

## **TO:- Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Mike Davies , Councillor Philip Davis , Councillor Andrew Adams , Councillor Helen Adams , Councillor Penny Allen , Councillor Jeff Ashley , Councillor Meg Barrow , Councillor Barry Bond M.B.E. , Councillor John Brindle , Councillor Gary Burnett , Councillor Val Chapman , Councillor Bob Cope , Councillor Steph Dufty , Councillor Robert Duncan , Councillor Sue Duncan , Councillor Christopher Evans , Councillor Mark Evans , Councillor Warren Fisher , Councillor Sam Harper-Wallis , Councillor Dr Paul Harrison M.B.E. , Councillor Diane Holmes , Councillor Fiona Hopkins , Councillor Matthew Jackson , Councillor Victor Kelly , Councillor Dan Kinsey B.E.M , Councillor Vincent Merrick , Councillor John Michell , Councillor Rob Nelson , Councillor Martin Perry , Councillor Ray Perry , Councillor Gregory Spruce , Councillor Christopher Steel , Councillor Wendy Sutton , Councillor Sue Szalapski , Councillor Bernard Williams , Councillor Kath Williams

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be held as detailed below for the purpose of transacting the business set out below.

Date: Tuesday, 25 July 2023

Time: 18:30

Venue: Council Chamber, Council Offices, Wolverhampton Road, Codsall, South Staffordshire, WV8 1PX



D. Heywood  
Chief Executive

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## **AGENDA**

### **Part I – Public Session**

- |          |   |              |
|----------|---|--------------|
| <b>1</b> | Minutes   | <b>3 - 4</b> |
|          | To confirm the Minutes of the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 31st January 2023. |              |
| <b>2</b> | Apologies   |              |
|          | To receive any apologies for non-attendance.  |              |
| <b>3</b> | Declarations of Interest  |              |
|          | To receive any declarations of interest.  |              |

<b>4</b>	<b>Integrated Performance Management (IPM) Report - 2022/23 Quarter 4 and Outturn</b> Report of the Corporate Director, Chief Operating Officer	<b>5 - 46</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Closed Churchyards Revision of Special Expense Decision</b> Report of Councillor Kath Perry M.B.E - Cabinet Member for Community Services	<b>47 - 74</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund</b> Report of the Assistant Director Enterprise and Growth	<b>75 - 88</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>South Staffordshire Place Narrative 2023</b> Report of the Corporate Policy Manager	<b>89 - 112</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Member Working Groups 2023 - 2024 - Topic Selection</b> Report of the Corporate Director of Governance	<b>113 - 116</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Work Programme 2023/24</b> Report of the Corporate Director of Governance	<b>117 - 120</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Outcome Report on 2023/23 Challenge Panels</b> Report of the Challenge Panel Chairmen and Vice Chairmen	<b>121 - 138</b>

#### **RECORDING**

**Please note that this meeting will be recorded.**

#### **PUBLIC ACCESS TO AGENDA AND REPORTS**

Spare paper copies of committee agenda and reports are no longer available. Therefore should any member of the public wish to view the agenda or report(s) for this meeting, please go to [www.sstaffs.gov.uk/council-democracy](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/council-democracy).

Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** South  
Staffordshire Council held in the Council  
Chamber Community Hub,  
Wolverhampton Road, Codsall, South  
Staffordshire, WV8 1PX on Tuesday, 31  
January 2023 at 18:30

**Present:-**

Councillor Andrew Adams, Councillor Penny Allen, Councillor Meg Barrow, Councillor Joyce Bolton, Councillor Barry Bond, Councillor Anthony Bourke, Councillor Mike Boyle, Councillor Gary Burnett, Councillor Nigel Caine, Councillor Jo Chapman, Councillor Bob Cope, Councillor Mike Davies, Councillor Philip Davis, Councillor Mark Evans, Councillor Matt Ewart, Councillor Warren Fisher, Councillor Lin Hingley, Councillor Steve Hollis, Councillor Diane Holmes, Councillor Ve Jackson, Councillor Janet Johnson, Councillor Dan Kinsey, Councillor Michael Lawrence, Councillor Dave Lockley, Councillor Vincent Merrick, Councillor John Michell, Councillor Ian Sadler, Councillor Spencer, Councillor Bernard Williams, Councillor Henry Williams, Councillor Kath Williams

24      **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 31 January 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

25      **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillor Chris Benton, Councillor Kath Perry, Councillor Ray Perry, Councillor Christopher Steel, Councillor Wendy Sutton and Councillor Ken Upton.

26      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

27      **MTFS REPORT**

**MTFS:**

Members scrutinised the proposed budget and MTFS. Councillor W Fisher abstained from voting.

**RESOLVED:** that

1. Members support this report together with the draft Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), projected expenditure for 2022/23, revenue estimates and capital programme for 2023/24 and proposals for the 2023/24 budget. In particular;
2. Members note the updated draft MTFS position and the revised revenue estimates for 2022/23 and 2023/24;
3. Members note the reconciliation for the previous approved MTFS to the updated draft MTFS;
4. Members support the revised capital programme;
5. Members support that the minimum level of general fund reserves is maintained at £1.5m;
6. Members note that the Leader of the Council be authorised to make any

6 February 2023

necessary amendments to include any late information or to correct any errors or omissions.

28      **WORK PROGRAMME REPORT**

**RESOLVED:** That the work programme be noted.

The Meeting ended at: 19:34

**CHAIRMAN**

## **SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023**

### **INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (IPM) REPORT – 2022/23 QUARTER 4 AND OUTTURN**

#### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**

## **PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

### **1.0 SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report provides a combined update as of 31 March 2023 (Quarter 4 of 2022/23) and 2022/23 outturn on performance, finance, and risk. This includes results against performance targets set to monitor delivery of the Council Plan 2020 – 2024.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**



- 2.1 It is recommended that Members review and note the Quarter 4 Integrated Performance Management (IPM) Report.

### **3.0 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	It reports progress against Council Plan targets.
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	No	This report does not impact on equality issues
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	The IPM report is presented to O&S at Quarter 2 and 4 only.	
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET DATE	Quarterly	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	Yes	The report details the financial position as at the end of Quarter 4 2022/23.
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	Appendix 3 to this report includes all Council strategic risks and a summary position statement on operational risk.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	All Wards

## 4.0 INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 4.1 Finance

 <b>REVENUE</b>		 <b>CAPITAL</b>	
Net Revenue Budget 2022/23 £m	Provisional Outturn 2022/23 £m	Capital Budget 2022/23 £m	Provisional Capital Outturn 2022/23 £m
£16.239	£15.983	£21.998	£6.406
Provisional Variance 2022/23 £m	Percentage Variance from Budget 2022/23		
0.256	1.58%		

### 4.2 Performance

Current Position	G	A	R	N/A
23 Council Plan Targets at Q4	17	1	5	0
23 Council Plan Targets at Outturn	16	0	6	1
Revenue Budget - Service (Net) Expenditure				
Revenue Budget - Other Expenditure				
Revenue Budget - External Funding				
Overall Revenue Budget - Appropriations to Reserves				
Capital Programme				

### 4.3 Strategic and Operational risks

Strategic Risks	8
Operational Risks	69

## **IPM Narrative Report**

### **5.0 Review of the Quarter**

- 5.1 At the end of the finance year, previously detailed financial and service challenges have been met primarily from Earmarked Reserves which were established to mitigate this in-year risk.
- 5.2 Significant financial pressures driven by inflation emerged in Quarter 1 of the financial year; however further service pressures have been experienced as the Council continues to see the longer term impacts of Covid and more present challenges from the Cost of Living Crisis.
- 5.3 Service pressures within Community Services remain although there has been improvement in the latter half of the financial year in membership take up. The works have been completed in the last quarter of 2022/23, which is reflected in the growth of memberships.
- 5.4 Sickness levels in Quarter 4 were on target with 1.77 FTE days lost per FTE against a target of 2.15. Sickness absence across the year average was 7.19 per employee which was above target. Long term sickness absence cases were the main cause of this target exceeding 6.95. While there are several long-term absences it is expected that sickness performance will continue to improve. Current sickness impacts on performance are mitigated.
- 5.5 Within the reported financial position are significant pay and inflationary pressures that have been managed by the Pay and Inflation Reserve in year (£0.600m); this included a provision for the 2022/23 pay award of £1,925 per person, per annum.
- 5.6 Commercial property income continues to perform well although following a major fire at one commercial unit last year and two units becoming vacant across the estate, rental income has been slightly lower leading to a small pressure. There is little indication at this stage that wider economic concerns will lead to further vacancies but the position will continue to be monitored into 2023/24. As such there has not been an update to the strategic risks at this point.
- 5.7 The Welfare Benefits teams saw increased demands on the service throughout 2022/23; recruitment challenges combined with additional calls for support meant an increase in Quarters 1,2 and 3 in time to process new Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claims. The approved additional funding and additional short term 3<sup>rd</sup> party support saw quarter 4 have a performance increase in claims being processed in an average of 13.36 days against the service expected standard of 15 days.
- 5.8 The additional demands Customer Services saw in the first quarter of the year have abated as the service returns to normal levels of demand. A review of the service took place in which changes to the teams structure was made, and investment to ease any future additional demand.

- 5.9 Planning income has performed strongly driving an expected over achievement against budget for the service as a whole in year of £0.111m.
- 5.10 Furthermore, decisions taken by the Council to lock into planned borrowing at historically low interest rates in 2021/22, coupled with higher interest rates receivable on balances has created a favourable variation across all Treasury activity of £0.632m.
- 5.11 Members should be aware that the agreed MTFS for 2022/23 agreed a contribution from General Reserves of £1.051m and established a £0.600m Pay and Inflation Reserve.
- 5.12 The provisional outturn (subject to audit) indicates a draw on General Fund reserves of £0.623m which is £0.427m better than budgeted.
- 5.13 In addition, the benefits of the Treasury windfalls will allow the Council to replenish the 'Pay and Price' inflation Earmarked Reserve to similar levels than those maintained successfully in 2022/23. This will be important given the potential for inflationary pressures to impact adversely on budgets in 2023/24.

## **6.0 Impacts on 2023/24 and beyond**

- 6.1 Concerns over rising inflation and pay that materialised throughout the year are likely to continue into 2023/24. The Pay and Inflation reserve set aside at the end of 2021/22 was fully committed in-year but can be re-established utilising the windfall receipts from Treasury activities in 2022/23
- 6.2 The main inflationary rise in the current year has been contained within the Pay and Inflation budget with relation to the annual CPI uplift applied to the waste contract. The impact of inflation will however be substantial in 2023/24 and ongoing and has been factored into the MTFS and the budget report for 2023/24.
- 6.3 Leisure centre base membership which was increasing following Covid has fallen back principally as a result of the refurbishment programme. At this stage it is expected that membership levels will recover over the course of 2023/24 following the completion of the refurbishment programme and the potential to attract new customers away from more expensive leisure sites at a time of increased economic challenge presents an opportunity to the Council.
- 6.4 Support to business via the enterprise team will be a key focus for the 2023/24 aligned to monitoring of commercial property occupancy levels which are still maintaining in excess of 97.5% and ensuring that outstanding debt levels do not increase. This will be an important metric of economic challenges in the months ahead.
- 6.5 Collection rates of Council Tax and Business Rates performance which primarily held up during the Covid-19 pandemic continues to be monitored closely to quickly pick up any adverse impacts due to the cost-of-living crisis. However, there was no underlying risk to this year's budget as any shortfall is mitigated by the way in which Collection Fund related deficits are funded in future years.



- 6.6 Finally, upside opportunities from treasury management activities may continue into 2023/24 as borrowing costs are fixed but investment income continues to increase in line with interest rate rises. There is a risk to the medium-term capital programme that should the need to borrow further monies arises, rates are now significantly higher.

## **7.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Not applicable

## **8.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Not applicable

## **9.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Appendix 1 – Quarter 4 Performance Scorecard
- Appendix 2 – Quarter 4 Finance Scorecard
- Appendix 3 – Quarter 4 Strategic Risk Register

Report prepared by John Mayhew Finance Team Manager



## Quarter 4 - 2022/2023

The measures in the scorecard have been rated using a Red, Amber and Green (RAG) system

<b>RED</b>	Not on target and / or the level of risk (of not meeting target) is high and needs urgent remedial action
<b>AMBER</b>	Not fully on target but not significantly off target and / or the level of risk (of not meeting target) is manageable but requires close monitoring
<b>GREEN</b>	On target and / or the risk (of not meeting target) is low and under control

Council Plan Measures		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Outturn	Update Please provide a Q4 cumulative update.
	<b>Planning</b>						
1	On target to submit the local plan to the Secretary of State in line to meet the Government 2023 deadline						Local Plan review paused awaiting the outcome of proposed changes by the Government to national planning policy. However, the team are continuing to review the representations from previous Regulation 19 Publication Plan consultation.
2	Key enabler to 2500 new jobs (through planning decisions and partnerships).						No new jobs were enabled in Q4, however the granting of planning permission for ROF Featherstone in Q3 - which will see significant inward investment and the creation of 3000 full-time equivalent jobs - means that the target is now exceeded.
3	a) 60% of major development decisions made within the relevant time frame (or with an agreed extension of time). b) 70% of non-major development made within the relevant time frame (or with an agreed extension of time).						a) 100% within relevant time frame  b) 97.3% within relevant time frame
4	No more than 10% of applications overturned through the appeals process (major and non-major development).						Total of 42 Applications decided within the period. 1 Appeal was allowed within this quarter. Based on DCLG methodology = 2.3% overturned through the appeals process.
5	Investigated 80% of planning enforcement complaints within 12 weeks.						87.2% of planning enforcement cases were investigated within 12 weeks.
	<b>Business support/Council Assets</b>						
6	Business Support: 150 businesses supported (and 95% satisfaction level achieved)						21 businesses were supported in Quarter 4. The yearly target has been exceeded, achieving 120.7% by Quarter 4. Cumulatively, 184 businesses have been supported to date.  Satisfaction levels are measured through one-to-one contact with an officer and the business supported.  Previously: Quarter 1 46 business were supported, 30.67% of the year-end target Quarter 2 52 businesses were supported, 65.3% of the year-end target Quarter 3 65 businesses were supported, 65.3% of the year-end target
7	30 Businesses accessing Start-Up Support provided by the Council						6 businesses contacted the Council for Start-Up support in Quarter 4. Cumulatively, 31 businesses have been referred for start-up support to date, 103% of year-end target.  Previously: Quarter 1 3 businesses referred for start-up 10% of the year-end goal. Quarter 2 11 businesses referred for start-up 36% of the year-end goal. Quarter 3 11 businesses referred for start-up 80% of the year-end goal.
8	Ensuring 97.5% occupancy across assets to ensure delivery of income and no more than 2% of debt written off with outstanding debt decreasing year on year.						Occupancy at the end of Quarter 4 was 97.3%. Occupancy throughout the year averaged at 98.5% occupancy. Three industrial units have recently been vacated. Demand remains high and viewings have been undertaken or are planned. Interest in the vacant office at Element Court has increased following the recent marketing campaign with advanced negotiations taking place.
9	80% of food businesses are rated broadly compliant for food hygiene.						The Q4 broadly compliant rate has risen to 96%. The requirement of Phase 2 of the FSA Recovery Plan for the local authority's food inspection programme has been achieved.
10	Improve Business Continuity and Resilience of at least 3 Council systems by April 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Customer Contact Management</li><li>Online forms</li><li>Council's website</li></ul>						Go Live of the Council's Website was achieved on 6 <sup>th</sup> March 2023. Workshops and testing activity is currently underway with Verint to implement activities for Customer Contact Management and Online Forms in May 2023 following the Local Elections.  The iterative delivery of the core elements of Customer Contact Management, the Online Forms platform and the Website is expected to last approximately 18 months with regular incremental delivery of new capabilities.

Council Plan Measures		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Outturn	Update
							Please provide a Q4 cumulative update.
Waste							
11	Missed bin collections: a) Limit of 20 justified non-collections per 100,000 collections of blue and grey bins.  b) Limit of 3 justified non-collections of green bins per collection day.						The missed bin collection rates for Q4 are as follows: Domestic: 26.58 per 100,000 (99.97% collected on schedule) Recycling: 26.62 per 100,000 (99.97% collected on schedule) Green: 2.56 per day (99.99% collected on schedule)  However, due to a higher number of missed bins earlier in the year, the cumulative performance for the year is as follows: Domestic: 46.16 per 100,000 (99.95% collected on schedule) Recycling: 43.5 per 100,000 (99.96% collected on schedule) Green: 3.75 per day (99.99% collected on schedule) Biffa collect any missed bins within 24 hours of it first being reported.
12	Achieve 69% of resident take up for the charge for green waste.						70% sign up rate achieved
13	Reuse, recycle and compost at least 45% of household waste.						The annual recycling rate was 44% this figure was primarily due to a poor year for garden waste arisings. In Q4 whilst recycling and residual waste volumes remained relatively comparable with the preceding quarters, we have been predominantly impacted by a poorer growing season affecting our garden waste tonnages, which has had a negative impact on our overall recycling rate.
14	Investigate 100% of fly tipping reports and agreed actions to resolve the problem within two working days of the report.						100% of all fly tipping reports received in Quarter 4 were investigated within two working days.
Leisure							
15	Maintain a base level of 3,500 members across our four leisure facilities by Q4						Quarter 4 membership is 3460 (99% of target). This represents a 7% increase on overall membership since last quarter. However, CHLC & WLC are significantly affected by current refurbishments.  Previously: Quarter 1 membership was 3334 (95% of target) Quarter 2 membership was 3292 (94% of target) Quarter 3 membership was 3206 (92% of target)
16	Maintain over a 100% income % of operating costs for our four leisure centers by Q4						Quarter 4 income % of operating costs was 81.79%. The pay award , inflationary pressure linked to joint use agreements and closures due to the refurbishment works have impacted not achieving the year end target.  Previously: Quarter 1 income % of operating costs was 85.6% Quarter 2 income % of operating costs was 80.78% Quarter 3 income % of operating costs was 82.47%
Financial performance							
17	Achieve 43,607+ online financial transactions by end of March 2023						Quarter 4 online transactions 4,250. Total online transactions 44,129 meeting the target for the year.
18	Achieve 98% collection rate (minimum) for a) Council Tax b) Business Rates.						Council Tax collection rate at the end of Quarter 4 is 98.0% which is 0.3% higher than last year.  Business Rates collection rate was 98.9% which is 0.1% lower than last year.  *Both set of collection rates are subject to end of year accounting reconciliations
19	Process new Housing Benefit/Council Tax Support claims in an average of 15 days						In Quarter 4, the average number of days to process a new claim was 13.36, within the target of 15 days. Overall, for the year the average number of days to process a new claim was 18.66.
20	Process changes in circumstances an average of six days.						In Quarter 4 the average number of days to process a change in circumstances was 3.13 days, within the target of 6 days. The average number of days to process a change in circumstance throughout the year is 3.53.
Climate Change							
21	Preparation of climate change action plan and preparation of baseline activity report with decreasing carbon impact/use.						The Climate change action plan for 2023/24 and carbon baseline report is currently in the process of being prepared. It will be presented to members later in 2023.
Staffing							
22	Maximum of 6.95 days average sickness absence per employee per year.						In Quarter 4 1.77* FTE days were lost per FTE employee against a target of 2.15. 0.76 of these days were due to long term absence.  Across the year the average sickness absence per employee was 7.19 which was above target. Long term sickness absence cases were the main cause of this exceeding the target. 1208 6.95. long Term Days lost per FTE Employees was 4.91 which is a 1.4 increase

Council Plan Measures		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Outturn	<div>Update</div> <div>Please provide a Q4 cumulative update.</div>
							<p>from the previous year. The number of employees on long term absence has not increased from the previous year, however the figure has been affected by the duration of these absences.</p> <p><i>*Occasionally there are small fluctuations in figures due to late/end of month notification. Figures are always reviewed and updated if necessary.</i></p>
	Welfare						
23	<p>Building Better Opportunities program (BBO) targets for year end 2022/23:</p> <p>a) Sign-ups to the BBO Program = 105</p> <p>b) Exit from the BBO Program to Education and Training = 12</p> <p>c) Exits from the BBO Program to Employment = 23</p>						<p>The total figures for the final year of the Building Better Opportunities program</p> <p>A) Sign-ups to the BBO Program = 164</p> <p>B) Exit from the BBO Program to Education and Training = 22</p> <p>C) Exits from the BBO Program to Employment = 58</p> <p>These all exceeded all targets</p>





## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn

Ref	Budget Heading	Original Budget £'000	Revised Budget £'000	YTD Budget £'000	Actual £'000	Provisional Outturn £'000	Provisional Variance £'000	E' Reserve Impact £'000	Gen Fund Impact £'000	RAG	Page Ref
1	Business Transformation	1,762	1,816	1,816	1,562	1,562	254	(15)	269	GREEN	
2	Community Services	4,855	4,830	4,830	5,294	5,294	(464)	(313)	(151)	RED	
3	Regulatory	492	492	492	544	544	(52)	(120)	68	GREEN	
4	Partnership Services	2,126	2,121	2,121	2,217	2,217	(96)	212	(308)	RED	
5	Planning	871	871	871	760	760	111	(148)	259	GREEN	
6	Welfare Services	1,133	1,109	1,109	1,338	1,338	(229)	(97)	(132)	RED	
8	<b>Total Service Expenditure</b>	<b>11,239</b>	<b>11,239</b>	<b>11,239</b>	<b>11,715</b>	<b>11,715</b>	<b>(476)</b>	<b>(481)</b>	<b>5</b>	GREEN	
9	Enterprise Zone	5,028	5,028	5,028	5,141	5,141	(113)	(113)	0	GREEN	
10	Insurance Receipt in respect of Unit 4E Fire	0	0	0	(213)	(213)	213	213	0	GREEN	
11	Capital Financing and Treasury	(28)	(28)	(28)	(660)	(660)	632	210	422	GREEN	
12	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>16,239</b>	<b>16,239</b>	<b>16,239</b>	<b>15,983</b>	<b>15,983</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>(171)</b>	<b>427</b>	GREEN	
13	New Homes Bonus	(499)	(499)	(499)	(499)	(499)	0	0	0	GREEN	
14	Enterprise Zone	(5,028)	(5,028)	(5,028)	(5,141)	(5,141)	113	113	0	GREEN	
15	Business Rates	(4,300)	(4,300)	(4,300)	(2,977)	(2,977)	(1,323)	(1,323)	0	GREEN	
16	Council Tax Requirement	(5,094)	(5,094)	(5,094)	(5,217)	(5,217)	123	123	0	GREEN	
17	Services Grant	(162)	(162)	(162)	(162)	(162)	0	0	0	GREEN	
18	Lower Tier Services Grant	(105)	(105)	(105)	(105)	(105)	0	0	0	GREEN	
19	<b>Total External Funding</b>	<b>(15,188)</b>	<b>(15,188)</b>	<b>(15,188)</b>	<b>(14,101)</b>	<b>(14,101)</b>	<b>(1,087)</b>	<b>(1,087)</b>	<b>0</b>	GREEN	
20	Appropriations (to) / from Earmarked Reserves	0	0	0	1,258	1,258	1,258	1,258	0	GREEN	
21	Appropriations (to)/ from General Fund Balance	1,051	1,051	1,051	624	624	(427)	0	(427)	GREEN	
22	<b>Total Appropriation (to) / from Reserves</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>1,051</b>	<b>1,882</b>	<b>1,882</b>	<b>(831)</b>	<b>1,258</b>	<b>(427)</b>	GREEN	

<b>RED</b>	Not on target and / or the level of risk (of not meeting target) is high and needs urgent remedial action
<b>AMBER</b>	Not fully on target but not significantly off target and / or the level of risk (of not meeting target) is manageable but requires close monitoring
<b>GREEN</b>	On target and / or the risk (of not meeting target) is low and under control

# Integrated Performance Management

## 2022/23 Provisional Outturn - Executive Summary

- Total (net) annual **Service Expenditure** is £11.715m against an approved budget of £11.239m an adverse variation of £0.476m. Within this outturn pressures of £0.560m relating to pay and price pressures, including provision for the approved pay award of £1,925 per FTE employee have been mitigated via Earmarked Reserves for that purpose. A lower level of inflation was incorporated into the budget as set in February 2022. However, as subsequent inflationary pressures were becoming increasingly apparent when the accounts were closed for 2021/22, an Earmarked Reserve of £600k was established to manage the immediate impact of inflation which has been applied to the forecast inflationary pressures.
- Other significant variations included within the £0.474m and not explicitly linked to inflation and funded through that reserve total include;
  - £237k pressures in Leisure Operations, primarily due to lower than budgeted income from classes as recovery to pre-Covid levels of attendance continues, amidst temporary reductions in capacity due to refurbishments. There was some evidence however of a fourth quarter recovery in Leisure memberships.
  - £176k in Estates and Assets due to empty units at Element Court and Four Ashes and one off revenue costs associated with Wombourne redevelopment.
  - £254k saving against budget in Business Transformation. Some additional spending has been funded via Earmarked Reserve but this has been more than offset by staffing vacancies and other savings on IT and mobile phone contracts.
  - £104k Additional Customer Services staffing resources, primarily to cover Blue Bag / Chargeable Green Waste enquiries and largely funded via Earmarked Reserves
  - £333k adverse variation in Benefits. That related to staffing and Agency Costs (to cover absences) of £184k is funded by Earmarked Reserve. Balance, impacting on General Fund arises from housing benefits not being entirely funded through eligible subsidy and an underachievement against target for Housing Benefit overpayment recovery.
- Separately, variations to budget but not impacting on the General Fund balance as funded through Earmarked Reserves includes:
  - £104k Additional Customer Services staffing resources to cover Blue Bag / Chargeable Green Waste enquiries and largely funded via Earmarked Reserves.
  - £177k Covid related spend on Track and Trace staffing resources funded via Earmarked Reserve.



- Decision taken by the Council to lock into planned borrowing at historically low interest rates, coupled with higher interest rates receivable for balances held has contributed towards a £0.632m windfall for the Council. Of this, £210k can be applied to Earmarked Reserves to protect the Council against on-going inflationary pressures in 2023/24 with the remainder applied to the General Fund Reserves.
- Collection Fund deficits and prior year liabilities relating to Business Rates (£0.700m) are, according to rules applied to South Staffordshire at the end of the year and are funded via the specific Earmarked Reserve for this purpose. Timing differences have resulted in a surplus on the Collection Fund at the end of the year which will benefit Council finances in 2023/24.
- New Homes Bonus forecasts are as budgeted. Differentials in i54 business rates received are matched by payments.
- Collection rates, which primarily held up during the Covid-19 pandemic will be monitored closely to quickly pick up any adverse impacts due to cost of living crisis. However, there is no underlying risk to this year's budget as any shortfall is mitigated by the way in which Collection Fund related deficits are funded in future years.
- The budget for 2022/23 assumed a deficit (adjusted for contributions from Earmarked Reserves) to be funded from General Fund reserves of £1.051m. The outturn shows a contribution from General Reserves of £0.624m is a £0.427m improvement against budget.



## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn – Business Transformation

	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Year to Date Budget	Actual	Provisional Outturn	Provisional Variation to Budget	Impact on ER	Impact on GF	RAG
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Business Change Programme	225	225	225	113	113	112	112	0	
Internal Audit	94	94	94	83	83	11	0	11	
Information Comms Technology	1,443	1,498	1,498	1,366	1,366	131	(127)	258	
<b>Total Business Transformation</b>	<b>1,762</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>1,816</b>	<b>1,562</b>	<b>1,562</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>(15)</b>	<b>269</b>	

Revenue Budget	RAG	Comments
Business Change Programme		Savings have been achieved on the Customer Experience Programme in-year. Earmarked Reserve proposed to be set aside to cover anticipated expenditure in 2023/24.
Internal Audit		Minor savings as budget for unexpected / unplanned audit work not called upon during 2022/23.
Information Comms Technology		Staffing vacancies have more than offset costs arising from the agreed pay award. Expenditure accrued on Business Transformation projects will be funded via Earmarked Reserve for that purpose. Savings made on ICT contracts, mobile phone contracts and staffing vacancies within ICT will contribute towards the Council's General Fund in-year.



## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn – Community Services

	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Year to Date Budget	Actual	Provisional Outturn	Forecast Variance	Impact on ER	Impact on GF	RAG
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Facilities	860	860	860	1,016	1,016	(156)	(8)	(148)	
Bereavement	(78)	(78)	(78)	(50)	(50)	(28)	(30)	2	
Emergency Planning	40	40	40	40	40	0	0	0	
Leisure Services (Operations)	524	524	524	707	707	(183)	(12)	(171)	
Recycling	(251)	(251)	(251)	(412)	(412)	161	(48)	209	
Street Scene	1,125	1,125	1,125	1,154	1,154	(29)	(44)	15	
Assistant Director	90	90	90	89	89	1	0	1	
Waste Collection	2,545	2,520	2,520	2,749	2,750	(230)	(171)	(59)	
<b>Total Community Services</b>	<b>4,855</b>	<b>4,830</b>	<b>4,830</b>	<b>5,293</b>	<b>5,294</b>	<b>(464)</b>	<b>(313)</b>	<b>(151)</b>	

Revenue Budget	RAG	Comments
Facilities Management		There are a number of adverse variations against this Service, particularly in relation to utility costs. In addition, there are increases to the insurance premium for 2022/23 for the Hub and pressures on the amended specification for the cleaning contract and technical accounting adjustments for depreciation. The latter is offset corporately so no net impact on the General Fund. There are also pressures in relation to the agreed pay award for Council employed staff for 2022/23 funded via Earmarked Reserve. Increased room hire income and some savings against business rates have offered some mitigation against these pressures.
Bereavement		Cemetery and pre-purchase income exceeded budgetary targets. One off expenditure incurred on drainage work at Strawberry Lane cemetery offset by Earmarked Reserve set aside for this purpose.
Emergency Planning		No variations to report

Leisure Operations		<p>Significant pressures identified within Leisure Services with most significant elements listed below.</p> <p>Memberships have continued to recover well post pandemic against the budget and only showed an adverse variation of £9k. However, other areas of income have reduced where activities are now included within the Membership package such as the Energise income £22k.</p> <p>Greater income losses have been incurred against classes, in particular swimming where, exacerbated by closures, income was below budget by £237k. This was largely due to a loss of Swim Academy income during the refurbishment pool closures of £196k and pool air handling repairs closure loss of income £18k</p> <p>Other income areas, such as Energise, instruction and vending machine income across the centres also showed a deficit against budget of £33k.</p> <p>Above inflation pay increases (funded via Earmarked Reserve) added £86k to the costs but these were offset by savings of £34k due to vacancies and a further £12k due to less than anticipated reliance on Agency Staff.</p> <p>Reduced depreciation charges have also provided a benefit to the Service budget of £54k (although offset corporately according to accounting rules).</p> <p>Future maintenance of the Wombourne 3G pitch will be funded through an Earmarked Reserve (sink fund) for which revenue contributions are made each year from the General Fund</p> <p>The Service also benefitted from an in-year legacy of £60k which has been set aside as an Earmarked Reserve for future use at Baggeridge in accordance with the terms of the will.</p>
Recycling		<p>There are three significant variations within recycling. The service has benefitted from price increases in the sale of recycle materials to Biffa which generated a £213k surplus against the budgeted target. In addition to net savings of £54k on the Mixed Recycling Facility (MRF) contract, these benefits offset the costs of pressures incurred through reduced volumes of dry recycling credits, the latter being £87k short of budgetary target. Overall, alongside other minor variations a net benefit of £211k to the General Fund has been achieved.</p>
Street Scene		<p>Majority of Street Scene pressure relates to the costs of the 2022/23 pay award (£45k) which can be funded via the Pay and Inflation Earmarked Reserve. Unfunded costs impacting on the General Fund include £5k for additional fleet insurance premiums, £19k for cameras, trackers and new livery for new vehicles (partly offset through sales of old vehicles) and £6k being the net costs of additional utility bills. These pressures have been mitigated by additional Grounds Maintenance and Tree Work yielding £5k, staffing saving of £9k through vacancies and a saving against the budget for Street Naming of £4k. Alongside other minor variations, the net pressure on the General Fund is £15k.</p>
Assistant Director		No significant variations to report
Waste Collection		<p>Significant inflationary costs of the Biffa contract of around £184k (which can be funded via the Earmarked Reserve for Inflation. Other (non-inflation) adverse variations include some variable costs associated with the Biffa</p>

		contract (including rebates for damaged bins for example) and a £25k income shortfall against budget for green waste subscriptions which will impact on the General Fund.
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## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn – Partnership Services

	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Year to Date Budget	Actuals	Provisional Outturn	Provisional Variance	Impact on ER	Impact on GF	RAG
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Pay and Pensions Adjustments	137	137	137	182	182	(45)	20	(65)	
Elections & Performance	175	175	175	185	185	(10)	(1)	(9)	
Commercial Accommodation	(460)	(460)	(460)	(569)	(569)	109	6	103	
Economic Development	167	167	167	(39)	(39)	206	176	30	
Corporate Leadership Team	610	610	610	609	609	1	0	1	
Estates & Assets	(1,539)	(1,539)	(1,539)	(1,391)	(1,391)	(148)	59	(207)	
Miscellaneous Corporate	961	961	961	1,169	1,169	(208)	79	(287)	
Finance Team	554	554	554	551	551	3	(28)	31	
Human Resources	406	406	406	430	430	(24)	(40)	16	
Legal Services	130	130	130	131	131	(1)	(27)	26	
Member Support	576	576	576	555	555	21	(1)	22	
Policy & Partnership	409	404	404	404	404	0	(31)	31	
<b>Total Corporate</b>	<b>2,126</b>	<b>2,121</b>	<b>2,121</b>	<b>2,217</b>	<b>2,217</b>	<b>(96)</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>(308)</b>	

Revenue Budget	RAG	Commentary
Pay and Pensions adjustments		Net of some minor, miscellaneous savings, the decision to write off a number of historic debts owed to the Council yet considered irrecoverable is the primary reason for the draw on the General Fund. A receipt of £20k in relation to Commercial Opportunities Seed Funding will be placed in an Earmarked Reserve to be applied as required.
Elections and Performance		Minor overspend incurred in consultancy support and miscellaneous costs in the prelude to the 2023 District Elections.
Commercial Accommodation		Additional commercial rents at Community Hub since budget was set. In particular Staffordshire Police have contributed to income in excess of target and rental income from period of Three Hammers hosing the café.
Corporate Leadership		No significant variations to report
Economic Development		Staffing vacancies have led to a small benefit against this budget head.
Finance Team		Pressures relate to EFin system upgrade (funded via Earmarked Reserve and the impact of assumed 2022/23 pay award which is also funded via specific Earmarked Reserve). Other minor variations allow for a small surplus to be applied to the General Fund.
Estates and Assets		There are currently two long term empty units at Four Ashes and Element Court respectively incurring costs of approx. £58k. Additional revenue costs relating to the development at Wombourne £118k (finders fees, business rates, utility & water recharges). These have been partly offset by improved occupancy on other sites especially 4E (fire damaged site) where a temporary tenant is in place.
Miscellaneous Corporate		Majority of the reported variation (with General Fund impact) represents the Corporate Vacancy adjustment of £242k. This pressure is being offset by reported staffing vacancies across organization and other minor variations which have been added to Earmarked Reserves for future application including savings against the budget for insurance claims below excess, savings on External Audit costs and New Burdens funding received in-year.
Human Resources		Identified pressure relates to assumed 2022/23 pay award and contract extension for one employee. Both are funded via Earmarked Reserve.
Legal Services		No significant variations impacting on the General Fund. Earmarked Reserve available to fund additional pressures created through the assumed 2022/23 pay award and the costs of an Apprentice post.
Member Support		Staffing vacancies contributing towards minor contribution to General Fund.
Policy and Partnership		Staffing vacancies contributing towards the General Fund. Other variations are either positively contributing to Earmarked Reserves (lottery receipts) or relate to specific localities expenditure which can be funded via Earmarked Reserve.



## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn – Planning

	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Year to Date Budget	Actual	Provisional Outturn	Provisional Variance	Impact on ER	Impact on GF	RAG
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Building Control & Land Charge	24	24	24	14	14	10	0	10	
Planning Enforcement	174	174	174	190	190	(16)	(16)	(0)	
Planning Services	584	584	584	468	468	116	(132)	248	
Parking Enforcement	0	0	0	(1)	(1)	1	0	1	
Strategic Housing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Assistant Director	89	89	89	89	89	0	0	0	
<b>Total Planning</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>871</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>760</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>(148)</b>	<b>259</b>	

Building Control & Land Charge		No significant variations to report
Planning Enforcement		No significant variations to report. Salary pressures emerging due to assumed 2022/23 pay award which can be funded via the pay and price inflation Earmarked Reserve. No variation to report against the General Fund.
Planning Services		Additional income raised through significant additional planning applications arising through West Midlands Interchange and extension of staffing contract with Lichfield DC which will materially benefit the General Fund. Identified Earmarked Reserves will be applied to meet the costs of other expenditures coded against this service area (including Climate Change project and Tree work).
Parking Enforcement		No significant variations to report. Small benefit of income from parking fines imposed.



Strategic Housing		No significant variations to report
Assistant Director		No significant variations to report



## 2022/23: Quarter 3 – Regulatory Services

	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Year to Date Budget	Actual	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Impact on ER	Impact on GF	RAG
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Community Safety	31	31	31	14	14	17	5	12	
Environmental Health	461	461	461	530	530	(69)	(125)	56	
<b>Total Regulatory</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>(52)</b>	<b>(120)</b>	<b>68</b>	

Revenue Budget	RAG	
Community Safety		No significant variations to report.
Environmental Health		A significant element of additional spend refers to costs incurred on Covid Track and Trace salary payments. These will be fully funded through Earmarked Reserves set aside for this purpose – and any savings through vacancies will be applied to a Track and Trace reserve for future years. Costs of assumed 2022/23 pay award are intended to be funded via the Earmarked Reserve for Pay and Price inflation. In addition, there are a number of miscellaneous, positive variations against several budget heads. It is similarly intended that an Earmarked reserve is approved to enable anticipated future year expenditures for the EDMS/IDOX upgrade to be funded.



## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn– Welfare Services

	Original Budget	Revised Budget	Year to Date Budget	Actual	Forecast Outturn	Forecast Variance	Impact on ER	Impact on GF	RAG
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	
Customer Services	539	515	515	619	619	(104)	(90)	(14)	Yellow
Homelessness & Welfare Support	0	0	0	(46)	(46)	46	46	0	Green
Housing Operations	119	119	119	193	193	(74)	(69)	(5)	Yellow
Revenues	270	270	270	35	35	235	165	70	Green
Benefits	115	115	115	448	448	(333)	(149)	(184)	Red
Assistant Director	90	90	90	89	89	1	0	1	Green
<b>Total Welfare Services</b>	<b>1,133</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>1,109</b>	<b>1,338</b>	<b>1,338</b>	<b>(229)</b>	<b>(97)</b>	<b>(132)</b>	Red

Revenue Budget	RAG	Commentary
Customer Services	Yellow	Pressures on salaries due to additional staffing required for Blue Bag roll out, Chargeable Green Waste renewal, and Meet & Greet (Welcome Host). It is proposed that the majority of this variation will be funded through Earmarked Reserves.
Homelessness & Welfare Support	Green	No major variation to report.
Housing Operations	Yellow	The Homelessness Grant which is a 'ring-fenced' Earmarked Reserve will cover the majority of identified pressures. Additional spend incurred on Housing Plus temporary accommodation funded via General Fund.
Revenues	Green	Receipt of New Burdens Grant and increased court income have contributed to positive variation. These have been partially offset by Agency Costs (funded by NBG), the costs of engaging Inform CPI (with associated benefits for the Collection Fund) and some increase in print costs. The balance of unutilised NBG applied to Earmarked Reserve to cover future anticipated pressures in this area.

Benefits		Increased cost of Agency staff to cover vacancies, on-going pressures and one-off project work being covered by Earmarked Reserve and in-year DWP grants. The remainder of the adverse variation has arisen from underachieved budget for the recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments (of £54k) and a £47k difference between Housing Benefits actually paid and eligible subsidy received.
Assistant Director		No major variation to report.



## 2022/23: Provisional Outturn - Capital

Capital Scheme	22/23 Budget £'000	Spend to date £'000	Provisional Outturn £'000	Provisional Slippage £'000	Commentary	RAG
Commercial Asset Strategy	12,281	2,953	2,953	9,328	<p>Budget includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wombourne Enterprise Park development</li> <li>Restoration of Unit 4E Four Ashes following fire damage (funded via insurance claim)</li> <li>Capital receipt to be set aside for future viable purchase(s) if business case justifies. This element is likely to be slipped into 2023/24</li> </ul> <p>Some delay at Wombourne Enterprise Park caused by key contractor entering administration.</p>	
Leisure Centre Upgrades	3,096	1,947	1,947	1,149	<p>Joint user agreements (inclusive of the investment programme) are currently awaiting approval from County Council colleagues in relation to Codsall Leisure Centre. Alliance Leisure and their contractors have commenced work at Cheslyn Hay and Wombourne Leisure Centre. Refurbishment at Penkridge is complete. Confirmation has been received that Leisure Centre capital works will not adversely impact upon Council's partial exemption for VAT purposes.</p>	

Baggeridge	120	120	120	0	Work to facilitate improved road access now complete	
I-Trent Upgrades	20	0	0	20	Further to appraisal of alternatives to the Council time and attendance system monies will not be applied to the original intended purpose of this budget. A time and attendance system is still required for Leisure Centre staff however for which this budget can be applied subject to Member approval.	
Business Transformation	92	32	32	60	Budget to facilitate the replacement of workstations and peripheral equipment on a rolling basis. On track.	
Disabled Facilities Grant	1,860	1,049	1,049	811	Better Care Fund allocations to fund necessary adaptations. Prior year accruals are reason for negative year to date expenditure. This is the final year of the existing contract with the current service providers, Millbrook. Funding for any backlog in completing approved work can be applied to the new contract.	
Street Scene Fleet	384	133	133	251	The budget for Street Scene fleet capital has been split to recognise the principal value of seven leased vehicles (caged tippers and tippers). Four new mowers have been purchased outright.	
Social Housing Grant	127	0	0	127	South Staffordshire Council contribution to South Staffordshire Warmer Homes project.	
Electric Car Charging Points	95	95	95	0	Project included installation of carports, solar panels and a battery storage system. Now fully complete.	
Refuse Vehicles New Contract	3,046	0	0	3,046	As part of the extension of the existing contract, a new fleet of vehicles is being hired by the service provider to include 'split back' recycling vehicles to facilitate the dual stream collection	
Waste Bins New Contract	877	77	77	800	As part of the dual stream collection methodology, reusable bags are being purchased to separately collect fibre products.	
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,998</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>6,406</b>	<b>15,592</b>		

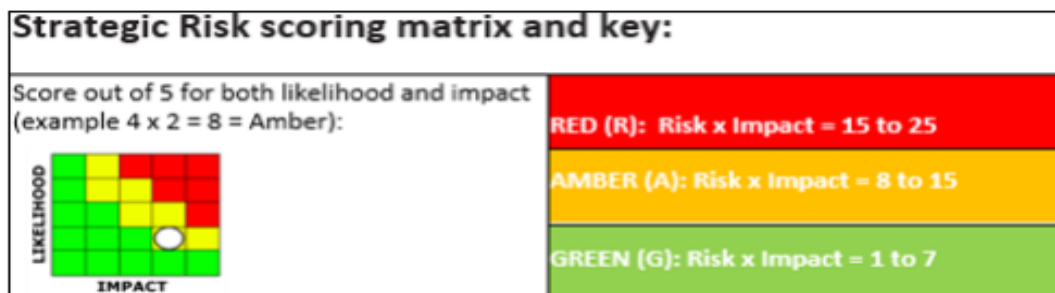








# STRATEGIC RISK



Theme/short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/internal control Q4.
The focus of our resources is not planned or prioritised effectively.	Resources are not organised effectively to deliver against the Council's priorities.	Workforce development does not meet priorities and challenges  Failure to recruit and/or retain	Services not provided at the correct level and standard  Residents' needs not met	1	4	4	<p>Resource Planning and Prioritisation (RPP) is in place to prioritise and focus on available resources. Risks continued to be monitored at a strategic level through regular check of key issues and priorities, weekly ELT meetings allow a continuous and dynamic check of these issues. If issues escalate appropriate teams are engaged to find solutions.</p> <p>The wider leadership team have plans in place to ensure that resources can be directed to areas of need in emergencies. Integrated reporting in place covering finance, performance, and risk. Ongoing communication with staff groups (Wider ELT, Team meetings). Staff surveys undertaken.</p>

		Workforce planning and succession planning are not in place	Competing priorities are not managed  Failure to recruit/retain business critical posts which will impact on service delivery				<p>The Council's Workforce Development Strategy reflects current local and national drivers that are influencing our workforce development challenges and priorities.</p> <p>The new strategy sets out three broad areas of focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values based leadership</li> <li>• Attracting and retaining the best talent</li> <li>• Continuing our ways of working journey</li> </ul> <p>The strategy has been informed by external industry data and consultation with our services and workforce to ensure it includes a range of short- and longer-term measures to ensure the Council has appropriate recruitment pipelines, skills development/training plans, succession plans, employer of choice strategies, employee reward/benefit packages and strong partnership plans with recruitment bodies, education providers, schools, and businesses. We have launched a range of new recruitment incentive pilots, a recruitment and onboarding system</p> <p>Our workforce development plans will continue to support and maximise our ways of working combining technology, virtual working, and the Community Hub. However further continuing professional development will also strengthen our arrangements around being a learning organisation, being data led and community engagement to build on our Locality + Model.</p> <p>Employment trends data profiling our workforce is regularly produced and used to inform workforce planning, RPP and succession planning.</p>
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							<p>We have an established apprenticeship scheme and there are currently 12 apprentices studying a levy approved qualification. We are working in partnership with South Staffordshire College to support our apprentice scheme and we are also collaborating with local schools to promote the Council as an employer of choice</p> <p>We are working with West Midland Employers and have participated in the new local government regional career guide for job seekers.</p> <p>We continue to offer our annual talent management programme ASPIRE which has so far delivered strong outcomes where 1/3 delegates have gone on to progress their development whether that be educational achievement or career advancement. Our 2023 ASPIRE programme is currently being delivered to continue the development of our staff.</p>
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Theme/short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/internal control Q4.
Budget pressures, increased income volatility and uncertainty as to the future of local government finance.	<p>The budget, the MTFS and the financial stability of the Council is severely impacted by reductions and/or changes in the way in which local government is financed.</p> <p>Indications are at this stage that the Fair Funding Review will redistribute funding away from District Councils to councils with Adult, Social Care and</p>	<p>Impact of major national and/or international factors on income streams and finances (e.g., recession, inflation, Brexit.</p> <p>Uncertainty re future of LG financial framework</p> <p>Costs passed on by other public authorities</p> <p>The fair funding review and funding baseline reset (both of which have been delayed) could</p>	<p>The Council's projected financial position is worse than anticipated.</p> <p>Our financial position becomes unsustainable</p> <p>The Council's reserves position becomes inadequate</p> <p>Residents' needs not met</p> <p>Services levels and / or quality are reduced</p>	2	4	8	<p>The authority has in place a transformation programme which has delivered significant savings to date.</p> <p>The 22/23 Budget and MTFS models general fund balances remaining above minimum levels for 4 years. Earmarked reserves increased to mitigate collection rate risks also.</p> <p>The Council is part of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent business rates pool which mitigate some of the financial risk associated with appeals and revaluations.</p> <p>Capital Strategy and Commercial Asset Strategy in place, supported by due diligence which balances risk/reward.</p> <p>Resource Planning and Prioritisation in place to focus available resources and integrated reporting in place which considers Finance, performance, and risk.</p> <p>The wider leadership team are looking to ensure that impacts from the Environment Bill and Waste pressures can be identified and mitigated as the implications become clear. Taking stock of finances to take place at each quarter. Income receipt at Hilton Cross to provide opportunity for investment.</p>

	Children's duties	significantly impact on the Council's finances.  Collection rates (council tax, business rates, sundry debt, rental incomes) reduce as a result of an economic downturn.					
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Theme/Short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/Internal control Q4.
Failure to deliver against the change, transformation, efficiency and savings agenda.	Plans to deliver further Efficiencies and Income and associated change programmes, transformation plans, commercial targets	Workforce not equipped/lack of capacity.  Project management failures.  Digital shift fails to reduce cost base.	Savings not achieved  Resident, Community and Business needs not met  Project timetables	2	3	6	Transformation Programme in place focussed on digital, flexible working and IT infrastructure.  Resource Planning and Prioritisation process in place to identify savings and efficiency opportunities. Commercial Asset Strategy in place supported by robust due diligence arrangements to balance risk and reward.  Workforce development strategy and programme in place.  Work ongoing with the County and parishes to develop options for stronger three tier working.

	and/or other large projects are not delivered.	<p>Inflexible work arrangements.</p> <p>Over optimistic projections within business cases</p> <p>Assets Strategy is not delivered / costs are higher than anticipated / income is lower than anticipated</p>	<p>not achieved</p> <p>Outcomes not delivered</p> <p>Poor staff morale</p> <p>Our financial position becomes unsustainable</p> <p>The Council's reserves position becomes inadequate</p>				<p>The next phase of digital transformation focusses on transforming the customer experience, enhancing customer journeys and refining and improving council processes to reflect efficient and effective service delivery. Intuitive online forms and informative website content will support digital customer journeys.</p>
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Theme/Short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/Internal Control Q4.
Cyber security attack	Cyber Security – risk of cyber security attack and	Failure to maintain a high level of cyber security	May result in theft or loss of confidential data	3	5	15	In recognition of the success of agile working (but also the additional associated risk) investment has been made (from earmarked reserves) into an additional data security and compliance package from the Council's software suppliers. This is part of the second

	ransomware type attacks	<p>(technology, processes and awareness) throughout the Council</p> <p>Ways of working</p> <p>Phishing attacks, scam emails and texts pretending to provide information from authorities re Covid 19</p> <p>Increased use of Home Wi-Fi networks / connected devices and more staff registering with cloud service providers.</p>	<p>May lead to denial of service and inability to access key systems for some time both for the Council, its partners and its communities. In turn may lead to financial penalties, reputational damage and a loss in public confidence</p> <p>May lead to loss of all digital services for weeks (specialist resources from the National Cyber Security Centre unlikely to be available).</p> <p>Home working severely disrupted</p> <p>Software suppliers' security compromised</p>			<p>phase of the Agile Working Project which is focused on the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• classification and labelling of council documents and emails</li> <li>• effective threat management and defensive mechanisms (layered to protect valuable data and information through "Defence in Depth")</li> <li>• creation of a "zero-trust architecture" to ensure that data and access across our technology environment remain secure.</li> </ul> <p>Clear policies on ICT security. Enforcing of policies on ICT security including implementing latest software updates/virus protection and firewalls. Staff training and communications are also being issued frequently to maintain and increase awareness.</p> <p>Council has in place specialist insurance to cover the impact in the unlikely event that an attack does succeed.</p> <p>Positive Internal Audit reports on Cyber Security, Agile &amp; Mobile arrangements, and Office 365 have both provided positive assurance of the controls in place.</p> <p>Monitor national and regional notification/alerting mechanisms for new cyber scams and attacks.</p> <p>Council data backed-up to the Cloud using 'write once, read many times' approach to facilitate complete recovery of the Council's data following a potential successful Ransomware attack.</p>
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		Supply chain attacks bypassing traditional cyber security defences	facilitating the distribution and installation of dormant viruses as part of regular software maintenance update cycles				<p>Divergence of hosting arrangements (on-premise and Cloud) for council business applications reduces the impact of a successful cyber-attack on council services. Digital communication channels, website, telephony, social media, contact centre all Cloud hosted by different providers and accessible by staff and the public in the event of a cyber-attack to the Council's network.</p> <p>Provision of Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) during 2023/2024 will provide further resilience for business applications and council services from a cyber-attack.</p>
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Theme/short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/Internal Control Q4.
Partner volatility	Partner volatility results in service delivery failure	<p>Financial failure/pressures on key partner</p> <p>National / International economic factors (including Covid 19 pandemic outbreak)</p>	<p>Negative impact on service provision</p> <p>Failure to meet legal duties</p> <p>Residents needs not met</p> <p>Risk of reputational and legal liability to the Council</p>	3	4	12	<p>The Extended Leadership Team meets regularly. Business and Service delivery (including key partner contracts) are standing agenda items.</p> <p>Monitoring of delivery of existing contracts in place.</p> <p>Appropriate financial due diligence takes place in entering long term contracts for key service delivery.</p> <p>Effective Business Continuity Plans are regularly updated and reviewed.</p>



Theme/short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/Internal Control Q4.
Information Governance Failure	Failure to comply with Information Governance requirements – in particular Data Protection	Failing to put in place appropriate policies, procedures and technologies to ensure that the handling and protection of its data is undertaken in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations	<p>May result in regulatory action including financial penalties</p> <p>May also lead to reputational damage and the loss of confidential information</p> <p>May also lead to legal liabilities as result of breaches</p>	2	4	8	<p>Data protection policy reviewed and refreshed and notified to all staff. Members oversight of this by Standards and Resources Committee</p> <p>Information Governance audit undertaken giving substantial assurance rating.</p> <p>A rolling programme of mandatory training for all staff is in place with focused training on key areas of risk including development management, customer services and management of Revenues and Benefits.</p> <p>Training for all elected members taking place post May 2023 elections, with refreshed training for staff also taking place.</p>

Theme/short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/Internal Control Q4.
Planning	Unsustainable development taking place contrary to existing Core	Lack of a 5 Year Housing Land Supply – harder to establish a 5YR HLS as a	Unsustainable and unplanned development	2	4	8	The Council's Core Strategy was adopted in 2012. Adoption of Site Allocations Document took place in September 2018 to deliver on the Core Strategy and set out where development takes place. Work on the Local Plan Review, to replace SAD is well underway

	<p>Strategy - development being driven by opportunity (as a result of National Policy) rather than being planned.</p> <p>Failing to meet Government targets on quality/speed of planning decisions</p>	<p>result of National Planning Policy Framework changes and National planning policy practice guidance. In turn this leads to a “tilted balance” for non-Green Belt applications, meaning that objections must significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.</p> <p>National Policy drivers including demand for National Infrastructure – including National Policy Statement on Networks</p> <p>Not having an up-to-date Local</p>	<p>Development taking place in the wrong place</p> <p>Lack of suitable infrastructure</p> <p>Risk of designation by</p>				<p>Work undertaken has resulted in confirmation that the Council has a 5-year housing land supply.</p> <p>Review of the Local Plan reached the final stage with the Regulation 19 Submission Plan being agreed by Members for consultation in Nov/Dec 22 and for it to be submitted to the government for examination in 2023.</p> <p>Work remains ongoing to review the representations received to the consultation, however the national planning reforms that were subject to national consultation in Dec 22 -March 23 provide a level of uncertainty for submission/the next stage of plan production, which carries risk. This is being mitigated by the approach taken with member engagement, in order to ensure the plan can progress quickly once clarity on reforms is understood. The Government has made clear that they expect Local Authorities to progress plans and will intervene where necessary. The team have met with the Planning Advisory Service who have confirmed that progress is being made and are supportive of the approach taken.</p> <p>Members have continued to be engaged in the process through with external speakers/experts being engaged in the process to support plan production.</p> <p>Discussions with key partners and Parishes and attendance of meetings with partners to maintain progress and dialogue on timetable.</p>
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		<p>Plan in place – as National policy has changed the current plan is no longer designated as up to date</p> <p>NPPF consultation on the future of Planning provides some challenges for the future planning strategy and the potential to interrupt the current timetable for the production of the plan along with unintended consequences for spatial development in the district.</p>	<p>Government which leads to applications being made directly to the Planning Inspectorate with loss of control and loss of fee income</p> <p>Loss of quality of environment across the district</p>				<p>Utilising digital methods to deliver engagement methods.</p> <p>The Local Plan Review is supported by an infrastructure delivery plan ensuring that any development has the right infrastructure in place.</p> <p>Quality and speed targets set by Government are regularly reviewed and monitored including through the Council's Performance Management Framework – work is underway through the transformation team to improve the processes and procedures within the planning team.</p>
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Theme/short name	Risk description	Cause	Impact	Likelihood (input 1-5)	Impact (input 1-5)	Q4 22/23 RAG (Automated)	Mitigation/Internal Control Q4.
Our communities do not become more prosperous and vibrant	The Covid 19 pandemic outbreak results in poor outcomes for our residents and our businesses	<p>Covid 19 pandemic outbreak (uncontrollable)</p> <p>Lack of capacity, resources and or agility/flexibility results in core council services not being delivered</p> <p>Internal business processes (including those relating to transactions)</p>	<p>Council performance and core service delivery is not effective</p> <p>Poor health and well-being outcomes for residents</p> <p>Economic opportunities for our residents are reduced</p> <p>Businesses do not receive the support they need</p>	2	3	6	<p>The Extended Leadership Team is meeting weekly. Standing agenda items include a focus on Community, business, service delivery and communications.</p> <p>Council has published the economic recovery ten-point plan and launched a business place partnership.</p> <p>Business Place Partnership ensures businesses engage and can capitalise on the Council's connections to partners through our open door.</p>

		which support residents and businesses) are not adapted to meet need					
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**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 25 JULY 2023**

**CLOSED CHURCHYARDS REVISION OF SPECIAL EXPENSE DECISION**

**REPORT OF COUNCILLOR KATH PERRY M.B.E - CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES.**

**PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 In October 2019 Members approved that a special expense could be charged to residents in a parish where a closed churchyard has transferred to South Staffordshire Council or any churchyards that transfer in the future.
- 1.2 It is proposed that in light of the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing a revised approach to financing works within a close churchyard is implemented.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Members consider the Proposed Decision attached in Appendix 1 regarding the revision to the 2019 decision made on this matter.

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
		These proposals will have a direct link to the Council Plan priorities within 'Vibrant Communities' by helping provide a quality environment that we can all be proud of.
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
		Yes
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE		Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
KEY DECISION		No

TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	August 2023	
FINANCIAL IMPACT		<p>The decision implemented in 2019 was undertaken to reduce the long-term financial risk to council for the inherited cost of maintenance and major repairs within a closed churchyard. By applying a 'Special Expense' under Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. These costs would then be chargeable directly to the council taxpayers of the relevant parish and would not impact on the councils' budgets or its ability to provide its current service provision by funding works to assets the council does not own.</p>
LEGAL ISSUES		<p>All transfers of closed churchyards take place under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>Under the Burial Act 1853 (section 1), a churchyard belonging to a Church of England church, may become closed by an order in council which is sought by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) from the Ministry of Justice. Essentially a church will apply to 'close' a churchyard (or in some instances, a set area within a churchyard) when it becomes full and they are no longer accepting new burials on the site. Once a churchyard is closed (or part closed), the responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the site can initially be passed onto the relevant parish council who may accept or decline this responsibility. If the parish do decline, then this responsibility for maintenance is transferred to South Staffordshire Council. This transfer is compulsory, not dependant on the condition of the churchyard in question, and nor dependant on the council's ability to meet this increase in maintenance costs.</p> <p>During the transfer of any closed churchyard to the council under section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, best practice suggests that the onus is on the PCC to ensure that the churchyard is 'in decent order and its walls and fences in good repair' before maintenance passes to this council. However, there is currently little in the way of a legal basis to ensure that this is the case. In order to minimise the inherited risk to this council, we commission an initial series of professional reports to identify any remedial tree works, and structural / buildings</p>



		<p>works that are necessary to bring each closed churchyard site up to a 'safe' standard.</p> <p>The council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) to ensure so far is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of members of the public using our portfolio of open spaces.</p> <p>The Occupier's Liability Act (revised 1984) requires that people can expect to be 'reasonably safe' when using any of the open spaces that we manage.</p> <p>As 'occupier' of a closed churchyard, this council therefore has a duty of care to members of the public using / visiting the site.</p> <p>Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the Council can impose a Special Expense on Council Tax.</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES		<p>Mitigate the risk of danger from 'unsafe' structures within by providing a mechanism whereby necessary works can be financed quickly.</p> <p>Risk of potential fallout with the public and residents of parishes regarding the implementation of a special expense.</p> <p>Covering the costs of any major structural repairs in a closed churchyard may cause an unacceptable increase in council tax to a particular parish in any one year. The council could consider a cap of these charges or alternatively recharging of costs could be spread over a period up to a maximum of two years.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS		<p>Potential district wide issue in the years to come as more churchyards 'close' and are passed to South Staffordshire Council.</p>

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4. INFORMATION**

- 4.1 It is proposed that in light of the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing a revised approach to financing works within a closed churchyard is implemented.
- 4.2 This proposed Cabinet Member Decision is being referred to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a voluntary basis in order to allow all members to scrutinise and comment on this proposed decision.

**5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is available as a meeting document for members to view.

**6. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

None directly applicable.

**7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

October 2019 Individual Member Decision.

**8. APPENDICES**

Proposed Individual Member Decision

**Report prepared by: Assistant Director Community Services**

## **SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **DECISION PROPOSED** **BY MEMBER OF THE CABINET**

I propose to make the following decision set out below in accordance with the powers vested in me by Part 3 of the Constitution of the Council approved by the Council pursuant to Section 37 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

The decision will be made by me on or after 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Councillor Kath Perry M.B.E, Cabinet Member for Community Services.

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023

#### **1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 In October 2019 Members approved that a Special Expense under Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 could be charged to residents in a parish to cover any future maintenance and one-off major repairs to closed churchyards that have already transferred to South Staffordshire Council or may do so in the future.
- 1.2 It is proposed that in light of the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing a revised approach to financing works within a close churchyard is implemented.

#### **2. Proposed Decision by Member of the Cabinet**

- 2.1 I propose that a Special Expense under Section 35 of the Local Government Act is applied based on the 2019 decision. However, to reflect the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing this figure will be capped at 2 % of a resident's annual council tax bill. If the amount recouped does not cover the cost of repairs within a Parish Council area any cost above the cap will be funded by South Staffordshire Council.
- 2.2 I propose the council can under the Section 35 legislation also spread payments over a maximum of two years and it is proposed to review repayment costs on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.3 I propose that any outstanding costs of repairs not covered by the Special Expense and funded by South Staffordshire Council will be capitalised subject to the nature of the work undertaken. In addition, a revenue sink fund of £25,000 per annum would also be created which will be used to offset future costs and reduce the borrowing liabilities of the council.
- 2.4 I propose that a policy will be introduced on the approach that South Staffordshire Council will take to the maintenance of any closed churchyards where the maintenance responsibility has transferred to South Staffordshire Council.

2.5 Routine grounds maintenance of closed churchyards will continue to be reviewed annually and should additional closed churchyards be passed to South Staffordshire Council; we reserve the right to review the standard of grounds maintenance provided or treat the costs for routine grounds maintenance and memorial testing under the Special Expense legislation.

2.6 If more than one churchyard in a parish area becomes closed and the responsibility transfers to South Staffordshire Council, the decision will be reviewed to reflect the change in circumstances at that point in time.

## 2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
		These proposals will have a direct link to the Council Plan priorities within 'Vibrant Communities' by helping provide a quality environment that we can all be proud of.
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
		Yes
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE		Report and Proposed Individual Cabinet Member Decision voluntarily taken to the Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
KEY DECISION		No; although there will be an impact in certain wards, it is considered that any impact, given the proposed 2% cap will not be significant and therefore fall within the Key Decision definition.
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	August 2023	
FINANCIAL IMPACT		The decision implemented in 2019 was undertaken to reduce the long-term financial risk to the Council for the inherited cost of maintenance and major repairs within a closed churchyard. By introducing a cap to the Special Expense, costs either in full or in part will be chargeable directly to the council taxpayers of the relevant parish. This will reduce the burden on residents particularly those in smaller parishes. However, introducing a capped approach presents a financial unknown to the council as the cost of repairs will vary along with the number of closed churchyards that transfer to the council in the future. To account for this, provision should be made within the annual budget and a reserve created to help offset long term financial liabilities to the Council.

LEGAL ISSUES	<p>All transfers of closed churchyards take place under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>The council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) to ensure so far is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of members of the public using our portfolio of open spaces.</p> <p>The Occupier's Liability Act (revised 1984) requires that people can expect to be 'reasonably safe' when using any of the open spaces that we manage.</p> <p>As 'occupier' of a closed churchyard, this Council therefore has a duty of care to members of the public using / visiting the site.</p> <p>Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the Council can impose a Special Expense on Council Tax.</p> <p>A Special Expense can only be applied in the parish area where a closed churchyard is located, and work is required. Should a special expense be applied, this would include all villages and hamlets within the parish boundary. Whilst all residents within a parish may not live in the parochial church / diocese boundaries, Ecclesiastical boundaries relate to church matters and are administrative functions of the diocese which do not match local authority boundaries and are not part of the council's jurisdiction or decision-making processes in relation to the Section 35 legislation.</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	<p>Mitigate the risk of danger from 'unsafe' structures within by providing a mechanism whereby necessary works can be financed quickly.</p> <p>Risk of potential fallout with the public and residents of parishes regarding the implementation of a special expense.</p> <p>Covering the costs of any major structural repairs in a closed churchyard may cause an unacceptable increase in council tax to a particular parish in any one year. Introducing a cap ensures a standardised approach across all parish areas and</p>

		the council also can spread payments over a maximum of two years utilising the Section 35 legislation.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS		Revising the position on the Special Expense could potentially be a district wide issue in the years to come as more churchyards 'close' and are passed to South Staffordshire Council.

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **3. INFORMATION**

3.1 South Staffordshire Council is currently responsible for four Closed Churchyards. The date in brackets indicates the year the churchyard transferred to the Council.

- St Benedict's, Wombourne, (2007)
- St Pauls, Coven, (2008)
- St Johns, Swindon, (2008)
- St Peters, Kinver – (2017)

3.2 The 2019 decision to impose a special expense was introduced to reduce the long-term financial risk to the Council for the inherited cost of maintenance and major repairs within a closed churchyard. By applying a 'Special Expense' under Section.35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 these costs would then be chargeable directly to the council taxpayers of the relevant parish and would not impact on the councils' budgets or its ability to provide its current service provision.

- The special expense covered any future maintenance and one-off major repairs to closed churchyards that have already transferred to this council in Swindon, Kinver, Wombourne and Brewood and Coven Parish Council areas.
- It was also approved that this stance would be taken to any additional closed churchyards that transfer to South Staffordshire Council in the future.

3.3 Guidance issued in May 2002 by the then Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (DTLR) on Financial Arrangements with Parish and Town Councils specifically mentions the use of special expenses in relation to the maintenance responsibility under section 215 of the Local Government Act. Key to note is that the responsibility for maintenance and associated works here is not being passed back to a Parish Council, but that the costs are charged locally. Special expenses cannot be charged retrospectively but a subsequent charge for churchyards where maintenance responsibility has been assumed is permissible.

3.4 As members are aware, the position has moved on from 2019 and in light of the current cost of living pressures, the position has been reviewed and alternative proposals put forward.

### **Option 1 – No Change**

- 3.5 Whilst it is acknowledged that the current economic climate is challenging, it was considered if it was still the right decision to continue with the imposition of the special expense in those parishes with closed churchyards that fall to the Council to maintain or any in the future.
- 3.6 The rationale behind this would be that, in line with the original decision, it is appropriate that only those residents within an affected parish are liable for the costs and the wider council tax base should not incur additional liability for parish specific costs. This option is not one I wish to pursue.

### **Option 2 – Introduction of A Cap To The Special Expense.**

- 3.7 I am of the view that it is still appropriate to utilise Section 35 special expense powers, however, the current economic climate justifies a more nuanced approach. To reflect the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing the special expense could be subject to a cap. The figure could be capped at 2% of a resident's total annual council tax bill. This would give a degree of equanimity across the council tax base. If a set figure cap were imposed, this would have a disproportionate negative impact on people occupying lower band properties.
- 3.8 Introducing a cap is likely to result in a shortfall in funding against major repair work projects or work in parishes with a smaller taxbase. If the amount recouped via the special expense (with cap) does not cover the cost of repairs within a Parish Council area, any cost above the cap will be funded by South Staffordshire Council (unless alternative funding mechanisms e.g., charitable donations, can be sourced). There will therefore be an impact on the wider council budget position, and it is not known the number of churchyards that could transfer or the cost of works in the future.
- 3.9 The table below uses the average band D Council Tax for 2023/24 and uplifts by the certain percentages listed in the table.

Table 1 – average band D

	BANDS									
	AV BAND D	INCREASE F	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
AVERAGE COUNCIL TAX IN SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	2017.39									
ADD 1%	2037.56	20.17	13.45	15.69	17.93	20.17	24.66	29.14	33.62	40.35
ADD 2%	2057.74	40.35	26.90	31.38	35.86	40.35	49.31	58.28	67.25	80.70
ADD 3%	2077.91	60.52	40.35	47.07	53.80	60.52	73.97	87.42	100.87	121.04

To work out what that means for the income as a special expense in a certain parish, you can multiply the relevant band D charge against the individual parish council's taxbase (below). (It must be noted that each property will be charged 2% on their individual banding, band D is only used as a guide to demonstrate the average).

Table 2 – Details of the Parishes which have Churches with burial grounds.

PARISH	CHURCHES	TAXBASE
ACTON TRUSSELL, BEDNALL & TEDDESLEY HAY	ST JAMES, ACTON TRUSSELL & ALL SAINTS CHURCH, BEDNALL	610.26
BLYMHILL & WESTON-UNDER- LIZARD	ST MARY'S, BLYMHILL & ST ANDREW'S WESTERN UNDER LIZARD	348.08
BOBBINGTON	HOLY CROSS	246.91
BREWOOD & COVEN	ST MARY'S & ST CHAD, BREWOOD & ST PAULS, COVEN	3134.18
CODSALL	ST NICHOLAS	3182.28
DUNSTON WITH COPPENHALL	ST LEONARDS, DUNSTON & ST LAWRENCES, COPPENHALL	272.87
ENVILLE	ST MARY'S	232.18
ESSINGTON	ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST	1655.08
GREAT WYRLEY	ST MARK'S	3373.70
HATHERTON	CHURCH OF ST SAVIOUR	282.83
HIMLEY	ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS	514.41
KINVER	ST PETER'S	3340.93
LAPLEY, STRETTON & WHEATON ASTON	ALL SAINTS, LAPLEY & SAINT JOHN'S, STRETTON & ST MARY'S, WHEATON ASTON	1028.02
PATTINGHAM & PATSHULL	ST CHAD'S	1014.24
PENKRIDGE	ST MICHAELS	3311.33
SHARESHILL	ST MARY & ST LUKE	307.36
SWINDON	ST JOHN'S	485.33
TRYSULL & SEISDON	ALL SAINTS	593.21
WOMBOURNE	ST BENEDICT'S	5237.23

- 3.10 An example of the cap being applied to the Special Expense using the band D average in our smallest parish Enville and our largest parish Wombourne is highlighted in the table below.

Smallest Parish Enville	Largest Parish Wombourne
1 % = £4,683	1% = £105,630
2% = £9,368	2% = £211,312
3% = £14,051	3% = £316,957

- 3.11 Whilst Enville has the smallest tax base several parishes contain more than one church located within them. For example, Dunston with Coppenhall has a tax base of 272.87 and two churches located within it. This exposes the Council to greater financial risks where maintenance is required to multiple church yards and there is a low tax base.
- 3.12 The inclusion of costs of major repair works via a special expense may cause an unacceptable increase in council tax in any one year for residents in smaller parishes.



The introduction of a cap will address affordability concerns providing a standardised payment mechanism across South Staffordshire. The council can under the Section 35 legislation also spread payments over a maximum of two years and it is proposed to review repayment costs on a case-by-case basis.

### **Option 3 – Reverse Special Expense Decision**

- 3.13 A further option was to determine to reverse or overturn the 2019 decision in respect of using Section 35 special expense powers. This would result in the full costs of repairs to closed churchyards falling to the general fund and inevitably would impact on the MTFs position. It may have been necessary to consider which other service delivery items would be stopped or reduced as a result of reversing the decision. This is not an option I intend to pursue.

### **Financial Council Impact Option 2**

- 3.14 In considering the financial implications of the potential residual cost to the council of option 2, there is the option of capitalising the costs subject to the nature of the work undertaken, this could be mirrored alongside the build-up of a revenue sink fund which could be used to fund the work in the future.
- 3.15 This option needs to be considered based on the current financial uncertainty of the council and any capital decision would bring a long-term liability to the Council and a change to the borrowing arrangements. Typically, the capital is based on extending the life of the asset which would be 40 – 50 years.
- 3.16 Any addition to the capital programme will, if funded from borrowing incur a revenue MRP charge and interest payment. As an example, if the asset life was extended by 40 years and a cost of works undertaken were £200,000 funded from borrowing, the estimated ongoing revenue implication is approximately £12-15,000 per year. In order to fund this, an ongoing revenue budget provision should be established to account for the MRP and interest; if not called upon this budget could then be set aside to an ear marked reserve to build up balances for any future liabilities. It would be preferable and more cost effective to fund any investments in the year of works rather than taking external borrowing as there is not an income stream that flows from any capital investment.

### **Other matters for consideration**

- 3.17 Routine grounds maintenance of closed churchyards is reviewed annually and currently costs South Staffordshire Council circa £30,000 per annum and is met from existing Street Scene budgets. Each churchyard receives 14 boxed grass cuts annually throughout the grass cutting season, and a maximum of 2 shrub prunes and 2 hedge cuts. Key to note that South Staffordshire Council maintains any closed churchyards to the exact same standard as that of our own cemetery sites at Sytch Lane and Strawberry Lane. In addition, the council is also required to carry out memorial testing at each closed churchyard which is undertaken every five years at a current cost of £6,000. If any issues are identified during memorial testing the council is also liable

for these costs which in 2022/23 equated to £9,000. Should the maintenance of additional closed churchyards be passed to South Staffordshire Council, then the council reserves the right to review the standard of maintenance provided or treat the costs for routine grounds maintenance and memorial testing under the Special Expense legislation.

- 3.18 I recommend the council introduces a policy that clarifies the approach we will take to the maintenance of any closed churchyards where the maintenance responsibility has transferred to South Staffordshire Council.

**4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**5. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

2019 Individual Cabinet Member decision, Cabinet Member Briefing May 2023



Closed Churchyards  
Statement of Decision

**7. APPENDICES**

Report prepared by: Assistant Director Community Services

**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

**PROPOSED DECISION AND STATEMENT OF DECISION**  
**BY MEMBER OF THE CABINET**

I propose to make the following decision set out below in accordance with the powers vested in me by Part 3 of the Constitution of the Council approved by the Council pursuant to Section 37 of the Local Government Act, 2000.

The decision will be made by me on or after the 8th October 2019 unless called in for scrutiny before that date

Councillor Len Bates BEM – Cabinet Member for Community Services

Date: 30th September 2019

**CLOSED CHURCHYARDS – FUTURE MAINTENANCE AND SPECIAL EXPENSES**

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

To examine the current procedure for the maintenance of closed churchyards by South Staffordshire Council and to propose a method of financing these works in the future.

**2. PROPOSED DECISION BY CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES**

- 2.1 That a special expense can be charged to residents in a Parish where a closed churchyard has transferred to South Staffordshire Council. The special expense will cover any future maintenance and one-off major repairs in the future to closed churchyards that have already transferred to this council in Swindon, Kinver, Wombourne and Brewood and Coven Parish Council areas.
- 2.2 This stance would also be taken for any additional closed churchyards that transfer to South Staffordshire Council should a church or parish council not wish to retain responsibility for the maintenance of a closed churchyard.

### 3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
		2. A safe and sustainable district. This report contributes by ensuring that we are maintaining our open spaces in a manner that is safe and appropriate for residents to use
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
		No – not envisaged that proposals will have any negative impact on any protected group.
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	<p>The Constitution and associated protocol provides that front line Councillors, the Monitoring Officer (Corporate Director Governance), and the Corporate Director Resource will have five clear working days following dispatch of a notification of a proposed decision in which to call in for scrutiny, decisions proposed by the Cabinet or its members.</p> <p>In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and associated protocol, any two or more members wishing to request that this proposed decision should be called in for scrutiny should do so by giving notice to the Assistant Director Democratic and Regulatory Services either by e-mail or in writing before the end of the fifth day specifying the reason or reasons therefore. The Assistant Director Democratic and Regulatory Services will then call in the proposed decision and arrange for it to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee/relevant Scrutiny Panel. A copy of such notice must also be sent to me either by email or in writing by the end of the fifth day.</p> <p>This proposed decision will be confirmed and implemented on or after the date to be notified upon circulation of the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet, unless called in for scrutiny by that date.</p>	
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Implementation from April 2020	
FINANCIAL IMPACT		Reduce financial risk to this council for the inherited cost of maintenance and major repairs within a closed churchyard by applying a 'Special Expense' under s.35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. These costs will then be chargeable directly to the council tax payers of the relevant parish.

LEGAL ISSUES		<p>All transfers of closed churchyards take place under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>The council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of members of the public using our portfolio of open spaces.</p> <p>The Occupier's Liability Act (revised 1984) requires that people can expect to be 'reasonably safe' when using any of the open spaces that we manage.</p> <p>As 'occupier' of a closed churchyard, this council therefore has a duty of care to members of the public using / visiting the site.</p> <p>Section 35 Local Government Finance Act 1992 provides that the Council can impose a Special Expense on Council Tax.</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES		<p>Mitigate the risk of danger from 'unsafe' structures within churchyards by providing a mechanism whereby necessary works can be financed quickly.</p> <p>Risk of potential fallout with the public and local residents of parishes – to be mitigated through consultation with local members.</p> <p>Covering the costs of any major structural repairs in a closed churchyard may cause an unacceptable increase in council tax to a particular parish in any one year. The council could consider a cap of these charges or alternatively recharging of costs could be spread over a period of time.</p>
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS		<p>Potential district wide issue in the years to come as more churchyards 'close' and are passed to South Staffordshire Council. Future increases will impact upon the services provided by this council.</p>

#### 4. INFORMATION

- 4.1 Under the Burial Act 1853 (section 1), a churchyard belonging to a Church of England church, may become closed by an order in council which is sought by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) from the Ministry of Justice. Essentially a church will apply to 'close' a churchyard (or in some instances, a set area within a churchyard) when it becomes full and they are no longer accepting new burials on the site. Once a churchyard is closed (or part closed), the responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the site can initially be passed onto the relevant parish council who may accept or decline this responsibility. If the parish do decline, then this responsibility for maintenance is transferred to South Staffordshire Council. This transfer is compulsory, not dependant on the condition of the churchyard in question, and nor dependant on the council's ability to meet this increase in maintenance costs.
- 4.2 During the transfer of any closed churchyard to the council under section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, best practice suggests that the onus is on the PCC to ensure that the churchyard is 'in decent order and its walls and fences in good repair' before maintenance passes to this council. However, there is currently little in the way of a legal basis to ensure that this is the case. In order to minimise the inherited risk to this council, we commission an initial series of professional reports to identify any remedial tree works, and structural / buildings works that are necessary to bring each closed churchyard site up to a 'safe' standard.
- 4.3 In taking on the responsibility for maintaining a closed churchyard, South Staffordshire Council asks each church to contribute to the cost of any works identified through the reports listed in 4.2. When a church is unwilling / unable to contribute, then from a liability point of view it is not acceptable for this council as 'occupier' of the site to simply manage the decline of the closed churchyard and associated features. In order to fund any one-off costs identified this council intends to treat these as a 'special expense' under section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This act allows different amounts of council tax to be calculated for different locations and so these costs can be passed directly to those residents living locally to the closed churchyard in question.
- 4.4 Guidance issued in May 2002 by the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (DTLR) on Financial Arrangements with Parish and Town Councils specifically mentions the use of special expenses in relation to the maintenance responsibility under section 215 of the Local Government Act and cites Cherwell District Council as an example of where this is automatically considered to be a special expense. Key to note is that the responsibility for maintenance and associated works here is not being passed back to a Parish Council, but just that the costs are charged locally. Special expenses cannot be charged retrospectively but a subsequent charge for churchyards where maintenance responsibility has been assumed is permissible.
- 4.5 At a local level, the most effective means of managing a closed churchyard is through a Parish Council and we would recommend this from the point of view of local accountability and direct financial management. When taking the decision about whether or not to accept this responsibility, a Parish Council should be aware of the

possible risks involved in order that they may consult and inform local residents. Once a closed churchyard has transferred to South Staffordshire Council, the Parish Council gives up any control over future maintenance arrangements and the scope / cost of future works on site.

- 4.6 The cost of liability associated with boundary walls and structures within a closed churchyard can be extremely high. As a worked example, in recent years this council funded the repair of a collapsed church wall in Swindon and the total cost for repairs was approximately £80,000. In future and under these proposals, these one-off costs would be passed onto the local residents. In the example of Swindon which has 620 properties, this would have equated to a one-off cost of £129 per property. Assuming that in the future, a similar repair bill was incurred in Kinver which has 3,254 properties, this cost would then be £24.59 per property.
- 4.7 The inclusion of costs of major repair works via a special expense may cause an unacceptable increase in council tax in any one year for residents in smaller parishes. If there are affordability concerns, then it is proposed to spread repayment costs over a period of time on a case by case basis.
- 4.8 This council will implement a rolling programme of site / building / tree etc. inspections for each closed churchyard in order to mitigate the potential effect of any required work in the future. Should any future works be identified that can't be funded through existing council budgets, and again if the church is unwilling / unable to contribute then it is our intention to treat these as a special expense as outlined above.
- 4.9 Routine maintenance of closed churchyards currently costs South Staffordshire Council under £10,000 per annum and is met from existing Street Scene budgets. This work includes all grass cutting, hedge cutting and shrub pruning operations. Should the maintenance of additional closed churchyards be passed to South Staffordshire Council, then we reserve the right to review whether these routine maintenance costs should also be treated as a special expense in the future.
- 4.10 In all instances, South Staffordshire Council will encourage community groups and local volunteers to get involved in work within each closed churchyard in order to reduce the likely cost of routine maintenance going forward.
- 4.11 When any works outside of routine maintenance are necessary within a closed churchyard, a Faculty from the Diocese is necessary. To support staff efficiency, this council will insist a church take all responsibility for securing Faculty licences, permissions and associated consultation etc.
- 4.12 All proposals within this report are subject to the principles and practices set out in the code of practice on local authority accounting, as published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting.

## 5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

N/A

6. PREVIOUS MINUTES

N/A

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

- 8.1 This proposed decision has not been called in for scrutiny and was not a Key Decision subject to scrutiny before being formally made. Accordingly, I made this decision on (Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019) for the reasons and having regard to the alternative options and circumstances set out above.

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Councillor Len Bates BEM – Cabinet Member for Community Services



## APPENDIX 2: Template for recording an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

EqIA guidance can be found at [https://sstaffsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/TheCore/SitePages/Equality-%26-Diversity\(1\).aspx](https://sstaffsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/TheCore/SitePages/Equality-%26-Diversity(1).aspx)

Service:	Person responsible for the assessment:	Date EqIA completed:
Community Services	Ryan Taylor	July 2023

### PART A - Identification

1	<b>Title or name of proposal</b>	Introduction of a Special Expense to cover any future maintenance and one-off major repairs at closed churchyards the council is responsible for either now or in the future.
2	<b>The commencement date of the proposal and approval e.g., CLT, Cabinet, Committee, Council</b>	Individual Decision by the Cabinet Member for Community Services in October 2019. Revised July 2023.
3	<b>What are the aims, objectives, and purpose of the proposal?</b>	<p><b>Aims:</b></p> <p>To examine the current procedure for the maintenance of closed churchyards by South Staffordshire Council and to propose a method of financing these works in the future.</p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <p>In 2019 Members agreed that a special expense could be charged to residents of a parish where a closed churchyard has transferred to South Staffordshire Council. This special expense will cover any future maintenance and one-off major repairs to that closed churchyard.</p> <p>2023 - Considering the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing a revised approach to financing works within a close churchyard is undertaken.</p> <p><b>Purpose:</b></p> <p>A Special Expense under Section 35 of the Local Government Act is applied based on the 2019 decision. However, to reflect the current inflation</p>

		and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing this figure will be capped at 2 % of a resident's annual council tax bill in a financial year. If the amount recouped within a financial year does not cover the cost of repairs within a Parish Council area any cost above the cap will be funded by South Staffordshire Council.
4	<b>Status of the proposal</b>	<b>New proposal/</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Existing proposal</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Date Last Reviewed:</b>
5	<b>Are there any other functions, policies or services which might be linked with this one for the purposes of this exercise?</b>	Council plan. 'Vibrant communities – provide a quality environment that we can all be proud of'.
6	<b>Who is it intended to affect or benefit (the target population):</b>	Residents of South Staffordshire who live in a Parish with a closed churchyard either now or in the future requiring maintenance or one-off major repairs that South Staffordshire Council is required to finance.

#### **PART B - Evidence, Research and Stakeholder Engagement**

7	<b>List relevant examples of data (qualitative and quantitative) or any consultation information available that will enable the impact assessment to be undertaken</b>	<p>Census of Population 2021 provides some relevant demographic information which allows some assessment of potential impact to be made.</p> <p>Also, during November 2022, Cabinet approved to utilise the decision made in 2019 to implement a Special Expense on council tax for residents of Kinver Parish. The special expense is to cover the costs of repairs to the closed churchyard wall at St Peters Church in Kinver.</p> <p>South Staffordshire Council wrote to all residents of Kinver detailing the proposal along with indicative costs of what each property could expect to pay.</p>
8	<b>Evidence from the data from Question 7 of any feedback or complaints against the service/policy/procedure on grounds of potential or perceived discrimination</b>	<p>Census of Population related points are detailed on the differential impact table below.</p> <p>In response to this council's letter, a number of residents enquired as to why they should pay for the maintenance of a church of England</p>

		churchyard – particularly if they weren't religious themselves.
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### PART C – Assessment and Differential Impacts

Within this table, state whether the policy or function will have a positive or negative impact across the protected characteristics and provide any comments, reason, and evidence to support this.

What is the effect of the change on each characteristic – tick one				Reason		Action* Required
	Positive impact	Negative impact *	Neutral	Explanation of impact analysis	Is this likely to be unlawful?	Yes / No
Age			X			No
Disability			X			
Gender reassignment			X	No available data		
Marriage & Civil Partnership			X	No available data		
Pregnancy and Maternity			X	No available data		
Race			X			
Religion or Belief		X		The Census of Population 2021 data shows that 59.2% of the South Staffordshire population identify as "Christian" This doesn't mean that they are of the CoE denomination, nor does it suggest that they are practicing. 32.5% of the population identify as having "no religion".	No - the legal position regarding liability of parish residents to pay means it is likely that the decision won't change	

				However, it is possible that those of no religion or not part of the faith group associated with a church might feel differentially impacted.		
<b>Sex</b>			<b>X</b>			
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>				No data		
<b>Other</b>				There may be an impact on groups that receive council/benefits support (particularly as the charge will be applied as a % of council tax), and some further clarity on how this will work in practice would be beneficial and how existing council tax support mechanisms would interact with and potential mitigate impact on those groups already qualifying for council tax support.		

9	<b>Does your proposal link with other proposals to have a cumulative negative affect on particular equality groups?</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>If yes, give details</b>
		<b>No</b>	

## PART D – Outcomes, Action, and Public Reporting

*What Justifiable Action Does the Evidence, Engagement and Consultation Suggest You Take?*

	Description	Yes / No
<b>A</b>	<b>No Major Change Required</b> When no potential for discrimination or adverse impact is identified and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.	
<b>B</b>	<b>Adjustments needed to remove barriers or to better promote equality.</b> Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments would remove the barriers identified?	
<b>C</b>	<b>Continue despite possible adverse impact.</b> For important relevant proposals, compelling reasons will be needed. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact.	Yes
<b>D</b>	<b>Stop and rethink your proposal.</b> Actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified; the proposal will need reviewing immediately.	

## PART E – Monitor Evaluate and Review

Action and Monitoring Plan - where the assessment in Part C & D indicates a potential negative impact, how will this be reduced or mitigated to reduce impact moving forwards?

Conclusions Reached About Potential Impact		
Possible Impact	Group(s) Affected	Evidence
1 Groups not associated with the church paying towards the upkeep.	1 People of no faith, different faiths, and denominations	1 Whilst there is potential for dissatisfaction with the approach, including a specific “no faith” based objection -, the council’s decision is based on UK law and specifically Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

<p>2 There may be an impact on groups that receive council/benefits</p>	<p>2 Groups already qualifying for council tax support.</p>	<p>2 For those residents receiving existing council tax support this would also be applied in relation to the special expense, and would interact with and mitigate impact on those groups already qualifying for council tax support.</p> <p>The cost of repairs to the closed churchyard wall do not fall within South Staffordshire Councils budget allocation, the council does not legally own the asset and in 2019 the council approved the introduction of a special expense under section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act to recover any one-off major repairs or future maintenance costs to any closed churchyards the council is responsible for now or in the future. Unless external funding is obtained to cover the cost of repairs.</p> <p>The current economic climate justifies a more nuanced approach. To reflect the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing the special expense could be subject to a cap. The figure could be capped at 2% of a resident's total annual council tax bill. This would give a degree of equanimity across the council tax base. If a set figure cap were imposed, this would have a disproportionate negative impact on people occupying lower band properties.</p>
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		<p>The decision made is for the cost of repairs to be apportioned to the parish area where maintenance is required to a closed churchyard the council is responsible for either now or in the future. The ability to apply special expenses under section 35 states it can only be applied in the parish and not across the district. It is important to emphasise that any closed churchyard is not in the ownership of the council, however we are required to take responsibility for repairs and maintenance, whereas generally council wide expenses relate to assets or services which could be provided district wide.</p>
Impact Identified	Action	Responsibility
<p><b>Revised Decision proposed to Members</b> to reflect the current inflation and cost of living pressures the residents of South Staffordshire are facing.</p>	<p>A Special Expense will still be utilised, but this figure will be capped at 2 % of a resident's annual council tax bill.</p> <p>If the amount recouped does not cover the cost of repairs within a Parish Council area any cost above the cap will be funded by South Staffordshire Council.</p> <p>Any outstanding costs of repairs not covered by the Special Expense will be capitalising subject to the nature of the work undertaken. A revenue sink fund of £25,000 per annum would also be created</p>	<p><b>Cabinet Member</b></p>

	which will be used to offset future costs and reduce the borrowing costs.	
<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>	<b>Review Date</b>

**PART F – To be completed by Equality Service Group**

Date Reviewed	Name of Representatives involved in Review (min of 2-3)	
13-14/07/23	Kevin Hubery, Catherine Gutteridge and Rachel Melvin	
<b>General Comments</b> Additional detail provided on evidence of impact on protected characteristics.  Commented on potential impact on those in receipt of Council Tax benefits – note that some consideration was given to the cost-of-living situation in revising the model of charging being levied by the proposal.  Noting that the available census data only allows for potential impacts to be inferred without additional information.  No faith objections it is important to acknowledge this type of objection – Although the legal position is clear that it is location which determines the liability, and the faith / no faith is not grounds for the charge not being levied on individuals.		
Recommendations		
<b>Publish Results</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Specific Recommendations to Consider:</b>	



Carry out further impact assessment, if yes  
state the review date and ensure this is  
diarised for action

Confirm that the recommendations have been actioned or explain why, if any cannot be actioned.

Review post revised decision

#### Part G – Corporate Director/Assistant Director Approval

- I am satisfied with the results of this EqIA.
- I have seen the Councils Equality Schemes or Equality Action Plan and am satisfied with the contribution it can make.

Approved Jackie Smith

Signature:



Date: July 2023



**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2023**

**UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND AND RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND**

**REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR ENTERPRISE AND GROWTH**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – COUNCILLOR VICTORIA WILSON, DEPUTY LEADER AND  
CABINET MEMBER FOR BUSINESS ENTERPRISE AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

**PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 The report will provide Members with an update on activities relating to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund.

**2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	Prosperous and Vibrant Communities
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (Equal) been completed?	
	No	Given the breadth of projects it is proposed that each project will need to complete EqlAs in turn as they progress.
	Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been completed?	
	No	Given the breadth of projects it is proposed that each project will need to complete DPIAs in turn as they progress.
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	No	Update report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	UKSPF and REPF funding ends in March 2025	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	Yes	There should be no financial impact on the Authority's MTFS as this is a fully grant funded project. However, the governance and use of these funds must follow the strict conditions set out by DLUHC, as any spend outside of this cannot be reimbursed through grant.

LEGAL ISSUES	No	The governance for the two grant funding streams is in accordance with government requirements and as set by Cabinet on 7 March 2023. Reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee forms part of that governance structure.
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES including climate impacts and health impacts if applicable		The UKSPF and REPF provide an excellent opportunity to improve the prosperity and health and wellbeing of our residents and businesses. The nature of the funding also enables us to reduce the impacts of climate change and improve the local environment. The report and appendices outlines the opportunities the funding brings to South Staffordshire.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **3. INFORMATION**

- 3.1 UKSPF is a central pillar of the UK Government’s levelling up agenda and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. It provides £2.6 billion of new funding for local investment by March 2025, with all areas of the UK receiving an allocation from the fund via a funding formula rather than a competition. This recognises that even the most affluent parts of the UK contain pockets of deprivation and need support.
- 3.2 Within the context of the Fund’s objectives, each place has the flexibility to invest across a range of activities that represent the right solutions to improve local pride in place, help spread and create opportunity, and a sense of community and belonging. Places were able to choose from investment in three investment priorities of communities and place, local business and people and skills. In addition, there are 41 interventions across the three investment priorities, each with their expected outputs and outcomes. We did not have to target all 41 interventions but they formed a menu from which we could chose whichever ones best met our local priorities.
- 3.3 South Staffordshire Council was allocated £3.82m (revenue and capital) across three funding years from 2022/23 – 2024/25 but had to submit an investment plan in Summer 2022. The plan needed to set out a degree of local context, what our priorities were, what outcomes and interventions we would be looking to target with the funding, and whether we had the capability and capacity to deliver this level of funding.
- 3.4 Our draft Investment Plan was put together focusing on existing Council priorities in consultation with Members and partners. The Plan set out the interventions we

would target with the funding and included projects in all three of the investment priorities as prescribed by the Government. Broadly they could be headlined as:

- A strong and effective package of business support across our business sectors
- Skills and support for access to employment for our residents
- Investment in our village centres
- Environmental improvements
- Decarbonising our assets
- Extending our Warmer Homes activity
- Active Travel improvements

3.5 Our Investment Plan was approved in December 2022 and the immediate focus in the remainder of 2022/23 was to focus on setting up and delivering the year 1 interventions and setting up the year 2 interventions. Given the Council has not had previous experience of delivering large-scale grant programmes we have also had to set up the necessary background activities to ensure we meet the guidelines issued by the Government to access the fund. This has included:

- Appointment of a Programme Officer to manage the programme
- Governance
- Reporting and monitoring processes
- Procurement
- Legal agreements
- Communications and branding
- Engaging with partners
- Compiling a UKSPF prospectus, information pack and launches of the programmes [South Staffordshire Council UKSPF Prospectus | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/ukspf-prospectus)

3.6 Late in 2022 the Government also announced an associated funding stream to UKSPF, the REPF, which was only available to certain prescribed rural areas. The funding is a capital grants programme for small businesses and community infrastructure, and we were allocated an additional £489k up to March 2025. Again, this was subject to completing and having approval for an addendum to our UKSPF Investment Plan which was approved in April 2023.

3.7 In March 2023 the Cabinet approved a new governance structure to enable the Council to deliver the programme with sufficient oversight and challenge from Members, senior officers and partners, whilst meeting the Government's requirements to have an effective governance system in place to properly manage the funding.

3.8 Appendix A sets out the approved governance structure and Members will note twice yearly reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which will provide updates on progress and the opportunity for Members to scrutinise the programme and the difference it's making to our communities, residents and businesses.

- 3.9 The UKSPF tapers up from year 1 (22/23) with £464k allocated, in year 2 (23/24) £928k and in year 3 (24/25) we have been allocated £2.43m.
- 3.10 Given we only received confirmation in December of funding for 22/23, we had very little time to put plans into place and the year 1 focus was on projects we could start to deliver on or progress quickly, which included commissioning the village centre appraisal, scoping and commissioning business support activities and the decarbonising project on Landywood Enterprise Centre. Whilst none of these projects delivered any outputs in 22/23, Government recognised that with the very short lead in time, they needed to see assurance of a 'credible plan' if spend had not occurred and we have been able to feed back our progress in these areas.
- 3.11 As part of the People and Skills priority we have created the 'Creating Brighter Futures' (CBF) programme to provide assistance for those residents who are long-term unemployed and furthest from the job market, as well as opportunities for reskilling and upskilling. As Members will be aware, the EU funded Building Better Opportunities programme ceased in March 2023 and the UKSPF funding has enabled us to continue many of those activities. However, it's also allowed us to expand that provision to now cover for those who may have recently lost work and need some assistance to retrain and improve their skills to meet future employment opportunities. £400,000 has been allocated to these activities across the two remaining years of the programme and this project is currently live and working with residents. Further information on CBF can be found here [Creating Brighter Futures | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/creating-brighter-futures)
- 3.12 Across the full three years of the programme circa £1.9m has been allocated to the Supporting Local Business priority, however this encompasses a range of activity including a bespoke business start-up programme with grants, a business growth and grants programme, a research and development innovator programme, a green solutions programme with grants, and a capital allocation to begin to decarbonise our own assets with a focus on Landywood Enterprise Park.
- 3.13 In terms of progress, we have used some of the funding to create a fixed-term post to deliver the business growth and grants programme and we have recently appointed a person to that role. Given the specialist nature of the start-up and innovator programme, we are unable to deliver that in-house and are currently tendering for qualified organisations to deliver that part of the programme, which we expect to have live in the early autumn. The green solutions programme sees a few of the Staffordshire local authorities working together with the County Council to deliver a full advice and grants service to assist businesses to decarbonise and make energy savings.
- 3.14 There are strong links between the People and Skills and Supporting Local Business activities, in terms of ensuring there are future opportunities available for our residents through local business growth. Officers from our Welfare Services and Enterprise teams are currently working together on an action plan of UKSPF and

other operational and strategic activities to ensure we maximise the benefits of local economic growth to our residents and communities.

- 3.15 Appendix B outlines the indicative allocations across the three priority areas. The scope of these projects was previously agreed through the Investment Plan submitted and most of the projects are now being worked up and planned for. Members will have noted in 3.9 that the rump of the funding is in year 3 and the majority of the allocated but not yet confirmed projects will be year 3 projects.
- 3.16 Members will have also noted from appendix a that there is circa £1.2m residual UKSPF funding unallocated and available for organisations to bid for to deliver projects in line with the Council's Investment Plan priorities and interventions. This funding programme has recently been launched and we are now accepting expressions of interest for projects. If a project is deemed as qualifying the organisation will be invited to submit a formal application, which in turn will be assessed by a panel consisting of both Council and independent representatives. Recommendations from that Panel will then be made through the formal governance structure as set out in appendix a to agree grant allocations. More information of the UKSPF residual funding can be found on the Council's website [UKSPF Residual Fund | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](https://sstaffs.gov.uk/ukspf-residual-fund)
- 3.17 REPF funding sits outside of the projects outlined in appendix B, given it is a grant funding programme to external business and community applicants. Allocation of these funds will follow a similar process to the UKSPF residual funding. Further information on applying for REPF can also be found on the Council's website [Rural England Prosperity Fund | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](https://sstaffs.gov.uk/rural-england-prosperity-fund)
- 3.18 Much of the focus to date has been on setting up the necessary infrastructure to deliver a significant funding programme from a standing start. Much of that is now in place which means that to date there has been minimal delivery against outputs and outcomes to report. However, as we move into the delivery phase future reports to Members will contain more performance information and the opportunity to scrutinise progress in greater detail.

#### **4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- 4.1 UKSPF and REPF provides the Council with a major opportunity to make a difference to all of the district and to all parts of our communities. Members will have noted the breadth of projects with an indicative allocation, with the expectation of more projects to follow.
- 4.2 Given the breadth of interventions and projects, the expectation is that each priority theme or project will undertake their own impact assessments. Some of this will form part of the government's monitoring process and can be reported back to Members, and if outside of this process then for example, any separate impact assessments can also be reported to Members.

**5. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

5.1 N/A

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 N/A

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that Members note the contents of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund report and the progress made to date.

**8. Appendices**

8.1 Appendix A – UKSPF Governance Structure

Appendix B – Indicative UKSPF Project allocations

Report prepared by: Grant Mitchell – Assistant Director Enterprise & Growth



**UK Shared Prosperity Fund & Rural England Prosperity Fund governance structure.**

**Lead Cabinet Member** – Cabinet Member for Business Enterprise and Community Infrastructure

**UKSPF Lead Officer** – Responsible for the leadership of the programme, reporting to CLT and Membership – AD Enterprise & Growth

**Programme Officer** – Day to day operational running of the programme responsible for the commissioning, monitoring, management and evaluation of all contracts and Government reporting requirements relating to UKSPF and RPF. Reporting to Enterprise TM and AD Enterprise & Growth.

**Officer Steering Group (OSG)** – chaired by the AD Enterprise & Growth (UKSPF Lead Officer) and will consist of the theme leads and supported by the Programme Officer. Oversight of the day-to-day operations of the programme around progress, management, monitoring, evaluation, commissioning, project award funding and comms, and recommending decisions etc to the CLT Challenge Board. Meeting fortnightly to start with and then moving to monthly and to meet before CLT Challenge Board.

**CLT Challenge Board** – Challenge Board receiving reports and recommendations from OSG on commissioning projects, individual funding applications, monitoring, evaluation, financial updates and overall management of the programme. Meet monthly.

**South Staffordshire Partnership** – engaging and utilising the existing partnership with a standing agenda item, UKSPF Lead Officer to provide updates on the programme, discussion on priorities, joint funding opportunities etc. Not decision making but advisory. Quarterly updates.

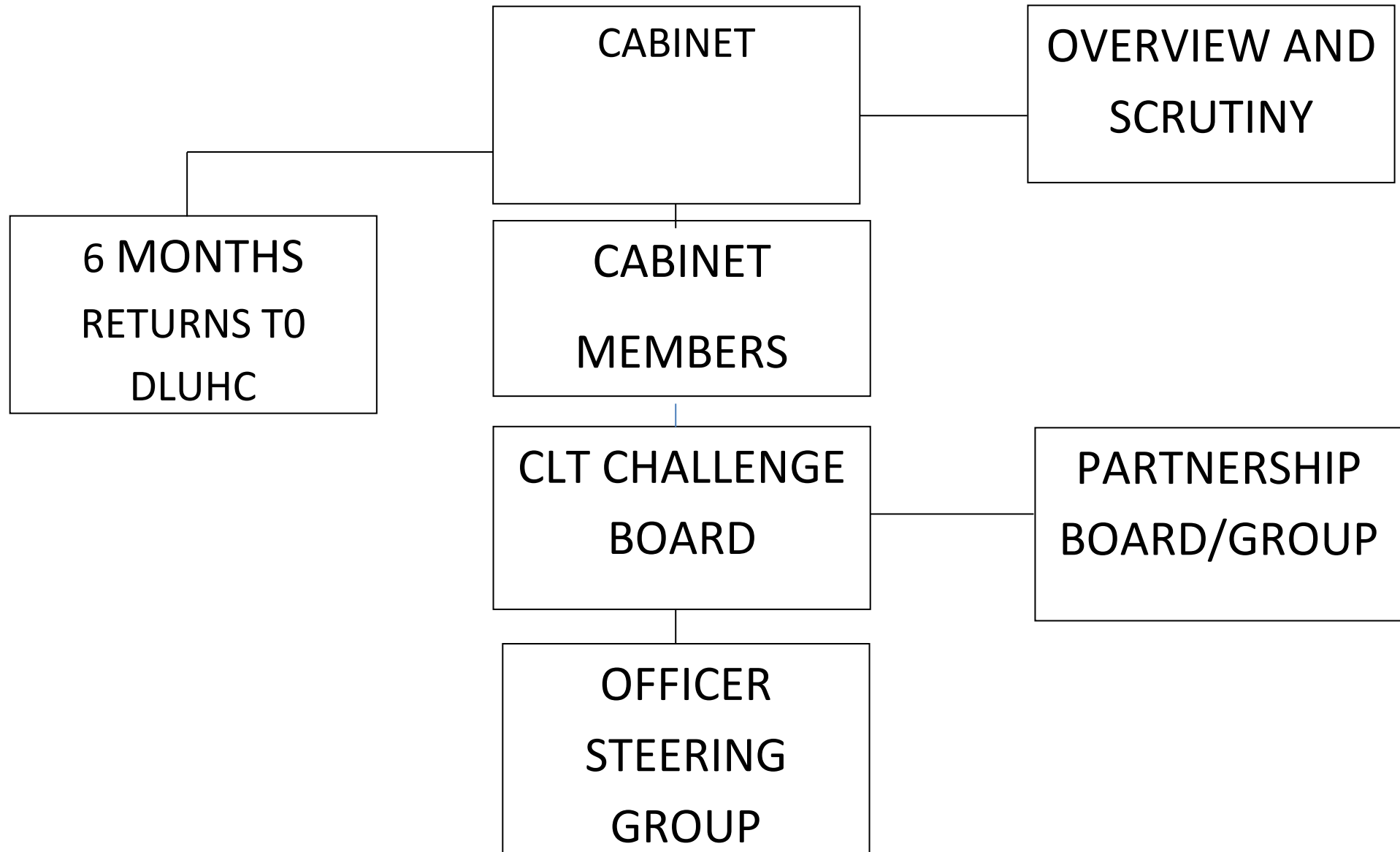
**Cabinet Members** – Quarterly updates on progress, commissioning decisions etc.

**Cabinet** – Decision making body when decisions required on an ‘as and when’ basis.

**Overview & Scrutiny Committee** – twice yearly reporting and opportunity for Members to be updated on progress plus the chance to scrutinise etc.

**See structure below**

# UKSPF & REPF GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Name of Project		
E1	C & P	High Street Support TBC
E2	C & P	Community capital project TBC
E3	C & P	Enhancing Open Spaces TBC
E4	C & P	Enhancing existing institutions TBC
E6	C & P	Local arts TBC
E7	C & P	Cycling infrastructure TBC
E7	C & P	Active travel enhancements TBC
E8	C & P	Tourism Campaigns
E9	C & P	Projects & volunteers TBC
E10	C & P	Health in the Community Programmes
E10	C & P	Engaging Physically Inactive Residents
E11	C & P	Infrastructure support TBC
E12	C & P	Community engagement TBC
E13	C & P	South Staffs Warmer Homes
E16	L B	High Street Support
E17	L B	Promotion of the visitor economy
E19	L B	Investment in R&D
E22	L B	College project TBC
E23	L B	Stoke & Staffs Growth Hub
E23	L B	R & D Accelerator Programme
E39	L B	Carbon Literacy Training
E29	L B	Landywood PV Solar
E30	L B	Get Started and Grow
E30	L B	Business Start Up Programme
E30	L B	Plan to Grow
E38	P & S	Creating Brighter Futures

Project Description
High street improvements
Community capital
Enhancement of the Councils open spaces
Enhancement of the institutions
Creative activities
Installation of cycle shelters at South Staffs Leisure Centres
Accessibility works
Delivery of a number of tourism campaigns
Volunteering & Social action
Replacement of walking and gentle exercise programmes
Further developing the current Forward to Health Scheme
Local group support
Community scheme
Continuation of a home upgrade grant scheme, EPC surveys carried out for needs assessment.
Appraisal, opportunities and promotion
Visitor economy promotion
Local level R & D
Capital equipment
Continuation of the Growth Hub registration/referrals service for prospective entrepreneurs, organisations
R & D support and grant funding
Continuation of support scheme delivery to organisations / employees
Installation of PV panels to 36 business units on Landywood Enterprise Park
Local business support for start up and growth of newly registered businesses / organisations <5yrs old
Start up support and grant funding
Business Planning, Winning Business, support and grant Programme
Replacing BBO, supporting individuals with basic, life and career skills.

New or pre-UKSPF Project?	Main Intervention
New	E1 Improvements to town centres & High Streets
New	E2 Community & neighbourhood infrastructure projects
Existing	E3 Creation of and improvements to local green spaces
New	E4 Enhancing existing cultural, historic & heritage institutions offer
New	E6 Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities
New	E7 Support for active travel enhancements
New	E7 Support for active travel enhancements
New	E8 Campaigns to encourage visits and exploring of local area
New	E9 Impactful volunteering and/or social action projects
Existing	E10 Local sports facilities, tournaments, teams & leagues
Existing	E10 Local sports facilities, tournaments, teams & leagues
New	E11 Capacity building & infrastructure support local groups
New	E12 Community engagement schemes, local regeneration
Existing	E13 Community measures to reduce the cost of living
New	E16 Open markets & town centre retail & service sector
New	E17 Development & promotion of visitor economy
New	E19 Investment in research and development at the local level
New	E22 Enterprise infrastructure & employment / innovation sites
Existing	E23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems
New	E23 Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems
Existing	E29 Supporting decarbonisation whilst growing the local economy
New	E29 Supporting decarbonisation whilst growing the local economy
Existing	E30 Business support measures to drive employment growth
New	E30 Business support measures to drive employment growth
New	E30 Business support measures to drive employment growth
Existing	E38 Local areas to fund local skills needs

Community & Place  
Local Business  
People & Skills  
Rural England Prosperity Fund

Secondary Int	Location		Delivery Lead	Type of organisation	Status	Estimated to
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£300,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	TBC	TBC	Planned	£150,000
E8	WV8 1PX	South Stafford	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£125,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	T.B.C.	Voluntary Sector	Planned	£100,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	T.B.C.	Voluntary Sector	Planned	£45,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£25,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£225,000
	WV8 1PX	South Stafford	T.B.C.	Other Public Sec	Planned	£50,000
	WV8 1PX	South Stafford	T.B.C.	Voluntary Secto	Planned	£45,000
E35	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£9,000
	WV8 1PX	South Stafford	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£11,000
	WV8 1PX	South Stafford	T.B.C.	Other Public Sec	Planned	£130,000
	WS6 6BD	South Stafford	T.B.C.	Voluntary Secto	Planned	£30,000
E14,	WV8 1PX	South Stafford	T.B.C.	Other Public Sec	Planned	£300,000
	WS6 6BD	South Stafford	Triquest	Private Sector C	Live	£81,000
	WS6 6BD	South Stafford	T.B.C.	Private Sector C	Planned	£40,000
	WS6 6BD	South Staffords	T.B.C.	Private Sector Co	Planned	£200,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£150,000
	ST16 2DH	South Stafford	Staffordshire	Local Authority	Planned	£39,040
E24, E33	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	T.B.C.	HE Institution	Planned	£200,000
E39,	ST16 2DH	South Staffords	Staffordshire	Local Authority	Planned	£300,000
	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£250,000
E24, E33	ST16 2DH	South Staffords	Staffordshire	Local Authority	Live	£15,000
E24,	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£176,000
E24	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Planned	£267,732
E33, E34, E35,	WV8 1PX	South Staffords	South Staffor	Local Authority	Live	£410,000

	Capital	Revenue	Captial	Revenue	
unallcoated	£ 550,000	£ 410,000	£ 176,000	£ 345,000	allocated
unallcoated	£ 230,000	£ 30,000	£ 250,000	£ 1,272,772	allocated
unallcoated	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 410,000	allocated
unallcoated	£ 489,371	£ -	£ -	£ -	allocated
	£ 1,269,371	£ 440,000	£426,000	£ 2,027,772	£150,000 £ 4,313,143

£1,200,000.00	£780,000	£420,000
Residual	Capital	Revenue

Total UKSPF / REPF budget		Primary non-UKSPF Funding	Secondary non-UKSPF Funding	
Revenue	£300,000			
Capital+Rev	£150,000			
Capital	£125,000			
Capital	£100,000			
Revenue	£45,000			
Capital	£25,000			
Capital	£225,000			
Revenue	£50,000			
Revenue	£45,000			
Revenue	£18,000		Existing Council budget	
Revenue	£22,000		Existing Council budget	
Capital+Rev	£130,000			
Revenue	£30,000			
Revenue	£275,000			
Revenue	£81,000			
Revenue	£40,000			
Revenue	£200,000			
Capital	£150,000			
Revenue	£39,040			
Revenue	£200,000			
Revenue	£300,000			
Capital	£300,000			
Revenue	£15,000			
Revenue	£176,000			
Revenue	£458,732			
Revenue	<b>£410,000</b>			

£3,673,772

£150,000 M & A

£3,823,772

£489,371 REPF

TOTAL

**£4,313,143**





**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JULY 2023**

**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE PLACE NARRATIVE 2023**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE POLICY MANAGER**

**LEAD CABINET MEMBER – COUNCILLOR ROGER LEES, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**PART A – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report presents the Place Narrative 2023 for members information. This is the second Place Narrative – the first was produced in 2020. The Narrative will be complemented by a Locality Profiles statistical document. These will be used for consultation and engagement with a range of stakeholders including our communities to shape the next Council Plan to be published in 2024.

**2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	No	The Place Narrative is a key document contributing to the development of the next Council Plan, to be published in 2024+
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	No	This report is not proposing any specific decisions or policy changes as the Narrative is intended to be used as part of the stakeholder engagement which will be undertaken in the development of the new Council Plan for 2024+.
	Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been completed?	
	No	There are no specific data requirements associated with the Place Narrative.
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	No	Information report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Details – The Place Narrative will be used for stakeholder engagement in the Autumn 2023.	

FINANCIAL IMPACT	No	
LEGAL ISSUES	No	
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES including climate impacts and health impacts if applicable	None	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **3 INFORMATION**

- 3.1 The Place Narrative presents key issues in the district and is designed to encourage participation in the process of identifying key priorities for South Staffordshire for the Council Plan to be published in 2024. It is the second Place Narrative for South Staffordshire – the first was published in 2020. We have achieved progress against the priorities set out in 2020 and these are detailed in an appendix to this report.
- 3.2 The Narrative draws on information from the Census 2021 and other sources and sets out how, in recent years, the national, international, and local context has changed with ongoing health, well-being and economic challenges.
- 3.3 Since we produced our last Place Narrative in 2020 much has changed. We have had the global pandemic, there is the war in Ukraine, the impact of the growth in refugee numbers and the increase in the cost of living.
- 3.4 A complementary Locality Profiles statistical document will be published alongside the Narrative.
- 3.5 The Narrative and Profiles will be used during consultation and engagement activity to be undertaken with stakeholders across the district. This will involve a variety of methods including local and District wide events, social media activity promoting the document and consulting on specific aspects of the Narrative as well as formal structured surveys.

### **4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Further details of any impacts as necessary.

None

### **5. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

5.1 N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

South Staffordshire, Unspoilt by Progress (Place Narrative 2020)

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the Place Narrative.

Report prepared by: Kevin Hubery, Corporate Policy Manager

## Appendix 1 – South Staffordshire Place Narrative 2023

### ***Separate document***

## Appendix 2 – Progress on 2020 Place Narrative priorities

2020 Priorities	Progress
The approach to plan well for the future of South Staffordshire is through a robust Local Plan which has gone through the full consultation process. This is required to avoid ad hoc unplanned development which occurs without infrastructure delivered.	The current review of the local plan continues this approach.
Ageing population and access to transport and the voluntary and community sector to provide support to access a wide variety of services	Voluntary organisations have continued to provide these services in some villages and parishes
Investment into the centrally located Council headquarters, benefiting residents with access to public services on one site	Since the production of our last Place Narrative the Codsall Community Hub project has been completed.
Focus on ensuring younger residents have the skills to meet local businesses future needs	South Staffordshire's employers links with schools have been particularly important in addressing this, with a specific focus on raising the aspirations of our young people and connecting local people with new and emerging opportunities.
IT buddies will be offering computer skills free to residents	This programme was popular and successful until it was disrupted by the pandemic. The shift online for accessing services has continued to grow.
Broadband connectivity 92% which is 3% below target and something to continue to improve	Nowhere in South Staffordshire is unable to receive broadband – although “decent” connectivity is not available in some areas. 93.9% of South Staffordshire now has Superfast availability compared to 95.9% of the UK and 96.4% of the West Midlands. Average download speeds and availability of gigabit remain significantly below national and West Midlands levels.

<p>To support health and delay or prevention of diseases continued investment in the Council's leisure centres and a range of outreach health and wellbeing programmes</p>	<p>A range of programmes designed to keep people active and support good health include formal leisure and sports activities - including Gentle Exercise and Forward to Health, backed by substantial investment in local Leisure Centres. Volunteer led activities such as Walking for Health and South Staffordshire's Cycling Scheme are also popular.</p>
<p>Committed to continue to be a district that is dementia friendly</p>	<p>A long term programme of being Dementia Friendly are still very much part of our agenda including work with parishes, community groups and local businesses to promote Dementia awareness. As part of our design for the Community Hub we ensured that the facilities were Dementia Friendly.</p>
<p>South Staffordshire Community Lottery, committed to continue its support for local voluntary organisations who assist people and place.</p>	<p>The South Staffordshire Community Lottery, launched in 2017, raises money for local organisations. Over 270,000 tickets have been sold and over £160,000 raised. The Lottery has benefitted almost 80 good causes, with funding from the lottery used to invest in community groups.</p>





South Staffordshire Council

# Place Narrative 2023

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)





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Front cover images: Top left clockwise: Baggeridge Country Park Play Area, Staffs and Worcester Canal, Shoal Hill Common, South Staffordshire leisure centres, Weston Park, i54 South Staffordshire.



*Codsall Community Hub*



# A story of our place

## Welcome to South Staffordshire



**South Staffordshire is a place offering a high quality of life, appreciated by people who have chosen to live here.** In

South Staffordshire, the quality of place and wellbeing of our communities are prioritised. As such, our economic base has grown in a sensitive way to retain the special characteristics that are valued by local people and visitors alike. South Staffordshire is forward facing, yet unspoilt by progress.

This Place Narrative is an important step towards creating a new Council Plan for 2024 onwards. It sets out how, in recent years, the national, international, and local context has altered the position of the area, with regard to ongoing health, wellbeing and economic priorities. Partners in the public, private, and voluntary sectors in the district plan carefully and collaborate to achieve progress on these priorities.

This Narrative will be used for extensive engagement with partners and communities at all levels.

The collaborative way of working is particularly valuable to maintaining South Staffordshire's successful economic performance, despite a challenging context.

South Staffordshire will continue to make a significant contribution to regional economic growth through the major developments at i54, the Royal Ordnance site in Featherstone, and the West Midlands Interchange. The

Business Partnership provides locality and sector-based engagement with the business community, supporting South Staffordshire's role as a place providing employment opportunities - particularly for our young people - and where people can start and grow businesses. The coronavirus pandemic, ongoing challenges and collective priorities see partners in the public, private and voluntary sector collaborating to achieve progress. These arrangements provide a framework within which all partners can work together, ensuring that local areas' particular needs and issues are addressed.

There is a strong district-level strategic partnership of public and voluntary sector organisations to engage with. The Localities Plus model brings to life a three-tier working model of county, district and parish councils co-ordinating work across the five localities in South Staffordshire. Regular Parish Summits bring stakeholders together to respond to issues, including health and wellbeing and the cost of living. This approach will ensure that South Staffordshire will continue to be a place where our residents are proud to live and that people choose to move to and to work in.

**Councillor Roger Lees**

Leader of South Staffordshire Council  
May 2023

**This Place Narrative is set in the context of a range of opportunities and challenges at local, national and international level.**

A range of new investments have been secured in the district, including the expansion of the i54 development and the West Midlands Interchange project. Securing the benefits of these schemes for local people is important, as is ensuring the quality of the developments in their locations.

**Since we produced our last Place Narrative in 2020, much has changed. There have been a number of factors which, through their sheer magnitude, have impacted on the social and economic wellbeing of our communities.**

**These include:**

- A global pandemic
- The war in Ukraine
- Refugee schemes
- Cost of living challenges

Locally, we can see and feel the effects of these events on our communities. We saw the impact the pandemic had on our more vulnerable residents, both in terms of isolation and also economically, as many residents were furloughed. This impact was also felt on businesses and our local high street shops. Brexit has added to the challenges faced by some businesses, in terms of accessing markets and recruiting workers from mainland Europe.

There has been a strong local response to support those affected by the cost of living crisis, through food schemes and wellbeing packages - including the establishment of 'warm spaces'. Some of these local initiatives are funded by South Staffordshire Council's 'Community is the Best Medicine' programme, set up to support those challenged by the cost of heating their homes. Advice is also available from partners such as Citizens Advice, while Beat the Cold has complemented the support packages administered locally.



# South Staffordshire

South Staffordshire is a predominantly rural district bordering the western edge of the West Midlands conurbation, Shropshire, Worcestershire and neighbouring Staffordshire authorities. The map, pictured right, shows how the district is made up of five localities, which form the basis on which we engage with partners and communities. There are a total of 27 parishes and 20 wards. The ward boundaries changed following a review in 2021.

## Locality 1

- Huntington and Hatherton
- Penkridge North and Acton Trussell
- Penkridge South and Gailey

## Locality 2

- Brewood, Coven and Blymhill
- Lapley, Stretton and Wheaton Aston

## Locality 3

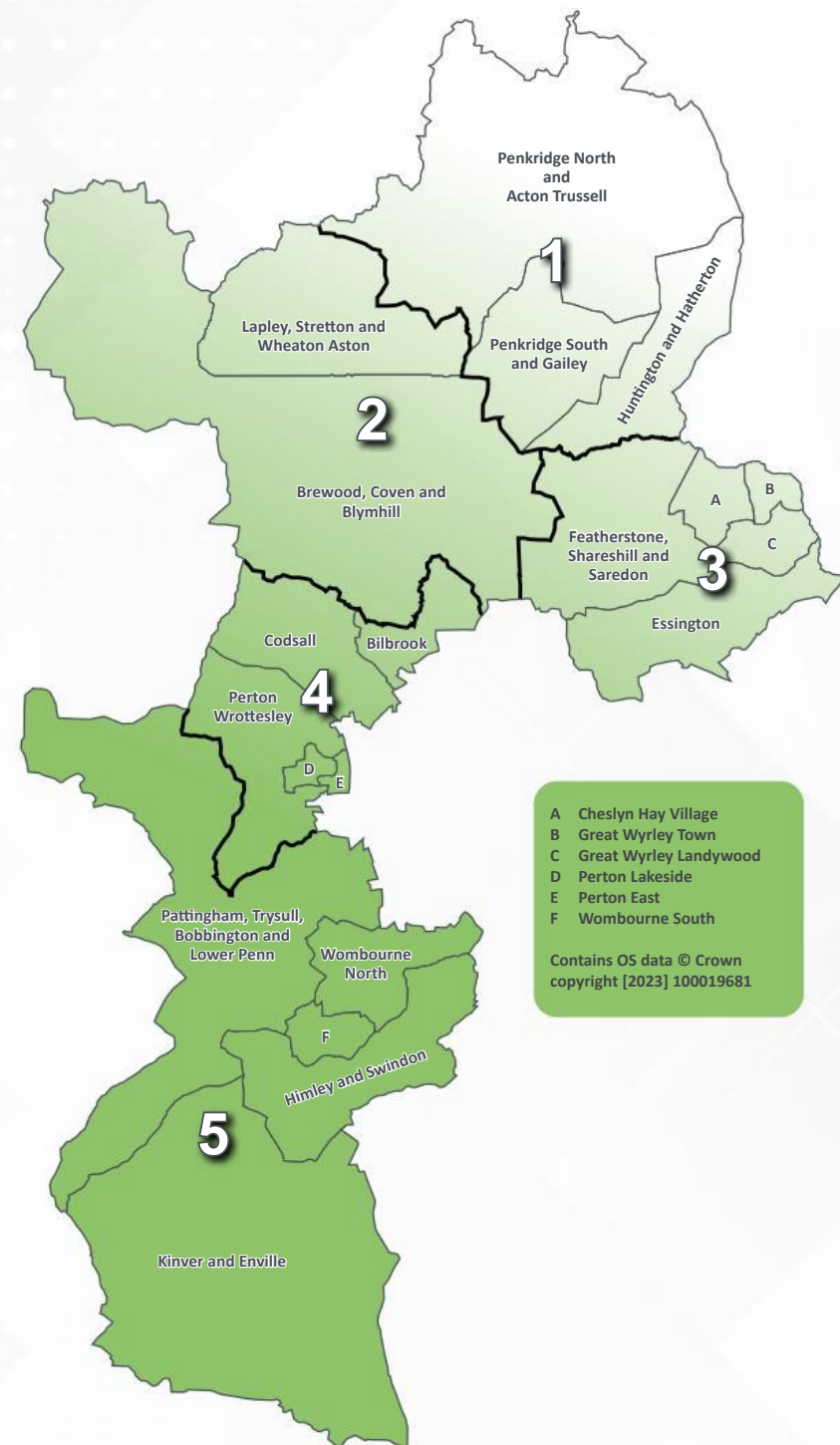
- Cheslyn Hay Village
- Essington
- Featherstone, Shareshill and Saredon
- Great Wyrley Landywood
- Great Wyrley Town

## Locality 4

- Bilbrook
- Codsall
- Perton East
- Perton Lakeside
- Perton Wrottesley

## Locality 5

- Himley and Swindon
- Kinver and Enville
- Pattingham, Trysull, Bobbington and Lower Penn
- Wombourne North
- Wombourne South





# Highlights from the 2021 Census

## Our population:

Between the last two censuses (held in 2011 and 2021), the population of South Staffordshire increased by **2.2%**, from just over 108,100 in 2011 to around 110,500 in 2021. The population here increased by a smaller percentage than the overall population of the West Midlands (6.2%), and by a smaller percentage than the overall population of England (up 6.6% since the 2011 Census).

In 2021, South Staffordshire was among the lowest (30%) for population density across English local authority areas at the last census. The district has around 1.9 people per football pitch-sized piece of land.

## An ageing South Staffordshire:

Between the last two censuses, the average age of South Staffordshire residents increased by three years, from 45 to 48 years of age.

South Staffordshire has a higher average age than the West Midlands as a whole (40 years) and a higher average age than England (40 years).

The number of people aged 75 to 84 years rose by just over **2,900** (an increase of 40.7%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by around **4,400** (19.1% decrease).

## Health in South Staffordshire:

In 2021, **48.2%** of South Staffordshire residents described their health as 'very good', increasing from **46.9%** in 2011. The proportion of South Staffordshire residents describing their health as 'very bad' was 1.0% (similar to 2011).

This data reflects people's own opinions in describing their overall health on a five point scale, from very good to very bad. The 2021 Census was conducted during the coronavirus pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.



# What has changed: Our people

**The Census of Population undertaken in 2021 provides a rich insight into the lives of people living in the district. While the overall population growth remains fairly stable - an increase of just 2.2% since 2011, compared to the national figure of 6.6%, the population does continue to age.**

However, overall life expectancy of South Staffordshire residents is higher than the national average - 80.1 years for men and 84.1 years for women. The age to which people are expected to live in good health in South Staffordshire is 65.6 years for men and 66.3 years for women.

Rates of excess weight for adults are higher than the West Midlands (WM) region and England. For young children (aged four to five), the rates are equal to those for the WM but higher than England. Those aged 10 to 11 have rates lower than the regional and national figures. Physical activity rates for South Staffordshire are higher than regional levels, but lower than those nationally. The maternity care and healthy pregnancy rates are very good, with South Staffordshire having much lower infant mortality than the West Midlands and England.

This positive health picture benefits from a range of programmes designed to keep people active and support good health. Alongside formal leisure and sports activities -

including Gentle Exercise and Forward to Health - there are volunteer-led activities, such as Walking for Health and South Staffordshire's Cycling Scheme.

The district has been through very challenging times in the last three years, due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Communities responded to the challenges presented due to the pandemic, with an increase in volunteering to provide practical support to those in need at local level. The pandemic highlighted the extent of isolation that exists, particularly among the frail and elderly. At a local level, an ongoing local response is essential to address this - and by working with organisations in the villages, as well as parishes and partners - including Age UK - we can offer support to those who need it.

The lessons from these experiences continue to inform the development and growth of local mutual support, which has continued with the need to address the current cost of living challenges. The increased cost of housing, energy, food, and transport all place pressures on those most vulnerable in our communities.

The South Staffordshire Community Lottery has raised £160,000 which has benefited almost 80 good causes, to enable them to invest in community services and support.





# What has changed: Our people

## What does the data say:

South Staffordshire is home to **110,500** residents. The population has a lower proportion of people aged under five, under 16, and aged 16 to 64, compared to England as a whole. However, the percentage of people aged 65 and over is higher than the national picture.



Overall life expectancy in South Staffordshire has seen a slight but insignificant reduction and is now **80 years** for men and **84 years** for women, both higher than the national average. The gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and least deprived areas in South Staffordshire has reduced slightly for men and increased slightly for women - and is now just over four years for both genders.

Around **25%** of children aged four to five in South Staffordshire have excess weight (overweight or obese), with rates now similar to average (they were previously higher than average). Around 34% of children aged 10 to 11 have excess weight.



The rate of hospital admissions caused by alcohol fell, but remains higher than the England average.



Adults having excess weight (either obese or overweight) has increased to over 68%, which is now higher than the national average (previously similar to England).



**64%** of South Staffordshire adults are physically active, similar to the England average. Only half of the district's adults are eating the recommended five portions of fruit and vegetables per day, also similar to the England average.

The estimated dementia diagnosis rate (proportion recorded of expected cases) in South Staffordshire is similar the national average (previously lower than average). A small but insignificant increase.



The proportion of older people in South Staffordshire who are aged 60 and over living in income-deprived households is significantly better than the national average.



The proportion of children in South Staffordshire in relatively low-income households is lower than England, but has seen a steady increase before falling slightly in 2020/21.



# What has changed: Our place

South Staffordshire is a place where people choose to live. In our 2021 Residents' Survey, 92% of residents said they would recommend South Staffordshire as a place to live. Boasting sprawling landscapes and lush greenery, South Staffordshire is set in the heart of the countryside, nestled between a range of bustling metropolitan locations. It is made up of 27 beautiful and inviting villages, each one bursting with character, attractions, and welcoming communities. These villages all have their own distinctive character and local people feel a strong affinity to them. Availability of open spaces close to people's homes is important and has a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

The location of South Staffordshire means that not only is it important to the wider Staffordshire county, but there are also close relationships with its other neighbours - the West Midlands and Shropshire - in terms of where people live and work.

There has been recent investment in promoting the district to visitors, who can enjoy the many attractions on offer locally. These include places of historical interest such as Weston Park - a house with many features in its extensive grounds, hosting a wide range of events throughout the year, including music festivals. Halfpenny Green Wine Estate has 30 acres of vines. Its site also features the Wild Zoo, offering a hands-on experience to educate guests about

animals. Baggeridge Country Park is an award-winning site of biological importance, with extensive walks, rich wildlife and many other attractions.

There is an ongoing commitment to mitigating climate change in the district. In 2022, young environmentalists from South Staffordshire showed their love for the planet when they took part in debates around how the district can help tackle the effects of climate change. Primary and secondary school children participated in the Youth Climate Committee, where they discussed what collective action we can all take to reduce our carbon footprint and preserve the environment for future generations. Ideas included creating more electric vehicle charging points across the district, planting more trees, and improving opportunities for cycling and walking. Each of the children also committed to a 'climate pledge' - one simple thing that they can do at home to help the local environment.

South Staffordshire is a safe place to live. Community safety is addressed at a locality level to understand the bespoke needs and challenges facing the different parts of the district.



**Take a tour of stunning South Staffordshire**





# What has changed: Our place

The prosperity of the district has continued to strengthen with significant economic growth, creating the opportunity for almost 7,000 jobs at several manufacturing sites across South Staffordshire and over £2bn investment into the local economy.

The strong and long-term commitment to partnership working is demonstrated by the i54 development, an excellent example of how we have continued to strengthen the prosperity of the district and that of our neighbours, with partners including Wolverhampton City Council and Staffordshire County Council.

South Staffordshire is located at the edge of the West Midlands conurbation, making it an area which attracts growth and investment. Making sure the level and location of that growth occurs in the most sustainable places is critical - and this is the role of the Local Plan review. Retaining the character and identity of the place, while ensuring our villages retain diversity and prosperity is a challenge which requires effective engagement with communities and businesses.



*JLR, i54 South Staffordshire*





# What has changed: Our place

## What does the data say:

The proportion of children in South Staffordshire who reach a good level of development at the age of five (76.4%) fell recently, but remains better than the national average (71.8%).



The percentage of adults aged 16 to 64 with NVQ level 3 or above is 17.6% - higher than the national average (16.9%). However, a higher proportion of adults have no qualifications (19.3%) compared to the national average (18.2%).



Both unemployment and youth unemployment rates in South Staffordshire have seen recent reductions and are lower than the national average (as at June 2022).



GCSE attainment for South Staffordshire pupils has fallen recently and is currently worse than the England average.



Housing affordability is increasingly an issue in South Staffordshire. The average house price (£265,000) now stands at eight times the average gross salary (£33,075).



The gap in the employment rate between those with physical or mental long term health conditions (aged 16 to 64) and the overall employment rate has increased to 17% - similar to the national average (11%).

South Staffordshire has a lower than average proportion of children who are absent from school and has experienced recent reductions in absence levels.



Nearly **13%** of South Staffordshire households were living in fuel poverty in 2020. Similar to the previous year and better than the national average.



Overall rates of crime, antisocial behaviour, sexual offences and violent crime in South Staffordshire are all low in 2022, although violent crime saw a significant increase on the previous year.



# What does the future hold? Our people

## Engaging with our communities

Regular Parish Summits and virtual forums bring partners together to respond to issues, including health and wellbeing and the cost of living. This approach will ensure that South Staffordshire continues to be somewhere our residents are proud to live and a place where people choose to move to and to work in.

## Connected

Digital technology is fundamentally changing the way we live, work, and learn - and the adoption of digital technology has become widespread in almost every aspect of modern life. With digital progress high among our priorities, we are using new skills and ways of working to shape the design and delivery of services. This results in faster response times and personalised interactions, while enhancing our communication and allowing residents to engage more effectively. We will still enable access to services through non-digital channels for those who do not have digital access.

Nowhere in South Staffordshire is unable to receive broadband - although decent connectivity is not available in some areas.

93.9% of South Staffordshire now has Superfast availability compared to 95.9% of the UK and 96.4% of the West Midlands. Average download speeds and availability of gigabit remain significantly below national and West Midlands levels.

## Workforce

The development of our local workforce is important if we are to benefit from recent and future investment – and this is particularly important for our younger people. South Staffordshire's business support networks and links with schools have been particularly important in addressing this, with a specific focus on raising the aspirations of our young people and connecting local people with new and emerging opportunities.



## Better health

We are developing a programme under Better Health Staffordshire which fits very well with our Locality model. Local partnerships are in place, which see partners and communities work collectively over the long term (10 to 15 years) to deliver on actions which tackle the causes of excess weight and promote an active lifestyle. The asset-based approach focusses on the potential of what already exists within an area and builds on that. Given the extent of locally based activities focussed on increased activity, South Staffordshire is in a good starting place to benefit from this approach which will help to increase our focus on addressing the challenges of maintaining healthy lifestyles.



How life has changed in South Staffordshire:  
Census 2021



Census 2021 - Staffordshire Observatory



# What does the future hold? Our place

Young children in South Staffordshire do well, with over three quarters of them having a good level of development by the time they reach school age – higher than the national average. At secondary school level, however, GCSE attainment for South Staffordshire pupils is worse than the England average.

Amongst adults, those with NVQ level 3 or above is higher than the national average, however a higher proportion of our adults have no qualifications compared to average. Unemployment and youth unemployment rates in South Staffordshire have seen recent reductions and are lower than the national average.

The proportion of older people in South Staffordshire who are aged 60 and over living in income-deprived households is significantly lower than the national average, as is the proportion of children in South Staffordshire in relatively low-income households.

Housing affordability is increasingly an issue in South Staffordshire. The average house price (£265,000) now stands at eight times the average gross salary (£33,075).

## Partnership working

The Localities Plus model that operates in South Staffordshire provides a framework for all three tiers of local government - county, district and parish - to work together with others in the public sector such as health, the police and fire services, and partners in the voluntary and private sectors in response to the impact of these and other challenges on different parts of the district. Partners work closely to understand and respond to the implications of trends in health, the economy, community safety, and demography, using the Census and other data sources to inform our activities.

Partnership working takes a 'who is best placed to deliver' approach. Working relationships have strengthened between partners. The introduction of Locality Enabler roles at South Staffordshire Council enhances the connections between partners and encourages cross-service working within the council. The Enablers are staff from existing service teams, who remain in their substantive roles and so provide both a focus on the particular Locality they are allocated to, while also applying their specific professional expertise to the whole Locality approach.

Within the voluntary and community sector, Support Staffordshire has been commissioned to establish key community groups in each of the Localities to provide a portal for enhanced community consultation and engagement. These will also act as facilitators of local mutual support and signpost people to organisations that can respond to their needs.



# What does the future hold? Our place

## Future economy

South Staffordshire will continue to make a significant contribution to regional economic growth through the major developments at i54 South Staffordshire, the Royal Ordnance site in Featherstone and the West Midlands Interchange.

Plans for the developments are now progressing. The West Midlands Interchange commenced in 2023. It will be the largest rail-served logistics development in the UK, offering 8 million sq ft of premium logistics facilities and creating 8,500 jobs. This will build sustainable foundations for the logistics sector and replace road freight for rail, producing 70% less carbon dioxide. It is hoped that the first occupiers will arrive by the end of 2024.

An additional 100,000 sq m of development will be made available on completion of the i54 Western Extension; this will create a further 1,700 jobs.

There is also the opportunity to develop a green corridor extending from Wolverhampton across the border into South Staffordshire. The proposed route will start around J2 of the M54, encompassing our green growth triangle and includes a potential metro route, and a planned park and ride site.

Further to this, Logic54, at the former Royal Ordnance Factory site in Featherstone, will provide accommodation for a range of uses including industrial, storage, and distribution, accessed by a new motorway link road, creating 1,700 jobs.





# What does the future hold? Our place

## UK Shared Prosperity Fund

South Staffordshire has been awarded £3.82 million from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and a further £0.49 million due to the rural nature of our district. The local partnership in the district has developed our Investment Plan based on a range of key priorities, including skills and business support. It is also based on our Locality 3 Action Plan, as this part of the district has higher levels of unemployment and benefit dependency, lower skills and educational attainment, poorer health, and higher crime levels. Digital connectivity is an underpinning enabling priority across all priorities. Developing the plan has just been an extension to our existing locality-based partnership approach, developed over many years.

The additional funding for rural areas integrated into the UKSPF provides capital funding for small businesses and community infrastructure, including converting farm buildings to business and rural tourism locations.

**Invest** in South Staffordshire 

## The Business Partnership

The Business Partnership provides locality- and sector-based engagement with the business community, supporting South Staffordshire's role as a place where people can start and grow businesses. These arrangements provide a framework within which all partners can work together, ensuring that local areas' particular needs and issues are addressed.



As the coronavirus restrictions eased, the relationships that had been established to support businesses during the lockdowns were key to the success of initiatives to get the local economy moving again – not least in the local village high streets. The Business Partnership (BP) brings together businesses of all sizes and sectors, the council, and public sector partners, to share knowledge, best practice, and to network on important and varied topics facing all our business sectors. As part of our partnership, we have over 100 business partners signed up to the Partnership, and nine Strategic Support Partners from the business support networks and community sectors. Following the pandemic, support was given to high street recovery - for instance creating a Virtual High Street video to promote buy local.

Through the BP, the five Locality Partnership Hubs across the district focus on a particular sector (hospitality or manufacturing, for example), and are differing in their needs and relationships with us as the local authority. Early work has included drop-in sessions for businesses which have focused on different topics, for example de-carbonising and building resilience. The Hubs also provide a gateway 'open door' to business support services.

# What does the future hold? Our place

## The Local Plan



The future growth of the district needs to be carefully balanced to maintain the character and identity of our place. We do this through a Local Plan.

The Local Plan is critical for communities to remain vibrant and for local people to have the opportunity to live and work in the district, generating the need for homes and sites for development. Although new developments have taken place, proposed green belt loss has been kept to a minimum and only 7% of the district is built up. Managing this appropriate level and location of growth in the future is the role for the Local Plan. The Local Plan creates the opportunity to deliver infrastructure to support growth.

The current Local Plan is being prepared in consultation and will be subject to examination in public prior to adoption.



## South Staffordshire Community Hub

Since the production of our last Place Narrative, the Codsall Community Hub project has been completed. Investment in the council's headquarters is transforming how council services are delivered. The council continued with the project during the pandemic; supporting economic growth at such a turbulent time in the wider economy.

The Hub is now a modern, energy-efficient working environment with an emphasis on social space, rather than the traditional 'nine till five' workstations. The building provides a local base for Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire County Council, a library, a private nursery, a GP surgery and many voluntary sector organisations and businesses, including a café. The removal of cellular offices creates an open environment where teams, councillors, and partners work together in new collaborative spaces, including pods, collaboration zones, and break-out areas.











**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL****OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JULY 2023****MEMBER WORKING GROUPS 2023-2024 – TOPIC SELECTION****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE****PART A – SUMMARY REPORT****1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 To seek Members views and approval of topics for the 2023/2024 round of Member Working Groups.

**2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	The Member Working Groups Action Plans contribute to the overall progress of the Council Plan.
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	No	The proposed decision is not considered to have any adverse implications and is considered to comply with the Council's equal opportunities and diversity policies.
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Each Member Working Group is due to complete by March 2024.	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	No	
LEGAL ISSUES	None	
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	None	Any impacts arising from the work of the groups will be addressed via individual reports from the groups.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

**PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION****3. INFORMATION****3.1 Background**

In May 2023 the Council revised its arrangements around scrutiny panels. Previously there were three Challenge Panels held annually based around the themes of Your Council, Your Place and Your Community. A more flexible approach was adopted in May 2023 and the panels renamed Member Working Groups.

The Member Working Groups report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to provide a progress report on the implementation of outstanding recommendations for each of the groups.

### 3.2 Topics for 2023/24 Member Working Groups

#### **Topic 1**

- 3.3 As the Council is in the final year of the current Council Plan, it is suggested that one Member Working Group could work on proposals for the new Council Plan, to be in place for 2024 onwards.

#### **Topic 2**

- 3.4 How we engage with our communities is vital to the delivery of our services and members have an integral role. Looking to capture and build on the many examples of good practice used by members in their wards, the Member Working Group would look to enhance the Council's position with regard to engagement.
- 3.5 Given the importance of the above two areas, members may determine that these should be the only two topics considered this year. Should members determine that more Working Groups should be held, then other possible topics are set out below.
- 3.6
- i) Climate Change – reviewing and refreshing the Council's approach – Carbon neutral – what it really means for the council
  - ii) Standing Orders for Meetings – fit for purpose in 2024?
  - iii) Food Waste Collection – how we are going to interact/engage our communities
  - iv) Best Value – Office for Local Government new criteria
- 3.7 It is suggested that no more than a maximum of three Member Working Groups operate at any one time to enable efficient and effective working.

### 4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Not applicable

### 5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

N/A

### 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1** For Member to consider and agree the topics for examination by the Member Working Groups for the current municipal year.

Report prepared by Lorraine Fowkes – Corporate Director of Governance



**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL****OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JULY 2023****WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24****REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE****PART A – SUMMARY REPORT****1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the work programme for the Committee for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

**2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	Scrutiny is key to the effective and efficient operation of the Council to enable delivery against the Council Plan
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	No	No – not needed as any equality issues would be addressed individually rather than as part of the programme setting
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	No – this report goes to Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	2023/24 Municipal Year	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	No	This is within existing budgets
LEGAL ISSUES	No	No specific legal issues from this report
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	No	None at this stage as setting the programme of work rather than considering individual items
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

## **PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **3. INFORMATION**

3.1 The Committee is asked to discuss and agree a work programme for the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

3.2 In addition to the programmed work there will, from time to time, be a number of additional items coming to the Committee including:

- Councillor call for action
- Councillor “call ins”
- Key decision reports

This may require additional meetings to be programmed in depending on when the issues arise.

3.3 Any suggestions for additions to the work programme should be referred to the Chairman in the first instance.

### **3.4 Work Programme 2023/24**

25 July 2023

- Setting of work programme
- UKSPF Report
- Integrated Performance Management outturn for 2022/23
- Member Working Groups – Topic Selection
- Challenge Panels Final Outcomes Report 2022/23
- Closed Churchyards Special Expense – Voluntary Referral of Member Decision
- Place Narrative Findings

26 September 2023

- Work programme update
- Climate Change Action Plan Update
- Peer Review Follow-up outcome
- Resource Planning and Prioritisation (RPP) 2024
- Service Standards

14 November 2023

- Work programme update
- Member Working Groups Update
- Integrated Performance Management Report Q2

- Staffordshire County Council Highways – Potholes – understanding the position (subject to confirmation from County as to attendance)
- Customer Programme/Digital Programme update

23 January 2024

- Work programme update
- Budget meeting
- Member Working Groups Update
- UK Shared Prosperity Update Report
- DFG's update report
- Local Plan

12 March 2024

- Work programme update
- Member Working Groups Conclusion Report
- The draft Council Plan – 2024-2022

4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION  
N/A

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES  
None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS  
None

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** That Members agree the work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

Report prepared by: Lorraine Fowkes – Corporate Director of Governance





**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL****OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25 JULY 2023****OUTCOME REPORT ON 2023/23 CHALLENGE PANELS****REPORT OF THE CHALLENGE PANEL CHAIRMEN AND VICE CHAIRMEN****PART A – SUMMARY REPORT****1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS**

- 1.1 South Staffordshire Council introduced the Challenge Panel model in 2013; this report provides an overview of the outcomes of the final round of Challenge Panels concluding in 2023.

**2. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

POLICY/COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council Plan objectives?	
	Yes	The Challenge Panel Action Plans contribute to the overall progress of the Council Plan.
	Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) been completed?	
	No	The proposed decision is not considered to have any adverse implications and is considered to comply with the Council's equal opportunities and diversity policies.
SCRUTINY POWERS APPLICABLE	Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
KEY DECISION	No	
TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	N/A	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	No	Any financial implications arising from the recommendations of the Challenge Panels will be incorporated into individual budget proposals as appropriate.
LEGAL ISSUES	None	
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	None	
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	No	

**PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION****3. INFORMATION****3.1 Background**

The Challenge Panels report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and this report seeks to provide a conclusion in respect of the work being undertaken by the three Challenge Panels that concluded earlier this year.

### 3.2 Challenge Panels 2022-23

The Your Community Challenge Panel looked at the Localities + model and the data and intelligence led approach to service design and delivery; this Panel had former Councillor B Spencer as Chairman and Councillor V Merrick as Vice-Chairman. The agreed outcomes arising from the work of this panel can be seen at Appendix 1.

The Your Council Challenge Panel looked at digital adoption from a member point of view including moving to paperless/paperlite from May 2023. Councillor P Davis was Chairman of the Panel with Councillor M Davies Vice-Chairman. The agreed outcomes from this panel can be seen at Appendix 2.

The Your Place Challenge Panel looked at pipeline project for future funding opportunities and the assessment criteria to be used for those projects. Councillor D Holmes was Chairman of this Panel. The agreed outcomes from this panel can be seen at Appendix 3.

#### 4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Not applicable.

#### 5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

#### 6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

### **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** To note the outcomes of the Challenge Panels.

Report prepared by Lorraine Fowkes, Corporate Director of Governance

## **YOUR COMMUNITY CHALLENGE PANEL – LOCALITIES + DATA LED APPROACH – Recommendations**

### **Background**

Panel meetings were held between September and March 2023, with a focus on Locality + and how to further develop the model to deliver better outcomes for our communities. The meetings have been led by Councillor Bob Spencer – Chairman, and Councillor Vince Merrick – Vice Chairman. The meetings have focused on increasing awareness, how we use data and intelligence to inform priorities, presentations from the Locality Enablers and information sharing.

Some outcomes of the review include:

- The opportunity with the 2021 census data and profiling to shape the focus for service delivery
- Going forward the continuation of a mixed economy approach to how we communicate at a three-tier level, parish summits and virtual forums are mechanisms as to how we do this.
- Use of Locality profiles provide the hard stats, the facts and figures, Members can use the data locally to inform key decisions for instance at parish level.
- As part of the Locality process it would also be useful to look at the number of voluntary groups in each locality – and their roles. This would enable us to start measuring social capital.

### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to produce Locality Profiles
- Ensure new members have access to the profiles
- District members to push profiles at parish level
- Continue with a mixed economy of communication mechanisms



Appendix 2

# **Your Council Challenge Panel**

Digital Adoption  
Final Recommendations

## Digital Adoption

“Digital adoption is the process by which people learn to leverage new technology to its fullest potential and derive maximum value from a digital solution”

## Challenge Panel



Reduce Printing



Review Member  
Training  
Requirements



Review Member  
Devices

# Purpose

To consider measures to enable Members to move to be able to fully adopt paperless or paper-lite meetings and associated ways of working

# Intended Outcomes:

Move to paperless and/or paper-lite ways of working for Members with appropriate support and digital technologies in place.

Agreement for Chairmen to have a reference paper copy of the agenda, reports and papers for meetings, with all Members and Officers going paperless.

Agreed criteria for where and when exceptions to the agreed paperless/paper-lite ways of working would be appropriate.



# Member Training and Support - Basics

	Large Group	Small Group	1-2-1	Videos	Manuals
Device familiarisation	X			X	X
Connection Issues	X			X	X
CMIS	X	X	X	X	X
Teams	X	X	X	X	X
Outlook	X	X	X	X	X
Diary Management	X	X	X	X	X

Would suggest start with a large group virtual session to enable members to be able to access documents from early stage. Then offer small group or 1-2-1 sessions (depending on personal preferences) which would be in person. The small group sessions could be recorded so attendees can refer back at a later date if needed.

This would be backed-up with videos and manuals, uploaded to member site, so members can access information at any point.



# Member Training and Support - Intermediate

	Small Group	1-2-1	Videos	Manuals
CMIS	X	X	X	X
Teams	X	X	X	X
Outlook	X	X	X	X
Diary Management	X	X	X	X

As we move to increased complexity of issue, large group sessions are not appropriate.

The approach outlined above of recording sessions and making videos and manuals available would apply.



# Member Training and Support - Advanced

	Small Group	1-2-1	Videos	Manuals
CMIS	X	X	X	X
Teams	X	X	X	X
Outlook	X	X	X	X

As we move to increased complexity of issue, large group sessions are not appropriate.

The approach outlined above of recording sessions and making videos and manuals available would apply.

# Devices

	iPad	Samsung	Lenovo
Getting Started	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Using Outlook	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Using Teams	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Using CMIS	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Using the Keyboard	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Suitability and Support	3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>

*Through testing and feedback, the Lenovo device was rated as the most suitable device for Members*

# Agreed Criteria for Exceptions

- Medical condition which means use of device is difficult e.g. arthritis of the hands
- Designated disability impacting on ability to use device

A Member identifying an issue would have a confidential discussion with Digital Services and HR to see if any reasonable adjustments could be made to facilitate digital working

**SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COUNCIL – UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND PROJECT PROFORMA**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Create clear and user-friendly criteria and set out in proforma.
2. Hold session with Community Businesses/Community Groups/Parishes to workshop available grants.
3. Hold session with Councillors on available grants.
4. Use locality forums to disseminate information.
5. Demonstrate good examples of funding use.





### South Staffordshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund

#### Project sifting and prioritisation proforma

Please complete the proforma with as much detail as possible. Word limits should be respected and no supporting information is required at this stage but may be requested at a later date, if needed, as part of the assessment process.

Question	Response
What is the name of your project?	
What geographical area will it serve? (please be as specific as you can)	
Project outline – what is your proposal intended to achieve and how will it do it? (100 words max)	
Is this a new project proposal or an existing project?	
What are the specific local challenges and/or opportunities that you intend to support through the proposal? (50 words)	
Please specify which of the three UKSPF investment priorities the project falls under (Communities and Place / Supporting Local Business / People and Skills)	
What is the responsible body, i.e. the organisation responsible for financial, legal and reporting requirements?	
What experience does the responsible body have of delivering this type of project using public grant support? (50 words)	
Has your organisation previously received funds from South Staffordshire UK	

SPF or Rural England Prosperity Fund? If so please provide details.	
How much financial support are you requesting?	£
Over what time period is this required? (please be specific)	
What are your anticipated outputs?*	
What are your anticipated outcomes?*	
Are there any interdependencies between this proposal and other projects?	
Are there any reasons why delivery could be delayed?	
If this proposal didn't go ahead what would the underlying situation be like by 2026? (i.e. the end of the three-year funding period from 2022-2023)	
Are there any other sources of funding available to part fund this project? If so please state the amount, source & status of the funding.	
Does the proposal have confirmed/existing support from the local community, stakeholders? If 'yes', please say who is supportive	

**Bid submitted by:**

**Signature:**

**Organisation:**

**Date:**

\* Outputs and outcomes must correspond to at least one of the HM Government prescribed outputs and outcomes of the UKSPF. [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: interventions, outputs and indicators - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-interventions-outputs-and-indicators)



Please also note that successful applicants will be expected to sign up to a grant funding agreement and abide by HM government's UKSPF branding and publicity guidelines [UK Shared Prosperity Fund: branding and publicity \(6\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

