



**South Staffordshire Council**

# Council Plan 2020 – 2024

*“Shaping South Staffordshire’s future”*

## Report of the Leader of the Council

Date: 12 December 2023

### Introduction and Overview

The Council Plan 2020-2024 sets the Council's vision of “Shaping South Staffordshire's future” and within this prioritises “Prosperous Communities” and “Vibrant Communities”.

A number of key performance measures and targets have been set in order to monitor delivery against this vision. These ‘hard’ measures and targets are monitored and reported through the Council’s Integrated Performance Management Report.

This report provides a commentary on matters which are not covered within the Integrated Performance Management Report, but which are nevertheless important activities and developments within each Cabinet area.



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## CORPORATE SERVICES

**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Roger Lees, Leader**

### 1. Activities and Developments

#### **Extra Layer Campaign**

South Staffordshire Community Safety Partnership is encouraging residents to add an extra layer of peace of mind this winter. With the onset of darker nights and mornings we're asking residents to stay one step ahead with one of our free personal alarms for an extra layer of security.

Alarms will be available from Codsall Community Hub, between Monday, November 27th - Friday 22nd December 10am and 4pm. Alarms are limited to one per South Staffordshire resident.

#### **Anti-Social Behaviour – Community Resilience Fund**

The Council has received £10,000 funding from the Staffordshire Commissioners Office to assist in supporting anti-social behaviour reduction across South Staffordshire. This funding is earmarked to support several targeted initiatives across the district.

#### **Polling Districts and Polling Places Review**

South Staffordshire District Council is conducting a review of Polling Districts and Polling Places. The review will take place between November 2023 and January 2024. Changes will then be implemented in time for the next UK Parliamentary Elections scheduled to take place before 28 January 2025.

This review is to help ensure all residents have the best chance to vote. More details can be found on our website by clicking on this link [Polling Districts and Polling Places review | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/polling-districts-and-polling-places-review)

#### **South Staffordshire Residents' Survey 2023**

We are delighted that 1,143 residents responded to our invitation to tell us about their experiences of living in South Staffordshire and their priorities for the area.

89% of respondents would recommend it as a place to live – similar to figure from previous surveys and well above the national figure for this measure of 76%

The most popular choice for why people feel that South Staffordshire is a good place to live is access to nature. They also identify low crime rates as a positive feature.

Residents were asked to rank a series of issues relating to local priorities. For Climate change the highest priority chosen was protection of green spaces. For Prosperous Communities the highest priority was cost of living. For Working Better Together the highest priority was tackling crime.



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The 2023 survey will feed into the development of the next Council Plan for 2024-2028. The information has also been split into locality data to help provide better insight for the different areas across the district.

## BUSINESS ENTERPRISE & COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Victoria Wilson**

### 1. Activities and developments

#### **Finalists in National RTPI Awards**

Following on from the planning team’s double win in the RTPI West Midlands regional awards, the council was a finalist in the national Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) awards for planning authority of the year. It was among just seven authorities across the country to be in the running for the prestigious national accolade from the RTPI. The award recognises planning excellence on a national scale and acknowledges the positive contribution that planning professionals make to the communities they serve.

The Lead Planning Manager, Kelly Harris, was also shortlisted for the RTPI Inspirational Leader of the Year award.

The ceremony was held in London on Tuesday, November 21<sup>st</sup> and unfortunately, up against some very stiff competition from bigger local planning authorities, we are extremely proud to have achieved the regional awards this time round.

[RTPI | RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2023](#)

#### **Local Plan Review**

Work continues to update the evidence underpinning the Local Plan review with a view to undertaking a further Regulation 19 public consultation in spring 2024. Strategy options are being considered and will be dependent on the outcomes of the government’s proposals to make changes to the national planning policy framework. Members will be appraised of the national policy when it is published and will discuss and decide on a way forward for the Local Plan.

Summaries of the comments made to the previous Regulation 19 consultation held in late 2022 have now been published and can be viewed here: <https://sstaffs.oc2.uk/document/3>

#### **Development Management**

Progress is being made to improve systems for processing planning applications which will further streamline the process and make it more efficient to use with a new system being implemented in March 24, including an online contact form enabling queries to be directly logged with the team.



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Work has now commenced at WMI, the nationally consented strategic rail freight interchange site. A site visit with local members is proposed in the future.

## **Planning Enforcement**

The unauthorised demolition of the Crooked House in August has generated a significant amount of work behind the scenes for Planning Enforcement. That work is continuing with a number of internal and external colleagues involved in gathering information and investigating the case. It is important that all the correct legal procedures are followed, and we are therefore ensuring that as always full diligence is applied to our investigations.

The bi-annual Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Count was undertaken by the team at the end of the Summer. While this is a statutory requirement of central government, it gives the team the opportunity to visit all Gypsy and Traveller sites and build stronger relationships with this community.

The long-standing case of the unauthorised event marquee at Hilton Hall has been resolved with events now ceased. The marquee is in the process of being removed in accordance with the court order that was successfully obtained by the council. Another successful result was achieved for an Enforcement Notice that was served for a large unauthorised two storey side and single storey rear extension as a house in Stourton. The Planning Inspectorate dismissed the subsequent appeal. The owners will now have to comply with the Notice which will result in demolition of significant unauthorised development.

## **Warmer Homes**

During the second quarter of working with Beat The Cold, South Staffordshire has received 85 advice line enquires and supported 61 households. This funding provided additional support for extremely vulnerable residents within the district.

South Staffordshire has managed to help residents with an estimated £4,900 bill savings, as well as providing an additional £8,100 household support fund through the Staffordshire Community Fund. In addition to supporting households with energy support, £1,148 worth of food vouchers were provided to extremely vulnerable households.

The Staffordshire Partnership successfully secured £10.5 million through Home Upgrade Grants which is an extension of the Staffordshire Warmer Homes Scheme, and which will run until 2025. The scheme aims to provide households not connected to the gas mains with air source heat pumps, insulation and solar panels. Staffordshire County Council is managing the scheme in collaboration with Community Homes Solutions. Due to limited availability of allocated funding, applications will be processed on a first-come, first served basis, therefore we advise any residents who are interested to apply promptly to determine their eligibility.

For more information please see: [Staffordshire secures £10.5 million for home energy efficiency improvements - Staffordshire County Council Newsroom](#)



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## **Business Enterprise**

The Council kicked off the launch of the UK Shared Prosperity funded (UKSPF) Enterprise in South Staffs programme at an event in October. The event, organised in partnership with Stoke and Staffordshire Growth Hub took place at the Community Hub and attracted more than 60 businesses. The event served as a one-stop shop for businesses of all size, sector and age to find out about financial, strategic, growth, start-up and practical support on offer. The video can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/TVSjM98Nuto>



Delivery of UKSPF business-related support has now commenced with the first cohort of the ‘Strive for Success’ business growth programme taking place in September and October. Ten businesses completed the 2-day workshops, delivered by an expert growth professional and will be invited to apply for financial support to help implement their growth plans.

The Council has awarded two contracts for delivery of UKSPF business support. Staffordshire University will deliver a research and innovation scheme whilst Good2Great, based in Bridgnorth, will deliver a start-up scheme for businesses trading up to two years. Both programmes will commence delivery in December. The start-up scheme is complemented by specialist consultancy support delivered by Staffordshire County Council.

Expressions of interest are invited for a share of £489,391 of the UKSPF Rural England Prosperity Fund and for the UKSPF Residual fund to deliver projects which meet the Council’s priority interventions. Interest is strong and further projects are invited from across the district. Further information regarding both schemes is available on the website. [UK Shared Prosperity Funding | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](https://sstaffs.gov.uk).



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## REGULATORY SERVICES

**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Rita Heseltine**

### 1. Activities and developments

#### **Private Water Supplies**

The Council has a duty to ensure that water for human consumption from private supplies (i.e. not provided by the statutory undertakers, Severn Trent Water and South Staffordshire Water), is safe and wholesome. Typically, these are small supplies, from boreholes, springs and wells, providing water to outlying properties where a mains piped supply is not available. During 2023, officers from the Environmental Health and Licensing Team have been visiting the supplies serving more than one property, carrying out new risk assessments and undertaking sampling of the water to meet the requirements of the legislation.

We will be reporting back to the Drinking Water Inspectorate in January 2024 on our work and generally, we are finding a good level of compliance with the requirements of legislation. Where samples have failed to meet these requirements, we are revisiting the supplies to investigate the cause and require the owners to take remedial action.

#### **Envirocrime**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023, Central Government increased the fee associated with a fly tipping fixed penalty notice that can be imposed by a local authority to £1000, littering offences to £500 and Household waste duty of care to £600. In response to this the Council reviewed current fixed penalty fees and increased all to the maximum allowed in law with the option of a discount for early payment of 20% for littering offences.

Currently we have two active prosecutions with the court for alleged fly tipping offences. These are expected to be heard in November 2023 and January 2024 respectively.

## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & ESTATE MANAGEMENT

**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor David Williams**

### 1. Activities and developments

#### **Digital Transformation**

**Customer Experience Improvement Programme:** A new website portal was released to residents during October. The portal, My Login, is accessible from every page on the council's website and



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can be accessed using the link <https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/MyLogin>. Residents are being encouraged to sign up to the My Login portal where they will be able to access a range of online services, such as paying bills and viewing their council tax account, as well as a new suite of 'Report It' type services, which were also released in October.

**Digital Services:** During September and October, in preparation for the annual assessment by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUC), Digital Services completed the health check of the council's cyber security defences. Accreditation and continued connection of the Public Services Network (PSN) for a further 12 months was awarded by DLUC in November.

## Commercial Assets and Estates

### **Major Projects**



**Unit 4E:** The project includes rebuilding the fire damaged unit, securing a new tenant in advance and purchasing the adjacent factory site. The main contractor has confirmed the programme of work is both on schedule and within expected budgets. The new steel structure is in place and replacement roof is nearly complete. The new tenant for Unit 4E has agreed Heads of Terms and is due to commence the lease when the building is complete in Spring 2024. Purchase of the adjacent factory is underway, and Heads of Terms are under negotiation with a prospective tenant.

**Wombourne:** Following the insolvency of Quantum Construction, a new Contractor Interclass PLC won the tender to complete site works including building the Lidl store, retail unit and car parks. A start date is imminent, this will take Practical Completion into Summer 2024 for the site. To



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keep progress with the project; installing and making live a new site substation was completed by a directly awarded sub-contractor in November 2023.

Landywood: Units at Landywood Industrial Estate are benefitting from roofing works, at the same time grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund are funding new Solar Panels and replacement insulated roller shutter doors, all helping to reduce the carbon footprint of this council owned commercial site. Work is due to start in the New Year and co-ordination with all tenants is underway in preparation for commencement.

Wolverhampton Road: 2 houses located adjacent to Codsall Community Hub are undergoing improvement works, creating new accommodation for a family and 5 people seeking ongoing permanent housing. Work is due to start in November 2023, with one house complete in March and the other April 2024.

## **Hinksford**

The park and its residents will be benefitting from Age UK taking residency in the old caretaker's house. Conversion works are underway, and services will be running shortly where residents will benefit from organised clubs and events. An application is also underway to improve the buildings green credentials and reduce carbon as part of the fit out works.

## **WELFARE SERVICES**

### **Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Robert Reade**

#### **1. Activities and developments**

#### **Creating Brighter Futures**

The UKSPF People and Skills programme is progressing well in meeting the interventions set by DWP. Since April, 74 residents have joined the programme and of these, 37 are Economically Inactive and are sustaining engagement with their Caseworker. We are providing employment support to 14 of these residents to look for suitable employment.

We have supported 17 residents to attend training courses that will improve their career prospects and are working with local employers to identify the skills they are looking for and sourcing training to match these.



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## COMMUNITY SERVICES & CLIMATE CHANGE

**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Kath Perry**

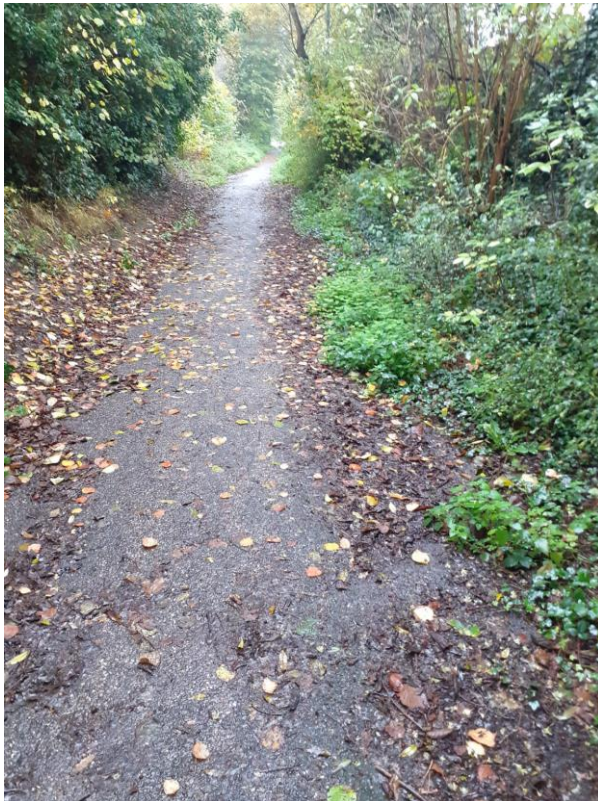
### 1. Activities and developments

#### **Bereavement**

Our community bulb planting events were held on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> November at Sytch Lane Cemetery in Wombourne and on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November at Strawberry Lane Cemetery in Great Wyrley. A variety of bulbs including tulips, bluebells, snowdrops and daffodils were planted and families were able to take away a free bag of bulbs as well as trees donated by the Forest of Mercia to plant in their own gardens.

#### **Street Scene**

The Street Scene team are currently completing a number of environmental improvement projects on behalf of Staffordshire County Council. This work follows the work successfully completed on behalf of the county council last year. The work on several sites across the district includes footpath clearances and cutting back of overgrown vegetation. Below are before and after images of work completed on Old Lane, Featherstone.





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## Leisure Services

Christmas opening arrangements for each leisure centre are now confirmed and can be found on the Council’s website: [Leisure Centre Opening Times | South Staffordshire District Council \(sstaffs.gov.uk\)](#)

To enable the replacement of the pool hall ventilation systems at Cheslyn Hay Leisure and Wombourne Leisure Centres. The swimming pool will be temporarily closed from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> December. It is anticipated that both swimming pools will reopen around the end of December/beginning of January. All other facilities at both centres will be open as usual.