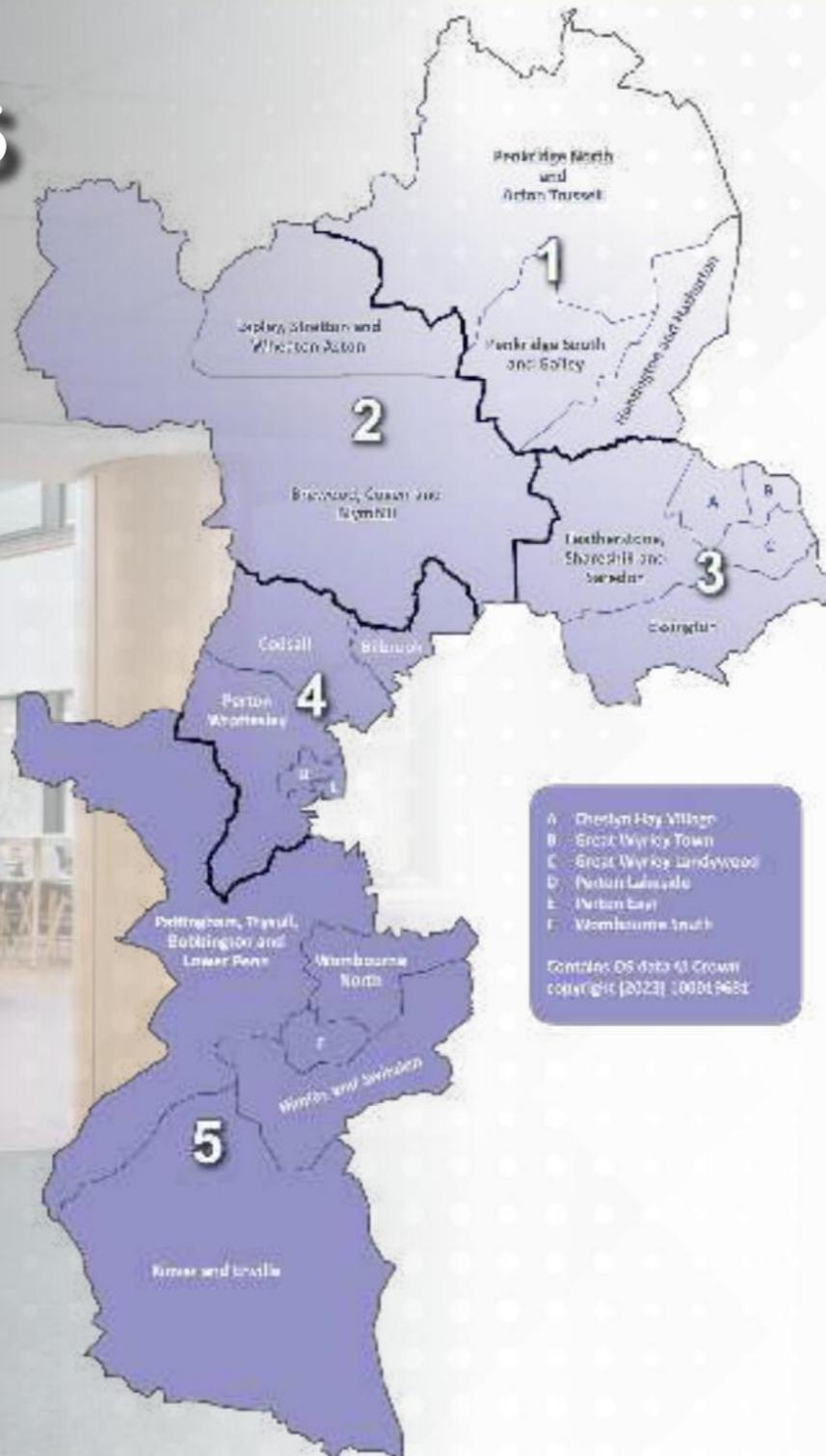


 South Staffordshire Council

# Council Plan 2024-2028



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# Welcome to our Council Plan for 2024-2028.



**89% of residents who completed the council's annual survey would recommend South Staffordshire as a place to live.**

South Staffordshire's attractive villages, countryside, and open spaces are the special characteristics valued by local people and visitors alike. The district's low crime rate means it's a safe place to bring up a family or retire to - and a place where being involved with your community adds to a feeling of wellbeing.

With this Council Plan, we aim to build on our strong foundations and continue to be a place where residents are proud to live, and a place where people want to visit and work.

Financial stability is at the forefront of our planning. We have one of the lowest council taxes in England, and it remains our priority to deliver services which provide value for money for residents.

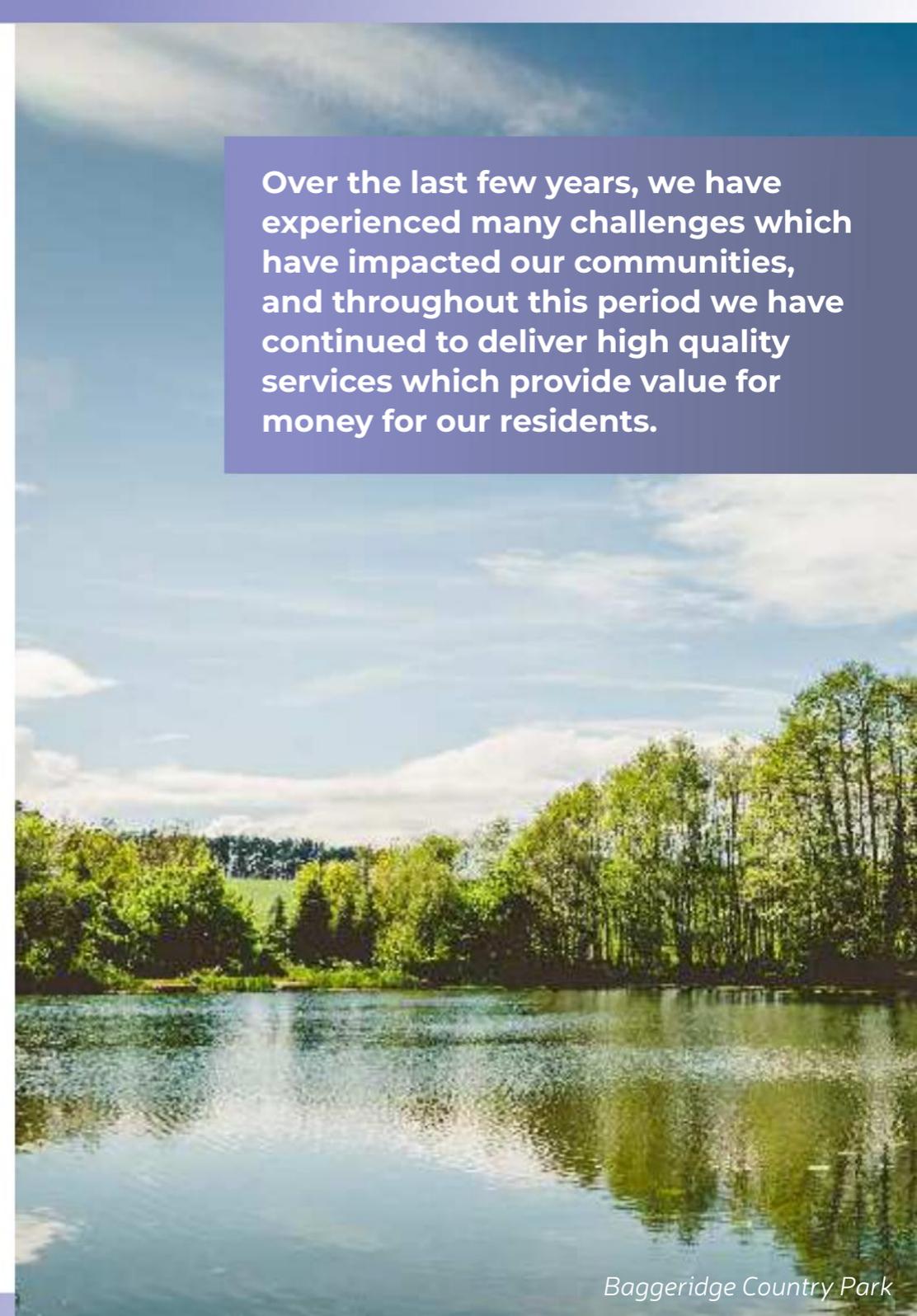
**This plan outlines the strategic direction of the council and sets out our vision and priorities for the next four years.**

**Our priorities include:**

- » Retaining a prudent financial approach, while continuing to provide value for money for our residents and businesses across the range of services the council provides.
- » Recognising the need for continued housing growth to support our communities and sustain our villages, but planned in a sensitive and sympathetic way.
- » Continuing to actively promote economic prosperity supporting better skilled job opportunities in and around the district.
- » Preserving and enhancing our green environment.
- » Protecting the distinctiveness of our communities, utilising our locality working model to further promote South Staffordshire villages as a 'community of communities'.
- » Supporting the wellbeing of our communities.

**Councillor Roger Lees BEM**  
**Leader of South Staffordshire Council**

Over the last few years, we have experienced many challenges which have impacted our communities, and throughout this period we have continued to deliver high quality services which provide value for money for our residents.



# About South Staffordshire

## Our people

From 2011 to 2021, the overall population of South Staffordshire increased by 2.2% - compared to a national increase of 6.6%.

Our population continues to age.

Nearly 25% of South Staffordshire's population is aged over 64.

The district saw a reduction of 3.8% in people aged 15 to 64 years.

Life expectancy in South Staffordshire is relatively high, but ageing well remains a challenge.



Kingswood Trust

Penkridge housing development

## Our place

89% of residents\* would recommend South Staffordshire as a place to live.

*\*Residents' Survey 2023*

Over 80% of land in the district is designated green belt, which is highly valued by local people.

South Staffordshire has low crime levels.

The district has a strong record of economic investment.





*Kinver Rock Houses*



*Kingswood Trust*



*Essington Pools*

# Introduction

In May 2023, South Staffordshire residents elected a new council which will now serve them through to 2027. This plan reflects the council's priorities, as set out by members for the next four years - and includes an ambitious delivery programme focused on addressing today's challenges, so we can all look forward to a thriving future.

Since the production of our last Council Plan, the council, our partners, and our communities have experienced many challenges, including the pandemic; Brexit; asylum and refugee support schemes; and the cost of living crisis brought on by the global economic crisis from the war in Ukraine and the conflict in the Middle East. The legacy of these challenges have inevitably left their mark, with some, like the cost of living, still presenting issues within our communities.

In response to these challenges, the council has remained nimble and connected, responding to local priorities and despite the pressures and uncertainty, we continue to move forward and make strides with our ambitions. This plan sets out how the council and its partners can do all that we can to ensure the communities of South Staffordshire continue to thrive.

The Council Plan sets out our vision and four priorities which we will deliver on over the next four years. We will continue to move forward and progress with our ambitions to keep our communities vibrant.

The council's vision as **a place of vibrant communities** will be delivered through four priorities:

- **Financial stability**
- **Economic growth**
- **Sustainable environment**
- **Empowering our communities**

# Council Plan vision

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## Vision: A place of vibrant communities

**A place where people want and aspire to live:** Responses from our Residents' Surveys regularly highlight that South Staffordshire is a place where people want and aspire to live. An important feature of ensuring this remains the case is our retention of the natural environment. Over 80% of our district is designated green belt and residents have made it clear this should be retained.

**Preserving our natural environment:** Although villages have inevitably grown over the years, there is still a sense of strong community spirit. A challenge going forward will continue to be around meeting the needs of our communities and balancing sustainable growth within our villages, while maintaining a strong local village identity.

**Housing mix and affordability:** A priority of the council when planning future housing growth is ensuring there is the right mix of housing to attract new families into the district, while also enabling our younger population to stay, live, and work in and around South Staffordshire.

**Supporting and creating a healthy, active ageing population:** The latest national census highlights the district's population is continuing to age beyond the national average. However, while our population is ageing, it is not necessarily ageing well; therefore it will be a priority of the council to work with partner organisations to keep our residents healthy into retirement and beyond.

# Council Plan priorities

The council's vision as a place of vibrant communities will be delivered by four over-arching priorities, which will frame how services will be designed and delivered.



*Penn Common*

- Retain an agile and adaptable workforce.
- Deliver a quality commercial portfolio for rent.
- Retain value-for-money services.
- Increase our commercial income.

## Financial stability

The council's financial position is strong because of timely and well-managed decisions taken over the last four years, despite some very challenging periods. We have been on a huge commercial journey; going from being an authority with no history of borrowing to invest, to one which now thinks and acts commercially for the wider benefit of the community and has invested in a number of sound financial acquisitions and commercial developments that have supported the ongoing delivery of front-line services. Commercial assets now have a market value of £34.9 million, and generate a sustainable ongoing commercial investment.

The council has continued to invest in its workforce and post-pandemic introduced a new hybrid operating model and a new Community Hub that is the home of the council, as well as a range of private, public, and voluntary organisations. This approach has contributed greatly to the ongoing financial stability and performance of the council, and over the next four years there will be a continued emphasis on delivering services this way and further enhancing our work within our villages.



*An artist's impression of West Midlands Interchange*

## Economic growth

- **Deliver growth for our communities and businesses.**
- **Maximise the district's assets to attract inward investment and create jobs.**
- **Connect our education sector partners and our businesses to support skills development.**

We will continue to grow our economic base working with partners in a sensitive way, to retain the features that people value, while ensuring that South Staffordshire is forward-facing. This collaborative way of working is particularly valuable to maintaining South Staffordshire's successful economic performance. It is important that we encourage

growth and investment so South Staffordshire is a place where businesses can start, grow and prosper and continue to make a significant contribution to regional economic growth. Major developments are taking place at i54, Logic 54, and the West Midlands Interchange. Our plans for inclusive growth will help to increase prosperity for residents.



- **Maintain safe, clean and thriving communities.**
- **Deliver on our climate change agenda.**
- **Ensure planning policy addresses issues of sustainable and inclusive communities.**
- **Deliver the right housing mix to sustain our vibrant and distinct villages.**
- **Protecting the safety and wellbeing of our communities.**
- **Preventing and reducing waste.**

# Sustainable environment

We are committed to reducing our carbon emissions and to mitigate climate change in the district. We have set an overall target of getting to net zero carbon emissions for the council by 2050.

We recognise that in order to reach this goal we have a lot to achieve over the lifespan of this Council Plan. In order to do this we are drawing up a local action plan which sets out our ambitions and what actions we need to do and when.

To deliver this plan we will continue to work with our communities and businesses to mitigate the effects of climate change, and a key feature of this work will be to decarbonise our own operations and our estate and maximise recycling opportunities through our waste services.

We will also continue to prioritise providing a safe environment for our communities through continued environmental health support.





*Volunteers from Wombourne Best Kept Village group*

- **Provide excellent leisure facilities and exercise programmes that improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.**
- **Deliver universal welfare and housing support services.**
- **Enabling digital inclusion whilst supporting inclusion for all.**
- **Strong community engagement.**

## Empowering our communities

Over the next four years we will work closely with our partners and our communities and continue to provide a strong leisure offer through our leisure centres, country parks and wider community exercise programmes. There is a strong district-level strategic partnership of public and voluntary sector organisations who we engage with on local priorities. Our Localities+ 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 and challenges that are best addressed through our collective efforts, such as health and wellbeing. Our approach is collaborative and considers issues in the broadest possible sense.

Together with our partners we will continue providing a range of welfare and housing support, advice and guidance to residents in need.

# Our council

The Council Plan's vision and four priorities will be delivered by a range of services and functions that the council has responsibility for. This will be underpinned by strong partnership working and ongoing engagement with users of our services and with our local business communities.

## Small

enough to remain close to our communities, but big enough to make a difference.

## Nimble

enough to remain flexible to respond to community sensitivities, but unfaltering on the ambition for the district.

## Connected

enough to forge productive ways of working, and confident to innovate to grow our digital agenda and locality plus programme.

## External services

### Community services

- Leisure centres
- Open spaces (Baggeridge Country Park; Shoal Hill Common; Wombrook Walk)
- Street Scene (includes environmental crime; bereavement)
- Waste and recycling
- Environmental health and licensing
- Community safety
- Emergency planning and business continuity

### Corporate Governance

- Elections
- Legal

### Enterprise and planning

- Planning development management
- Strategic planning (including housing strategy)
- Planning enforcement
- Building control
- Business enterprise and inward investment
- Business support and growth

### Welfare

- Council tax and business rates
- Benefits and welfare support
- Disabled facilities grants
- Housing options and homelessness

## Internal services

- Business transformation and digital services
- Human resources and organisational development
- Member support
- Policy development
- Facilities management
- Financial services
- Communications
- Contact centre

## Commercial activity

- Industrial and business parks
- Leisure centres
- Codsall Community Hub
- Hinksford Park
- Commercial portfolio



# Working in partnership

**We see our vision as the long term development of a strong, sustainable and inclusive district, where we are contributing to the wellbeing of our communities, our economic base and the quality of life of our residents.**

An important function the council plays is its community leadership and facilitating role, trying to influence services where the council has not got direct responsibility for a public sector service.

The council's mantra has always been to work in partnership with other organisations, very much taking a 'who's best placed to deliver' approach. As a local community leader, we will continue to deliver the priorities of the council, working closely with external partners, and meeting the needs of our communities.



Our Localities+ model brings together the three tiers of local government. Virtual Forums and Parish Summits are held throughout the year to tackle priorities at a local level. The council's eight locality enablers play a key role as the eyes and ears of our communities.

The South Staffordshire Business Partnership sets out our role in supporting local businesses, who we recognise are key in our communities. As well as economic partnerships within Staffordshire we also work cross boundary in order to strengthen the prosperity of the district.

Partnership working is strong in the district with partners meeting quarterly to deliver on joint priorities. Health, housing, police, and voluntary and community colleagues remain focused on working together using data and intelligence to inform delivery.

The South Staffordshire Community Safety Partnership continues to be a good example of how partners work together to address local issues, keeping South Staffordshire a safe place to live.



## Economic wellbeing

South Staffordshire  
Business Partnership

Inward investment and  
regeneration funds

People and skills

## Community Wellbeing

Better health

Ageing well

Community is the Best Medicine

# Community engagement

South Staffordshire Council sees our residents as key stakeholders, and know that good community engagement will lead to better services and better outcomes for all our communities.

Throughout the four years of this Council Plan we will continue to work with our residents to improve, develop and design our services.





Kinver Edge

## Measuring our performance

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**Strong  
finances**

**Strong  
council**

**Strong  
communities**

**Our residents will tell us** through an annual residents survey.

**Our staff will tell us** through an annual staff survey.

**Our performance tells us** through consistently meeting our Council Plan targets.

**Our peers tell us** through the LGA Peer Review; national awards/ recognition.



**South Staffordshire Council**

For further information about South Staffordshire go to the Place Narrative 2023 and the Locality Profile 2023, for documents supporting the council plan, go to the links below:



## Key documents/enabling policies

- [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)
- [Emerging Local Plan](#)
- [Housing and Homelessness Strategy](#)
- [Digital Strategy](#)
- [Locality Framework](#)
- [Capital Strategy](#)
- [Waste Strategy](#)
- [Community Safety Partnership Plan](#)
- [Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan](#)

We measure the performance and progress against our Council Plan through the Integrated Performance Management Framework which is reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.



**www.sstaffs.gov.uk**

