

Minutes of the County Council Meeting held on 20 May 2021

Attendance

Jak Abrahams	Syed Hussain	Bob Spencer
Arshad Afsar	Graham Hutton	Mike Sutherland
Charlotte Atkins	Thomas Jay	Mark Sutton
Philip Atkins, OBE	Julia Jessel	Stephen Sweeney
Gill Burnett	Peter Kruskonjic	Simon Tagg
Tina Clements	Ian Lawson	Samantha Thompson
Richard Cox	Tom Loughbrough-Rudd	Carolyn Trowbridge
Mike Davies	Johnny McMahon	Ross Ward
Mark Deaville	Paul Northcott	Jill Waring
Janet Eagland	Jeremy Oates	Alan White
Ann Edgeller	Gillian Pardesi	Philip White
Keith Flunder	Ian Parry	Mike Wilcox
Richard Ford	Kath Perry, MBE	Conor Wileman
John Francis	Jeremy Pert	Ian Wilkes
Colin Greatorex	Bernard Peters	Bernard Williams
Philippa Haden	Jonathan Price	David Williams
Gill Heath	Robert Pritchard	Victoria Wilson
Phil Hewitt	James Salisbury	Mark Winnington
Jill Hood	Janice Silvester-Hall	Mike Worthington
Derrick Huckfield	David Smith	
Philip Hudson	Paul Snape (Chairman)	

Apologies for absence: Jason Jones

PART ONE

1. Election of the Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year

Cllr Spencer moved, and Cllr Trowbridge seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED – That Cllr Paul Snape be elected Chairman of the County Council for the ensuing year.

2. Declarations of Interest under Standing Order 16

The following Members declared an interest in accordance with Standing Order 16.5:-

Member	Minute Nos.	Interest	Reason
Tom Loughborough-Rudd	3 and 16	Personal	Director of a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in receipt of funding from the County Council
Mark Winnington	14	Personal	Farmer living in a rural area

3. Confirmation of the minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 March 2021

Cllr Charlotte Atkins referred to minute number 45 relating to the report of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and asked when the information on (i) the numbers of PCSOs, Police Officers and Support Officers employed over the last three years; and (ii) information on staff absences during 2020 for both Fire and Police services and if those absence had been due to Covid-19; would be made available to Members.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the County Council held on 18 March 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Election of the Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year

Cllr Pert moved, and Cllr Wileman seconded, and it was:-

RESOLVED – That Cllr Phil Hewitt be appointed Vice-Chairman of the County Council for the ensuing year.

5. Chairman's Correspondence

There were no items of Chairman's Correspondence on this occasion.

6. Results of the County Council Elections - 6 May 2021

The Chairman presented an Election return detailing the names of candidates elected and the number of seats won by each of the political parties, together with the percentage of votes cast. Cllr Alan White and Cllr Charlotte Atkins extended their congratulations to their fellow Members on being elected to the County Council.

RESOLVED – That the Election return be received.

7. Members not re-elected

The Chairman presented a report detailing those former Members of the Authority who were not re-elected at the County Council Elections on 6 May 2021. Cllr Alan White and Cllr Charlotte Atkins paid tribute to the contributions the former Members had made to the work of the Council during their term(s) of office. Cllr Charlotte Atkins did however express concern at the abruptness with which the Members were asked to return the IT equipment which had been provided to them by the County Council.

Cllr Philip Atkins OBE indicated that he hoped that the Council would formally recognize the contribution made by the former Members who had served three or more terms of office by awarding them Honorary Alderman status.

RESOLVED – That the former Members named below be thanked for the valuable contribution they had made to the work of the Authority during their term(s) of office:

- Ann Beech (2013 - 2021) Audley and Chesterton (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
- David Brookes (2016 - 2021) Uttoxeter Town (East Staffordshire)

- Alan Dudson (2013 - 2021) Brereton and Ravenhill (Cannock Chase)
- Dave Jones (2017 - 2021) Keele, Knutton and Silverdale (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
- Susan Woodward (2005 - 2009 and 2013 - 2021) Burntwood North (Lichfield)

8. Appointment of the Leader of the Council

Cllr Philip White moved, and Cllr Philip Atkins OBE seconded, and it was:-

RESOLVED – That Cllr Alan White be appointed Leader of the County Council.

9. To set the maximum number of members of the Cabinet

Cllr Alan White informed the Council that he proposed to set the number of Members of the Cabinet at nine plus the Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED – That the number of Members of the Cabinet be set at nine plus the Leader of the Council.

10. Statement by the Leader of the Council of the members appointed to the Cabinet

The Leader of the Council circulated a statement setting out his Cabinet, as follows:-

Cabinet Members (10)

- Leader of the Council – Alan White
- Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills – Philip White
- Cabinet Member for Health and Care – Julia Jessel
- Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change – Simon Tagg
- Cabinet Member for Commercial Matters – Mark Deaville
- Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport – David Williams
- Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources – Ian Parry
- Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture – Victoria Wilson
- Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Mark Sutton
- Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND) – Jonathan Price

Support Members with specific portfolios (1)

- Cabinet Support Member for Public Health and Integrated Care – Johnny McMahon

11. Committee Membership

Cllr Alan White moved, and Cllr Philip White seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED – That the Members indicated below serve on the Committees listed for the period up to the Annual Council meeting in 2022:-

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Charlotte Atkins	Bernard Peters
Tina Clements	James Salisbury
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
Colin Greatorex	Samantha Thompson
Gill Heath	Conor Wileman
Jeremy Oates	Mike Worthington
Jeremy Pert	

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Tina Clements	Graham Hutton
Keith Flunder	Ian Lawson
Philippa Haden	David Smith
Philip Hudson	Ross Ward
Syed Hussain	Bernard Williams

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Gill Burnett	Gillian Pardesi
Janet Eagland	Kath Perry
Richard Ford	Bob Spencer
Peter Kruskonjic	Jill Waring
Jason Jones	Mike Wilcox

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Jak Abrahams	Thomas Jay
Charlotte Atkins	Phil Hewitt
Philip Atkins	Paul Northcott
Richard Cox	Jeremy Pert
Ann Edgeller	Janice Silvester-Hall
Keith Flunder	Ian Wilkes
Jill Hood	

Planning Committee	
Jak Abrahams	Jeremy Oates
Arshad Asfar	Rob Pritchard
Richard Cox	David Smith
Richard Ford	Paul Snape
John Francis	Mike Sutherland
Phil Hudson	Jill Waring
Ian Lawson	Mark Winnington
Tom Loughborough-Rudd	

Pensions Committee	
Philip Atkins	Bob Spencer
Mike Davies	Mike Sutherland
Colin Greatorex	Stephen Sweeney
Derrick Huckfield	Mike Wilcox
Samantha Thompson	

Audit and Standards Committee	
Arshad Asfar	Janice Silvester-Hall
Ann Edgeller	Carolyn Trowbridge
Richard Ford	Ross Ward
Philippa Haden	Conor Wileman
Phil Hewitt	Ian Wilkes
Graham Hutton	Bernard Williams
Bernard Peters	Mike Worthington
James Salisbury	

Corporate Parenting Panel	
Gill Burnett	Phil Hudson
Janet Eagland	Syed Hussain
Ann Edgeller	Tom Loughborough-Rudd
Keith Flunder	Paul Snape
Richard Ford	Mark Sutton
John Francis	Carolyn Trowbridge
Peter Kruskonjic	Victoria Wilson
Jill Hood	

Charities and Trusts Committee	
Ian Lawson	Paul Snape
Thomas Jay	Mark Winnington
David Smith	

Property Sub-Committee	
Mark Deaville	Alan White
Ian Parry	Philip White
Jonathan Price	

County Farms Tenancies Panel	
Gill Heath	Victoria Wilson
Carolyn Trowbridge	

Countryside and Rights of Way Panel (subject to the approval of the Planning Committee)	
Jak Abrahams	Jill Waring
David Smith	Mark Winnington
Paul Snape	

Standards Panel (subject to the approval of the Audit and Standards Committee)	
Philippa Haden	Bernard Williams
Graham Hutton	Mike Worthington
Carolyn Trowbridge	

Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	
Philip Atkins	Samantha Thompson
Paul Northcott	Mike Wilcox
Jonathan Price	

12. Appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees and Panels

Cllr Alan White moved, and Cllr Philip White seconded, the nominations for the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees.

RESOLVED – That the under-mentioned be appointed as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committees stated for the period up to the annual Council meeting in 2022:-

Committee

Chairman

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Colin Greatorex
Conor Wileman
Gill Heath

Health and Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Jeremy Pert
Paul Northcott
Ann Edgeller

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman
Vice-Chairman - Overview
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny

Tina Clements
Keith Flunder
Ross Ward

Committee

Chairman

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman	Bob Spencer
Vice-Chairman - Overview	Gill Burnett
Vice-Chairman - Scrutiny	Richard Ford

Planning Committee

Chairman	Mark Winnington
Vice-Chairman	David Smith

Pensions Committee

Chairman	Mike Sutherland
Vice-Chairman	Mike Davies

Audit and Standards Committee

Chairman	Mike Worthington
Vice-Chairman	Carolyn Trowbridge

Corporate Parenting Meeting

Chairman	Mark Sutton
Vice-Chairman	John Francis

Charities and Trusts Committee

Chairman	Paul Snape
Vice-Chairman	David Smith

13. Appointment of members to Outside Bodies 2021/22

Cllr Alan White moved, and Cllr Philip White seconded, and it was:

RESOLVED - That the nominations of the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Political Group Leaders, on the appointment of Members to Outside Bodies for 2021/22

be approved and that the Leader be authorised to make any changes to those appointments as may become necessary.

14. 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 Means Back to Business

(Paragraph 1 of the Statement)

Cllr Smith, Cllr Flunder, Cllr Deaville and Cllr Eagland spoke about the various visitor attractions in their respective areas and the role they could play, together with the County and District/Borough Councils, in regenerating the tourism and hospitality sectors in Staffordshire. Cllr Deaville also highlighted the support the County Council had already given to the sectors. In response, Cllr Wilson thanked Members for their comments and indicated that she would be delighted to accept Cllr Smith's invitation to visit Lichfield. She also indicated that she hoped that many Staffordshire residents would choose to "staycation" this year and use their Staffordshire pound to boost the local economy.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins referred to the increase in the number of vacant shops on high streets across the County and asked that the County Council work with the district, borough and town councils to look for opportunities to find alternative uses for these premises so as to reinvigorate town centres. In response, Cllr Philip White referred to the enormous amount of work the County Council did, along with its partners, in supporting town centres.

Cllr Edgeller requested that the County Council lends its support to the Riverway Link Scheme, which promoted the restoration of the historic river and canal waterway linking Stafford and the National Waterway Network, and indicated that the scheme, once completed, could boost the economy of the town. She also asked Cllr Philip White, in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills, to promote the scheme and she also invited him, together with the Council's Chief Executive and the Chairman of the Local Enterprise Partnership, to visit the site to see the work completed to date. In response, Cllr Philip White, indicated that he would be delighted to accept Cllr Edgeller's invitation.

Cllr Winnington and Cllr Hussain referred to the support the Council was making available to local businesses through the Staffordshire Business Loan Fund which formed part of the Council's response to COVID-19 economic recovery and the county's future economic prosperity. Cllr Hussain also spoke about the impact of the Covid pandemic on businesses in urban areas and how support needed to be targeted to help them. In response, Cllr Philip White referred to the answer given to the written question submitted by Cllr Hussain referred to in minute number 16 below.

Cllr Winnington also referred to the forthcoming Rural Economic Strategy and enquired as to when it was likely to be published. He also enquired as to whether the Rural Development Forum was likely to be reinstated and whether there were opportunities to develop brownfield sites in rural areas. In response, Cllr Philip White indicated that he

would be delighted to speak with Cllr Winnington on the issues he had raised and added that the Rural Economic Strategy would be developed over the remainder of the year.

Capital Programme for Schools 2021/2022

(Paragraph 2 of the Statement)

Cllr Smith indicated that he hoped that the capital programme would enable the development of further energy saving initiatives in schools to assist in addressing climate change. Cllr Jessel added that the County Council had secured just over £3m in public sector decarbonisation scheme funding which would help schools reduce their carbon footprint and also be utilised by the County Council in working towards the targets it had set for itself. She also added that a number of schools had submitted applications under the Council's Climate Change Action Fund. Cllr McMahon referred to the recent scheme which had helped to lift 500 homes out of fuel poverty and had also led to the installation of more efficient central heating boilers. Cllr Price added that the proposed new Free School in Rugeley had been designed to be completely carbon neutral.

Cllr Afsar enquired as to the value of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 funds allocated to each electoral division to date and what conditions needed to be met in order for those funds to be released. In response, Cllr Price indicated that he would be happy to speak with Cllr Asfar with regard to the questions he had raised.

In response to a question from Cllr Edgeller, Cllr Price explained how mental health funding for children and young people was utilised in Staffordshire.

Highways and Transport Capital Programme 2021/22

(Paragraph 3 of the Statement)

Cllr Smith referred to the causes of highway defects, including flooding, and how the County Council could work with others, such as the farming community, to help alleviate these problems. In response, Cllr David Williams confirmed that the Council already worked closely with other organisations such as the National Farmers Union.

Cllr Hussain praised the work of his Divisional Highways Team and also highlighted some of the challenges they faced. He also asked that local Members be involved in the decisions on how the County Council's additional £5m investment in highway maintenance was to be utilised. In response, Cllr David Williams confirmed that local Members would be involved in the decisions as to where this funding would be utilised.

Cllr Flunder also praised the work of his Divisional Highways Team and referred to the importance of the County Council working in partnership with local district/borough and parish councils in responding to highway issues. In response, Cllr David Williams stated that he was an advocate of three tier working and that the Council already engaged with both district/borough and parish councils.

Cllr Hood sought the assistance of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in addressing the damage caused to roads in her Division as a consequence of their use by heavy commercial vehicles involved in the Smart Motorway works on the M6 between junctions 14 and 15. She also enquired as to whether any compensation could

be claimed by the Council from Highways England as a result of the impact of those works. In response, Cllr David Williams confirmed that, unfortunately, the Council was unable to claim compensation. Cllr Francis also raised concerns about the potential impact of the HS2 construction traffic on the local highway network. Cllr Alan White also referred to the impact of a number of past regional schemes on the highways infrastructure in Staffordshire.

Cllr Northcott referred to the shortfall in the funding needed to address highway defects across the County and asked the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport if he would lobby Highways England and the Government with a view to them addressing this shortfall. In response, Cllr Alan White confirmed that lobbying was taking place and he also encouraged Members to lobby their local Member of Parliament.

Cllr Greston indicated that, in order to address possible congestion issues, there needed to be more coordination where a number of highway works were planned in the same locality at the same time.

Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme (Department of Education)

(Paragraph 4 of the Statement)

Cllr Charlotte Atkins enquired as to how the “learning gap” being experienced by many children from deprived communities would be addressed. In response, Cllr Price indicated that schools were able to access the advice provided through National Tuition programme; and that the Council was awaiting the Recovery Plan to be published later in the current school term or early in the Autumn term. Cllr Sutton also referred to the Winter Warm project which, like the Holiday Activities and Food Programme, was not directly related to attainment in schools, but did provide support for deprived families.

Update from COVID-19 Member Led Local Outbreak Control Board

(Paragraph 5 of the Statement)

Cllr Charlotte Atkins enquired as to what was happening with regard to the Council’s bid to take over responsibility for “test and trace” within Staffordshire. She indicated that, with the emergence of Covid-19 variants, action needed to be taken to “close the vaccine gap” between the richer and poorer nations. In response, Cllr McMahon indicated that the United Kingdom had played a major part in developing the Covid vaccines. He added that he believed that the UK Government would play its part in tackling the vaccine gap between the richer and poorer nations. With regard to “test and trace”, Cllr McMahon indicated that the Council had recently closed its static sites and was now operating through a series of eight pop-up vans, one in each district/borough area, offering mobile testing to local communities. He also indicated that everybody had a role to play in fighting the pandemic by ensuring that they tested twice per week and also by self-isolating if they tested positive for the virus.

Cllr Hussain praised the work of the Local Outbreak Control Board and also extended his thanks to Dr Richard Harling for the support and guidance he had given to Members. Cllr Alan White extended his thanks to Cllr Hussain for his comments and added that the Board would continue its work although it would now meet fortnightly instead of weekly.

Integration and Innovation: Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care for All

(Paragraph 6 of the Statement)

Cllr Tagg indicated that he welcomed the White Paper as he was of the view that it would lead to improvements in working across the health sector. Cllr Charlotte Atkins indicated that she was pleased to see the proposed end of the Clinical Commissioning Groups as they were always finance lead rather than patient lead. She did however express her concerns about the Government's failure to set out a ten-year plan for the reform of social care and the funding thereof and enquired as to its impact on the County Council's ability to deliver integrated care with the NHS. In response, Cllr Alan White indicated that the County Council was continuing to lobby Central Government on the need for a long-term solution for the funding of social care.

Cllr Flunder referred to the All-Party Working group and the work it had been doing around collaboration and enquired about the proposals to develop Community Hubs.

Cllr Tagg and Cllr Huckfield also raised concern about the impact on the health of local residents arising from the sulphur dioxide emanating from Walley's Quarry in Silverdale. In response, Cllr McMahon indicated that he would be happy to work with local members and Leader of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to see what could be done to bring the issues at the quarry to a swift conclusion. Cllr Alan White added that he had written to the site's operator to raise the concerns about the impact of the landfill operations on the health of the local community and was also pressing them to take action to remedy the situation.

Framework Agreement for the Repair and Treatment of Flat Roofs and Associated Works

(Paragraph 7 of the Statement)

Cllr Jessel asked that, as part of the Agreement, the opportunity should be taken with regard to replacing flat roofs with pitched-roofs, where this was feasible, so as to increase the roof's longevity; and where this was not possible, to look at installing solar panels. In response, Cllr Deaville confirmed that the Council would be looking at the opportunities for such provision, particularly on new buildings.

Integrated Performance Report 2020-21 - Quarter 4

(Paragraph 8 of the Statement)

Cllr Sutherland stated that 2020/21 had been a very challenging year and the latest revenue forecast outturn showed a saving of £1.8m (0.3%) (compared to the overspend of £0.6m (0.1%) at quarter 3) despite the financial pressures caused by the pandemic. He added that he hoped that going forward, the Government would provide a three to five year financial settlement, rather than the current annual ones, as this would enable the Council to plan more effectively.

Elections

(Paragraph 9 of the Statement)

Cllr Hussain expressed his thanks to Mr Henderson, the Council's Returning Officer, Deputy returning Officers and their staff, for the excellent manner in which the elections on 6 May were managed despite the additional pressures resulting from the Covid pandemic. Cllr Alan White added that 47 of the Council's 62 Members were also elected Members of District/Borough Councils and he expressed the view that this would bring benefits by way of closer working relationships and improved partnership working.

Covid-19

(Paragraph 10 of the Statement)

Cllr Afsar indicated that, whilst it was good news that Covid infection rates were declining and the rollout of vaccines were beginning to have a positive impact, there were still issues which needed to be addressed such as access to vaccines by those persons who were housebound and also difficulties in accessing GP services. In response, Cllr McMahan informed the Council that, as at 12 May 2021, one million vaccinations had now been given in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. He added that arrangements were in place for those who were housebound to be vaccinated and if Cllr Afsar could pass on the details of the individual to whom he referred, those details would be passed on to the appropriate authorities. With regard to access to GP services, Cllr McMahan stated that the Council also had concerns on this matter and that appropriate representations had been made.

Cllr Smith paid tribute to the NHS, volunteers and others involved in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. In response, Cllr Alan White indicated that he was discussing with the Council's Chief Executive the most appropriate way of acknowledging their contribution.

RESOLVED – That the Statement of the Leader of the Council be received.

15. Change to the Constitution Requiring Approval from County Council

Members considered a report of the County Solicitor proposing changes to the Council's Constitution.

They were informed that it was essential for good governance that local authorities regularly reviewed their Constitution. Over the past several months, work had been ongoing in reviewing the Constitution, particularly Section 11 – Officers.

Cllr Philip Atkins OBE and Cllr Winnington spoke about the need for Member involvement and appropriate scrutiny in decision making and asked that the proposals be reviewed to ensure that they were appropriate and that adequate safeguards were in place to ensure political accountability.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins referred to the proposed delegation relating to the programme of on-street charges for parking schemes and enquired whether this related only to existing schemes or also to any new schemes.

Cllr Alan White thanked Members for their comments and indicated that he would be speaking to the Council's Chief Executive and also the Monitoring Officer about how to take forward the further development of the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED – (i) That the proposed changes to the Constitution, as detailed in the report, be approved.

(ii) That it be noted that the above-mentioned changes will be reviewed in due course.

16. Questions

Cllr Clements asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health Care and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

With the growing number of military veterans struggling for support and some taking their own lives what is the county council doing to identify these people within the county and the community and what support is offered/signposted to them?

Reply

Further to Cllr Clements' question, the Portfolio Holder has made enquiries with Senior Primary Care colleagues with respect to whether veterans are now being acknowledged as such and coded on their systems. He was advised that they are now being accounted for. This will not be universal, however we can work with our NHS Primary Care colleagues to ensure that veterans get the support they wholeheartedly deserve.

For adults who require assistance there is also a wealth of help available from our communities. People can use Staffordshire Connects to find help locally or can call Staffordshire Cares or use one of our Community Help Points to have a conversation about the sort of support they need and what might be available in their area. Anyone who requires a Care Act assessment will be offered one, by telephone initially and in person if necessary.

Supplementary Question

Can I ask that the Cabinet Member and this Council formulates a process/policy to help us better understand the needs of our veterans and that a report be brought to the appropriate Committee or to Full Council in due course?

Reply

I will discuss with my successor on the Cabinet the opportunities which we may have in the future to support our military veterans.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

The introduction this year of Climate Change Action Funds for local projects was very welcome. Will such funds be allocated to Councillors in the future? Which Councillors were successful in applying for Climate Change Action Funds, how much were they allocated and how were these funds used within their Divisions? Which Councillors applied for funds but were unsuccessful in securing support for their bids? Which Councillors did not apply for funds for their Division? What was the total sum allocated to Climate Change Action projects?

Reply

The intention is that the Climate Change Action Fund will be launched again this year.

The fund was not allocated directly to Members, the financial allocation to each electoral division was a guide as to how much support was available. The fund was set up to raise awareness in the community to the climate change challenge and the need for everyone to make changes to their lifestyle and environment. Each project applicant had to seek their local councillor support before submitting their application, this gave councillors the opportunity to champion the climate change message

In financial year 2020/21 there were:

- 155 applications in total,
- 107 successful applications,
- 33 unsuccessful,
- 15 pending (had to be put on hold due to elections),

The original fund was launched in October 2020 with a budget of £62K. It rapidly became apparent that the fund was extremely popular with a great amount of interest. A further £62K was then allocated out of the total climate change budget. Therefore, of the total fund that was available over the course of last financial year was £124,000, of this £70,337 has been awarded to projects, with a further £14,110 pending.

The successful applicants' projects ranged in focus, in line with the fund criteria. The majority of the projects were for items such as, LED lights, building insulation, bike shelters (in schools), tree planting and double-glazed windows.

The table below is a summary of the allocation by the eight district/borough council areas (to date excluding pending submissions):

District or Borough	Amount Awarded
Cannock Chase	£7,709.00
East Staffordshire	£10,259.60
Lichfield	£9,971.00
Newcastle	£6,400.00
south Staffordshire	£12,246.00
Stafford	£10,867.00
Staffordshire Moorlands	£11,750.00
Tamworth	£1,135
Total	£70,337.60

Supplementary Question

Will the details of these successful applications be made public; has any Division lost out on allocations: and what are the main reasons for applications being turned down?

Reply

Yes, the information about the successful applications can be made available. We need to look at the lessons learned do date in order that we can continue to improve and develop the scheme.

Cllr Charlotte Atkins asked the following question of the Cabinet Member Communities and Culture for whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

What assessment has the Council made of the proportion of electors within Staffordshire who do not possess a form of photographic identity document, such as a passport or driver's licence that might be acceptable for use as a requirement before voting? Are those electors without photo ID likely to be from any specific community or disadvantaged group? How many instances of voter impersonation have there been in Staffordshire over the last ten years?

Reply

No analysis has been done specifically in Staffordshire, but based on national research by the Electoral Commission (published 2015) it is estimated that 7.5% of the electorate may not have a suitable photo ID.

The Commission also noted that 2011 Census data shows that White groups and mixed White and Black Caribbeans are less likely than other groups to hold a passport.

DVLA data showed that women, people under 20 and over 65, are less likely to hold a driving licence.

In terms of electoral fraud, we do not have the information for Staffordshire to hand, but the figures nationally show that for the years between 2010 and 2018 inclusive the number of cases of electoral offences reported to the Police varied between a low of 148 in 2013 and a high of 518 in 2015. In the majority of these cases, no further action was taken because there was insufficient evidence.

Supplementary Question

Will voter ID make it harder for people to vote; will it impact on some communities more than others; do we need to spend millions of pounds and to put up barriers in view of the low level of impersonation; and what is the County Council saying to Government about these issues?

Reply

I can assure you that our officers will pick-up these issues and make the appropriate representations to Government. With regard to your point about costs, I do not have the information but would be happy to look into this further if you wish.

Cllr Pardesi asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Health Care and Wellbeing whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Integrated Care Systems are shortly to be introduced with a more permissive NHS procurement regime. These new arrangements will hasten the increased fragmentation and privatisation of the NHS. What is the Council doing to alert the public of the implications of these changes?

Reply

The White Paper 'Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' published in February 2021 sets out HM Government's proposals for legislation to reform the NHS. They include the establishment of Integrated Care System NHS bodies to replace Clinical Commissioning Groups. They also include removal of the procurement rules which apply to the NHS when arranging healthcare services by creating powers to remove the commissioning of these services from the scope of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, as well as repealing Section 75 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Procurement, Patient Choice and Competition Regulations 2013. This would enable the new Integrated Care System NHS bodies to determine providers for healthcare services in the best interests of patients, taxpayers, and the local population and use competitive tendering only where it adds value.

Supplementary Question

How can the Council seriously suggest these proposals for unregulated markets are reforms?

Reply

I would be happy to discuss this with you outside of this meeting.

Cllr Edgeller asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

The people in South East Stafford Division have suffered greatly from the loss of Bus Services and I would imagine many other rural areas are also in that category. In one area alone, I have approximately 1000 homes with no service. These homes are approximately 3 miles from the town centre and their lack of access to public transport will have a negative impact on the town centre's businesses. Additionally, a lot of these houses will have a high elderly population who cannot walk the ½ mile to the nearest bus route, to which we can add the mental anguish, loneliness and isolation to compound Mental Health issues this problem creates. This Friday I, along with our MP Theo Clarke, have arranged a meeting with Chaserider to discuss the bus issues. Will the Leader and Cabinet give their support to help our citizens to regain their bus service lifeline?

Reply

We support your conversation with one of the main local bus operators, D&G, to discuss potential opportunities for new commercial services in your area. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, more than 95% of the local bus network in Staffordshire was operated on a commercial basis by bus operators. Public transport locally and nationally has been drastically impacted by the pandemic, and in line with government advice service levels were reduced due to lack of demand during national lockdowns.

The government and the authority have financially supported our local bus companies throughout this challenging time to ensure that they remain sustainable and in the medium to long term. Since April 2021 service levels have returned to pre pandemic levels in most areas of the county although patronage levels are still only 60% of pre-pandemic figures.

We continue to work closely with bus operators through the Staffordshire Bus Operators Forum and are currently considering what impact and benefits there will be for our residents following the recent publication of governments National Bus Strategy.

Cllr Hussain asked the following question of the Cabinet Member Communities and Culture for whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Has the County Council allocated £1m for Burton Library's relocation to Market Hall, if so, can I be assisted with the breakdown of the spending of the one million pounds? How is that £1m arrived and to whom? Has the council received any developer's interest in the site?

Reply

The initial submission to Government of The Burton Town Investment Plan has been successful in securing £22.8m across a collection of seven complementary projects, subject to individual Full Business Cases being approved. The seven projects will contribute significantly towards the regeneration of the town. These include the concept of relocating the existing Library to the Market Hall and around £7m of potential funding has been allocated. The redevelopment of the existing library site is considered essential to the success of an associated project to regenerate the frontage to the River Trent's "Washlands".

The Cabinet considered the principle of the relocation in a confidential report on 19th August 2020 (item 11) and as part of the decision-making process agreed the recommendations in respect of the proposed move to the Market Hall subject to the relevant consultation and design processes.

I can confirm that up to £1m has been earmarked for this project should it proceed.

The project is still at an early stage of design and as such the actual cost breakdown of the works is not available, hence the wide range of £0.5m - £1.0m used in the August 2020 Cabinet paper.

The decision to proceed will rest with both the Burton Stronger Town Board, in terms of making the requested £7m available to fund the structural alterations to the building and Property Sub Committee in order to confirm the Council's acceptance of the terms following submission of a Full Business Case and the Council's contribution. Neither the Town Deal Board nor the Council's Property Sub Committee will make any decisions until after they have considered the results of an extensive public consultation exercise that will take place during summer 2021.

There are no current plans to move the library if the Market Hall proposal is not progressed.

The principle of a land exchange between the two councils has been discussed which would see the county council becoming the freeholder of the Market Hall if the project proceeds. In return, East Staffordshire Borough Council would become the freeholder of the existing library site. The existing library site has not been marketed by the County Council and neither has it had any discussions with any developer about the site.

Supplementary Question

May I have the Cabinet Member's reassurance that the voice of local people will be heard, and that appropriate consultation will take place?

Reply

Yes – Not one penny will be spent on this project before public consultation has taken place.

Cllr Hussain asked the following question of the Deputy Leader Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills whose reply is set out below the question:-

Question

Because of personal circumstances, many residents in the county slipped away from the COVID economic safety net, very often we hear their financial hardship experiences, what will the council do to assist them?

Reply

At the time of any significant global economic shock which results in a recession there will unfortunately be parts of the labour force which will be disproportionately impacted through the loss of work or pay. Beyond the extensive Government business and job support that has been put in place such as the furlough scheme, self-employment income support and the Government relaxing the criteria for Universal Credit, so that those that have lost earnings as well as people out of work can now claim locally, the County Council have put in place an extensive COVID-recovery, renewal and transformation strategy, Staffordshire Means Back to Business.

To aid local businesses with their recovery and transformation as we move beyond the crisis there are an extensive range of business loans e.g. The three-year Staffordshire Business Loan Fund will provide loans from £10,000 to £150,000 to companies across a range of sectors.

The £5.4m Staffordshire Means Back to Business Support Scheme provides further support and incentives to help businesses and the workforce and includes:

- Small Business to Thrive Financial Support Grants of between £2,000 and £5,000, and support schemes.
- Incentives of £5,000 to businesses to recruit, retrain and train apprentices
- Free Training Top Up for Employers with grants of up to £5,000 for businesses to help quickly adapt business models to become more viable and sustainable.

Residents that are looking for work can access a wide range of new COVID-19 response and recovery interventions such as the Countywide Redundancy and Recruitment Triage Service to support residents back into work, the local delivery of the Government's Kickstart scheme to support young people into work and the Government's Restart scheme to help local unemployed residents that have lost work

in hardest hit sectors to reskill and upskill into growth sectors such as digital and the green economy. The Redundancy Triage Service has supported over 1,600 people with a positive progression to jobs and further training of 29% so far.

Be assured the Council will not stop working to find ways to support our communities. The County Council recently made its own submission to central governments Community Renewal Fund to deliver new and more ways to support citizens. But it does not end there, it is also looking at further ways that it can continue to support as many people and businesses as possible now and into the future.

Supplementary Question

What will the County Council do to minimise the suffering and to help citizens who slip through the safety net?

Reply

I'd be happy to work with you to try and find a resolution to the case to which you have referred.

17. Petitions

There were no petitions on this occasion.

Note by Clerk: Cllr Eagland referred to the public opposition in respect of the planning application submitted by Cemex for a proposed cement factory on land near Alrewas. She added that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, she did not have a petition to present but wanted the Council to be aware of the strength of public opinion against the proposals.

Chairman