

News You Can Use on the Doorstep

Leader's Monthly E-Newsletter for April

From the Leader of the Council

Conservatives Lead the Way with Programme of Change

Over the past eight years Staffordshire Conservatives have worked hard to lead significant change in the region in the most challenging of circumstances. The need to reduce the national debt has driven the most dramatic public sector changes in post-war Britain.



In Staffordshire we have led the way with a programme of change, fresh thinking and innovation to create what is now a nationally recognised well run council. And that's because we believe that smaller, smarter local government can deliver affordable and strong public services without the burden of costly, out-of-date bureaucracy and waste.

In the long-term interest of Staffordshire residents, we have carefully and thoughtfully made the difficult decisions to reshape services and to ensure that spending priorities meet community and citizen needs.

At the same time, while facing major funding issues we have maintained one of the lowest council tax rates among English county councils. This offers Staffordshire residents greater value while meeting your most important demands for essential services.

And through a deliberate focus on improving the Staffordshire economy we now have real and sustained opportunities for people to enjoy a good quality of life in safe and strong communities with low unemployment and higher income opportunities.

Staffordshire is now one of the strongest economic regions in the UK, attracting new investment and boosting employment. Staffordshire is now better placed in 2017 to take advantage of the inevitable changes and opportunities that Brexit and new global trading opportunities may bring. The County is now poised—strong and ready to take full advantage of these new opportunities.

Yet it doesn't stop there. Staffordshire Conservatives have a clear vision of an even brighter future— one where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, to be healthy and enjoy life to the full. This will be our focus for the next four years.

But we don't want to leave anyone behind. We want to continue to see more people than ever in work with better paid jobs leading to an ever-improving quality of life for local people through major investment programmes securing future growth. Along with substantial changes to how the council operates, we will continue to deliver better outcomes for Staffordshire people, while managing the ongoing financial pressures we all face.



Sir Patrick McLoughlin MP,
Conservative Party Chairman
launches "Our Future Together"

Staffordshire has made great progress in the past eight years, but there is even more a Conservative county council can do to support residents aspire to and achieve, balancing a growing demand for care and support for vulnerable children and our frail elderly and those with a disability, alongside good transport links and building new schools.

Staffordshire Conservatives believe the only way to achieve this is by community responsibility, working with public and private sector partners and our local communities, sharing and supporting each other to live fulfilling lives, with maximum independence and personal choice.

We all want to see a prosperous Staffordshire with a thriving economy creating wealth for all which enables us to all pay the taxes that we need for public services and those who really need our help.

County Council Election Takes Place on May 4

Staffordshire County Council is currently Conservative-controlled, with the Conservatives holding 34 of the 62 seats.

Conservative group leader Philip Atkins said the next four years will be a challenging time, no matter who wins control of the council. His party has promised to build on its record and invest in social care, highways, digital technology and skills.



He added: "We want to align more of our care services with health. And at the same time, we need to build the right capacity and capability to offer care where it is needed. That is a massive challenge, which will sit at the top of our priorities."

That means prioritising the young and the old. We want to see every child in Staffordshire attending a good or outstanding school, providing the opportunity to gain skills needed to land a high-quality job and every family encouraged to live healthy, happy and productive lives.

We want to see Staffordshire's residents able to enjoy extended healthy years of life, in line with the improvements that medical science is making in life expectancy. We can only achieve this through partnership working across health, local authorities, the voluntary sector and the public at large.

The Conservatives also plan to raise money for road maintenance by selling off unused council assets, and have committed to continuing the Your Staffordshire card which allows young people to benefit from subsidised bus travel.

On May 4 – Vote for Your Local Conservative Candidate in the County Council Election for a better future together

Only Staffordshire Conservatives will help secure Staffordshire's people's *brighter future together*.

Philip Atkins

Leader of the Council

Backing Stoke-on-Trent's bid for City of Culture 2021

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent have always been closely linked and are steeped in history with a proud and rich shared heritage going back many years. And it is great the City is going for City of Culture 2021 and we are pleased to support their campaign.



Any successful destination benefits from a vibrant city culture. We have seen the recent success of Hull and how the area has been regenerated and its reputation transformed with more to come. Winning the accolade would not only be great for the city but would also be hugely positive for Staffordshire and the surrounding area.

This would also help to create even more jobs in Staffordshire not just in the culture and tourism sectors. It would also stimulate more inward investment in terms of companies being attracted by the city's and Staffordshire's offer for their employees and customers.

The City is up against some tough competition including, Perth, Paisley, Sunderland, Coventry, Hereford, Warrington, Portsmouth, Wells, Swansea and St Davids. The final bids must be submitted by the end of April with a shortlist announced in July and the winning city named in December.

Supporting our Armed Forces and their Families

Twenty years ago saw the first trees planted at the National Memorial Arboretum. The Armed Forces Memorial, along with over 330 other memorials, is helping make Staffordshire the focus for the nation's remembrance activities.



And you can see people want to be able to support our local armed forces be more involved in local community's activities and there is some funding that may help us do this.

A new round of the £10 million annual fund available through the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Covenant Fund is now accepting applications for grants. This is a really good opportunity to access financial support for groups and projects to help integrate Armed Forces and civilian communities and deliver valuable local services to the Armed Forces Community.



We have already had two organisations benefit from the first round of the Fund and all three bids to the last round have successfully secured funds. Make Some Noise, Recruit for Spouses and the Army Welfare Service in Stafford have all benefited from the fund.

Employers Urged to Take on More Apprentices

Employers across Staffordshire are being encouraged to take on more apprentices now that a new national training funding pot has opened. The Apprenticeship Levy aims to offer new starters and existing workers the opportunity to learn new skills in a mixture of study and practical experience.

Big employers, including Staffordshire County Council, are being encouraged to take on more apprentices across departments alongside small businesses who don't pay the levy.

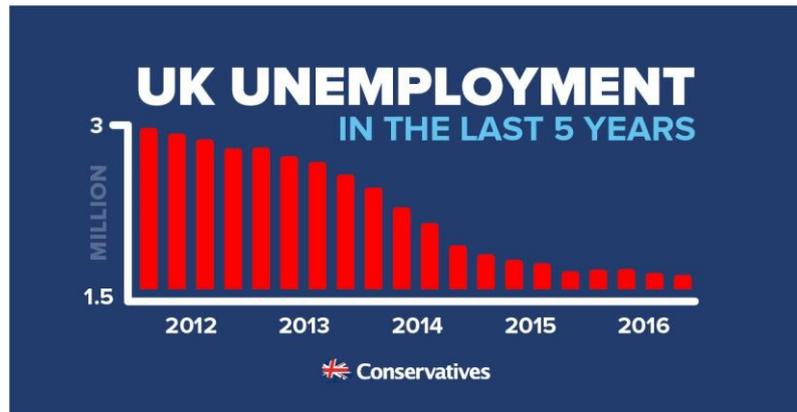
The changes apply to all organisations which have a payroll in excess of £3 million per year and any employer will be able to use the "levy pot" to help cover training costs. The Levy is designed to be used to give employers more flexibility to invest in training a new generation of workers and to improve the skills and expertise of existing staff.

Although it is still early days for this scheme, becoming an apprentice is a great way to learn while you work and we would encourage all businesses, regardless of size, to consider the value of taking on an apprentice.



Employment figures are good news for Staffordshire

The latest unemployment figures for March have been released and show our Conservative number one priority of having a productive Staffordshire economy is working.



People in work are healthier, safer, and happier and reduces the need for the services a county council provides which in turn means we can keep council tax low.

In Staffordshire there are 5,825 people claiming out of work Universal Credit benefits including Job Seekers Allowance, this equates to a rate of 1.1 per cent. Staffordshire County continues to have the joint lowest rate in this measure of all West Midlands Strategic Authorities.

There are 3,484 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Staffordshire, this equates to a rate of 0.7 per cent. Staffordshire County Council has the fourth lowest rate in this measure of all West Midlands Strategic Authorities.

Labour always try and tell Britain that all these jobs are part-time, insecure and poorly paid – in fact nationally:

1. Since 2010, over 70 per cent of the rise in employment has been from full time work.
2. Since 2010, 95 per cent of the growth in employment has come from permanent employees or people working for themselves.
3. Real wages are continuing to rise strongly.
4. It was Labour that left people with fewer jobs and fewer opportunities:
5. Youth unemployment rose by 44 per cent under Labour – meaning young people were not getting the skills they need to get on in life.
6. The number of households where no member had ever worked nearly doubled under Labour.
7. Unemployment rose by nearly half a million.
8. Female unemployment rose by 26 per cent.

Keeping Staffordshire on the Move

Mark Deaville, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, addresses the challenge of keeping a county the size of Staffordshire on the move. He told the council meeting in March: “This can be a challenge at times, especially when you have to factor in highways maintenance, major developments, utility and telecom projects such as BDUK and Virgin Media’s Project Lightning as well as unplanned, emergency works such as a lorry collision to the Network Rail bridge on the A519.



“As a traffic authority, the County Council receives notices for more than 25,000 works on the highway each year and seeks to co-ordinate these with developer works including new housing developments and business/commercial developments that provide the basis for economic growth that is vital to Staffordshire.

“Investments in local, regional and national infrastructure such as the Highways England Network and the forthcoming construction works for HS2 are all creating significant extra pressure to access the road network and these demands will grow for the foreseeable future.

“We always aim to co-ordinate and wherever possible influence the timing and duration of work within the highway and do this through consideration of notices received based on the impact to road users with those likely to cause the most significant disruption and congestion to highway users being given priority.



“We will be putting an additional £3 million into road maintenance this year if we are in control with potentially another £2 million investing additional money into our road network from capital receipts from assets surplus to our needs.”

Competition Heats Up for Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire Race

Athletes from as far away as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and New Zealand will come to Burntwood to take part in the Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire race. Almost 2,200 competitors will battle it out on June 18 as they take on a 1.2 mile swim at Chasewater, a 65 mile bike ride and a 13.1 mile run.

A number of the participants are from across the UK, but organisers have revealed entries have also come from places such as Poland, Senegal, Angola, Lithuania, Hong Kong and Iran.



Kevin Stewart, managing director of Ironman UK & Ireland, says: “It is fantastic to see so many athletes from around the globe coming to Staffordshire year on year for our opening race of the UK season.

“We look forward to welcoming all the athletes, Ironkids and spectators lining the course in Staffordshire and Shugbrough over the weekend.”

The race starts in Chasewater before taking in Cannock Chase on route to the finish line at Shugborough.

Cabinet Member Mark Winnington said “Over the past two years we have seen Ironman bring so many people together from different backgrounds, each with the same goal of completing one of the toughest challenges there is.



“I’m also pleased to see so many people coming to Staffordshire from across the world, taking up the chance to see our county at its best. Hopefully they will enjoy their stay here, and take the opportunity to see just what Staffordshire has to offer.”

Sign Up to the Friends of Chasewater

Chasewater Country Park is asking people to sign up to a new group called The Friends of Chasewater. The group will be working on projects and ideas for the park and will receive help from members of the team at Chasewater where necessary.

Staffordshire County Council runs the park and says the friends group was a 'great' opportunity for people to work together to benefit the site. Helen



Riley, deputy chief executive and the council's director for families and communities, said: "The Friends of Chasewater is an exciting opportunity for members of the towns surrounding the park to come together and work on ideas and projects that benefit the community.

"The Friends will take the lead on activities that local communities have said they want to see taking place at the park, and work with the Chasewater team to make the park a focal point for local people. It's a really great opportunity for people with an interest in Chasewater to get directly involved with the park, so I'd urge anyone interested to join up."

The group is expected to be similar to that of the Friends of Hednesford Park, which helps Cannock Chase District Council with projects and supports Hednesford Park.

More information about our candidates and their leaflets is available at

www.staffordshireconservatives.cc

with links to your local Association if you want to help return Conservatives to County Buildings for a record third term.

VOTE Conservative on May 4th