will continue to actively seek views and feedback from our residents, on the issues that matter most to them. We will continue to include our residents and communities in transforming and improving our services. In particular we want to make it easier for people to find out about the work we are doing, and easier to engage with us, by using the latest digital technology, streamlining our processes, and providing the right information at the right time.



Our Pledge

Our pledge to the people of Staffordshire is that we will spend our money wisely and well to deliver the greatest impact from every pound we spend. We will always live within our means.

The county council is financially stable and well run. However, the financial outlook for the whole of local government is challenging and uncertain. Covid-19 has impacted on our finances, due to the leading role we played, and continue to play in the response to and recovery from the pandemic. We must continue to find different ways to help more people to help themselves, and reduce demand for public services. If we succeed in this, we can target our resources on the people that really need them.

Our approach to financial planning has six strands.

- **Reduce costs to live within our means**
- **Use our assets wisely to gain the best return for the council**
- **Work with government to achieve fair funding, particularly for social care**
- **Develop initiatives and ways of working that encourage our communities to help themselves and each other, and use digital technology to make services efficient and effective**
- **Grow and support the economy**
- **Help partner organisations to build more homes**



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