

Staffordshire County Council

# Connected Staffordshire

Strategic Plan 2018-2022



# Foreword

**This document sets out Staffordshire County Council's strategic plan for the next four years, 2018-2022. How we will inspire and support the 867,000 people living across the 1,000 square miles of our great county to prosper, achieve their full potential and enjoy life.**

Staffordshire is home to historic and vibrant market towns, picturesque villages and stunning countryside. Our economy is strong and growing, from start-ups to world-renowned businesses, and is home to many of England's leading tourist attractions.

Over the last eight years much has been achieved. More people are in work, young people are leaving school and college with better qualifications, people are living longer, and tell us they feel safer and happier than ever before.

We are proud of these achievements, the result of the hard work and dedication of families and communities, schools, parish councils, the voluntary sector, employers, the NHS, local government, police and many more. But the world around us is changing fast, our society continues to face big challenges, and there is so much more we want to do.

As the largest democratic body in Staffordshire we have an important role, to work with others and to give the people we serve every opportunity to improve their lives. This spirit of collaboration will define our approach over the next four years and beyond as we work with people and communities on the things that matter most to them.

We remain hugely ambitious for Staffordshire's future yet realistic about the challenges ahead. The uncertainty surrounding the UK economy, the health and wellbeing of our growing, ageing population, and reduced Government funding demand fresh thinking and new ways of working.

We will continue our track record of delivering results for the people of Staffordshire. The digital age we are living in presents the greatest opportunity to do this. As technology alters every aspect of how we live, work and learn, it presents boundless opportunities to transform public services around the needs of individual citizens. In everything we do, this means thinking community and digital first to help realise our ambitions.

We look forward with a sense of aspiration for Staffordshire, its people and the county council. Staffordshire has a bright future. This strategy details our priorities for the years ahead and explains how we will work with people, communities and others across our diverse county to deliver an even better Staffordshire for current and future generations.



**Philip Atkins OBE**  
*Leader of the Council*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Philip Atkins'.



**John Henderson CB**  
*Chief Executive*

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# Creating a Bright Future

**As we focus on delivery in the next four years, we also need to think about our long term aspirations for Staffordshire and its people. Our county is already a great place to live where most people enjoy life and good prospects. We want this to be the case for everyone.**

The world and the way we live our lives is changing rapidly and 15 years ahead our county will be a very different place. While we cannot predict the future, we can imagine the kind of Staffordshire we want to help guide the things we and others do today, tomorrow and in the years ahead.

## So here is our vision for Staffordshire in 2033...

**People will aspire to live in Staffordshire; from families looking for the very best schools and space to grow and thrive, to older people seeking a great quality of life.**

Staffordshire is one of the safest places to grow up in the country. Schools are the top performing in the Midlands and among the best in the country, with excellent links to employers. Our highly-rated colleges and universities offer courses that attract people of all ages to learn new skills throughout their careers so that they can adapt to changes in the workplace or the job market.

Through appropriate and demand-driven development, Staffordshire offers attractive homes for all, from affordable starter homes helping graduates and young families on to the property ladder, to executive houses in sought after locations.

This development is matched by investment in road and rail connections, and next generation digital communications technology. Our transport

links are world class and Staffordshire is now a truly Smart County with ultra-fast digital connections to the rest of the UK and the world.

By exploiting the arrival of HS2 the county town of Stafford has undergone a renaissance with a new station quarter teeming with business start-ups and homes, all under an hour away from London, Birmingham and Manchester.

The regeneration of Stafford and our town centres, and investment in infrastructure across the county has helped balance Staffordshire's economy over the last decade as part of a thriving Midlands. The Staffordshire economy is diverse, with more people in higher value, better paid jobs across a wide range of different sectors.

Strengths remain in advanced manufacturing thanks to excellent road and rail freight links. In other areas from agri-tech to software development, employers are attracted by Staffordshire's skilled workforce, its connectivity and affordable land and premises.

Digital health and social care services are joined up and help people take responsibility for their own health and wellness. More specialist support in communities mean people are living at home in good health for longer. Demand on services has fallen due to pioneering schemes that inspire people to prepare and plan for later years and end of life.

The appeal of more and better jobs, leading schools and the mix of housing has also rebalanced the age of Staffordshire's population, attracting a younger generation with more disposable income. The resulting growth in council tax and business rates, coupled with reduced demand for services, means public services have the funding they need to support our growing, ageing population.

In addition, the digital transformation of public services means technology is now used to provide residents with the right support, information and advice when they need it, and to ensure taxpayers' money is spent effectively.

# Our Vision and Priorities



To start making this bright future a reality, the county council needs to be clear on its priorities for the next four years. Our vision is enduring: we want a Connected Staffordshire where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy. And where the people of Staffordshire will:

- 1. Access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth**
- 2. Be healthier and more independent**
- 3. Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community**

This vision is fundamental. It reflects what matters most to local people. We all want to be happy, have a good job, live in good health and do the things that we enjoy. People want much greater control over their own lives and to influence what they want and need from public organisations. Our role, with others, is to help create the conditions for people to flourish, achieve their potential and live in good health for as long as possible. In short, to be an enabling council.

We are clear where we need to concentrate our efforts: helping to grow the economy so that employers create better jobs for local people; supporting the construction of more homes to meet growing demand; improving schools and skills levels; improving health and social care across the county; preventing ill health through lifestyle choices; and transforming the way we support vulnerable children and families.

These things will not happen by themselves. To ensure we can deliver our part, we will focus on four main areas: developing our workforce; making the best use of technology and data; our relationship with citizens; and how we work with other public and private organisations.

Everything we do is funded by local taxpayers so we need to ensure we deliver real value for money.

Our strategy is simple and summarised on the next page, but delivering it will be much more complicated. We are developing a detailed annual delivery plan that will be refreshed every year to set out exactly what we will do.

# Our Vision: A connected Staffordshire where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

## Outcomes

The people of Staffordshire will:

- Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth
- Be healthier and more independent
- Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community

## Priorities



Create the right conditions for **economic growth** across the whole of Staffordshire that produces more, better paid jobs for residents.



Support the construction of more **housing** to meet the growing needs of our families and people young and old.



Improve **Education and Skills** provision in our schools, colleges and universities so that more people gain the training and qualifications they need to succeed.



A joined up approach to **Health, Care and Wellness** that encourages people to take responsibility for their own health and plan for their future, so that we can support those who really need it.



Ensure **Children and Families** have a network of support to help manage their own problems and stay safe and well.

## Enablers



Our **workforce** is the greatest asset we have for improving the lives of Staffordshire people, so we need to give our employees the skills, tools and confidence to do their jobs well.



**People Helping People** is how we support citizens to help themselves and one another to improve their communities and act on the things that matter most to them.



Our **digital** programme will make greater use of technology and data to work in more modern, effective and lower cost ways.



Work with and through our **networks** of public, private and community organisations to achieve our ambitions.

**Pledge** Deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means

# Economic Growth



A successful, vibrant and balanced economy is the bedrock of a successful Staffordshire. Enabling people to get better paid jobs is the best way to raise living standards, while evidence shows that being in work also improves your physical and mental health, self-esteem and confidence.

A thriving economy is increasingly important to how we fund public services too. In future, council tax and business rates will be the only way that the police, fire service and local government will be funded. So growing the number of businesses and building homes will allow us to continue investing in our communities, to keep them safe, and to support the most vulnerable people in Staffordshire.

In the last eight years our economy has grown by £3bn to £16.5bn. More than 21,000 new jobs and 4,555 businesses have been created. Unemployment is at its lowest ever level at around 1%.

Since 2014 alone, the county council has delivered or been involved in economy boosting projects with a total value of £383million. Of this total, we have spent or will commit £56million of direct investment. This means that for every £1 invested by the county council an additional £15 is levered in from the private sector or from the Government.

We should celebrate these achievements but we can and must do more to boost productivity and incomes, and be a place where everyone can feel the benefit of the growing economy.

Our ambition is to be one of the strongest performing shire economies in the UK, driven by high-value, high-tech industries while our existing sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, continue to innovate to increase productivity and competitiveness.

We will accelerate the delivery of schemes to make Staffordshire the best connected place in the UK, through investment in road, rail and next-generation digital communications such as 5G and ultrafast broadband.

This will see the county become a place where people aspire to live, attracting business to locate and invest here thanks to our balance of housing, excellent schools, an attractive cultural and wellbeing offer, and outstanding green spaces.

## Our main priorities will be:

- **Place and Infrastructure** - we will invest to create the right mix of places that are attractive as a destination to live, work and visit, with good transport connections.
- **Sites and Premises** - we will both build and support others to build employment sites and business premises that support the growth of a more diverse economy, which is more resilient to economic shocks, and gives residents the opportunity to secure higher paid jobs.
- **Skills and Employability** - we will ensure that Staffordshire has an outstanding skills system that helps people to learn new skills and improve their job prospects throughout their entire career. It will help residents make informed choices about the best way to learn, develop their career, re-train or increase their skills, and in doing so, will give employers the skilled and ambitious workforce they need to drive business success.
- **Innovation** - we will support and encourage innovation across our traditional industries to increase productivity and competitiveness, and foster growth in new, higher-value sectors.
- **Business Development** - we will enable and inspire our residents to start their own business and provide the best possible support to help them thrive.
- **Inclusive Growth** - we will ensure no one in the county is left behind by supporting the creation of the right types of jobs in the right locations and ensuring people can learn the skills they need for those jobs.
- **Health and wellbeing** - we will encourage employers to promote employee wellbeing and embed greater social value into their business and supply chains.

# Housing





Levels of housebuilding in Staffordshire, in keeping with the rest of the UK, are failing to keep up with the needs and demands of our people. Not enough new homes or the right variety of homes are being built, prices are continuing to rise faster than incomes and it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to buy a home of their own.

This needs to change. We want Staffordshire to be a place where people aspire to live with the right mix of homes for all, from first-time buyers seeking affordable starter homes to executives seeking prestige developments in sought after locations, and homes that support older people to enjoy a good quality of life.

We want the county to have a range of accommodation so that Staffordshire people can buy or rent a good home whatever they earn. In addition we want to attract and retain skilled workers, including graduates, through the development of smaller affordable and larger family homes in areas where people want to live.

We also need to see more development to cater for our growing ageing population, with homes that support older people to have a great quality of life.

To do this we need to create the right conditions for development and to provide the right social infrastructure such as transport links, schools and a cultural and entertainment offer. Development must also be sensitive to existing communities and the environment.

## Our main priorities will be:

- **Strategic Infrastructure Plan** - to support the construction of more homes. Importantly the plan will make sure new developments are supported by employment opportunities, high quality transport, green spaces, places to go out and excellent digital connections like superfast broadband.
- **Housing offer** - consider how we influence and affect the housing market in Staffordshire to deliver the right homes for our current and future residents. Housing can support a vibrant local economy, for example through the development of live/work apartments in town centres.
- **Housing delivery** - increase choice by encouraging and supporting self-build, bespoke modular build and more developments by smaller house-builders to increase the range of housing types and designs, and speed up construction.

# Education and Skills



Every Staffordshire child deserves the best possible education and to leave school or college with the learning and skills they need to succeed in further education or the workplace. A strong economy relies on a high performing education system to produce the workforce of the future, and young people with the right skills, attitude and ambition to meet the needs of our employers or to start a business of their own.

Staffordshire schools are improving and there are many examples of good practice across the county, starting in our early years settings. Just four years ago only half of our children had reached a good level of development and were judged 'ready for school' by the age of five. Targeted work with families and early years providers has made a difference, and now three in four children are reaching that good level of development by the age of five. This is significant progress but we need to do more for the remaining one in four.

Nearly 90% of Staffordshire schools are rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. However, despite these achievements, our young people are not achieving the education and skills outcomes that we expect for a county with the ambition of Staffordshire. Key Stage 4 and 5 results are below the national average.

We want to offer Staffordshire parents and their children high performing early years provision, schools and colleges to attend. To do that, the county council must encourage and help parents to become more involved in and ambitious for their child's education. At the same time we have a role to play in influencing early years settings, schools, colleges and universities to support each other to improve, excel and contribute fully to their communities.

Finally, we need to make sure that children and young people are taught the importance of good health and wellbeing so that they make the right choices to look after their physical and mental health from an early age and throughout their lives.

## Our main priorities will be:

- To hold head teachers and governors to account for improving results and to act on underperformance in our existing schools through the development of an Education Improvement / Challenge Board.
- Giving additional support to the most vulnerable in our communities, including children with special educational needs.
- Support the delivery of high quality independent advice and guidance to enable residents to make good career choices throughout their life.
- Delivering high quality statutory services including school place planning, support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and work to keep children safe from harm.

# Health, Care and Wellness



Improving the health and wellness of the whole population, with everyone taking some responsibility, is central to our ambitions for Staffordshire. It is not just about what happens when we are sick and need to see a doctor or go to the hospital, or need longer term care and support.

Staffordshire's population is growing and ageing, and by 2026 there will be nearly 11,000 more residents aged 85 and over. This is a good thing. However more people are spending their later years in a state of ill-health. This is placing a growing and unsustainable demand on our health and care services, with Staffordshire's public sector spending £1.759 billion on health and care services each year. Much of this is down to our modern lifestyles, with 40% of ill-health down to the lifestyle choices that people make, whether that's smoking, drinking too much alcohol, eating a poor diet or not doing enough exercise.

The county council and the NHS cannot keep spending more money on health and care services. We will quite simply run out of money. This means that people in Staffordshire will need to take more control of their own health and wellbeing and make the lifestyle choices that will enable them to live a full and enjoyable life well into old age.

Public and private organisations can help by creating an environment that supports these choices, and promoting a culture of physical and mental wellness whereby staying fit and healthy becomes the norm. Good health and wellbeing is essential, not a luxury, particularly for young people who are our future workforce, taxpayers and carers.

Good health improves our ability to attract businesses, jobs and income to the county too. We could save up to 137.3 million working days in the county every year through better health and wellbeing.

At the same time we recognise that there will always be people in need of health and care services. We will continue to work with the local NHS to improve and join up services and continue to offer care and support to those people who really need it.

## **Our main priorities will be:**

- To lead a conversation with the public and professionals about people's responsibilities for staying well, planning for and managing their own care.
- Tapping into the massive potential offered by new technologies to improve the information, advice and tools that help people take control over their health and wellbeing, both physical and mental, as well as plan for and manage their own care.
- Ensuring that health and wellbeing shapes the policies and decisions we make about our housing, economy, retail, infrastructure, leisure and green spaces, creating an environment that favours good health and wellbeing for current and future generations.
- Making much better use of the data we collect to better predict who is likely to be at risk of ill health and to take appropriate action quicker.
- Improve social care assessment, case management and safeguarding services to promote independence and ensure appropriate access to taxpayer funded care.
- Ensure a sustainable market for care and intervene to establish alternative providers of care where necessary.
- Continue to integrate health and care services and support and lead NHS reform for the benefit of Staffordshire people.
- Lobby Government for sustainable funding for adult social care.

# Children and Families



Most families in Staffordshire tell us they are happy, safe and enjoy life and evidence tells us that resilient and stable families will enjoy a better life.

Those who do need our help tell us they don't want to be in 'systems' or 'services'. They want to be supported by their friends, families and in their communities to deal with the day-to-day challenges they face. As long as people are safe, we want this too.

Their lives will be better and demand for public services from families will reduce at a time when other demands, such as those for adult social care, are rising. Helping more families to help themselves will mean that we can target our resources at those people who really need our help.

This will involve three separate but connected elements: quality statutory children's social care where teams step in and take action when it is needed; quality services for all children and families; and a strong working relationship with the voluntary sector and community groups.

## **Our main priorities will be:**

- Ensure that the support for families and children either nearing the point of or in crisis is efficient and uses the right resources to make a positive difference in the lives of children, young people, families, vulnerable people and communities.
- Work flexibly in districts and communities to use local intelligence, expertise and organisations to effectively reduce demand by keeping children and families out of the higher level services where safe to do so.
- Make the most of all available resources to ensure that high quality provision exists in communities from universal to statutory services, helping to provide the foundations for a good quality of life.
- Ensure more families and communities in Staffordshire feel supported to manage challenges and take much greater control over their own health and wellbeing.
- Support and develop the Staffordshire workforce including volunteers to better meet the needs of our citizens, ensuring people are happy, safe and well.

# Enablers

This plan sets out our ambitious agenda for Staffordshire and its people. To be successful, we need to constantly evolve with the changing world around us to ensure we can deliver the best possible outcomes for citizens. We believe there are four key building blocks that will enable us to be successful.

Investing time, effort and resources into these areas will provide the right foundations for us to work effectively with our citizens, communities, our partners and across the council to deliver our vision and priorities.



## Workforce

Our workforce is the most important asset we have for making a positive difference in the lives of Staffordshire people. We employ approximately 4,000 people, many of whom are Staffordshire residents.

How we lead, manage and support our employees will ensure we have a highly skilled, motivated and innovative workforce that can deliver our outcomes for local people.

As the council continues to change over the next four years we need to invest in learning and development, and new technology, to ensure our employees have the right skills and capabilities for today and for the future. At the same time we must engage and involve them in the way we plan and deliver, to make sure we utilise their expertise, ideas and passion to create a brighter future for Staffordshire.



## Digital

Technology and digital communications are changing every aspect of how we live our lives. The digital age presents an exciting opportunity to transform what we do and how we do it. In short the council needs to be like the internet: always on, controlled by the citizen, responsive, personalised and supporting personal responsibility.

We will work with public sector and private organisations to create a Smart Staffordshire, a county where we use data and technology to enable people and business to flourish in the digital age, and lead the happy and successful life they want to lead.



## Networks

While the county council has a really important leadership role as the largest democratic organisation in Staffordshire, we are only one cog in a much bigger machine across both the county and the wider Midlands region.

Our county is a vibrant and diverse network of people and organisations that is continually growing and evolving. We will play an active role working with organisations across the county and beyond our borders for the benefit of people, families and communities across Staffordshire.



## People Helping People

In our rapidly changing society people now want much greater control over their lives and to be independent. When local people come together, they bring great passion and commitment for the places they live in.

There are so many examples of people and organisations providing support or activities in their local community, with little or no involvement or funding from the county council or other public organisations.

When communities get involved in solving problems or meeting demand in their local area, the solutions are often more enduring as the people involved have a personal interest or passion for making them work.

Ensuring that people and communities are in the driving seat and can do more about the things that matter to them, rather than looking to the council, is about finding lasting solutions to local problems.

We also have to be honest that given the funding pressures on public services, the county council and others cannot do everything we used to do or would like to do. Our default position will therefore be community first, services last as we deliver on our vision and priorities for the county and our people.



# Deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means

The county council receives and generates a range of different income to fund both our day-to-day activity and long-term investments. This includes council tax and business rates, Government grants and money from fees and charges.

To deliver on the aspirations in this plan, it is essential we have affordable and sustainable funding plans over the next four years. We need to manage demand in areas such as social care and seek new opportunities to increase our income. Our pledge to Staffordshire people is that we will spend their money wisely and well to extract maximum impact from every pound we spend, and always live within our means.

Council funding has changed significantly in recent years, with significantly less grant coming from Government. Since 2009 we have reduced our costs by £240million, by changing the way we work and support Staffordshire people and businesses.

However, the financial pressures ahead are far more significant than in the recent past. Government grant will continue to reduce as costs continue to rise. We will address this, deliver value for money and live within our means by focusing on six key strands.



**Creating the right conditions for our economy to grow will increase Business Rates income**

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**As we encourage housebuilding to meet growing demand, more homes will generate more Council Tax**

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**Lobbying Government to secure greater funding and responsibility to act on the issues that matter most to Staffordshire people**

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**Changing the way we use technology and data combined with closer working with communities, in a new offer to Staffordshire citizens**

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**Using council assets such as land, buildings or money held in reserve to generate income**

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**Continuing to reduce costs by finding new and more efficient ways of working, for instance through greater use of technology**

Staffordshire County Council

# Connected Staffordshire

Our Vision 2018-2022

