

Partners Update – February 2011

Dear Colleagues

It has been a busy time for Staffordshire County Council since my last Update with restructuring to support our new way of working well under way and a reshuffle of Cabinet portfolios.

Two major announcements have been made in recent weeks around how we fund social care services and concessionary fares. In Staffordshire, as in all other areas of the UK, we are faced with the massive challenge of how to sustainably fund social care and health services in line with the increasing growth in demand that comes from an ageing population. We are leading the way in our approach to this and you can see more below.

We are also planning a massive commitment to public transport with new travel schemes providing free and subsidised travel to thousands of young and older people.

Things are progressing well with the Families First project which will see a range of existing services radically reshaped through transformation to provide a coherent approach to providing services to children, young people and families.

Staffordshire County Council continues to support the local economy by investing in measures that will cut costs and encourage growth. This month we have announced the name for our new HQ that will save tax payers at least £250,000 per year over 40 years and we have also unveiled plans for an innovative new development on Keele Science Park.

Nick

Why not check out my weekly [blog](http://staffscc.net/ceblog/) (<http://staffscc.net/ceblog/>) which will keep you in touch with some of the issues and developments facing Staffordshire.

Cabinet reshuffle

There has been a change in the portfolio responsibilities at Cabinet.

Philip Atkins - Leader of Staffordshire County Council commented: "We have planned ahead effectively by focusing strongly on our priorities and on what outcomes will make Staffordshire an even better place to live. This is reflected in the way our Cabinet posts are being realigned.

"This considered approach is allowing us, for example, to extend services in our libraries and enhance bus travel schemes for our younger and older residents at a time when such services are facing high profile cuts elsewhere. We have put the economy of Staffordshire at the centre of our priorities. Creating new employment opportunities and encouraging new employers to come into the county.

"Staffordshire is an enterprising county and we will throw our wholehearted support behind the new Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and make it easier for job creation. Staffordshire must take full advantage of its position at the centre of the country and the fact that we are between the major cities of Birmingham and Manchester and the East Midlands cities of Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. Studies show that the outer edge of major conurbations is the best place to live and we must maximise our geographical advantage when talking with inward investors.

"This goes hand in hand with providing high quality schools, a skilled workforce and having a great cultural offer in making Staffordshire the natural destination for business. Clearly, the changes that need to be made will not be easy for everybody. Focusing on delivering the services that matter most will inevitably mean that people's jobs may change and others may no longer be needed. But we can achieve our goals by working more smartly and concentrating on the priorities that matter to enhance life in Staffordshire."

The Cabinet positions are (former Cabinet role in brackets)

- Ian Parry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)
- Ben Adams, Economic Growth and Enterprise (Communities and Culture)
- Pat Corfield - Culture, Communities and Insight (Community Health)
- Matthew Ellis - Adults' Wellbeing
- Mike Lawrence - Children's Wellbeing (Economy, Skills and Enterprise)
- Robbie Marshall - Public Health and Community Safety (Regeneration and Infrastructure)
- Mike Maryon - Highways and Transport (Highways and Environment)
- Liz Staples - Education and Skills (Schools)
- Mark Winnington - Environment and Assets (Assets, Performance and Organisation)

Is your organisation in the Staffordshire Cares Purple Pages?

Thousands of people will have more choice and control over their life from June 2011, when Staffordshire Cares goes live.

It'll be an easier way to find information, in one place, which helps maintain an individual's independence and the ability to live as normal a life as possible whether coping with a disability, other health challenges or simply getting that bit older.

It'll be the first contact for people making lifestyle, leisure, social and practical choices as their health circumstances change or are likely to change.

It'll be easy to access, through a single telephone number, interactive website or face-to-face advisors in local areas.

The Staffordshire Cares Purple Pages, our online directory, will give people the chance to browse the details of hundreds of community-focused organisations and businesses across Staffordshire.

If your organisation or business offers community activities, events or products to support in life's ups and downs or any financial, legal or housing service that will help people to live a more independent, healthy, active and safe life, you can advertise on Purple Pages for free.

Whether you offer a coffee at the local community centre, sporting, leisure or cultural activities, advice for the community or anything in between, we want to hear from you.

To register your interest, please email staffscares@staffordshire.gov.uk . You will then receive an email alert when Purple Pages is accepting details.

Partnership for Care policy

Over the last 18 months, the county council has been looking at how we can effectively meet the challenge of how to sustainably fund social care and health services in line with the increasing growth in demand.

It is estimated that the number of people aged over 65 will increase by 45% by 2025 in Staffordshire. The increase in over 65s living with a disability will rise by 93% and those with dementia by 69%. The number of younger adults with disabilities will also increase.

The new policy will both meet the future needs of the people of Staffordshire and be fair to council tax payers at the same time. This policy, which will set out how much people receiving care services should contribute towards the cost of care has been extensively consulted on across the county.

Matthew Ellis, Portfolio Holder for Adults and Wellbeing, explains: "We need to be absolutely clear; this new policy is not about making up for budget cuts, it is about making sure we are able to meet the future needs of the people of Staffordshire and at the same time are fair to council tax payers. It allows us to focus our resources on those who need it most."

"Staffordshire is one of the very few authorities which has not reduced the budget for Adult Social Care but doing nothing is not an option. The county council has to develop sustainably funded social care in the face of growing demand because of the pressures of an ageing population without significant tax increases for council tax payers. Any contributions paid will be reinvested into social care services to help meet future growing demand. This is in addition to maintaining adult social care budgets."

The new policy will have a three year transition period in place to limit the impact on existing services users. People will not be charged more than they can reasonably afford under national means testing criteria.

County Councillor Ellis continued: "We extensively consulted about this - people's views have directly helped to shape the policy and resulted in additional policy development work being undertaken in response"

The policy will see an increase from 6 weeks up to 12 weeks free reablement care to help people get back to their normal after a health crisis or injury.

Recommendations are also being made to Cabinet to undertake further work to look at two significant areas on the back of the consultation - the difference in care needs, availability and cost of services in rural areas compared to urban ones and the possibility of raising the capital savings limit threshold.

The new policy will come into effect from 1 June 2011. Everyone's individual circumstances will be taken into account including any disability and the county council will work with individuals over coming months on their social care needs and financial contributions. An appeals process will be available in the event of exceptional or abnormal personal circumstances.

New reablement service to be launched

An important new service benefiting people across Staffordshire has been announced and is due to be launched in the coming months.

The reablement service will help people get back on their feet and live independently following a health crisis, supporting them in accessing essential services through health and social care on in the community.

In a first for Staffordshire the service, called 'Living Independently Staffordshire,' will offer free reablement support for up to 12 weeks for those who have been assessed as needing it

After a successful pilot in some areas of the county, a decision has been made to roll it out across the whole of Staffordshire in the near future.

The new service will focus on helping as many people as possible, assisting their rehabilitation and ensuring they get the support they need quickly and easily.

Support can range from simple help with medication and relearning how to boil a kettle, to more intensive support like regaining the ability to walk and carry out other normal daily tasks. An essential part of the service will be building personal confidence.

Matthew Ellis, Staffordshire's Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing, says that Living Independently Staffordshire will help people to resume a more normal life.

"This is a major step forward for Staffordshire. Since taking office 16 months ago we've worked hard to improve support for individuals recovering from illness or injury whether leaving hospital or simply starting on the road to recovery. It's great for the individual and cost effective for public finances because it avoids more complex and costly acute or long term care.

"Short term, intensive support, provides a real opportunity for people to maintain their independence and live a more normal life in their community amongst friends or family. Evidence shows it's good all round.

"By offering this more flexible service we are giving people choice and control over the care they receive. It is also a good opportunity for our professionals on the ground to really tailor support for people as they see fit. Brenda's case shows just what can be achieved when people are given control over their care."

Ceremony celebrates Staffordshire volunteers

Dedicated volunteers from across Staffordshire have been honoured during a special awards ceremony.

More than 50 volunteers came together at the inaugural Volunteer Staffordshire Awards held at the beginning of Feb. Nine volunteers, volunteer groups and volunteer professionals taking away a Volunteer Staffordshire Award.

The gala celebration event was the culmination of a joint call from Staffordshire County Council and Volunteer Centres Staffordshire to the public to nominate the people that make a difference.

County Councillor Ben Adams, Cabinet member for Growth and Enterprise, said: "I would like to congratulate the nine winners and thank them for the selfless work that they carry out in the community.

"Their efforts help to make Staffordshire the great place it is to live and work and they deserve the highest praise.

"The awards reflect the wide range of ways that people are making a real and vital difference to the community. I really appreciate the good work that the winners, and all those who were nominated, do for the people of Staffordshire."

The aim of the awards was to recognise Staffordshire's unsung volunteer heroes, and the people that help and support them, and thank them for making their community and Staffordshire a better place.

More than 300 nominations were received since the campaign's launch in October.

An independent panel of judges including Chairman of Staffordshire County Council Erica Bayliss, Andy Halden, of the Community Council of Staffordshire, Christine Harris, Pride of Tamworth Volunteer of the Year, and Viv Evans, Chief Executive Officer of Staffordshire Parish Councils Association, chose the winners.

More information is available at www.volunteerstaffordshire.org.uk

Families First Update

Families First is a Staffordshire County Council project which aims to deliver the right help at the right time to ensure children, young people and families in Staffordshire achieve positive outcomes.

New management structure to be announced in April

Over the next few weeks, you'll see the Families First project moving from a series of plans to a reality. The pace of change is quickening and as the period of consultation over the new Families First management structure drew to a close on February 3rd, interviews will be held and the new structure announced by mid-April.

Local Support Team and Specialist Safeguarding Unit patches

We've reached a further significant milestone in the Families First project this month with the approval of the final boundaries for our Local Support Teams and Specialist Safeguarding Units.

One of the key features of Families First is local teams of children's service professionals who work together across a small patch to identify and address family needs early.

Just before Christmas, we asked you to comment on the proposed boundaries for twenty of these Local Support Teams.

We received lots of valuable feedback and as a result, we've changed the boundaries quite considerably.

It's important that on an operational level, we are set up to respond to local need. As such, you'll see that we've given a high priority to school catchment area as the vast majority of cases are referred to us by schools. We have also tried to maintain a good balance between the likely number of clients per team and have tried to ensure manageable drive times for team members.

District managers will be in place to ensure that those of you who work on a district basis will have a key point of contact to assist you with your planning and priorities.

[The final boundaries can be viewed here.](#)

Each district map shows the number of Local Support Teams for the district and the proposed geographical boundaries in which they will work. Specialist Safeguarding Units will mirror these teams with the exception of South Staffordshire, where, due to the level of need, there will be two Local Support Teams and one Specialist Safeguarding Unit.

What does this mean for me?

You can now see the areas that our Local Support Teams and Specialist Safeguarding Units will cover and where they are likely to be based.

In each patch indicates we are now looking to secure a main office base. Our teams will also make use of a number of touch down points (small office spaces with internet access) and delivery centres (schools or children's centres for example).

Get in touch

If you have any queries regarding Families First, please get in touch by emailing families.first@staffordshire.gov.uk

New travel schemes benefitting thousands gets Staffordshire moving

Staffordshire County Council is to make a massive commitment to public transport with new travel schemes providing free and subsidised travel to thousands of young and older people.

The council will give free 24/7 bus transport to people of a pensionable age or people with a disability and a carer. In addition under-20s will get the right to travel anywhere within Staffordshire for just £1 per journey.

It will make Staffordshire the national leader in discretionary travel allowances at a time when bus services elsewhere are coming under threat.

County Council Leader Philip Atkins said: "This is a bold step that marks our absolute commitment to improving the economy of Staffordshire".

"Travel and prosperity go hand-in-hand, and this move gives mobility and independence to those people who are least likely to have their own transport. Tens of thousands of pensioners, disabled people and young people will be eligible to benefit directly."

"We have been listening to our residents as well as representative groups. Groups, including Staffordshire's Youth Action Council (YAK), have clearly told us that there is a need for greater mobility for young people. Research conducted by YAK last year showed over 60% of young people said a £1 ticket would get them on the move."

The plans were formally considered by the county council's Cabinet on February 16.

County Councillor Atkins said: "We want people to find getting around the county as simple and affordable as possible. This will increase employment prospects and allow people easier access to educational, leisure and social activities. It is good for prosperity and good for the people of Staffordshire."

"We are aware that many authorities plan to make cuts to public transport subsidies. This may ease short-term budgetary pressures, but will contribute to economic stagnation.

"We believe we can do this without increasing the pressure on the taxpayer or affecting our pledge to a zero per cent council tax increase.

The move is the result of around 18 months of planning and negotiations:

- The 24/7 travel for older residents and people with disabilities is the first of its kind to cover the whole of Staffordshire. It will replace eight different schemes administered by district councils and offer improvements over all. It will benefit around 120,000

people in Staffordshire. A carer will also be able to travel free of charge to accompany those who need it

- The card for under 20s will be known as the Your Staffordshire Card. It will allow anyone aged under 20 a one-way trip for £1 anywhere in Staffordshire. This will be regardless of their educational status and will apply to weekends and school or college holidays. *
- The Your Staffordshire Card will be expanded over time to offer a host of wider benefits and discounts for young people.

County Councillor Atkins said: "We need to get more people travelling regularly by bus. We know this and so do the operators, with many services under threat and subsidies from Government being cut.

"Concessionary schemes for elderly and disabled people have previously been administered in Staffordshire by the eight district councils.

"From April 1 they come together under the control of the county council. Instead of having eight different schemes we can adopt an enhanced one-Staffordshire scheme that will be cheaper to run and administer, simpler to access and cut across district boundaries

"Thanks to the partnership with bus companies we have been able to keep the costs within budget and not burden tax payers. Bus companies recognise that the young persons scheme will boost bus use too.

"While councils across the UK are cutting rural routes, we are taking action to keep buses on the move in the countryside."

He added: "The important message is that the more young people use the Your Staffordshire Card, the more affordable it becomes. We will review the scheme next year. Its success depends on people making the most of this opportunity."

If the plans are accepted by Cabinet the older and disabled people's scheme kicks off from 1st April - and young people will be able to register for a card in April and May, with the cards coming into action in June.

Older residents would be able to access their enhanced new passes via their local library or from www.staffordshire.gov.uk/passiton or by calling **0300 111 8000**. Passes will be valid from April 2011.

Details about how young people can get their passes will be announced soon.

Innovative new development planned for recession busting Science Park

A major new development - creating around 125 cutting edge jobs - is being planned at a thriving Staffordshire Science Park.

Staffordshire County Council has unveiled plans for a fifth Innovation Centre at Keele Science Park, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The Science Park, at Keele University, is a major success story, bucking all recessionary trends with an average 95 per cent occupancy rate. Jobs on the site are generally skilled, high quality, often hi-tech, jobs which will help to regenerate the North Staffordshire economy.

And the new 30,000 sq ft IC5 development is set to get off to a flying start with potential tenants identified for two thirds of the space.

Councillor Philip Atkins, leader of Staffordshire County Council, said: "The Keele Science Park is a major national success story. Occupancy rates have remained high since the first Innovation Centre unit opened in 1999, resulting in continual on-going development on site.

"The Science Park is home to many innovative companies, providing high quality jobs in areas such as medical research and hi-tech research and development.

"We have identified two potential tenants who have outgrown their previous units on site and negotiations are on-going for them to take two thirds of the space in the proposed IC5 development.

"It is vital that we give companies the opportunity to grow on site and IC5 will enable them to do so."

Around 40 companies are currently housed at Keele - generating about 650 jobs.

Councillor Simon Tagg, leader of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and County Councillor for Keele and Westlands, said: "This is fantastic news for jobs at Keele and in the borough. It is great that the newly formed Staffordshire and Stoke Local Enterprise Partnership is backing the scheme to bring employment and prosperity to the area."

The four current Innovation Centres provides around 100,000 square feet of mixed development space.

Companies on site are encouraged to forge academic links with Keele University, creating a research force for the companies and a highly qualified source of potential employees.

Staffordshire County Council has submitted a planning application to Newcastle Borough Council asking for permission to go ahead with the development.

New county council HQ name announced

Staffordshire County Council's new headquarters in Stafford will now be known as Staffordshire Place.

The name for the buildings has been chosen to reflect a unified county that is proud of its heritage and confident in its future.

They will save tax payers at least £250,000 per year over 40 years and boost the economy of Stafford.

County council leader Philip Atkins said: "We're pleased finally to give the buildings a name. People have been watching them take shape but not knowing what to call them.

"Staffordshire Place reflects our unified and forward thinking county. It will bring far more efficient working practices to the county council that will help us meet the challenges ahead. Doing this based in our old, inefficient buildings, scattered around the Stafford area would be far more difficult and expensive.

"Staffordshire Place is also good for the economy. It will bring a significant number of new consumers to the town centre. Our former sites will also be made available for phased redevelopment. Some have already attracted considerable interest."

Cabinet member for environment and assets Mark Winnington said: "The name Staffordshire Place highlights the fact that these buildings are for the people of this county. They are public buildings which people will be visiting for a variety of reasons and they will provide a welcoming environment.

"They will also contain a new registry office, conference and meeting rooms which the public can use.

"Staffordshire Place uses the latest technology and replaces outdated and inefficient buildings. This is why it offers such good value for money for residents and the county council - saving us hundreds of thousands of pounds each year."

Staffordshire Place replaces 17 inefficient buildings across Stafford.

Residents can look forward to more efficient services as the people who deliver them are brought under one roof. Staffordshire Place will also provide employees with more opportunities for flexible working, cutting down on unnecessary travel costs.

The building will be heated using the latest eco-friendly technology. Last month, a biomass boiler was fitted in the basement of Staffordshire Place.

County councillor Winnington added: "Rocketing fuel prices are top of the news agenda, but biomass will help to protect the tax payers from these."

The burner will cut costs by using biomass from the county council's own forest resource. This will dramatically reduce carbon emissions by more than 1,750 tonnes per year which is equal to the average annual emissions of nearly 50 households. It is a system that will save around £4,000 per month at current energy prices.

Staffordshire Wood Fuel, which is a trading arm of Staffordshire County Council, will supply the high quality, stable and sustainable renewable energy.

Major milestone for Staffordshire County Council apprenticeship scheme

A county council commitment to develop career skills in young people and help enhance Staffordshire's workforce has celebrated a major milestone.

The apprentice scheme for 16 to 24-year-olds from across Staffordshire has now taken on 250 people. The news comes ahead of national Apprenticeships Week which begins on Monday.

Now the county council is urging others to kick start their careers by joining the scheme. One of the county council's top priorities is ensuring Staffordshire has a vibrant economy and helping to develop a skilled workforce is a vital part of this.

Cabinet member for Environment and Assets Mark Winnington said: "To reach the 250 mark with our apprenticeship scheme really is a fantastic achievement. Our apprentices are learning valuable skills and knowledge at a pivotal time in their lives which they can take on through their career development.

"By using a Staffordshire small enterprise as our training provider we're also doing our bit for local business. We want to be at the forefront of ensuring our young people are prepared for employment; providing a county workforce in years to come and helping us to secure a bright future for our local economy."

Young people who may have just left school or college or are still looking for their first step on the employment ladder have been making the most of a range of apprenticeship opportunities.

The county council has been recruiting apprenticeships in areas such as youth work, business administration, catering, grounds maintenance, social care, teaching assistants, finance, customer service and ICT. Apprenticeships last from 12 to 15 months. The apprentices learn and develop a range of skills and undertake training and qualifications which will help them throughout their careers.

People who are interested in catering are now being urged to get in touch - the scheme is aiming to place apprentice chefs in as many Staffordshire schools as possible from September.

ICT apprentices have just completed their National Vocational Qualification Level 2 and are working towards Level 3. The county council is working with private training provider Indigo - a Staffordshire small business which is helping young people achieve the skills they need for future employment.

ICT apprentice Matt Alderson said: "The scheme has been really good because it's combined workplace training with the academy at Indigo. I'm now looking forward to completing my NVQ Level 3."

His colleague Rob Pennington added: "It has been a valuable and challenging experience and I think it's played an important part in my career development."

People can register to hear about apprenticeships when they become available by signing up to an e-job alert online. They can find out more or sign up for an alert at www.staffordshireapprentices.org.uk

The county council is also asking businesses which want to recruit apprentices to get in touch on 0300 111 8000.