

Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 15 February 2023

Attendance

Mark Deaville	Simon Tagg
Julia Jessel	Alan White (Chair)
Ian Parry	Philip White
Jonathan Price	David Williams
Mark Sutton	Victoria Wilson

Cabinet Support Member in attendance: Paul Northcott

PART ONE

103. Declarations of Interest in accordance with Standing Order 16

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

104. Decision notice of the meetings held on 18 and 25 January 2023

Decision – That the notes of the meetings held on 18 and 25 January 2023 be approved.

105. Leader's Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Leader of the Council giving an update on a range of issues including the many businesses and employees talking about the benefits of apprenticeships during National Apprenticeship Week; the launch of the Staffordshire Dignity in Care Awards, now in their ninth year; the commencement of works near Saredon in South Staffordshire and on the A34 near Stone, part of the County Council's £5.2 million investment into improving eight major gateways into the county's towns; the support available from the County Council for businesses, including new businesses start-ups; the commencement of work on the new Stafford History Centre, a £5.4m project funded predominantly by the Heritage Lottery Fund; and the Council giving away 5,000 trees to residents to encourage more tree planting in gardens across Staffordshire; be noted.

106. Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 1 February 2023

Decision – That the minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 1 February 2023 be received.

107. Staffordshire Means Back to Business - Oral Update

Decision – That the oral report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills giving an update on “Staffordshire Means Back to Business” activity including the following matters be noted:

- The claimant count which this month saw a further increase of 265 claimants, with the total number of claimants in the county now standing at 14,700. This increase is higher than the rise seen nationally, with the claimant rates for Staffordshire increasing from 2.7% to 2.8%. However, the rate in Staffordshire remains one of the lowest rates in the West Midlands and far lower than the average for England of 3.7% of the working age population.
- The youth claimant count in Staffordshire saw a slight increase of 45 to a total of 2,685 young people. The proportion of young people in Staffordshire aged 18-24 that are claiming work-related Universal Credit has increased this month from 4.2% to 4.3%, although this remains lower than the national rate of 4.7%.
- The publication of the Council’s Economic which sets out the Council’s economic priorities in the coming years, namely:
 - Working with our partners to regenerate our town centres.
 - Enabling people to benefit from higher paid, higher skilled and high social value jobs.
 - Supporting people to start and grow a business.
 - Encouraging greater levels of innovation activity.
 - Developing those investment-ready projects that will be vital to the future of the county.
 - And, developing our A50 / A500 and A38 strategic corridors for transformational economic growth of national significance.
- The Council’s success in supporting innovation, including the delivery of multiple business premises on Keele University Science & Innovation Park that are now home to many high-value, highly skilled companies.
- The Government’s granting of permission for JCB’s hydrogen-powered backhoe loaders to be used on UK roads. JCB’s hydrogen project has already led to the creation of 150 new jobs with the promise of hundreds of more to come. We are now driving forward plans to consider how the county council and our partners can best support our businesses and institutions to further increase innovation activities, improve connectivity and ultimately support growth in highly paid jobs.

- The Council's successful bid for £20 million of Levelling Up Funding. This will be used to improve a number of major roads around the county, reduce journey times, put greener, cleaner buses on main roads, improve walking and cycling routes and, as part of the delivery of our Strategic Infrastructure Plan, support the substantial growth in jobs and housing planned to be delivered in the county.
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council's success in securing £17.1 million to redevelop Leek town centre, including substantial investment in the Nicholson Institute, home to Leek's library, museum and art gallery. Together with Cannock Chase District Council's success in round one, this means that the Staffordshire local authorities have secured over £57 million for the county from the Levelling Up Fund alone.

108. Diversity and Inclusion - Progress Update

	<p>"Working to ensure everyone in Staffordshire has the best opportunity they can to do well, to thrive and be happy is at the core of the values of this council.</p> <p>As a major employer, we want to lead by example to others across the county. I am proud of the progress which has been made but recognise too that more work still needs to be done to make Staffordshire a truly inclusive place to live and work."</p> <p>Alan White, Leader of the Council</p>
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Reasons for the Decision – To consider progress in 2022 and proposed areas of focus for 2023/24 to further strengthen the Council's approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion both within the organisation and across Staffordshire.

Decision – (a) That the progress of the Council's work to further strengthen its approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, including delivery of the delivery plan be noted.

(b) That the Council's Gender Pay Gap report and Workforce profile as reported in April 2022 be noted.

(c) That the emerging priorities for 2023/24 as part of the Council's continued commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, be approved.

109. Empowering our Communities



"Our amazing communities across Staffordshire really are at the heart of what makes this county such a fantastic place to live.

Friends helping friends, neighbours helping neighbours and people stretching out a helping hand to those most in need, is what makes a difference to the quality of so many people's lives.

As a county council, we are committed to empowering our communities and in the last year this approach, with the support of our voluntary, community and public sector partners, helped more than 1,200 families improve their lives, supported just under 110,000 people through our community-based public health drives and distributed more than £200,000 worth of grants to help communities recover from the pandemic.

But we know together we can do even more, and in 2023 we aim to do just that by empowering our wonderful communities here in Staffordshire."

Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

Reasons for the Decision – To consider the Communities Position Statement which reviews progress in 2021/22, provides a clear and detailed delivery plan for 2023, and sets out the Council's intention to develop a long-term, innovative, and aspirational Communities Strategy for Staffordshire

Decision – (a) That the Communities Position Statement, including a review of the progress made with partners and communities in 2021/22, be approved.

(b) That the Communities Delivery Plan for 2023 be approved.

(c) That the proposal to engage with partners and communities to develop a long-term, innovative, and ambitious Communities Strategy for Staffordshire, be approved.

110. Integrated Performance Report - Quarter 3, 2022/23



"Creating the right conditions for businesses and our economy to thrive remains a priority for the county council while managing the inflationary pressures we continue to face.

Our here to Help campaign and dedicated webpages which launched in October continue to signpost families to help and support with rising cost of living pressures. The Holiday Activity and Food programme also ran over the Christmas holidays helping families by providing eligible children with a healthy meal and positive activities.

The next phase of the successful Staffordshire Warmer Homes scheme (Sustainable Warmth Competition) is underway and is helping residents by installing measures to make their homes more energy efficient. This scheme will be able to help people across the county and will run until March 2023.

We continue to face challenges in both adult social care and children's services including in recruitment and retention. Due to the delay in the adult social care charging reforms until 2025, the recruitment of additional capacity has been paused, however work to streamline pathways and explore digital solutions continues.

We continue to support our local businesses to start up, survive, and adapt, including supporting five hundred individuals through the Staffordshire Start Up Programme. The number of business start-ups in the county have been increasing and are now in line with the national average for the first time. Businesses started within Staffordshire are also more likely to survive compared to the national average.

Despite the inflationary pressures facing councils like ours, we will invest to keep growing the county in a sustainable way to make a positive difference in the lives of our residents".

Alan White, Leader of the Council



“Significant progress has been made across the organisation during Quarter 3, however inflationary, recruitment and retention pressures continue.

Levels of demand also remain challenging, particularly in children’s services where there remain areas of financial risk. However, there have been improvements in some areas of adult social care over the quarter.

The latest revenue forecast outturn shows a forecast overspend of £16.135m (2.74%), prior to additional funding for inflationary pressures being taken into account. Once this one-off funding is included and an allocation from the Inflation Reserve is assumed, the overspend reduces to £11.635m (1.97%). This is compared to an overspend of £6.408m reported at Quarter 2.

Like many local authorities, we still face financial challenges, but we are a well run council and continue to keep our finances in as strong a position as possible. Well managed finances means we can continue to invest in our future, grow our economy and improve people’s lives.”

Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Reasons for the Decision – To consider an overview of Staffordshire County Council’s progress, performance, and financial position in delivering against the Council’s Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan

Decision – (a) That the report be received.

(b) That the use of the remaining £4m of Contingency plus £1.189m of earmarked reserves be approved.

111. Decisions taken by Cabinet Members under Delegated Powers

Decision – That the following decisions taken by Cabinet Members under delegated powers be noted:

Cabinet Member	Decision
Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)	In approving the determination of admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools in 2024/25, and coordinated admissions scheme in 2024/25.
Cabinet Member for Health and Care	In approving the relocation of the Newcastle Specialist Day Opportunities service to the Brackenberry site along with refurbishment and modernisation of the building.
Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)	In approving the recommended revised Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus in Religious Education, under Schedule 31(2) of the Education Act 1996.
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport	In approving the level of support from the approved concessionary travel budget which will be used to support local bus services in Staffordshire to avoid extensive bus network reductions during 2023.
Leader of the Council	In approving the amendment of the pay structure to accommodate the deletion of spinal column point 1 on the national pay spine.

112. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 15 March to 19 July 2023, which detailed the following issues, was approved:

Subject Matter	Contact
Our People Strategy 2023 and Beyond	Name: Sarah Getley Tel: (01785) 854265
Capital Programme for Schools 2023/ 2024	Name: Ian Tuner Tel: (01785) 277228
Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2023/24	Name: James Bailey Tel: (01785) 276591
Staffordshire County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy	Name: James Bailey Tel: (01785) 276591
Mental Health and Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2028	Name: Andrew Jepps Tel: (01785) 278557
Corporate Delivery Plan 2023/4	Name: John Tradewell Tel: (01785) 276102
Joint Coroners Service - Legal Framework and Financial Protocol	Name: Catherine Mann Tel: (01785) 278320
Maintenance and Minor Works Framework	Name: Ian Turner Tel: (01785) 277228

Alan White
Leader of the Council