

## **News You Can Use from the Leader Monthly E-Newsletter for July**

### **From the Leader of the Council**

#### **Look Ahead Now to Elections in 2016 and 2017**

With the first Conservative budget since 1996 now behind us there is no room for complacency with vital elections coming up in 2016 and 2017. We now know that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) election will take place in May 2016 together with elections in some of Staffordshire's district councils where they elect in thirds.



We can certainly take heart from the fact that on May 7 the Conservatives took 50.23 per cent of the popular vote in Staffordshire. There is no doubt about it – where leaflets are delivered the Conservative vote goes up possibly because people receive far less junk mail these days.

Leaflets work and in some constituencies we still need to deliver the Conservative Group funded leaflet from February which in some areas took second place to the general election campaign.



**Office of the Police and  
Crime Commissioner  
STAFFORDSHIRE**

The PCC election is certainly important and there are strong messages from our incumbent Police and Crime Commissioner

Matthew Ellis about how policing and justice can be better and more cost effective. He firmly believes in improving value for money because local people should not be taxed when the money already there could be spent better.

In order to start campaigning to retain Conservative control of the county council with as large a majority as possible, we need to have candidates in place for our May 2017 election by May 2016 to give us a clear 12 months. We already know that we have to find candidates for opposition seats and for some of our seats where members are indicating they won't re-stand.

There is a lot at stake in 2017. Our aim is to retain control for an historic third term and it is worth remembering that until we won the council from Labour in 2009 the last time we had been in office was 1977-1981. It's worth remembering in fighting Labour that old slogan adopted by Fuji Film in taking on its American rival Kodak. It was very simple "Kill Kodak" so why not "Kill Labour in 2016 and 2017."



The two most immediate tasks in our build up to 2017 is to establish which members want to put themselves forward for selection because everyone has to go through a full process—tick box isn't good enough. We also need to focus on refreshing the Conservative Manifesto—"Uniting Our Communities Because it Matters" and defining our action plan for the "First Hundred Days." We have a strong narrative to present to the public especially on economic growth and virtually full employment, prevention of alcohol abuse, and partnership working within the health economy.



Since 2009 we have cut the size of the public sector within the County Council from 28,000 people under Labour to a likely target of 850 to 1,000 by 2017. That doesn't mean public services are not being delivered rather more that we are delivering them more efficiently with

different partners and indeed through the third sector. Locality working has become a major focus to enable us to have more decisions made locally rather than at the centre.

There is plenty for us to take pride in—the i54 new business park in South Staffordshire which is due to expand still further is a jewel in Staffordshire's crown. Redhill Business Park and the A50 road improvements will bring in more new jobs. We are also developing closer relationships with China by accessing EU funding for the benefit of the Staffordshire economy. There is much more to come.

Philip Atkins

Leader of the Council

## Osbourne Budget 2015 is a Winner for Staffordshire



The Conservative Government Budget measures including a new Roads Fund fueled by car tax cash and more support for businesses taking on apprentices have been welcomed by Staffordshire County Council's leader Philip Atkins.

He has also hailed the extra £8bn support for the NHS, another announcement made by Chancellor George Osborne.

Philip Atkins says: "As a county council, we are committed to creating the right conditions to help businesses flourish, attract investment and give more people the skills and the opportunities to get better paid jobs.

"We are proud to promote the role of apprenticeships in business across the whole of Staffordshire so more support for this, more financial help to find loving homes for children waiting for adoption and a new Road Fund from vehicle tax are all welcome news.

"Last year over 11,000 people started an apprenticeship here in Staffordshire; nearly double that of five years ago. And, the number of higher level apprentices continues to grow also doubling in the last three years. New apprenticeships in high-tech engineering have also increased by 39 per cent in the past five years and are vital in securing future growth in the area.



"The detail in the budget will undoubtedly be fleshed out over the coming weeks and as a council we will be looking closely at what this means for Staffordshire and how we can achieve the best results for people who live and work here."

## **...And in Staffordshire Our Finances Are on Track**

The County Council Cabinet has received an upbeat report at its July meeting from the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council showing our finances are on track. Ian Parry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategy, Finance and Corporate Issues, said: “We have made big savings whilst factoring in increased pressures from looking after the more vulnerable people in our county. Our anticipated overspend is just 1.1 per cent of the overall budget and we will continue to work on reducing this further.”



Council Leader Philip Atkins said: “We are continuing to focus our resources on our priorities—ensuring there are more and better paid jobs for Staffordshire people, more resilient families, and more people living independent lives. Staffordshire now has near full employment and has the biggest economy of shire areas in the West Midlands. Together with our partners we are increasing skills so people can get higher value jobs and we are seeing increased inward investment. We’re also investing in better health and social care and have seen a reduction in the number of looked after children.”

## **£90 million Boost to Staffordshire Economy from Troop Redeployment**



The latest phase of the Ministry of Defence’s Borona programme, returning parts of the British Army from Germany will see two highly-skilled Signals regiments relocate to Stafford.

More than 1,000 military personnel and their families will make the move boosting the local economy by an estimated £90 million and generating up to 700 jobs. The £150 million construction project has seen homes, recreational buildings and technical facilities built at Beacon Barracks in Stafford for the two regiments.

As well as boosting the local economy, the military repatriation has benefited schools in Stafford which have been expanded and a brand new £5 million Veritas Academy will eventually have space for 420 pupils plus 52 nursery children. Philip Atkins says: “This move is one of the biggest in Staffordshire’s recent history and it is important that we provide the right conditions to allow our military personnel and their families to thrive. We are looking forward to welcoming such highly skilled people into Staffordshire.”

## Staffordshire Conservatives Area Management Executive AGM

The Staffordshire Conservatives Area Management Executive chaired by Mike Ackroyd has recently held its AGM and will play an important role in the 2016 Police and Crime Commissioner and the 2017 County Council elections. The other area officers are Matt Ewart, Deputy Chair Political, Roger Barnard, Chairman of Stone who has taken responsibility for fund raising. Roger has the daunting task of raising £30,000 for the Police Commissioner Election. Trevor Sout, ex-chairman of Tamworth is responsible for membership. In addition, newcomer John Whelan who lives in Rocester and was a councillor for 24 years is taking on the role of treasurer with additional responsibility for Staffordshire area development working with Mike Ackroyd.

The meeting was addressed by Amanda Milling MP, the new MP for Cannock



Chase who entertained her audience with an account of what it's like being a new MP. She has already taken a coordinating role at Westminster responsible for liaising with all Staffordshire MPs as well as immersing herself in constituency issues with a home in Rugeley.

Matthew Ellis, Police and Crime Commissioner, spelled out his plans for improving policing and justice which could be summarised as zero increase in the police and community safety part of the council tax, planned cuts to neighbourhood policing cancelled and finances back on track. He forecasts at least 3,000 extra hours of visible policing by the end of the year due to improved use of technology. He also spoke on SPACE, activities for young people starting this summer school holiday.



Leader of the County Council Philip Atkins outlined the process for re-selection of existing county councillors and recruitment of new members (see more above). If you are interested in standing for the county council, application forms for candidate approval and a guide to selection are being sent to our Associations with a view to having prospective candidates selected before May 2016.

## **Stafford Town Centre Library to Re-Open at New Home in September**

Stafford Town Centre library, currently based at the Shire Hall in Market Square, will move to Staffordshire Place in Tipping Street in September.

Staffordshire Council Council, which runs the service, says it will provide better access to books and resources for the public and be more modern and fit for purpose for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It will continue to give access to more than 1 million books and over 3,000 e-books as well as computers and free Wi-Fi. New digitable touch tables will also give people easier access to online archives, photographs and other materials.

A new Innovation Suite will provide access to 3D printing, helping people and businesses to design and develop new products and prototypes, while Raspberry Pis, a tiny and affordable computer, will be available to help children and young people learn coding and other computer science skills needed for the jobs of the future.

Councillor Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills at Staffordshire County Council, says: "The new library will be a good example of how libraries can be revitalised to be at the centre of people's lives now and in the future, whether they want to live, work or just socialise.

"The new Innovation Suite, with the latest technologies will be a vibrant and attractive space for local businesses, community groups, schools and individuals to explore, learn and be inspired.

"Supporting children and parents to access education, information and reading also continues to be our priority. The new space and facilities will help motivate and inspire young people, while developing their skills in technology, engineering and science."

Organisations will be able to offer adult learning courses and support artists, while the new children and teen's area will provide space for young people to learn, meet and explore.



## Tamworth Gets £900,000 Boost for Assembly Rooms



Ambitious plans to restore and extend Tamworth Assembly Rooms can now go ahead following the awarding of £900,000 to the project from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The announcement that the £900,000 bid had succeeded at the second stage of the HLF bid means that all external funding needed for the Tamworth Assembly Rooms regeneration project is now in place. It is proposed that Tamworth Borough Council will allocate a total of £900,000 in match funding, with Staffordshire County Council contributing £550,000 on top of the £903,400 from HLF.

Work is expected to begin on the venue early in 2016 and the building is expected to be closed for around 18 months.

However, all groups which use Tamworth Assembly Rooms will be found alternative accommodation while the work is carried out and will also continue to receive marketing, front of house and technical support.

The regeneration of Tamworth Assembly Rooms is the first stage in the ambitious £5.5 million project to develop a Creative Quarter in the heart of Tamworth town centre. Earlier this year, the project – led by Tamworth Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council - was awarded £2.95 million from the Single Local Growth Fund.

The development of the Creative Quarter will include the refurbishment and extension of Tamworth Assembly Rooms, the transformation of the Philip Dix Centre into a Business and Enterprise Centre, the redevelopment of the Carnegie Centre as a restaurant and improvements to the library and surrounding area.

The project will create around 100 jobs and attract extra private investment. An independent economic impact assessment which was carried out ahead of the funding bid, showed that the development of a Creative Quarter could potentially add £13 million to the town's economy by 2019.

Reyahn King, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: "Tamworth Assembly Rooms have acted as a stage for Tamworth life for more than 125 years. Thanks to

those people who play the National Lottery, we're delighted to support this project which will restore the building for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an important first step for Tamworth's Creative Quarter and ensure its historic elements and the stories it holds are preserved for future generations to enjoy."

Staffordshire County Council will lead the project of alterations to Tamworth Library and the creation of a new public open space and a planning application is expected to be submitted later this year.

### **Major Milestone for Lichfield Industrial Park**

Completion of a new industrial park in Lichfield that will create up to 1,100 jobs has taken "a huge step forward" as the installation of the site's access bridge nears completion.

Staffordshire County Council is supporting the infrastructure for the site, with the development being delivered by Liberty Property Trust and its partner Stoford Developments.

The bridge deck beam installation is the next significant milestone after the former bridge over the railway was demolished overnight on Christmas Day 2014.



Since Christmas, engineers have been building the foundations to the new bridge on either side of the railway. The new bridge should be completed by October 2015.

The development also involves improvement to Burton Old Road which will provide access to the site, enabling the development of approximately 450,000 square feet of employment space.

Staffordshire County Council economy leader Mark Winnington says: "The bridge installation at Liberty Park marks a major step forward in the development which is progressing on schedule. It means our infrastructure works should be complete by the end of the year."

Liberty Park has been backed by £4 million funding through the Government Growth Deal and was the first such project to get underway in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

## Superfast Broadband Boost for Kinver

Kinver has become one of the latest areas in Staffordshire to benefit from superfast broadband. The village has been connected to a faster fibre broadband as part of the Superfast Staffordshire campaign, a partnership between Staffordshire County Council and BT, which has now connected 50,000 homes and businesses in the county. The rollout of fibre broadband in Staffordshire has now reached its halfway point, with more than 50,000 premises able to access superfast speeds.



County councillor Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport, says: "It is making a real difference to communities across the county, whether it's for learning, business, leisure or to access other services."

Bill Murphy, Managing Director of BT's Next Generation Access, says the roll out - part of the Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme - has been "progressing extremely well" and he adds: "Everything is easier, better and faster with high-speed fibre broadband." Residents can follow the progress of the roll-out online at [www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk](http://www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk) and via Twitter @superfaststaffs.

## Celebrity Chef Gordon Ramsay on the Boil for Ironman



The celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay and his charity team were star attractions at the IRONMAN inaugural event in Staffordshire. The eventual winner of IRONMAN was Javier Gomez of IRONMAN 70.3, which is a half triathlon event for which there were some 2,000 competitors in the senior race.

Mark Winnington, Cabinet Member for the Economy, Environment and Transport, says: "The event is great news for the economy bringing in an extra £2.7 million into the county, great for local businesses and charity and we look forward to welcoming the event back next summer."