

## **News You Can Use on the Doorstep**

### **Leader's Monthly E-Newsletter for June 2019**

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

Staffordshire Day, the annual celebration of our great county, took place on 1<sup>st</sup> May. Now four years old, this year's event saw thousands of people take part in more than 60 events across Staffordshire while #StaffordshireDay was trending across Twitter for most of the day.

It was great to see so many people, businesses and organisations joining in celebrations and showing pride in where they live. We all know how much Staffordshire has to offer but this is our chance to let the rest of the country and the world know about what a great place it is to live and visit.



Staffordshire residents also went to polling booths this month for district and borough council elections. There have been a few changes on councils around the county and I look forward to working together with new council leaders in the years ahead on the big issues in their local areas, so that we can make a positive difference for our residents. Thanks also go to Mike Wilcox and Richard Grosvenor who have stood down as Leader for all the work they have done for the Party.

We knew the European Parliamentary Elections would be difficult elections for the Conservatives – people want us to deliver Brexit as quickly as possible. It is also disappointing some excellent MEPs such as Dan Dalton lost their seats. Nationally we are committed to honouring our manifesto commitment to leaving the EU – 90% of Conservative MPs backed leaving the EU, whilst Labour have voted 37 times to stop Brexit.

Meanwhile Jeremy Corbyn's top team have made it clear Labour have no interest in delivering on the referendum result; with John McDonnell indicating he supports a second referendum and Emily Thornberry saying Labour should campaign for Remain. And Labour's Deputy Leader Tom Watson laid bare their political game playing, calling their Brexit policy 'electoral calculation' – showing that all Labour have ever cared about is party-political game playing.

There is much to do over the coming months with the current election of a new Party Leader and Prime Minister and an eye to our work as a Party in the coming years. The list is long but underpinning everything we do is our style, values and philosophy which has brought us electoral success in Staffordshire.

Philip Atkins

Leader Staffordshire County Council

## Crowning success for county firms

Leader Philip Atkins joined HM Lord-Lieutenant Ian Dudson in congratulating five companies for winning the Queen's Award for Enterprise:

- Allett Ltd, Hixon in Stafford.
- Synetics Solutions Limited, Newcastle-under-Lyme.
- Semantics 21 Ltd, Dunston, Stafford.
- Warwick Music Limited, Tamworth.
- Implementra Ltd Trading, Rugeley



## Staffordshire Day £1million economy boost

Great news that Staffordshire Day has generated around £1million for the local economy.

Over 70 events took place across the county at locations which included the World of Wedgwood, Alton Towers and the National Memorial Arboretum. This year's theme was Made in Staffordshire and Staffordshire Day has helped to raise the profile of the county nationally and internationally.



## Householders urged to get composting with bin giveaway

People snapped up free composting bins from the county council's waste team during an international awareness week.

It joined the national GetComposting organisation to offer Staffordshire residents the bins during International Composting Week. Over 30 per cent of household waste can be composted and that it is an easy way to get rid of green waste. The offer was soon taken up and Lichfield Live and A Little Bit of Stone were among the media outlets featuring the offer.



## Crooked puppy farmer collared

Media as far away as Germany reported on the work of the Staffordshire County animal health team in bringing an unlicensed seller of dogs to justice.

Buyers had been given false vaccination certificates and Kennel Club papers by Esther Titterton, of Milwich, who was jailed for 18 months at Stafford Crown Court.



## Boar story continues to interest

The exploits of the wild boar of Burntwood continued to gain coverage over Easter and into May, before the boar was taken into temporary care by a farmer.

Gill Heath's warning that people should be cautious near the animals was repeated by many news websites.

The escapees have a safe home – for now!



## Avoid counterfeits during bank holidays

People are urged to be vigilant and avoid buying counterfeit goods if they're heading to a weekend or bank holiday market.

Car boot sales and markets are common during bank holiday season. While providing a family day out where people can pick up a bargain, they can also attract traders selling counterfeit and illicit goods.



The county council's trading standards team coordinates the national [Real Deal markets campaign](#) in Staffordshire.

Anyone wanting to report counterfeit goods sales can call the anonymous Staffordshire Fight the Fakes line on 01785 330356

## Unlock the potential of superfast broadband

More Staffordshire residents are being urged to get connected to superfast broadband now.

Across Staffordshire, more than 75,000 homes and businesses can benefit from faster speeds thanks to the county council's £32 million Superfast Staffordshire partnership with Openreach and more than half have already done so.

To make sure people understand their options, the county council's broadband team have launched a 'SwitchStaffs' campaign – including a new website at [www.switchstaffs.com](http://www.switchstaffs.com) – to give people tips and advice on how to make the switch and on different providers.



Cannock Chase District Council area is covered 99.7% with only 20 properties on the Chase unable to have access to the green cabinets.

## County starts new financial year on near full employment

Staffordshire has started the new financial year with near full employment.

Just 1.6% of the local population was claiming out of work benefits, lower than both regional (3.3%) and national (2.7%) averages. Major new developments this year will further boost employment.

*“In June we will start work on the western extension at i54 South Staffordshire – a huge project which will result in hundreds more jobs being created. The success of the current site has been huge and is now nearly fully occupied.”*



## Have your say on electric vehicles

Staffordshire residents are being asked to fill in a survey to understand attitudes towards electric cars and what gets in the way of buying them.



The results will help the county council understand what is required to help the public adopt electric vehicles.

Government plans will see new cars in the UK be effectively ‘zero emission’ by 2040, with the sale of new petrol and diesel cars banned. They have also pledged that half of all new car sales will be hybrid or electric by 2030.

[Fill in the 5 -minute-survey here](#) and you’ll be entered into a draw to win a £25 Amazon voucher.

## New fostering short film released

A new short film focusing on the urgent need for foster carers in Staffordshire and the difference they make to children’s lives has been released.

[More information on the film can be found here.](#)

In Staffordshire, the fostering service is keen to hear from anyone interested in fostering but in particular from those who would like to care for teenagers, children with disabilities or siblings.



You can find more info at: <http://www.care4child.org/fostering> along with upcoming updates on Foster Care Fortnight (13-16 May).

## 99% offered top choice primary school



Ninety-nine percent of parents in Staffordshire have been allocated one of their top three choices of primary school, with 94% of parents being offered their first choice.

Over the past five years, Staffordshire County Council has added nearly 8,000 primary and secondary school places, at a cost of £61 million. This is to address the rising demand for school places at a primary and secondary level

in some areas. This programme of building and expanding is set to continue, with plans to provide more than 20,000 new school places by 2031

## Motorists ignore speed limit

Dozens of families in Cheadle are complaining that a number of motorists are ignoring the 30mph speed limit and the local papers ran an article with residents calling on the county council to do more to prevent speeding motorists.

The county council has responded, saying that speed restrictions would be considered after a project to implement parking restrictions had been completed.



## Foster carer app to close attainment gap

A new app run by the county council that helps foster parents keep track of their children's performances at school has been featured in key children's trade magazine, Children and Young People Now.

The app is an attempt to close the attainment gap between looked-after children and their non-care peers, and is being used by the majority of foster carers in the county.



## Four Seasons Care Homes

News that the Four Seasons Care Health Care group entered administration, and the potential effect on the seven care homes they run in Staffordshire, appeared in the local press and radio.

Alan White sought to reassure residents of these homes, saying that the council's priority was to ensure care for residents continued, and that reassurances had been sought from the group that the homes in Staffordshire were unaffected.



## New county bus service launched

A new bus service running to a recently-developed part of Stafford and connecting the county town with Uttoxeter has been launched.

The county council has worked with D&G Buses to introduce the new service. It runs every half-hour to St Mary's Gate off Tixall Road in Stafford. Every hour the service will extend to Uttoxeter via Weston and Hixon.



Passengers on the new specially branded buses will be able to use contactless payment. A significant amount of funding for the subsidy has come from developers

Helen Fisher supported David Brookes, the local county councillor saying it was important to be able to offer new services as towns grow.

## School closure sadness

The confirmation that The Henry Prince village school in Mayfield is to close after the summer term due to a lack of pupils was reported either side of the Staffordshire Derbyshire border.

Education leader Philip White said the decision was made with great sadness in the best interest of the children who remained.

Despite the best efforts of local people children were being sent elsewhere in Staffordshire and Derbyshire.



## Bus service frustration

Helen Fisher's welcome of a new all-day travel bus travel pass from the county's five main operators provoked a mixed response.

While most reaction was positive, in some areas such as Leek quoted local Labour and Independent politicians lamented alleged reductions in local bus services.

It is easy to criticise, however bus services are commercial enterprises which depend on people using them.



## Earthy reward for revitalising former church

The RICS West Midlands building conservation award for the spectacular conversion of the former St Mary's Church into Lichfield's new city centre library and community arts space was warmly welcomed.

This is really good news for the Lichfield community with extra uptake of library books, increased membership and even moer volunteers. A win-win situation as a result of the county council's £1.4m investment.



## Councils warn of a potential £50bn future black hole

The increasing financial pressures facing councils was the feature of a BBC national news story this week.

The County Councils Network (CCN) said that English councils face a funding black hole of more than £50bn over the next six years unless extra cash is made available.

Philip Atkins was interviewed and said that the council was spending more than ever on social care due to increased demand and a national solution was needed rather than the burden falling on local tax payers. The county council is spending £326 million on adult and children social care needs this year, up from £200 million in 2009.



## Kiwi soldiers remembered on Cannock Chase

The unveiling of a new memorial to remember the New Zealand soldiers who were based at the training camps on Cannock Chase during the Great War was well attended.

Gill Heath explained on various media that the new memorial was a wonderful way to commemorate the centenary of the New Zealanders based here and the special connection with the local community that remains so strong today.



## Foster Care Fortnight

The latest Foster Care Fortnight campaign to help recruit 60 more foster families was last month.

Mark Sutton was interviewed on Moorlands Radio and encouraged interested families to visit one of the roadshows while Staffordshire's Poets Laureate threw their weight behind the campaign by writing a series of poems.

Poet Laureate Emily Rose Galvin was also interviewed about the campaign on BBC Radio Stoke.



## Stafford Western Access Route motors along

The front pages of the Express and Star, Staffordshire Newsletter and Sentinel all featured the news that work on the Stafford Western Access Route will begin in a few weeks, and last until September 2021.

Mark Winnington said the route is an essential part of Stafford's ambitious growth plans, and that it will enable future development contained within the borough council's local plan. It is key that vital infrastructure is in place before houses are built to avoid traffic congestion.



## Grassroots support for grazing plans

The grazing issue on Cannock Chase has garnered support from a local conservation group.

Members of the 'Sustainability Matters' group have spoken out in favour of the county council's grazing plans, and are urging local people to take in all of the details and understand the full picture before taking a stance on the measures.



## Fund could warm homes in Tamworth

News that eligible households could get fully funded gas central heating was featured on the Tamworth Informed website. The county council's Staffordshire Warm Homes Fund, along with partners E.ON and local councils will be installing first-time central heating systems into eligible homes across the county, starting in Tamworth. The article detailed the ways people are eligible, and encouraged them to get in touch with the Warmer Homes Team to find out more.



## Delay plea for HS2 plans

County councillors are calling on the Government to pause 'enabling works' on the first phase of the HS2 project.

Philip Atkins has been asked to write to the Government to request that all works are halted on Phase 1 of HS2 until contractors have been approved.

Mark Winnington was quoted as saying: "We see no reason why Staffordshire should suffer significant disruption and long-term environmental destruction until detailed design and cost has been approved."



## Social care crisis in focus

Alan White was interviewed on BBC Radio Stoke as part of a feature about the national social care crisis.

He said that the ageing population and people's choice of lifestyles meant that more needed care than ever before.

Alan added that in the future this number would only increase, though this would not be matched by younger people able to care for them.

He said changes in government funding is also presenting councils with a serious challenge.



## Get set for Ironman 70.3

People were reminded of weekend road closures in Staffordshire for the Ironman 70.3 event in several media outlets.

Fifty-six miles of road will be closed for Sunday's event, which is expected to see up to 2,400 participants compete. The course begins at Chasewater and finishes in Stafford's Market Square.

Mark Winnington said the event gives a huge boost to the local economy as well as showcasing it to visitors from across the world.



## Council 'got it wrong' over road markings

We don't always get it right!

New road markings heading towards a busy traffic island had been painted in the wrong position.

The county council's highways team had altered the original lines as part of a safety review, the report says. They were reinstated this week.



Helen Fisher said the error was corrected as soon as it had been identified.

## Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships

A lot of work has been done by partners since the Sustainability and Transformation Plan was published at the end of 2016 – matched by the tireless work being done each day by thousands of dedicated staff. Likewise, the health and care landscape has also changed in that time – most recently with the publication of the NHS Long Term Plan.



Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships across the country are being asked to produce a refreshed Five-Year Strategic Plan that outlines how the priorities set down in the Long Term Plan will be implemented locally. They are also about to embark on the process of developing proposals to the challenges we face across the system upon which we will ultimately formally consult people about. Of course, there is equally the recognition of the very real and significant budget challenges that both of our local authorities are facing.

Over recent years the county and city councils have had to take difficult decisions to make their budgets balance and will need to continue to do so. This context makes it even more important that we work as partners across the system and make decisions that are transparent, understood and aligned to ensure we don't simply just move demand or cost pressures around the system.

In order to achieve our aims, it's important we hold a single conversation across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent – one that seeks views on broad-reaching themes that align to the Long Term Plan's ambitions and results in viable options for transformational change that are financially and clinically sustainable in the longer term. It is important we are cognisant of the fact that we need all partners to be actively involved in this conversation, but that ultimately it will be the CCGs that have the statutory requirement to formally consult.

The areas where we know we will need to make most significant change are where we will focus our discussions, but the intention is not to limit the conversations and we will use the feedback received to inform both the refresh of our local Five Year Plan as well as the Pre-Consultation Business Case.

The main areas of focus are:

- Simplifying the local urgent and emergency care system
- Developing a new vision for health and care in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent that is focussed on high quality community based care centred on the patient – this will include maternity services, mental health services and planned care (surgery and outpatients)
- How the local health and care system can embrace and fully utilise new technology and ensure the buildings we deliver services from are fit for purpose
- Reviewing the use and function of the community hospitals in South Staffordshire
- Exploring what 'integration of health and care services' really means for local people
- Identifying additional priorities that will deliver clinical and financial stability.

This conversation launched on Monday 3 June and over the course of 12 weeks will include a series of public and staff listening events held in each district across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and a raft of roadshows in clinics with service users and in public places such as supermarkets and leisure centres.

People will be able to share their views by completing a survey, both online and hard copy, and we will also be meeting with a range of voluntary and community sector organisations.

This work builds on the recent survey run by Healthwatch Staffordshire and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent that sought views on the key priorities of the Long Term Plan.

In order we get this right it's crucial that we do all we can to encourage our patients, service users, colleagues, stakeholders and followers to get involved and make their voice count.

## Lord Ashcroft's survey of 10,000 and where votes were cast at the European Election

