

News You Can Use on the Doorstep

Leader's Monthly E-Newsletter Election Special 2019

From the Leader of the Council

Let's be honest – we've had an interesting few weeks. With the return of Parliament after proroguing we saw the return of the same old Labour. Tired attacks rather than substantive debate, refusal to support us in delivering on the referendum result, and the farce of their election debacle. One minute, Corbyn's demanding an election. The next minute, he tells his MPs to block an election.



We have done everything we could to get Brexit done by 31 October, working extremely hard for a new deal and preparing extremely carefully for no deal. The Prime Minister achieved what many said was impossible and negotiated a great new deal. Tragically, Parliament voted again to delay, and worse, Jeremy Corbyn handed over the decision on what happens next to Brussels.

We've got to face the fact there's likely to be a delay until 31 January at least. And we should all be worried that this Parliament will just waste the next three months like it's wasted the last three years.

MPs have voted for an election on 12 December so we can have a new, functioning Parliament working for us, without the confusion, indecision and arguments that have plagued the last three years. We don't want an election. But this Parliament has made a total mess of Brexit and we are worried that if we don't have an election, this Parliament will do nothing but play games and delay again in January. Labour MPs have left us no choice.

Our top priority remains, as it always has been, to Get Brexit Done. We've got to let the country move on – and get Britain back on the road to a brighter future.

The Queen's Speech set out how we will get Brexit done and focus on the people's priorities with our ambitious domestic agenda of 26 bills, focusing on our core priorities of investing in our NHS, tackling violent crime, and dealing with the cost of living. When people voted in the EU referendum, they voted for a better future for this country. But years of delay and indecision by politicians means the change they hoped for has not yet been delivered.

By getting Brexit done, we will end the uncertainty and get on with this ambitious programme to build a brighter future for everyone in our country.

We need our country to move on so we can focus on all your other priorities like the cost of living, the NHS and conserving our environment. We need a functioning Parliament working for us, without the confusion, indecision or arguments that have plagued the last three years.

The Chancellor laid out our Party's spending plans – look at what he is proposing for our local hospitals, police and schools.

Spending to support children with special educational needs and disabilities, tackle climate change and help towards meeting growing social care costs.

Philip Atkins said: “By taking early proactive measures, as a county council we have successfully managed some significant financial pressures and continue to be clear to Government that the challenges of meeting increasing costs for care remain huge.



“This review will hopefully go some way to easing these pressures in the short-term and I am pleased in particular that the Chancellor has confirmed the £700m spending boost for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

“It is important to remember that this review covers just 12 months and we will now need to look in detail at what this means for Staffordshire in the both the short-term and the longer term before we respond to the Government.”

In the review, the Chancellor also announced that local councils will get £1.5bn for social care next year, £432m in additional funds for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to tackle climate issues. The County Council has already declared a climate change emergency

Philip added: “These remain uncertain times nationally, but as a county council our focus is on ensuring we are able to support the most vulnerable with the money available, empowering healthier and more independents communities, creating better jobs, attracting investment and growing our economy for the benefit of Staffordshire families and businesses.”

It is imperative that we also continue our excellent work in recent years to grow the economy and create more, better paid jobs. Get this right and we put more money in residents' pockets to lead the healthy, happy lives they want, with less reliance on the county council and other public bodies. Extra business rates income also funds the work we do.

Whatever happens in the next few weeks and months, we're ready.

Philip Atkins
Leader Staffordshire County Council

Dramatic reduction in delayed transfers of care

Figures that show the number of patients who are in hospital beds, even though they are fit to leave, have reached a new low for Staffordshire patients. Figures show that the number of patients in hospital unnecessarily has fallen by over 40 per cent in the last 12 months. They are now lower than they have been for many years.



Officially called Delayed Transfers of Care (DTOCs), it means patients who don't need to be in hospital are in a bed because the support they need to live at home is not available. Staying in a hospital bed unnecessarily can rapidly lead to Deconditioning Syndrome - serious muscle wastage and loss of confidence – especially for patients who are frail and elderly.

Your Staffordshire Card scheme to end

The Your Staffordshire Card (YSC) scheme ended on 31 August 2019 and is no longer accepted for discounted travel on buses following this date.



The number of journeys had fallen by 80 per cent since its peak in 2014/15 as operators are now offering their own discounted fares and passes.

Young people could still use their pass to travel throughout the school summer holidays and we advised parents to contact their local bus company to see what options are available for their children.

County Council declares a climate change emergency

Staffordshire County Council has declared a 'climate emergency' and with recent wet weather not a surprise.



The move came on a day that saw record breaking temperatures across the UK. In a meeting of the County Council, councillors vowed to refresh the Council's 'Green Shoots' climate change strategy, continue their support to local councils in tackling climate change, and committed to providing a strong, unified voice on behalf of councils when lobbying the Government.

The declaration, which has cross-party support, comes a month after the county council launched its air quality initiative, which aims to improve air quality in the county.

Work starts on i54 western extension

Work has started on an extension to a major Midlands business park which could generate around 1,700 jobs and lever up to £300 million of investment.

It will see i54 South Staffordshire expand to provide much-needed sites of different sizes at what is becoming a globally-recognised high manufacturing employment zone.



Machines have moved in to construct the new access road with preparation for factory platforms and services infrastructure works to follow next year. It is anticipated new occupiers could start arriving from 2022.

Planning permission has been granted for up to 100,000 square metres of manufacturing space, which will provide job opportunities for residents.

Working seven days a week

We delivered a pledge for highways crews to work seven days a week to deliver a major investment scheme in Burton.

Cabinet member Helen Fisher commented on how the resurfacing of Shobnall Road would bring huge benefits to businesses, residents and commuters on the road and in Burton.

There have been many complaints about congestion with ongoing highway, bridge, environmental and station improvements in Burton.

The county council is doing its best at working with many partners to see traffic flows and businesses can thrive. They all agree the work needs doing.



A shopping centre manager has commented on two road improvement schemes taking place having a negative impact on trade and that shops in the town were struggling as the result of Shobnall Road and Borough Road being closed.

Around £1million is being spent on the schemes, which will see Shobnall Road resurfaced and the railway station forecourt on Borough Road improved.

Helen Fisher said the works had been scheduled to take place during the schools summer holidays to minimise disruption.

Bracken spraying on Cannock Chase

Specialist contractors have been spraying bracken on Cannock Chase to help manage the spread.

Mark Winnington, Staffordshire County Council's cabinet member responsible for Cannock Chase, reminded people that left uncontrolled, the bracken would dominate other vegetation and that reduces the variety available to sustain the wildlife, while also making it more difficult for dog walkers, ramblers, mountain bikers to enjoy the Chase.



Pothole reporting change

The county council switched to online reporting for potholes from September. Concerns have been expressed that older people in particular may not have access to the internet or will have difficulty reporting faults on line.

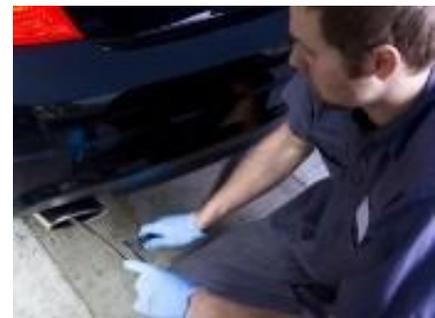
Helen Fisher said that IT buddies would be on hand at libraries to help if need be but added that the majority of people already reported faults online. Although members of the public are encouraged to report potholes they have concerns about, the vast majority have actually already identified by inspectors.



Levy considered to tackle pollution

Employers could face a work-place levy in a bid to help tackle air pollution in North Staffordshire.

Newcastle Borough Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council have been told to submit plans to the Government on how they will tackle air pollution – with a charging zone being an option. Simon Tagg the leader of NBC has held talks with both the city council and the county council on the issue.



Rail change welcomed

The announcement that First Trentitalia would take over the West Coast Main Line was welcomed by Staffordshire's Economic Growth leader.

Praising the commitment to new trains, more services and updated rolling stock, Mark Winnington said the county council would monitor delivery of services both now and when HS2 was running.



Support for uni-bound care leavers

News that care leavers bound for college and university were being given extra support was welcomed by local residents.

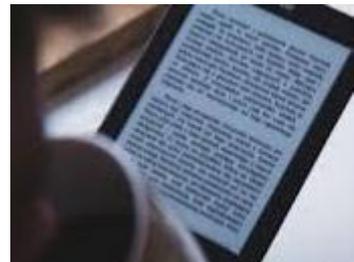
Mark Sutton said, "The gift of a laptop and stationery will help overcome one of the practical hurdles faced by youngsters without family support."



Ebook expansion excites

The county library service's ebooks service has been expanded.

Commenting on the 80 per cent increase in electronic stock, Gill Heath said it was important to invest in an increasingly popular part of the library service.



Summer in Staffordshire

Mark Winnington took to the airwaves again to extol the virtues of enjoying Staffordshire's charms and attractions during the summer holidays rather than travelling far and wide.

Staffordshire's tourism economy is calculated to be worth £1.7bn annually, supporting more than 31,000 jobs. We are lucky to have such beautiful opportunities on our doorstep.



Farmer prosecuted for breaking TB rules

The Farming press reported the prosecution of a Staffordshire farmer who broke livestock TB rules and kept inaccurate records.

John Sadler from Great Wyrley was handed a 27-week prison sentence, suspended for 12 months, at Stafford Crown Court on Monday.



The county council's trading standards discovered that 61 cattle had not been presented for their TB test and more than 50% of the herd remained untested at the time of the visit.

Work begins on major road project in Stafford

Work is now under way on a multi-million-pound road project which will boost growth and ease congestion in Stafford.

The Stafford Western Access Route (SWAR) will enable millions of pounds worth of new housing and business development to take place. It will also improve traffic flow in the town centre.

The road is being funded by developers and with £15.5million secured by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership through the Government's Local Growth Fund.



Mark Winnington said the route will enable future development contained in the borough's local plan and will also reduce congestion in the town centre, particularly around the railway station.

The SWAR, which is essentially a new outer ring road that will link A34 Foregate Street at Madford Retail Park to the A518 Newport Road Castlefields junction and will be used to relieve traffic and also open up new development areas for housing and employment sites.

Stafford is a strategically important area nationally, with great digital and transport connections, and a skilled workforce.

The SWAR is an important part of realising Stafford's ambitious growth plans, enabling future development contained in Stafford Borough Council's Gateway Masterplan – notably the delivery of thousands of new homes and business, office and retail space. It will also reduce congestion in the town centre, particularly around the railway station, and pave the way for the potential of HS2 to be realised.

HS2 review welcomed

News that an independent review of the HS2 scheme is to be carried out was welcomed by Philip Atkins.

Welcoming the review, Philip said: "While this was a decision for Parliament, from the outset we have made it clear that we will do everything we can to mitigate its impact, win timely compensation for affected communities and ensure we share in improved connectivity and economic benefits."



Pupils join fight against air pollution

Pupils returning back to school have joined the county council's Air Aware campaign to tackle pollution. Youngsters from The Willows school have been encouraging families to opt for more sustainable forms of travel. According to Helen Fisher, "Idling is often the biggest contributor to air pollution outside schools, with one minute of idling creating enough fumes to fill 150 balloons with toxic chemicals."



Roadworks progressing well at retail park

News that work is progressing well on the multi-million pound designer shopping village in Cannock is welcome news for Staffordshire. Lichfield Road and the junction of Hayes Way and Eastern Way should open mid-October, a full five months earlier than anticipated. Helen Fisher commented that the highways work at the site was progressing well, and that the council was making every effort to get the vital infrastructure works completed as soon as possible.



£5.2 million school opens its doors to pupils

The brand new Poppyfield Primary Academy in Cannock has opened its doors to pupils for the first time.

The £5.2 million school has capacity for 210 pupils and a nursery, and this year has accepted reception and nursery children. Philip White said that the Academy has been built in response to new housing in the local area, and that the county council was proud to help create a school with a real community ethos.



New county council-built nursing homes

Up to 200 people who need nursing care in Stafford and South Staffordshire could be accommodated in two new homes.

In plans being put before the county council's cabinet, it is proposed to build two new nursing homes in the areas where the council experiences the most difficulties in sourcing placements.

Alan White said that by building these homes, the county council could increase capacity and offer good quality, cost-effective placements to meet people's needs.



Busting myths on fostering

A month-long campaign has been launched to help bust some of the commonly held myths putting people off fostering.

'No Myths, No Ifs, No Buts...' will support the county council in finding families for 1,200 children in care.

Some of the most commonly held myths around fostering are that, you need to be married, you need lots of experience and skills, you can't have any animals and you need a big house.



Mark Sutton said a series of information events would be taking place throughout the autumn.

Council agrees to sell two county farms

News broke that the county council has agreed to sell off two of its farms as part of a review of the agricultural estate.

Around 1,700 acres of land in total have been earmarked for sale and tenants at the affected farms were being offered the chance to buy their holdings first.

While the move was less welcomed by the Tenant Farmers' Association, Mark Winnington explained that any proceeds would be used to support health and care services and invest in the county's infrastructure, as well as being reinvested in the county farms estate.



Burton shopkeeper sold fake tobacco

A Burton shop worker has been prosecuted for selling counterfeit tobacco at a town centre store.

Dilshad Sharif was handed a day's prison sentence and ordered to pay £200 costs after county council trading standards officers visited his Derby Street shop and discovered the haul.

Gill Heath said that the trading standards team targets its resources where it knows the sale of illegal tobacco and alcohol is taking place.



Suspended jail sentence for man selling fake golf gear

A Kidsgrove man has been sentenced to 14 months imprisonment, suspended for 24 months after selling counterfeit golfing goods on eBay.

The investigation by Trading Standards found that Steven Bowler had been buying counterfeit golf covers, club grips and t-shirts from China and selling them to customers worldwide as genuine on eBay.



Gill Heath praised the work of the team and said it sends out a clear message that action will be taken against those selling counterfeit goods.

Pupils urged to get on their bike!

Bike to School Week returned in September and schools, along with parents and children are being encouraged to join the celebration and cycle to school.

The campaign highlights the many benefits of cycling for not only parents and children but also for the environment.

Helen Fisher was interviewed live on Moorlands Radio, talking about how the council is working hard to make cycling an easy, safe, and appealing option for travelling to school.



New bollards to be in operation in town centre

A new set of rising bollards have been installed to help protect the pedestrian area in Tamworth town centre.

The £700,000 highways investment saw new bollards replace the old ones, which had been out of use for many years. Staffordshire County Council worked with Tamworth Borough Council to make this happen.

Helen Fisher explained that the bollards are there to protect the pedestrian area in the town centre and enforce the traffic regulation order.



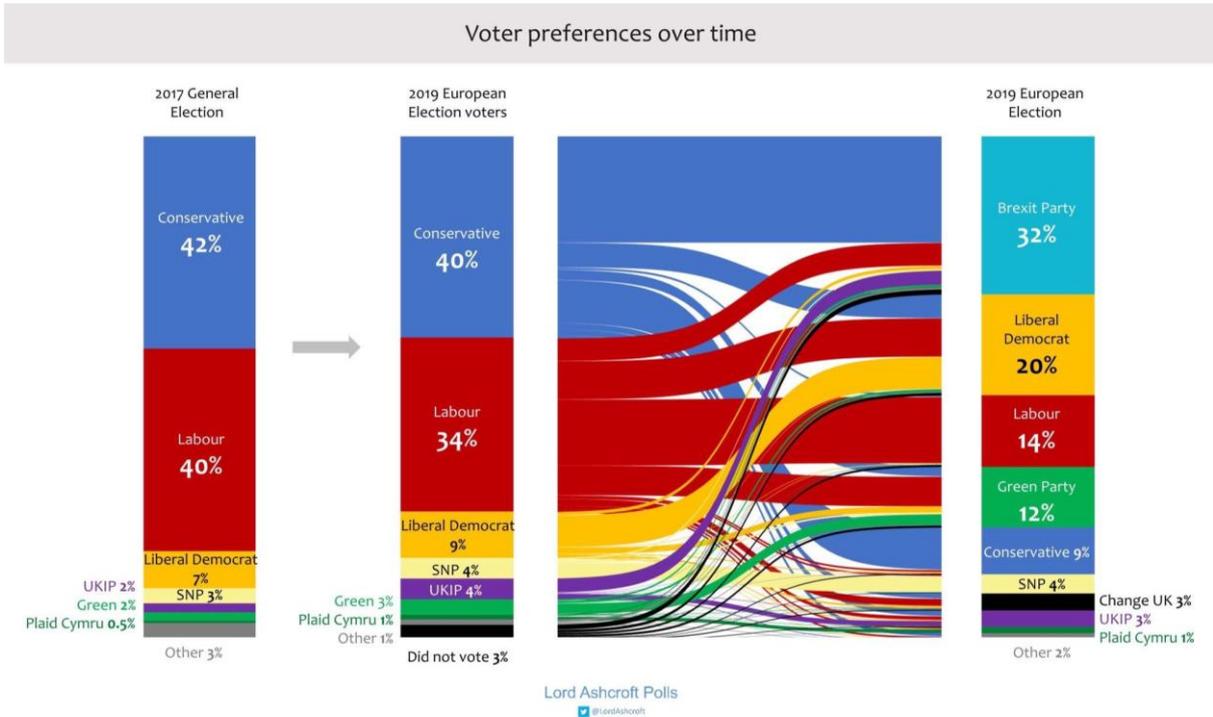
New bid to make history centre

The second bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for £3.9m towards a £5.9m history centre in Stafford to host the county's archive service was on the front page of the Express & Star.

Gill Heath explained that the Staffordshire History Centre project would see an extension to the existing record office on Eastgate Street, incorporating the William Salt Library.



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



You Gov Poll

