

News You Can Use from the Leader Monthly E-Newsletter for June

We Did It—a Majority Conservative Government at Westminster

With all 650 seats having declared, the Conservatives had secured 331 seats, five more than were needed to form a majority in the House of Commons and return David Cameron to Downing Street. In Staffordshire, we secured eight of the nine constituencies in the county only narrowly missing out on Newcastle under Lyme. In addition, we regained control of East Staffordshire Borough Council with a substantial majority.



The general election result means the UK is set for an in-out referendum on EU membership in 2017, or even sooner—one possibility is that the referendum will correspond with the 2017 County Council. It could substantially boost turnout. In the meantime, Cameron wants to renegotiate the terms of EU membership.

Turning to the Queen's Speech there was a lot of good news for Staffordshire and our hard working families and no need to agree any of it with the Liberal



Democrats, the SNP or UKIP. On childcare the amount of free childcare available for children aged three and four will be doubled by 2016 to 30 hours each week, as long as both parents work. On jobs Cameron has promised "work for all" with jobs for everyone who wants one by the end of the Parliament. On welfare the

government will reduce the cap on benefits from £26,000 to £23,000 a year.

For our booming economy in Staffordshire, businesses will welcome the Conservative Government's commitment to cutting red tape on small and medium size business as well as reforming business rates. Laws will ensure that those who work 30 hours a week on the national minimum wage will not pay income tax. Local authorities will be allowed to bring in super heads to turn failing or coasting schools around and create academies.

While we have all heard of Greater Manchester devolution, in Staffordshire, we have been working on an alternative and will be closely following the progress of the Cities and Local Government Bill to offer an alternative that suits Staffordshire and its 10 local authorities and see what opportunities exist to ensure that local decision making is made locally. This bill paves the way for powers over housing, transport, planning and policing to be devolved to England's cities as part of government plans for "a balanced economic recovery." We'll make the case for Staffordshire to have more powers over the delivery of public services. True localism – not parochialism.



County Council Election 2017



In the meantime, we have a challenge on our hands to get our candidates lined up for the County Council elections in May 2017 where we will be going for a record third term. There is already a tight timetable as we need to have candidates in place by May 2016 to give us a clear 12 months. There will be a review of candidate performance in October

2016. We already know that we have to find candidates for opposition seats and where sitting members decide to stand down.

Everyone wanting to stand for the Party in 2017 will be obliged to complete an application form for approval and selection as a candidate. It is in no one's interest for there to be a free for all with any of us taking an excuse to challenge colleagues for a safer seat with which they have no previous connection. Labour may be in melt down for the time being but we have no reason to believe that by 2017 they will not be challenging for control of the council. The main focus must remain an early start to campaigning to retain as many seats as possible in 2017 while keeping an eye to the hard work that still lies ahead.

Philip Atkins

Leader of the Council

County Council Elects Lichfield Councillor as New Chairman



Staffordshire County Council has a new chairman and vice chairman. They are Cllr Janet Eagland and Cllr Bob Fraser respectively.

Cllr Eagland has represented Lichfield Rural North division for 10 years and is a previous mayor of Lichfield and chaired the district council 2006-2007. She is a trustee of several charities and a governor of Chadsmead Academy Junior School. Cllr Eagland takes over from former chairman Cllr Ian Lawson who has been appointed to the Healthy Staffordshire Select Committee. Cllr Fraser represents East Staffordshire- Dove division and lives in Burton on Trent.

Welcoming our New Chief Executive John Henderson

John Henderson has taken up the reins as Chief Executive of the County Council. He was the former Commander of British Forces in Germany and brings with him more than 30 years' experience leading complex change in the army.



Council Leader Philip Atkins says: "Building on a distinguished global military career, John brings a unique combination of skills and experience to lead the innovation and change needed to achieve our ambitions. I am confident in John who will be working even closer with government, partners, employees and residents to secure a successful and prosperous future for Staffordshire. We all welcome him to his new role."

Entrust New HQ takes shape



Replacing the surplus sites around Stafford was part of the Staffordshire Place regeneration project and the new Entrust HQ is taking shape in Stafford. Entrust is our school support services joint venture with the private sector and is 49% owned by the county council.

Entrust Offers Value for Money to Staffordshire Schools

All 329 maintained schools and 71 of the 72 academies within Staffordshire continue to buy into annual service agreements from Entrust, according to Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills. He was responding to a question from a Labour councillor who was trying to criticise Entrust



performance—the challenge was unsuccessful as you can judge from the response. Entrust

is the name of an independent joint venture company set up between Staffordshire County Council and Capita to improve education across Staffordshire. Since 1 April 2013 Entrust has been up and running but in just two years its performance has been nothing short of remarkable.

Ben Adams says: “Since inception, Entrust has introduced multi-year contracts for its annual service agreements and a broad range of new products and offers across the full range of services.

The introduction of longer term deals results in better value for schools through beneficial pricing, improved certainty of budgets and provides Entrust with improved revenue certainty and the ability to further invest in services to improve quality.



“These longer term deals have proved popular with schools with approximately 75 per cent of the schools that buy into a service taking up the multi-year option where it is available.

“In addition to Staffordshire schools, Entrust now has annual service agreements in place with well over 100 new schools and academies outside the county. For example, they are providing specialist ICT support for schools further afield in West Sussex and are working closely with schools in Wolverhampton, providing special educational needs support. In addition, our Outdoor Education Centres are now providing residential visits for many schools.”

County Council Promotes “District Deals” to Boost Economic Growth

Council Leader Philip Atkins responded to a question on Staffordshire County Council’s progress on district deals at the last county council meeting on May 21 and urged greater collaboration with all district councils across the county.

He says: “The first wave of our innovative District Deals were launched in 2012 as a local Staffordshire policy response to the government’s offer of a share in our growth through business rate retention. This is through a pooling arrangement with other local authorities alongside devolved funding for transport infrastructure improvements.

“A District Deal works through a set of agreed shared priorities to promote economic growth by aligning joint resources with detailed business cases, infrastructure design blueprints and planning applications to facilitate further external funding through Growth Deals. They have been successful in bringing forward several high profile schemes that include the Western Access Road improvements in Stafford, Redhill and Lichfield Business Parks and many other employment successes across the county.



“Our county needs high-quality business and employment opportunities to further grow its value-added economy for our residents’ benefit. Further devolution of funding by the newly elected government will make it easier for Staffordshire to achieve its local economic growth

aspirations for the mutual benefit of the whole county.

“Following the recent general election, the devolution agenda for county areas is set to widen and increase the scope of opportunity. All local authorities across Staffordshire including Stoke-on-Trent City Council need to ensure they are able to make and take these opportunities jointly over the coming months as government policy is formed.

SCC Reaffirms Commitment to Partnership Working

Council Leader Philip Atkins affirmed the authority's commitment under Conservative control to partnership working speaking at the May council meeting. He said: "Since we last met, people across Staffordshire took to the polling booths to have their say on the future direction of the country and their local areas and 50.23% of all votes cast in the Parliamentary General election were Conservative. A resounding vote of support for what we are doing in Staffordshire as Conservatives."



"As a county council we have already demonstrated how we have cut through political, geographical and historical divides in our drive to create better lives, better health and better opportunities for the people of Staffordshire."

"Better jobs and the skills to access them, good schools to prepare our children for life, the provision of a robust health service, quality care in the community and a safe and secure place to live are key priorities for Staffordshire people and for the county council."

"There are challenges of course, particularly around both the health economy and supporting a growing ageing population, so it is more crucial than ever that we work together to maximise the public purse to support change to help people lead longer, healthier, fulfilled lives."



"We have a clear plan to deliver results and want to see Government now give counties such as Staffordshire even greater say, influence and control over delivering our local priorities."

Cabinet Member Outlines Policy on HS2 Compensation

Cabinet Member for Economy, Environment and Transport Cllr Mark Winnington briefed the May county council meeting on HS2 compensation in response to a question.

He said: “Like many other affected residents and businesses along the proposed Phase Two route, the County Council is awaiting for a decision from government and the outcome of the consultation on the proposed route.



Once this is finalised we will assess the impact on the county and indeed council-owned land.

“The responsibility to compensate affected land owners and residents falls solely to HS2 Ltd as promoter of the scheme and not the county council.

“The county council is committed to getting the best deal for Staffordshire from the project. This is why we have committed limited financial resource to appointing a full-time project officer. The authority has already secured significant mitigation because of its petition against the hybrid Bill. While not losing sight of our preference not to have HS2 running through Staffordshire’s countryside, we should not underestimate the achievement in securing alignment changes to just over 50 per cent of the proposed route in Lichfield District. These changes are subject to Parliamentary approval but have been welcomed by many local residents and businesses.

“We do understand the concerns of many residents and we are doing what we can to make sure their voice is heard by Department for Transport/HS2 Ltd.

“Each County Councillor, whose division is affected by HS2, has access to £5,000 from the HS2 Community Support Fund which provides support for communities in creating awareness and promoting mitigation. Lichfield members will support my comments that the fund has been working well for those communities and Parish Councils affected by the Phase One route in Lichfield. It is there for Phase Two Parish Councils and groups, with further information being provided on the dedicated HS2 web pages.

Unemployment Remains Below National Average in Staffordshire

The latest unemployment (JSA claimant count) figures for April have been released and the claimant rate for Staffordshire remains the same at 1.0 per cent. This is well below the national and regional figures with numbers still dropping, this time in March there were 5,579 compared to now 5,432 in April.



Council Leader Philip Atkins comments: "Seeing such a big drop in the number of people claiming JSA in Staffordshire in 2014/15 is good news for everyone in the county. It means people are making the most of the opportunities on offer. The challenge is to attract better-paid skilled jobs, not just jobs for the sake of employment, other areas have that challenge."

The claimant rate in Staffordshire still remains lower than both the regional (2.4 per cent) and national (1.8 per cent) averages.

Uttoxeter Tip Closure Delayed After Talks

The closure of Uttoxeter tip has been delayed until September after a meeting between council chiefs reached an agreement. Following a discussion between Councillor Richard Grosvenor, leader of East Staffordshire Borough Council, and Councillor Philip Atkins, leader of Staffordshire County Council, the planned closure of the Uttoxeter Recycling Centre, in Pennycroft Lane, has been postponed.

It has been agreed that the existing facility will now remain open until September and not close at the beginning of June as previously announced. The councils will work together to finalise plans for a temporary recycling facility in the town. It is hoped that this will ensure the continuity of service while the county council invests £1 million in a new centre off Dove Way in Uttoxeter to replace the one due to close.

County Council Cabinet Member Mark Winnington, says: "We're committed to providing a new £1 million facility in the town and I'm pleased we are all working together to explore the options of a temporary solution until the new site opens off Dove Way."

Burton Gets New £30 Million Secondary School

A new Burton secondary school costing £30 million will open in September 2018. The multi-million pound plans will see the school built on land off Yews Bridge, in Tatenhill. It will cater for around 1,800 children once it is fully up and running.

Staff at education authority Staffordshire County Council said they were confident the facility would meet the growing need for secondary education in the area, which has come as a result of an increase in the number of people living in and around the town.

Councillor Ben Adams, cabinet member responsible for education, says: "It's significant in size, and in terms of location it's ideal for people living in the new developments due to be built in Burton.

"The population is expanding because of birth rates and the new developments. Burton is probably the hottest hotspot in the county. This should mean that people can relax on the basis we are confident we have found the site we need for a school."

The Tatenhill site, which borders the 2,500-home Branston Locks development, was one of six options considered by the council for a new secondary school in the area.

The authority is hopeful that an academy sponsor will come forward for the site, and that some funding can be sought from developers.

The news comes after years of concern from residents and councillors about the lack of secondary provision going forward, as 2,600 extra such school places are expected to be needed between now and 2031.

Extra space can be made at Abbott Beyne School, in Winhill, between now and 2018, Councillor Adams says, but this new site would make up the shortfall. He adds: "We've been planning for some time, and working on acquiring a site for two years. At first we thought we would need a new school in 2020-21, but Burton is growing very fast."

The authority is hoping to submit an application to planning authority East Staffordshire Borough Council by Christmas, and it is hoped that work would begin next summer. The school will be built in stages and will be increased in size over the years to cope with demand

Use a New App to Report Potholes and Fly Tipping



Staffordshire residents can report pothole problems and fly-tipping as part of a new free app on smartphones and tablets to access council services.

Finding out about school closures, reporting highways issues, ordering an extra bin and managing council tax payments are some of the things people can now do with a swipe of their finger.

The My Staffs App launched by Staffordshire County Council, allows people to access many council services.

The My Staffs App is free and available on Apple devices, android and Google platforms. It can be downloaded from the Apple App store and Google Play Store. The services are also available via www.staffordshire.gov.uk/mystaffs.

Councillor Ian Parry, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation, says: "This is all about making information and services more accessible and giving people choices about how they access them.

"One in three people that access our services online now do so from a mobile device and this is expected to increase over the next few years. And with people leading increasingly busier lives and getting jobs done on the move, it is vital that we make it as easy and efficient as possible for them."

The app will also access South Staffordshire Council services for residents living in Penkridge and Wheaton Aston.

Leader of South Staffordshire Council Brian Edwards says: "We are always looking for new ways to make accessing local services easier, and the new My Staffs app will mean local people can see what's around for them. Now, you can order an extra bin and manage your council tax payments just by swiping your finger."

Some of the features include a postcode finder, reporting of any highways issues, including potholes, school closure alerts, and missed bin collections or to request additional waste and recycling bins. They also include reporting of abandoned vehicles, dead animals, fly tipping, littering, dog fouling, notifications of house moves, change of circumstance with council tax, making a payment or checking a balance.

And Here is the Sports News

Great news for our county as we celebrate the promotion of one of our local Staffordshire football teams. Burton Albion Football Club are well deserved Champions of their division when they won the league title after their 3-2 win against Cambridge United after gaining promotion two weeks previously. This means that Burton Albion will be playing at their highest ever level when they start their season in League One in August which is a huge achievement for them and great news for the county. Staffordshire is the home of the National Football Centre at St George's Park in Burton, so it is fitting that Burton Albion are enjoying such success.



Sports fans may already be aware that between 25-28 June, Europe's largest multisport festival for businesses and organisations —the UK Corporate Games —is coming to Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

This is a great opportunity to show off our great county and for our local businesses, giving local firms the chance to network with executives from top UK companies.

Over a dozen local organisations have already signed up including Bet365, Vodafone, Alton Towers, Portmeirion, Matrix Fitness, Knights Solicitors, Johnsons Health Tec, Environmental Essentials, and Staffordshire Police.

More than 4,000 athletes from over 50 top UK companies will battle it out in 22 sports, including hockey, cricket, soccer, netball, volleyball, and dragon boat racing. As well as showcasing the region's investment potential and what a great place Staffordshire is to visit, the Games are also expected to generate over £3 million for the local economy.