

## Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 14 December 2017

Present:

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

Apologies for absence: Janet Eagland, Keith Flunder, Gill Heath, Alastair Little, Natasha Pullen and Ross Ward

### **PART ONE**

#### **48. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16**

There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

#### **49. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 October 2017**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 12 October 2017 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

#### **50. Chairman's Correspondence**

##### **County Councillor Robert Marshall**

The Council were informed of the death on the evening of Wednesday, 1 November 2017 of County Councillor Robert Marshall. Mr Marshall was elected to the Council in May 1997 and represented the Codsall (South Staffordshire) Electoral Division. He served on a number of the Council's Committees including the Environment Scrutiny Committee, Social Care Scrutiny Committee, Corporate Policy Scrutiny and

Performance Committee, Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee and the Audit and Standards Committee. He also served as Chairman of the Pensions Committee and the Staffordshire Health and Wellbeing Board. He was appointed to the Cabinet in 2009 as the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Infrastructure and again in 2013 as the Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing.

### **Honorary Alderman Elsie Ashley OBE JP**

The Chairman also informed Members of the recent death of Honorary Alderman Elsie Ashley OBE JP. Mrs Ashley represented the former Westlands (Newcastle-under-Lyme) Electoral Division on the County Council between 1973 and 1997. During her 24 years as a Member of the Authority, she served on a number of the Council's Committees including the Planning Committee, Fire and Public Protection Committee, Education Committee, Police Committee and Policy and Resources Committee. Mrs Ashley was appointed as an Honorary Alderman in 1999.

Members paid tribute to the contributions Mr Marshall and Mrs Ashley had made to the work of the Council, and the District/Borough Council's on which they had also served, and observed a one minute's silence in their memory.

### **51. 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.

#### **Staffordshire's Mental Health Challenge**

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Mrs Woodward indicated that she welcomed the appointment of Mrs Edgeller as the Council's Mental Health Champion and expressed the view that there should also be a staff champion so that Council officers facing mental health issues were not disadvantaged in any way. In response, Mrs Edgeller stated that she would request all Members of the Council to make life better for those with mental health issues by, for example, speaking to schools and major employers within their division to ensure that appropriate arrangements to assist pupils and employees with mental health issues were in place. She added that one in four people would suffer from depression at some point in their lives. Mrs Edgeller also asked that all Members become "dementia friendly" and, with this in mind, two training opportunities were to be arranged.

#### **Staffordshire's Libraries Strategy**

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Mrs Compton and Mrs Beech referred to the possible introduction of self-service libraries and the re-modelling of the mobile library service. In response Mr Adams indicated that, despite the financial pressures facing the Council, it had kept all its libraries open whereas a number of other Councils had chosen to close some of their libraries. He added that library usage was changing and that the library service needed to evolve. Mr Atkins added that the consultation on the future of the library service was on-going and that, with regard to self-service libraries, technologies were available to

ensure the safety of library users including through the use of CCTV and fingerprint recognition.

Mr Smith also referred to the success of the community library in Shenstone which had seen an increase in the number of users.

### **Staffordshire Transforming Care Partnership Financial Update** (Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

In response to questions from Mrs Atkins and Mrs Woodward concerning what plans the County Council had for developing more community based services, including supported housing, for people with learning disabilities, Mr Alan White indicated that the Council was continuing to work with the district and borough councils with a view to increasing the provision of supported housing. Mr Atkins added that there was still a long way to go but there was some really good work going on across the County. He also indicated that the County Council was continuing to work with partners in both the local government and health sectors to improve provision.

### **Second Quarter Budget Monitoring Report** (Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Mrs Atkins enquired whether the County Council had received Government approval to be one of the pilot authorities in relation to the retention of Business Rates. In response, Mr Atkins indicated that the County Council would be around £10m better off if the County Council's application to be part of the pilot scheme were to go ahead.

### **Quarter 2 2017/18 Performance Report** (Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

In response to questions from Mrs Woodward concerning child protection plans and the recruitment and retention of teachers and social workers, Mr Colin Greatorex indicated that staff turnover, particularly in schools, was happening across the Country, not just in Staffordshire. He added that Staffordshire schools were performing well despite its history of being one of the less well funded local education authorities. In responding to Mrs Woodward's question regarding child protection plans, Mr Atkins indicated that the number of "children at risk" in Staffordshire had fallen over the last 12 months.

Mr Brookes expressed concern at the level of childhood obesity and the need to educate parents on making the right dietary choices for their children.

Mr Smith spoke about how the County Council and the universities were working together to give young people the necessary training and skills to obtain high quality jobs.

### **Staffordshire Better Care Fund** (Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Dave Jones in relation to the targets for NHS-related delayed transfers of care in Staffordshire under the approved Better Care Fund plan, Mr Alan white indicated that the target for September of 3655 had been achieved and that

the targets for October and November were 3411 and 2855 respectively, reducing to 2000 by the end of April 2018. Mr Atkins added that hospital admission rates over the next couple of weeks could be critical to achieving the BCF targets and that additional measures to reduce admissions had been put in place by the NHS including additional opening hours at doctor's surgeries over the Christmas period.

### **Staffordshire Supported Bus Network** (Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Mr Robinson and Mrs Beech expressed concern at the possible impact the proposals to reduce funding for the supported bus network could have on both young and elderly people who did not have access to an alternative form of transport. Mr Robinson also asked about the work carried out to date in relation to the development of alternative transport arrangements. In response, Mr Colin Greatorex indicated that it was too early to ascertain the possible impacts of the proposals as some bus operators may decide to continue to operate some services which were previously subsidised. Mr Deaville added that the County Council would continue to support the bus network in the County to the tune of £1.3m in 2018/19. He also indicated that the exiting arrangements, whereby some bus journeys were subsidised by up to £12 per passenger, was unsustainable and alternative ways of working needed to be found. Mr Deaville also stated that this work had commenced and that officers were in negotiations with Parish Councils and the voluntary sector. Mrs Fisher also added that the Community Cabinet Support Members were to consider this issue early in the New Year.

Mr Atkins indicated that the Cabinet's decision in respect of the supported bus network proposals was called in and referred to the Corporate Review Committee at their meeting on 5 December 2017. After careful consideration of the reasons for the call-in, and the Cabinet Member's response thereto, the Committee resolved that the Cabinet's decision be implemented.

### **Stafford Western Access Route – Land Acquisition Update** (Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Mr Price referred to the scheme to provide the Stafford Western Access Route and enquired about the current position regarding the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). In response, Mr Winnington indicated that there were only four objections remaining to the CPO and that officers were in discussions with those objectors to try to negotiate the withdrawal of their objections. He added that the public inquiry into the CPO was due to take place in the spring.

### **Budget** (Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

In response to questions by Mrs Woodward in relation to the Chancellor's recent budget announcements and its impact on local government, Mr Atkins indicated that he welcomed the Chancellors proposals which would "put more money in people's pockets". He added that the increasing costs of funding the support of a growing ageing population and numbers of children in the Council's care was still a major challenge and that he was awaiting the announcement of the Provisional Local Government Financial

Settlement for 2018/19 to see what additional support was to be made available to Councils.

### **Industrial Strategy**

(Paragraph 11 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mrs Atkins in relation to the low productivity levels in the County, Mr Brookes referred to the high levels of employment in Staffordshire and that wage rates were increasing. Mr Smith and Mrs Jessel referred to the need to provide the right environment for businesses to thrive. In response Mr Winnington indicated that since the Economic Growth Programme commenced in 2014, seven employment generating projects with a total value of around £130 million had been completed to date. Between them, these projects were anticipated to create around 11,500 jobs. He also indicated that, between 2011 and 2016, 19,000 new jobs had been created in Staffordshire.

Mrs Compton referred to the recent announcement by General Electric of proposed redundancies at their factory in Stafford and expressed her hope that the County Council would support those affected in securing alternative employment.

In responding to Members, Mr Atkins stated that the Council's economic programme had already brought in almost £400 million of investment, with every pound from the county council being matched by £15 from the private sector or Government.

### **Broadband**

(Paragraph 12 of the Statement)

Mr Price referred to the number of rural businesses which were not currently able to access superfast broadband and asked about the plans to address this issue. Mr Clarke also referred to the lost opportunities arising from the failure of developers to make provision for superfast broadband infrastructure when building new developments. In response, Mr Winnington indicated that 95 per cent of households and businesses in Staffordshire were now able to get superfast fibre broadband. He also referred to the development of other technologies to improve connectivity including 5G.

### **HS2/Rail**

(Paragraph 13 of the Statement)

Mr Tittley referred to the £3m available under Phase 1 of the scheme to address road safety issues in relation to the construction of HS2 and enquired as to how Members could access this funding. He also stated that he hoped that the County Council, when petitioning in relation to Phase 2, had learned the lessons from its petitioning during Phase 1. In response, Mr Winnington asked that if members became aware of any road safety issues they notify him or officers accordingly. He also confirmed that the County Council would be petitioning on a range of issues including appropriate construction routes.

Mrs Hood and Mr Tittley also referred to issues whereby the Pendolino trains would not be able to get out of the way for the faster Javelin trains which could have a negative

impact on a HS2 service at Stafford. In response, Mr Winnington indicated that HS2 had indicated that this was not the case.

Mr Adams also requested that when the construction of HS2 commenced, local members are kept informed of any road closures and diversions that were put in place. In response, Mr Winnington confirmed that Members would be notified of any works affecting roads within their division.

Mr Atkins added that he had recently met with, and also written to, Sir David Higgins, the Chairman of HS2, to stress the need for HS2 to consult more effectively with local councils.

### **Communities Fund**

(Paragraph 14 of the Statement)

In response to a question from Mr Robinson concerning what had been done to promote the Children and Families Fund and what was the level of take-up, Mr Sutton indicated that there had been quite a lot of publicity. With regard to the level of take-up, Mr Sutton stated that he did not have the information to hand and that he would respond to Mr Robinson in writing after the meeting.

## **52. Recommendations to the Council**

### **a) High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill**

The Council were informed that the High Speed Rail (West Midlands to Crewe) Bill was deposited to Parliament on 17 July 2017, supported by a full Environmental Statement (ES). This was open for consultation until 30 September 2017. The County Council led a comprehensive joint response with affected District and Borough Councils. Views of Parish Councils and other key stakeholders were also taken into account where possible.

Second reading of the Bill was likely to occur in early 2018, triggering a petitioning period in the House of Commons. It was not possible at this stage to object to the principle of the scheme; however it was recommended that the County Council petition the Bill in order to secure optimal mitigation for Staffordshire. A number of potential key petitioning points had been identified, including:

- The potential to lower the vertical alignment of the railway as it passes by Kings Bromley on viaduct.
- Proper assessment of the potential to join Whitmore and Bar Hill tunnels, avoiding a range of impacts including loss of ancient woodland.
- Ensuring maximum mitigation for the railhead/maintenance depot at Stone, including consideration of noise, visual impact, and transport planning issues.
- Petitioning on alternative or improved construction routes where these are unacceptable in safety or capacity terms.
- Ensuring proper mitigation and restoration for the borrow pits proposed in Lichfield and Newcastle.
- A range of ecological, archaeological, landscape and Public Rights of Way matters.

The petitioning process was likely to closely follow that for Phase One, with a period of negotiation following submission of a petition. This may, if successful, result in reaching an agreement prior to a Select Committee appearance. If not the County Council would have to appear in front of Select Committee to present its case.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the Council acknowledge the work undertaken to date on Phase One.

(b) That in the judgement of the Council it is expedient for the Council to petition the High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill deposited in the 2017-19 session of Parliament.

(c) That the Council authorise the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth along with the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills to develop the scope of the County Council's petition to Parliament and take all necessary steps to carry the foregoing Resolution into effect.

(d) That the Council acknowledge the sum of £210,000 which has been allocated across 2017-18 and 2018-19 to the HS2 budget in order for the Council to petition the High Speed Rail (West Midlands - Crewe) Bill.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting until 2:00 pm.

Present at 2:00 pm:

Ben Adams	Phil Hewitt	Paul Snape
Charlotte Atkins	Jill Hood	Mike Sutherland
Philip Atkins, OBE	Syed Hussain	Mark Sutton
David Brookes	Keith James	Stephen Sweeney
Gill Burnett	Julia Jessel	Martyn Tittley
Ron Clarke	Bryan Jones	Carolyn Trowbridge
Maureen Compton	Dave Jones	Alan White
John Cooper	Jason Jones	Philip White
Mark Deaville	Ian Lawson	Conor Wileman
Alan Dudson	Johnny McMahon	Bernard Williams
Ann Edgeller	Paul Northcott	David Williams
Helen Fisher	Kath Perry	Victoria Wilson
John Francis	Bernard Peters	Mark Winnington
Colin Greatorex	Kyle Robinson	Susan Woodward
Michael Greatorex	David Smith	

b) Proposed Changes to the Constitution – Decision Making Structure for Property Related Matters - Property Sub-Committee of Cabinet and Officer Scheme of Delegation

Members were informed that the Leader of the Council had recently approved the establishment of a Property Sub-Committee of Cabinet to:

- Exercise full delegated executive powers to consider and make decisions on all land and property transactions where the County Council has an interest and the value of the transaction is between £200,000 and £2million (transactions above £2million value are considered by full Cabinet).
- To advise the Cabinet on the contents of the property strategy for the use of land and property in which the County Council has an interest including Economic Regeneration Sites, County Farms and Enterprise Centres.

The Sub-Committee membership was comprised of the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members for Commercial and Economic Growth. In addition the Cabinet Support Member for Learning and Employability would be invited to attend and participate in all meetings but would not have the right to vote.

The creation of the Sub-Committee and the band of £200,000 - £2million value on transactions which the Sub-Committee would consider had resulted in the need to also review the Officer Scheme of Delegation in relation to property matters.

**RESOLVED** – That the establishment of a Property Sub-Committee of Cabinet be noted and that the amendments to the Officer Scheme of Delegation (as set out in Appendix 3 to the report) be approved.

### **53. Changes to Committee Memberships**

The Leader of the Council indicated that he wished to nominate Colin Greatorex as Chairman of the Pensions Committee and David Williams as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee.

In response to a question from Mrs Woodward as to whether Mr Greatorex would continue as Chairman of the MTFs Working Group, Mr Atkins indicated that this was a matter for the Corporate Review Committee to decide.

Mrs Woodward also informed the Council that Ann Beech had been appointed as the opposition lead on Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee (in place of Maureen Compton who was to continue to take a lead role on Arts/Culture).

**RESOLVED** — That the following recommendations of the Leader of the Council relating to changes in Committee membership be approved –

- (a) That Colin Greatorex be appointed as Chairman of the Pensions Committee.
- (b) That David Williams be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Review Committee.

### **54. Report of the Chairman of the Staffordshire Police and Crime Panel**

In response to a question from Mr Clarke as to whether the Police and Crime Panel had supported the Police and Crime Commissioner's Business Case for the adoption of the Governance Model for collaboration between the Police and Fire and Rescue Services in Staffordshire primarily to secure the additional 40-70 frontline Police Officers



promised by the PCC, Mr Williams indicated that the Panel had given very careful consideration to the Business Case and had concluded that the Governance Model was the best option.

In response to a question from Mr Dudson concerning the scrutiny of the PCC, Mrs Edgeller indicated that, in her view, the PCC was scrutinised effectively by the Panel.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be received.

#### **55. Report of the Chairman of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

The Council were informed that, in summer 2017, HMIC took on inspections of England's fire and rescue services. To reflect this new role, the Inspectorate's name had changed to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS). HMICFRS would be carrying out inspections of all 45 fire and rescue services over the next two years and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Service was one of three Services who were to be included in a "trial" inspection in the Spring.

**RESOLVED** – That the report be received.

#### **56. Questions**

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

##### **Question**

Given General Electric's statement on Thursday, 7<sup>th</sup> December that they are restructuring their business and that many jobs at Stafford could be lost, what is Staffordshire County Council going to do to assist those who face redundancy at Christmas?

##### **Reply**

The County Council, along with partners, will be doing all we can in the coming weeks to support those affected by the GE announcement. We are already working with Stafford Borough Council, DWP Jobcentre Plus and a number of other key agencies to form a 'Task Force' to ensure appropriate timely support is put in place. The Borough Council has agreed to lead the 'Task Force' and the first meeting is scheduled for the 16 January 2018.

DWP Jobcentre Plus has a rapid response service and this will be engaged once GE has submitted the HR1 redundancy notification to DWP. GE has entered a 90 day consultation on the proposed redundancies.

There is a specialist response to redundancy programme commissioned by the LEP and funded via ESF and this service plus others such as the National Careers Service will be used alongside the DWP's rapid response service. These services will help to redeploy, retrain, upskill and signpost people to new employment

opportunities ensuring support is available to the individuals affected and their families.

These services will address the effects of job losses on individuals and on the local community by helping people move rapidly into alternative employment without the need to claim welfare benefits.

The support is managed by Jobcentre Plus and delivered with the aforementioned partners. Decisions are made locally about the appropriate support drawing together local partners to deliver support tailored to the needs of the situation.

Rapid Response Service support is available through the notice period and for 13 weeks after, irrespective of whether a claim for benefit is made.

The support offered by Jobcentre Plus and partners can include:

- connecting people to jobs in the labour market;
- matching people facing redundancy to known job vacancies;
- helping people to construct a CV;
- helping people to enhance their job search skills;
- providing general information about benefits;
- helping people to identify their transferable skills and training needs;
- providing job-focused training to help people develop additional vocational skills;
- helping to meet discretionary costs e.g. travel to work expenses; and for large redundancies potential for on-site services to promote jobs or to take benefit claims.

Getting the right information in a timely manner is essential and the above services will provide the appropriate support to individuals by signposting them to sources of help, support and advice. This might be how to find a new job, improve skills, find out about benefits that individuals may be entitled to, to ease money worries, or coping with the emotional pressure of being made redundant.

### **Supplementary Question**

With regard to your point about securing alternative employment, can we encourage such businesses to come to Stafford?

### **Reply**

I've already been approached by other businesses who have vacant positions which they may be able to offer to those being made redundant by GE.

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

### **Question**

Why is it that the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth seeks to achieve mitigation for the economically detrimental Stone site, rather than seeking to gain either

Alternative Provision or Petitioning for the far superior Aldersey's Rough option, especially as the Stone site will ultimately lead to Stafford station losing its HS2 services and status as an HS2 hub? Page 31 lists six bullet points as key petitioning points, why isn't there a seventh which would state that "Proper assessment of the potential of the Railhead for HS2 ph2a being at Aldersey's Rough, instead of Stone, thereby avoiding the need to bypass Stafford with HS2 Services, avoiding the log-jam of traffic on the A34 and the M6 at J15 associated with a Railhead at Stone, and having the potential to develop effectively the rail services for North Staffordshire safeguarding the interests of Staffordshire's residents

### **Reply**

The Authority is aware of the suggestion by some residents to relocate the proposed HS2 maintenance depot at Stone to Aldersey's Rough. The Authority is also aware that there are opposing views to this proposal from residents living near to Aldersey's Rough.

The Authority does not agree that HS2 Ltd proposals for the location of the maintenance depot will mean that the HS2 passenger services for Stafford Station will be lost once it is constructed. Indeed we are working closely with the Government to ensure that the benefits of HS2 trains stopping in Stafford are maximised both in the short and long term.

The authority will take residents views into account when preparing its petitioning document which will be submitted in early 2018. It should also be noted that the Authority has recently held a community meeting where the petitioning process was explained in detail allowing interested stakeholders to effectively petition the current HS2 Ltd proposals for Phase 2a.

### **Supplementary Question**

If the railhead at Stone goes ahead, what mitigation measures will be put in place regarding the 11,000 HGVs which will be using Yarnfield Lane? At the moment HS2 have told us that there will be no mitigation.

### **Reply**

I will be working closely with officers to look at the impact of the proposed railhead and what measures we need to put in place to mitigate its impact on the surrounding area. I would also encourage local members to be part of the process and submit their views.

Mrs Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People whose reply is set out below the question:-

### **Question**

What is the procedure the County Council follows in allocating Section 106 monies? How is the local member involved?

## Reply

Section 106 (or S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows for private agreements to be made between local authorities and developers to make acceptable development that would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms. The legislation allows only local authorities to be the recipients of any financial contributions and other government departments (e.g. Highways England) cannot be party to a S106 agreement.

Legislation sets out the three strict tests that all contributions (as set out in a planning obligation) must comply with, i.e., they must be:

- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- directly related to the development; and
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

All S106s must be agreed by the developer and confirmed by the planning authority that they meet the relevant tests for them to be legitimate. As a result where SCC is party to an agreement we are bound by the terms to spend the contributions on what is set out in said agreement to mitigate the impact of the development. If the monies are not spent on that scheme then they legally have to be returned to the developer. Often the amount and timing of the contributions are agreed only at the end of protracted negotiations with developers and landowners.

The second test means that a mitigation project, e.g. a new or expanded school, new bus service, pre-identified highway projects, toucan crossings, etc. must have a direct and identifiable link to the development under consideration. Historically, contributions could be secured towards additional infrastructure within the vicinity of the development. More recently however, the Community Infrastructure Levy (or CIL) Regulations have tightened considerably the use of S106, which means that obligations must now be more precise and set out *specific* infrastructure projects.

Where the district or borough council has an up to date local plan, the planning of infrastructure can be less complex. For example, a [list of potential new schools](#) on large local plan housing sites is published on-line. Nevertheless, even where there is an agreed plan, unexpected and speculative applications from developers can have a major impact on infrastructure planning. Such applications provide officers with a matter of days to identify an appropriate project to have any possibility of securing a contribution from developers: in such instances there is little scope for wider discussion.

S106 agreements also set out the trigger points for when contributions must be paid. Phased payments assist with viability but mean that the county council often has to wait for the total amount to be paid. It may be perceived that projects are not being delivered even after contributions have been agreed with developers. In some respects this is down to the delay between developers gaining planning consent, the actual commencement of development and when the triggers points are met. Often a project would not start until sufficient funding has been received from developers (contributions from up to five developments can be pooled towards a specific project). Occasionally, a specific project has not been identified for an older style S106

agreement, e.g. where more than one school is capable of expansion in the vicinity of the development).

With respect to local members, Development Control officers regularly meet with the Divisional Highway Managers to discuss the highway impacts of planned and speculative development. This opportunity allows any potential projects held on the Members Divisional Highway Programme to be picked up and funded by a contribution from the development but only if it meets the three tests as defined in current legislation. Over recent years, officers from the School Organisation Team have attended meetings with members in most districts and boroughs to discuss school place planning, as well as responding to individual member inquiries. Over the coming year, working with the Community Partnership Officers and Strategic Delivery Managers, officers will use the schedule of Local Priority Meetings to provide members with more regular, scheduled briefings.

### **Supplementary Question**

How does the County Council identify relevant projects for Section 106 monies especially if there is no local plan and the local members are not involved?

### **Reply**

You highlight a difficulty for officers. Planning applications are looked at carefully by officers. Members can also look at planning applications submitted for development in their division and identify opportunities which may arise.

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

### **Question**

The town of Kidsgrove deserves a modern Sports Centre fit for the 21st Century. Can the Leader please tell me whether Staffordshire County Council's position has changed on funding a new Sports Centre in Kidsgrove or whether the position is likely to change in the future?

### **Reply**

Our position on this issue has not changed since my response to a similar question at Full Council in May. We are still committed to working alongside Newcastle Borough Council as they develop their plans for leisure in the town. However, responsibility for and funding of the provision of leisure facilities rests with the Borough Council. To date there have been 2 expressions of interest in taking on the former Kidsgrove Leisure Centre as a Community Asset, and those interested community groups have until March 2018 to provide a business case before any decision can be made.

### **Supplementary Question**

Taxpayers in the Kidsgrove area pay 72% of their Council Tax to the County Council. So, to clarify and for the avoidance of doubt, can the Leader confirm whether the

County Council is willing to provide any capital funding for either the renovation of the sports centre or for a new sports centre fit for the future?

### **Reply**

I refer you to my previous answer. The responsibility for the provision of leisure facilities rests with the Borough Council.

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

### **Question**

Can the Cabinet Support Member for Highways and Transport please tell me why grit bins across my Division have not been replenished before the recent severe weather set in?

### **Reply**

Staffordshire has in the region of 4,000 salt bins and piles distributed across its 6,000kms of highway network. These are grouped in to 168 refill schedules for the purposes of efficiency.

Generally speaking the restocking exercise begins at the start of the winter season in late October, as highway crews switch from the main road repair season to winter activities. Restocking then carries on throughout late October to early December in advance of the more severe winter weather generally experienced between December and February.

It's an onerous process and the time taken to complete this exercise can vary based on the availability of resource and the demand placed on the teams to deal with other highway related activities.

The Countywide restocking exercise was 95% complete prior to the recent snow event. Unfortunately the schedules covering Kidsgrove, Talke, Mow Cop and Newcastle had not been completed and are scheduled for completion during the week commencing 11 December. This work remains on track for completion by the end of the week.

More generally further refills are then carried out throughout the season as required, dependent on local usage. The salt should only be used on the adopted highway, but during periods of severe weather the stocks in these bins and piles can diminish very rapidly. The first refills of this winter season are taking place currently following the recent period of high demand.

### **Supplementary Question**

Would you agree that customer services simply telling residents that grit bins will be refilled in due course for weeks on end is not really good enough? I hope that you will ensure that the highways team will give firmer information to the public in future.

## **Reply**

We have over 4,000 grit bins across the County and the refilling of them is clearly a matter of priority. Local members can play their part where they receive requests for grit bins by looking at the criteria on the application form and, where the location fulfils that criteria, submitting an application.

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

## **Question**

With the recent figures for claimants for job seekers allowance and Universal credit in the county again being welcome news, could the portfolio holder comment on some initiatives which encourage business to locate or retain high paid, high skill jobs to the county?

## **Reply**

Creating the right conditions for Staffordshire's economy to grow and create more better paid jobs remains a key priority for the County Council. Members will be aware of the County Council's support to the "Make It" Investment Service which has a target of creating and safeguarding 2,000 jobs in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in 2017/18. The service specifically targets key sectors where there are higher value jobs, such as Automotive, Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Digital and Energy.

We're working on behalf of the Local Enterprise Partnership to help meet their ambitions of creating 50,000 jobs and growing the economy by 50% over the 10 years. Through the success of our "Growth Deal" projects we have recently secured 800 jobs at the Bericote Four Ashes site in South Staffordshire with automotive supplier, Gestamp relocating their production to a purpose built 450,000 square foot facility, following our intervention.

By investing in sites such as Innovation Centre 5 at Keele University Science and Innovation Park, Redhill Business Park in Stafford, and the highly successful i54 South Staffordshire we are creating the right conditions for further high value and skilled employment in Staffordshire.

The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Growth Hub was established in 2014 with the purpose of helping to unlock private sector growth in terms of job creation, sustainable new businesses and new product/market development. It does this by extending the reach and impact of national initiatives and funds, and by a referral system which enhances the effectiveness of the business support infrastructure across Staffordshire. The Growth Hub has assisted more than 4,300 businesses since 2014, and develops co-operation among national and local providers and encourages the cross-referral of clients.

Through activity funded by the European Social Fund we are also delivering a high level skills programme with a value of almost £10 million which will reach benefit 7,600 people.

## **57. Petitions**

### **High Street, Halmer End**

Mrs Woodward (on behalf of Mrs Beech) presented a petition from residents of Halmer End calling on the County Council to repair and resurface Halmer End High Street and the adjacent pavements.

**Chairman**