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Dear Members

### **Cabinet**

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on **Thursday 7 March 2024** at **6.30pm** in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown at the top of each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "I. Curran".

Head of Law and Governance

## CABINET - 7 MARCH 2024

Chair - Councillor A T A Godfrey

### AGENDA

- 1 Minutes of 8 February 2024 as circulated and published on 9 February 2024
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Councillors' Question Time (if any)
- 4 Proposals of the Cabinet Members (as follows):-

Page Nos

- (a) **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO**
  - (i) Stafford Station Gateway - **PART CONFIDENTIAL** 4 - 12  
**Report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**
- (b) **LEISURE PORTFOLIO**
  - (i) Planning Obligations and DCLG Grant Allocation - Baswich, and Weeping Cross and Wildwood 13 - 18
- (c) **RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**
  - (i) Quarter 3 Performance Report for 2023-24 19 - 56
  - (ii) Revenues and Benefits Collection Report - Quarter 3 - **PART CONFIDENTIAL** 57 - 67  
**Report contains information relating to an individual, which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).**

## **Membership**

### **Chair - Councillor A T A Godfrey**

A T A Godfrey	- Leader
R Kenney	- Deputy Leader
A N Pearce	- Climate Change Portfolio
J Hood	- Community Portfolio
A F Reid	- Economic Development and Planning Portfolio
I D Fordham	- Environment Portfolio
G P K Pardesi	- Leisure Portfolio
R P Cooke	- Resources Portfolio

**Agenda Item 4(a)i****Stafford Station Gateway**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 March 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Economic Development and Planning
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Economic Development and Planning Portfolio

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**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on progress made in relation to the development of Stafford Station Gateway, following the recent award of funding from the Levelling Up Fund. The report also seeks to secure appropriate delegations to enable the timely expenditure of recently awarded Levelling Up grant funding. The report concludes by setting out the context for immediate future reports relating to the formalisation of governance arrangements.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet accept the £19,998,144 Levelling Up funding awarded by Government to Stafford Borough Council for the delivery of the Stafford Station Gateway Levelling Up Fund project.
- 2.2 Request that Cabinet recommend to Council that Stafford Station Gateway is included within the Council's Capital Programme.
- 2.3 To delegate authority to the Head of Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Deputy Leader, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning and the Council Section 151 Officer to commence negotiations to acquire the land within the Gateway site as identified on the plan within **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX 1**.
- 2.4 That appropriate governance structures and programme/project management arrangements be developed to support the delivery of the Stafford Station Gateway, Levelling Up Fund project, including the establishment of a Stafford Station Gateway Programme Board, with a further report to be presented by the Head of Economic Development and Planning to Cabinet to approve these arrangements.

- 2.5 To delegate authority to the Head of Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Deputy Leader, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning, the Council Section 151 Officer and Stafford Station Gateway Programme Board, authority to progress the Stafford Station Gateway, Levelling Up Fund project. This will include but not be limited to the appointment of external contractors, preparation, and submission of regulatory approval applications, conducting relevant surveys, demolition, site clearance land reclamation, relocation of existing tenants and entering into any necessary license agreements.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.6. The recommendations enable the progression of land acquisition and grant funding spend as a means to commence the timely delivery of the project.

## **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 This report sets out the main updates that have occurred since a general summary of progress and detailed discussion relating to the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) was provided to full Council at its January 2023 meeting and seeks approval for delegations to enable the progression of land acquisition and grant funding spend as means to commence the timely delivery of the SRF.

## **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Stafford Station Gateway currently supports delivery of Business Objectives 1,2 and 3 in the Council's Corporate Business plan 2021-2024. The Station Gateway scheme supports the delivery of sustainable economic and housing growth.
- 4.2 Objective 1: Delivering sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.
- 4.3 Objective 2: Developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing.
- 4.4 Objective 3: to continue work towards our Climate Change and Recovery objectives, integrating them into our activities and strategic plans.
- 4.5 It also delivers against Growth Priority 1 in the Economic Growth Strategy for Stafford Borough 2020-2025.
- 4.6 The proposal is also consistent with and supportive of the Council's adopted development strategy as set out in The Plan for Stafford Borough (adopted 2014) and the emerging Local Plan 2020-2040 Preferred Options document.

## 5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Stafford Station Gateway mixed use redevelopment proposals represent a significant investment opportunity, maximising potential economic benefits. The Stafford Station Gateway project is a partnership between Stafford Borough Council (SBC), Staffordshire County Council (SCC), placemaking and regeneration expert LRC and Network Rail (NR).
- 5.2 Cabinet has received, since 2017, progress reports relating to the ambition to regenerate underused brownfield land adjacent to Stafford Railway Station. In 2017 an initial Stafford Gateway Spatial Masterplan was produced for the site by the Council.
- 5.3 In October 2019, Cabinet agreed to formalise this arrangement by entering into a Collaboration Agreement with key partners to enable progression of a more detailed masterplan. This commission completed by Hawkins\Brown and WSP was able to reflect the changing market landscape since the initial masterplan was completed.
- 5.4 Cabinet gave approval in March 2020 for the Council to enter into a Task Agreement with partners that focused on sharing revenue investment to enable the completion of a delivery framework, financial model, planning and delivery strategies. The Cabinet report set out the principle of land ownership within the site by the Council and secured approval to engage with consultants linked in relation to the acquisition of a major land parcel within the Gateway site. This engagement also included feasibility studies appraisals, options analysis, and business case development.
- 5.5 In July 2021 Cabinet approved a budget to enable officers to progress the necessary technical work, in partnership with Staffordshire County Council and LCR, to develop a draft Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). CBRE, Hawkins\Brown and WSP were commissioned to progress this work on behalf of the three organisations.
- 5.6 The draft SRF was presented to Cabinet on 4 August 2022. Cabinet resolved to commence public consultation which was subsequently launched on 18 August 2022 and continued through to the 29 September 2022.
- 5.7 In January 2023 Cabinet considered the responses received to the consultation and further technical work relating to biodiversity and proposed amendments to the SRF. The SRF was subsequently published on the Council's website in February 2023.
- 5.8 In summary, the SRF presents a vision, illustrative masterplan and a set of design and development principles that will guide the future development of Stafford Station Gateway. The document responds to existing and emerging planning policies and seeks to nurture the assets and opportunities that are unique to this part of Stafford, including its green and blue infrastructure,

major development site opportunities and exceptional connectivity. The proposals for Stafford Station Gateway scheme include a hotel, up to 900 new homes, 30,000 square feet of commercial space, a 350-space multi-storey car park, along with retail, leisure facilities, biodiversity net gain on underutilised brownfield land around the Stafford railway station.

- 5.9 Initial delivery of ambitions set out in the SRF include unlocking employment land opportunities, housing, community space, leisure provision and the construction of a new Institute of Technology for Stafford College. That element of the development is supported by £13 million of government funding via a partnership that includes Stafford College, Keele University, and private technology companies.
- 5.10 In August 2022, the Council submitted a business case for Round 2 Levelling Up funding for Stafford Station Gateway, which included around £16m in respect of land within the County Council's ownership. The application focused detailed site analysis and land remediation and preparation to enable commencement of development in accordance with principles set out within the SRF.
- 5.11 In November 2023, the Council was provisionally awarded a sum of £19,998,144 from the third round of the Levelling Up Fund based on the second-round bid. Drawdown of the funding is dependent upon completion of a validation exercise which was launched on 21 December 2023 with a submission deadline of 2 February 2024. Once the funding has been confirmed a spend deadline of March 2026 will apply and the focus of activity must remain reflective of the submitted funding bid and importantly will function as a catalyst for the development of the Station Gateway site.
- 5.12 Delivery of this transformational project will require robust programme and project management and timely decision making. The focus will be on moving forward technical ground remediation work, tenant management, land acquisition and demolition works. As such, Cabinet is asked to consider a number of delegations in relation to the delivery of the Stafford Station Gateway Levelling Up Fund project.
- 5.13 Technical information implementation following Cabinet approvals secured in March 2020 (feasibility studies, appraisal work and options analysis) will be utilised to inform the continuation of negotiations related to the acquisition of land set out within **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX 1**. Up to date valuation information will be commissioned to accompany technical information. Building upon relationships established following the March 2020 Cabinet approval the Council will continue to access expert technical support from CBRE to engage with the relevant landowners.

- 5.14 In summary the following timescales can be applied in relationship to the process of land acquisition. A review and reestablishment of commissions has been completed (January 2024) and it is envisaged that negotiations will move to completion in the first half of this year. It is critical that ownership of the land is secured in a timely manner to enable and future demolition and remediation work to be included within the wider commission for the site; ensuring economics of scale and timely grant spend.
- 5.15 Ensuring all partners can input in an appropriate and timely manner within a framework that facilitates accountability and scrutiny will require a formal governance structure. The existing Station Gateway working group, which has previously sought approval from Cabinet for the adoption of the SRF and secured the allocation of external grant funding, will consider governance options, (which will have at its core a Partnership Programme Board), before seeking approval from Cabinet for its implementation. The Council will also need to ensure it has the capacity and resource to deliver this ambitious and transformational project.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

The recommendations set out within this report include approval that Cabinet accept a grant of £19,998,144 Levelling Up funding awarded by Government to Stafford Borough Council and that Cabinet recommend that Council include this sum within the Councils Capital Programme.

The grant funding relates to a bid which was originally submitted in August 2022 and only relates to the development of the site, with the land acquisition subject to a separate permission to spend report to be submitted at a later date.

Due to the delay in the funding award and submission of the bid a validation exercise is currently being undertaken to ensure that the funding is still sufficient to deliver the original objectives.

Funding awarded needs to be spent in full by March 2026 which will need to include acquisition of the site and all works.

Local evaluation of the potential health impacts of Stafford Station Gateway development will benefit from the £10,000 grant received from Staffordshire County Council via the Health Inequalities Directors' Group which will enable the completion of a rapid Health Impact Assessment. The funding carries a commitment to spend by the end of 2024.



## 6.2 Legal

The Council can exercise powers under section 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to acquire land. This allows the Council to agree the purchase of any land which the Council is satisfied will facilitate the carrying out of development/redevelopment, or improvement, of the land. This is on the basis that the intended purpose must be likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of the economic, social, or environmental wellbeing of the area.

Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972 also allows the Council to acquire land by agreement for the purpose of its statutory functions, or for the benefit, improvement, or development of the Borough.

In terms of the funding award, a Memorandum of Understanding will be issued upon confirmation of the funding award following completion of the validation exercise. A mechanism will then need to be agreed with Staffordshire County Council in respect of accessing their allocation of funding.

## 6.3 Human Resources

None

## 6.4 Risk Management

The grant funding is required to be spent by the end of the financial year 2026. Whilst clawback doesn't exist on LUF monies spent, there is a risk that unspent monies would have to be repaid. This would occur if the LUF monies had not been committed within the permitted timescales

Spend pressure results in several risks for the project. A critical risk to the Council is attached to the willingness of the owner to sell the land to the Council and further that this transaction can be completed within the funding available (Table 1: Capital Programme Commitment). Beyond the fundamental willingness, a lengthy negotiations or complex legal requirements attached to the land acquisition will have an impact on the overall delivery programme. The land will need to be in the ownership of the Council before demolition of the buildings located on the site and future land reclamation can commence and the works benefit from the funding and therefore contribute to the grant spend profile. The mitigation actions attached to this risk were in place before the grant application to DLUHC was submitted and are ongoing. The Council, supported by appropriately skilled consultants, has already entered negotiations with the landowner. These negotiations have been supported by technical information including valuation information.

The remaining land that will benefit from LUF is in the ownership of SCC, there are existing tenants on part of this landholding. Project delays and subsequent consequences on delivery outputs could be experienced if SCC are not able to gain possession of part of the site. SCC are committed to exercise terms of tenancies and licences to ensure that possession can be achieved.

Potential delays attached to procurement of contractors will be mitigation by early contractor engagement and the use of the SCC existing term contract.

Programme Governance and detailed project planning is required to support delivery. Commitment to ensure robust governance has been set out within the recommendations of this report. Dedicated programme management resources will be procured, and clear scope of deliverables will be agreed through the governance structure. The definition of the scope of works will also be strategical directed by Stafford Station Gateway SRF.

The detailed scope of the reclamation and therefore associated cost will be dependent on the findings of detailed Ground Investigations. Completing the Ground Investigations early in the work programme is essential. In addition, parameters informed by Groundwork Investigation, early contractor involvement and value engineering will support budget controls.

Securing planning and other regulatory consents is critical to creating the investment opportunity set out above. Early dialogue with relevant officers to highlight any policy or technical issues with proposals has taken place and planning and building control colleagues will be engaged throughout the life of the project.

## 6.5 **Equalities and Diversity**

None

## 6.6 **Health**

The overall impact of Stafford Station Gateway will benefit from a Health Impact Assessment. The assessment will follow the requirements attached to a 'rapid' HIA methodology. The scope of which enables the assessment of impact on the social, physiological and physical health of communities.

## 6.7 **Climate Change**

Stafford Station Gateway is listed as supporting the delivery Objective CC4: Continue to implement our green recovery, set out within Stafford Borough Council's Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy 2020-2040.

# 7 **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Land Acquisition

## 8 Previous Consideration

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 21 January 2016

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 4 August 2016

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 6 July 2017

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 3 October 2019

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 5 March 2020

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 1 July 2021

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 4 August 2022

Stafford Station Gateway Cabinet - 19 January 2023

## 9 Background Papers

Strategic Regeneration Framework [www.staffordbc.gov.uk/stafford-station-gateway](http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/stafford-station-gateway)

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Maxine Turley
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	01785 619 335
<b>Ward Interest:</b>	Doxey and Castletown and Rowley
<b>Report Track:</b>	Cabinet 7 March 2023 (Only)
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes

**Agenda Item 4(b)i**

## **Planning Obligations and DCLG Grant Allocation - Baswich, and Weeping Cross and Wildwood**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 March 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Economic Development and Planning and Head of Operations
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Leisure Portfolio

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### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To consider the allocation of Section 106 funding plus DCLG grant monies towards the provision and enhancement of open spaces serving the communities of Baswich, and Weeping Cross and Wildwood and to be given permission to spend subject to the successful completion of the procurement process.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the allocation of an existing off-site contribution under the terms of a S106 agreement for the amount of £129,096 be approved for the enhancement of open space in Baswich ward.
- 2.2 That £21,153 from a DCLG grant for Park Improvements received in 2018/2019 be approved for the enhancement of open space in the ward of Weeping Cross and Wildwood.
- 2.3 That permission is given to progress to the procurement and spend stages of the project delivery process, based on the proposals described in section 5 and the above funding allocations.
- 2.4 That delegated authority is granted to the Head of Economic Development & Planning and Head of Operations, in conjunction with the Leisure Portfolio Holder and relevant Local Councillors to approve the final plans and any further revisions to enable the projects to be delivered.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.5 The Borough wide Assessment of Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Facilities 2009 and the subsequent update in 2013 highlighted the need for better quality play provision for children of all ages. In addition the [Open Space and Green and Blue Infrastructure Topic Paper \(staffordbc.gov.uk\)](http://staffordbc.gov.uk) illustrates a need to improve the quality of existing play areas in the borough.
- 2.6 In order to progress with the works through procurement and delivery, without any further delays, this report is requesting that delegated authority be granted.

## 3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The sum of £129,096 was received in Sept 2018 relating to Section 106 funding as outlined in the table below and is targeted at the “provision and/or enhancement of open within the wards of Weeping Cross and Wildwood and/or Baswich”. In addition a grant of £21,153 was received from DCLG in 2018/9 for Park Improvements:

No	Budget Source	Detail	Amount	Date Received
1	Planning Application 18/27849/FUL	Former Police HQ	£129,096	Sept 2018
2	DCLG Grant	Park Improvements	£21,153	2018/9
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>£150,249</b>	

- 3.2 As part of the Council’s normal process of delivering S106 funding, Officers have already met with the Local Ward Members to discuss the priority projects in the Baswich Area and also the ward of Weeping Cross and Wildwood. The Local Councillors are fully supportive of the proposals.

## 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This project should help to deliver the Council’s Corporate Business Plan 2021-2024 key objectives set out below:
- “To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and well-being.”

- “To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives”

## **5 Report Detail**

5.1 The play facility off Yelverton Avenue in Baswich (location plan attached as **APPENDIX 1**) was last refurbished in 1996 with a further small investment received in 2010. The facility is in need of refurbishment and enhancement.

5.2 The priorities identified for the site are:

- upgrading the existing play facilities and associated surfacing
- installation of a new circular pathway around the boundary of the open space
- ancillary items including picnic benches, seating, bins and distance markers.

5.3 Officers have undertaken soft market testing which indicates that the budget for the works is sufficient to cover the estimated costs at Yelverton Park.

5.4 The additional monies available from the DCLG Grant will be targeted at minor improvements to Wildwood Park.

5.5 Wildwood Park was upgraded to a Destination Park in 2014 and has proven extremely popular with users. As the park is now 10 years old and continues to attract large numbers, the age and constant wear has resulted in the need for investment to improve the park experience.

5.6 The funds allocated to Wildwood Park will be used to replace and repair worn areas of safety surfacing within the play area and provide an inclusive picnic bench on the site. Again officers have undertaken soft market testing which indicates that the available sums are sufficient to cover these works.

5.7 In both cases, should the final cost of these works fall below the available sums, then further minor improvement / enhancement works will be carried out at the respective parks.

5.8 The existing facilities are managed by the Council and the new facilities will be maintained and operated in the same way by the Streetscene team.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

The OSOS S106 18/27849/FUL relating to the Former Police HQ with a value of £129,095.86 was received in September 2018. This sum is currently

unallocated and is therefore available to use for projects within the wards of Weeping Cross and Wildwood and/or Baswich.

A further sum of £21,153.00 from a DCLG grant received in 2018/2019 is available for allocation towards Park Improvements.

In both cases the outline projects have been soft market tested and it is believed the two funding allocations will be sufficient to cover the costs of the proposed works. This working assumption will be confirmed once a full procurement process has been undertaken. Officers will ensure that the procurement exercise complies with relevant regulations thereby achieving the necessary balance between value for money and quality.

The site is currently managed and operated by the Council's Streetscene team who have been involved in developing the project outlines. It is believed at this point that the project will not increase the management costs above and beyond the current level. As such, it is expected that the ongoing maintenance costs will be met from within existing budgets.

## **6.2 Legal**

The main legal implication is the need to ensure compliance with the requirements of the two funding allocations.

## **6.3 Human Resources**

None

## **6.4 Risk Management**

Future risks will be formally assessed as a part of the overall Project Management.

## **6.5 Equalities and Diversity**

The Borough Council has considered the effect of its actions on all sections of our communities and has addressed all and believes there to be no impact on any of the Equality Strands in the production of this report.

In following the recommendations of this report there will be no impact on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation within the community.

## **6.6 Health**

The delivery of these projects will help maintain and improve the health and wellbeing of the residents by allowing them the opportunity to partake in social and leisure activities.

## **6.7 Climate Change**

No significant implications.

## **7 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Yelverton Park Location Plan

## **8 Previous Consideration**

None

## **9 Background Papers**

The Borough wide Assessment of Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Facilities 2009 and the subsequent update in 2013 - [Open Space and Green and Blue Infrastructure Topic Paper \(staffordbc.gov.uk\)](http://staffordbc.gov.uk)

### **Contact Officer:**

**Telephone Number:** Sally McDonald  
**Ward Interest:** Baswich, Weeping Cross and Wildwood  
**Report Track:** Cabinet 7 March 2024 (Only)  
**Key Decision:** Yes



# Appendix

## Planning Obligations and DCLG Grant Allocation - Baswich, and Weeping Cross and Wildwood



**Agenda Item 4(c)i****Quarter 3 Performance Report for 2023-24**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 March 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Transformation and Assurance
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources Portfolio

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**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To advise Members on the progress in delivering the Council's priorities and performance at the end of the quarter 3 for 2023-24.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note the progress made during quarter 3 in the delivery of the Council's priorities and performance as set out in **APPENDICES 1 AND 2**.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.2 The performance information allows Cabinet to monitor progress in delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and operational services.

**3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Corporate Business Plan 2021-24 sets out the Council's priorities and the key actions to deliver these.
- 3.2 Overall, 83% of the key actions have been delivered or are on schedule to be completed. Progress in delivering the corporate priorities is summarised in section 5 of the report and set out in detail in **APPENDICES 1A TO 1D**.
- 3.3 With regard to the operational performance of the key services of the Council, 71% of targets have been met or exceeded. Further details can be found at 5.7 and in **APPENDIX 2**.

**4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The indicators and actions contribute individually to the Council's priorities as set out in the Corporate Business Plan 2021-24.





**5 Report Detail**

- 5.1 The Corporate Business Plan 2021-24 sets out the Council's priorities and the key actions to deliver these.

## Delivery Plans

- 5.2 The Delivery Plans set out in **APPENDICES 1A TO 1D**, to this report summarise how the Council will achieve progress against its Corporate Priorities; these plans establish the actions and timetable for delivery and form the basis of the Council's performance reporting framework. The appendices summarise performance in delivery of the actions at the end of quarter 3 of 2023-24.
- 5.3 A commentary on performance and a rating for each of the actions set out in the Delivery Plans is given in **APPENDICES 1A TO 1D**. A summary of progress, by rating, is given in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Summary of progress in delivery of key projects/actions for Quarter 3**

Corporate Business Plan Priority	 Action completed	 Work on Target	 Work < 3 months behind schedule	 Work > 3 months behind schedule	N/A Action not yet due	Total Number of Actions
The Economy	4	6	2	1		13
Community	1	11		1		13
Climate Change		6				6
The Council		1		2		3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>35</b>




- 5.4 At the end of quarter 3, of the 35 projects/actions due for delivery:

- 14% of have been completed;
- 69% are on target to be completed;
- 6% have slipped slightly by less than 3 months;
- 11% have slipped by more than 3 months and
- 0% are not yet due for action.

### Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- 5.5 In addition to the Delivery Plans, performance is also reported against the delivery of key operational services; Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for these services are set out in **APPENDIX 2**. In summary:

**Table 2 - Summary of key performance indicators for Quarter 3**

<b>Corporate Business Plan Priority</b>	 <b>Performance exceeds target</b>	 <b>Performance on target</b>	 <b>Performance below target</b>	<b>Total Number of KPIs</b>
<b>The Economy</b>	6		1	<b>7</b>
<b>Community</b>	6	1	4	<b>11</b>
<b>The Council</b>	3	1	2	<b>6</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>

- 63% indicators show performance above target;
- 8% indicators show performance on target; and
- 29% indicators show performance below target.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The financial management of the Corporate Plan and the Delivery Plans is standard in accordance with Financial Regulations. All actions are budgeted for accordingly.

### **6.2 Legal**

None

### **6.3 Human Resources**

None

### **6.4 Risk Management**

None

### **6.5 Equalities and Diversity**

None

### **6.6 Health**

None

### **6.7 Climate Change**

None

## 7 Appendices

Appendix 1A: The Economy  
Appendix 1B: Community  
Appendix 1C: Climate Change  
Appendix 1D: The Council  
Appendix 2: Key Performance Indicators

## 8 Previous Consideration (Part)

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee - 5 March 2024 -  
Minute No TBC

## 9 Background Papers

Corporate Plan 2021-24

**Contact Officer:** Judith Aupers

**Telephone Number:** 01543 46411

**Ward Interest:** Nil





**Report Track:** Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny 05/03/24  
(Part)  
Cabinet 07/03/24  
Resources Scrutiny Committee 13/03/24 (Part)  
Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 21/03/24 (Part)

**Key Decision:** No

## The Economy - Delivery Plan for 2023 - 2024

### Business Objective 1: To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs

#### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 3





				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
4	6	2	1		13


#### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 3

- Development management performance has improved with the backlog reducing.
- Renovation works in Market Square have completed and successful launch event taking place.
- Cabinet have agreed to acquire the former Co-op department store and Guild Hall shopping centre.
- Nearly £20m of funding has been secured from the Levelling Up Fund to support development of Stafford Station gateway project.
- Westbridge Park project completed and new facilities open to the public.


#### Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 3



- Local Plan production has slipped and new timetable is being prepared.
- Meecebrook - delay to completion of Strategic Outline Business Case for railway station due to HS2 decision.



	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Assess the economic implications for the Borough over the medium and long term</b>							
1.1.1	Review and assess all key programmes and major projects	Review of key projects and delivery plans	X				Key projects reviewed and delivery plans prepared for 2023/24. Details of key projects are referred to through the actions set out below	
<b>1.2</b>	<b>To facilitate the delivery of 500 new homes in the Borough per year including 210 affordable homes</b>							
1.2.1	Complete five year land supply statement	Data extract Site visits complete Publication of statement	X				Statement completed and published – July 2023	
1.2.2	Improve and maintain performance of development management	Develop Recovery Plan to tackle current backlogs of applications  Produce quarterly updates setting out progress in reducing the backlog.	X		X		Recovery Plan is being implemented. Total number of applications 'on-hand' as at end of December 2023 is 531, a 50% reduction from December 2022.	
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Deliver key projects and infrastructure proposals that will promote economic growth and investment for the Borough</b>							
1.3.1	Delivery of the Stafford Town Centre Transformation Programme	Completion of Market Square renovation			X		Works in Market Square were completed in October 2023 with a very well attended launch event held on 28 October.	


	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		Appointment of onsite contractors for Station Approach project		X		X	Contractors appointed Q3, who subsequently withdrew from the contract. (Appointment of replacement contractor completed January 2024; currently finalising contract).	
		Completion of Station Approach project				X	Sequencing of ongoing highways works elsewhere within the town centre is now being considered alongside the Station Approach programme.	
		Conclusion of discussions with third party landowners to progress commercial projects		X			Acquisition of former Co-op department store and Guildhall shopping centre approved by Cabinet. Officers are progressing due diligence.	
1.3.2	Delivery of the Stafford Station Gateway	Completion of station access feasibility study		X			Nearly £20m Levelling Up Funding award announced November 2023. As such delivery programme scoping exercise now being carried out in the context of the funding award.	
		Completion of delivery programme scoping exercise			X			





	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.3.3	Supporting the development of proposed Meecebrook Garden Community	<p>Completion of Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC)for the railway station</p> <p>Completion of remaining technical studies (excluding transport modelling)</p> <p>Completion of detailed master planning and viability studies</p> <p>Completion of collaboration agreement</p>		X			<p>Draft SOBC reviewed, HS2 Birmingham to Manchester link cancellation resulted in SOBC being reconsidered and an amended draft received for officer review/ consideration. Scrutiny report setting out details 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024.</p> <p>X Brief to procure work remains ready to take to market.</p> <p>X Continued dialogue with commissioned consultants including input in to SOBC review.</p> <p>X Continued/active dialogue with commissioned consultants to understand next steps includes input in to SOBC review.</p>	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
1.3.4	Stone Leisure	<p>Delivery phase for Westbridge Park initiated</p> <p>Planning consent granted.</p> <p>Work on site commences</p>			X		All works completed at Westbridge Park - Play facilities and Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) opened to public in October 2023. Wheeled Sports opened 1 December 2023. Car parks works completed and building in place. Formal opening scheduled for April 2024	
<b>1.4</b>	<b>Work in partnership to generate economic and sustainable growth for the long-term prosperity of our residents, visitors and businesses</b>							
1.4.1	Develop Stafford as a hub of productivity to help businesses develop, grow and thrive	New and existing businesses supported to grow and build confidence in Stafford as a hub of productivity with a balanced economy.		X	X	X	<p>Stafford continues to attract entrepreneurs with a record number of 215 new businesses registered at companies house.</p> <p>The Business Growth Team continue to support our 5000 existing businesses via one-to-one advice, email campaigns, business bulletins, delivery of grants, key account management activities, attending business events.</p>	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
							The team continues to deliver our £5 million UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund to support local businesses.	
1.4.2	Promote our visitor economy to demonstrate the offer in the Borough	Relaunch Our Beautiful Borough visitor economy campaign  Development of a Local Visitor Economy Partnership in conjunction with Staffordshire County Council	X			X	The roll out of the campaign continues to gain traction with 1.98 million interactions over the past 8 months.  November saw Visit England confirm the county's LVEP has been accredited nationally. The existing DMP (Destination Management Partnership) will evolve to fulfil the role of a high performing LVEP with a new board and governance.	
1.4.3	Unlock economic opportunities in our rural areas	Launch of Rural England Prosperity Fund grant programme		X			6 Community projects have been earmarked for funding, a total of £50,000 has been paid so far with a balance of £70,000 due to be paid before March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2024.	





	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		Grant awards made under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund rural business to business grant programme		X	X	X	14 REPF Business Expressions of interest have been invited to submit full applications for funding. This totals £650,000 of funding requests against a 'pot' of £365,952. This fund is due to be received in May 2024.	
		Completion of UK Shared Prosperity Funded rural hub feasibility study			X		Study has been completed and will be presented to UKSPF Board for consideration at its next meeting in Q4.	
1.4.4	Support the facilitation of lifelong learning to create a local workforce with specialist skills that can respond to growth ambitions	Delivery of grants to support apprenticeships and training via UK Shared Prosperity Fund business to business rural grant scheme		X	X		FE providers and training providers have been contacted and are working with us to promote the use of this fund to cover the cost of taking on an apprentice as well as upskilling existing staff.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>1.5</b>	<b>Develop a new Local Plan that reflects our Corporate ambitions for growth</b>							
1.5.1	Revise and refresh the Local Plan	<p>Appropriate sites for future development for housing, employment and open space identified</p> <p>Updated evidence base completed that includes infrastructure, viability and economic recovery issues</p>		X	X		<p>The approved Local Development Scheme sets out the key stages leading to the adoption of new Local Plan (2023/24), subject to review</p> <p>New Local Plan Preferred Option completed and implications of Government planning reforms on subsequent stages of the Local Plan 2020-2040 progressing.</p>	
1.5.2	Embed high quality design into Planning Policy to ensure that Stafford is an attractive place that people want to live in, promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting future investment.	Local design codes linked to New Local Plan progressed	X				Government's proposals through NPPF for local design codes confirmed and work progressing aligned to Local Plan during Spring 2024	

## Community - Delivery Plan for 2023 - 2024

**Business Objective 2: To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing.**

### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 3



				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
1	11		1		13



### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 3

Annual Air Quality Assessment indicates that the borough's air quality is satisfactory thereby meaning that the Council does not have to declare an Air Quality Management Area and reported to DEFRA. The Council was once again shortlisted for the APSE best performer in street cleansing category award. The Warm Space scheme has been set up with 15 venues operating at the end of the quarter.




### Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 3



By the end of this quarter the Service had only delivered about a third of the annual food safety inspection programme. Following recognition that the Food Safety Program was off track, external support has been brought in to complete the outstanding inspection program with the expectation that all visits bar around 10%-15% of low-risk visits should be completed by the end of the financial year. All high-risk inspections have been completed and all medium risk inspections are programmed in for completion.


	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Work in partnership to sustain support for vulnerable residents</b>							
2.1.1	To work in partnership to provide support to our communities and the voluntary sector	2 rounds of the Stafford Borough Grants Scheme implemented	X		X		8 applications were received and funding was supplied to 1 sports application and one small grant application. The process will be reviewed in the coming months	
		2 rounds of the Stafford Borough Small Grants Scheme and Sports Grants implemented, grants agreed and awarded	X		X			
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Keep the streets and parks clean and attractive for everyone to enjoy</b>							
2.2.1	Deliver high quality Neighbourhood Services to ensure that town centres, parks and open spaces are clean, tidy, and attractive	Continue to participate in Annual National Performance Benchmarking for Street Cleansing and Parks and Open Spaces		X			APSE Benchmarking data submitted. Shortlisted for "Best Performer" in Street Cleansing category again. The Council did not pick up the award but was extremely pleased with the recognition.  Continued ongoing support for community groups is being given.	
		Support Community groups undertaking litter picks		X				


	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
2.2.2	Monitoring of construction works associated with major infrastructure projects (e.g. M6 Smart Motorways and HS2) to minimise the potential for nuisance being caused to the reasonable amenities of local residents.	<p>To determine the adequacy of Section 61 notices and 'Statement of Intent' submitted by HS2 within prescribed timescales.</p> <p>To respond to all complaints concerning pollution incidents, or non-compliances with approved method as per Section 61 or 'Statement of Intent'.</p>	X	X	X	X	<p>No S.61 Notices received during this monitoring period. M6 Smart motorways upgrade has been completed.</p> <p>Whilst the HS2 scheme will no longer proceed north of Birmingham (and through the Borough), there is ongoing work with HS2 regarding existing groundwork operations.</p> <p>Ongoing provision of responsive service to address any complaints.</p>	
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Support and promote community health and wellbeing to all our residents and businesses</b>							
2.3.1	Support partners to offer and deliver initiatives to improve and enhance health and wellbeing of residents	Support partners to offer and deliver initiatives to improve and enhance health and wellbeing of residents	X	X	X	X	Warm Spaces have been successfully rolled out; 15 venues have opened throughout the borough.	



	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
2.3.2	Support the co-ordination of high-profile events run by Freedom Leisure	Appropriate support for Freedom Leisure in the implementation and evaluation of significant events such as the Shakespeare Festival, Stafford Half Marathon, Christmas lights switch on, Stafford 10k and the Pancake race.	X	X	X	X	Events continue to be delivered as per the Contract specification. The Stafford Christmas Lights Switch On took place on 18 <sup>th</sup> November and planning is underway for the Stafford Half Marathon on 17 <sup>th</sup> March.	
2.3.3	Providing a safe place for residents to live and work by enabling all food and drink businesses to be compliant with environmental regulations.	All food businesses to be inspected under Food Safety legislation on risk-basis and actions taken as appropriate.				X	By the end of Q3 the service had only delivered about a third of the annual food safety programme.	
2.3.4	Providing a safe and clean place for residents and businesses to thrive, by monitoring and assessing air quality within the Borough.	To monitor and assess air quality within the Borough to determine whether air quality is within prescribed limit values.  To prepare an annual report upon findings to DEFRA.				X	Air Quality Assessment completed, indicating that air quality is satisfactory (no need to declare an Air Quality Management Area).  Report issued to DEFRA.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Work with partners to ensure the borough is a safe place to be at all times</b>							
2.4.1	To assist in the operational delivery of, and lead on, the implementation of specific initiatives that support the reduction of crime and vulnerability in the Borough (as per the recommendations in the Community Safety Strategic Assessment)	Focus groups established for ASB hotspot locations  Partnership plan developed  Progress made on delivery plan	X	X  X	X	X	The groups are meeting monthly and are working towards the identified actions in the delivery plan.	
2.4.2	To ensure that the authority adheres to its statutory responsibility in respect of the Prevent, Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse	Safeguarding Policy up to date  Training and awareness rolled out to elected members, staff	X			X	The safeguarding policy is up to date.  Safeguarding training is underway for Councillors and a presentation has been purchased to roll out to staff. Staff are also currently completing online Prevent training. Councillors will be asked to complete this statutory training next quarter	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
2.4.3	Utilise procedures and processes to investigate reported incidents of anti-social behaviour (ASB)	Increased reporting ASB campaigns formulated, implemented, monitored and evaluated. On-going review of investigations in place.	X	X	X	X	<p>During this Quarter 17 new reports of ASB were received by the Council. To assist in tackling the ASB that is reported the following have been served by the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7 Community Protection warnings</li> <li>• 4 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) were issued in partnership work by Police and council for breaches of the PSPO in both Stone and Stafford Town Centres.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, 10 FPN's were issued for breach of Community protection notices served previously.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 case review was held.</li> </ul>	





	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>2.5</b>	<b>Work towards everyone having access to safe and suitable accommodation</b>							
2.5.1	Provide a comprehensive housing options service to prevent homelessness and support people into sustainable accommodation	Continuous focus on upstream prevention to minimise crisis intervention	X	X	X	X	Additional temporary accommodation units have been sourced to assist with demand. Options continue to work with partner agencies to upstream homeless prevention where possible, which has included the reviewed Young Persons Protocol.	
		Robust housing pathways for all client groups in place	X	X	X	X	The pathways to be strengthened are young persons and rough sleepers, the update above and below relate to this.	
		Systems change approach to supporting rough sleepers implemented		X	X	X	The high level supported accommodation to be run by Turning Point for rough sleepers is close to being opened, strengthening the rough sleeper pathway.	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
2.5.2	Ensure good housing standards are delivered in the private sector	Advice and support provided to landlords, tenants and home owners	X	X	X	X	Proactive HMO inspection work reduced as service requests increased. Legally, one civil penalty of £3000 was paid, and 7 legal notices to property owners were issued. Funding obtained for project to target areas of poor housing and deprivation. Work will commence in Q4 and continue through to September 2024.	✓
		Licensing of properties and sites	X	X	X	X	Site and property licensing continues.	
		Enforcement of standards Proactive Inspection of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)	X	X			This was a project for Q1 and Q2 of the year, as demand picks up in Q3 proactive work has to cease.	
2.5.3	Provide an effective and efficient service to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants	Embed new shared service delivery	X	X			Work is progressing well and the team are dealing with both legacy cases and new referrals.	✓
		Update the Housing Assistance Policy to enhance the DFG offer to residents				X		

**Climate Change - Delivery Plan for 2023 - 2024**

**Business Objective 3: To continue work towards our Climate Change and Green Recovery objectives, integrating them into our activities and strategic plans**

**Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 3**


				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
	<b>6</b>				<b>6</b>

**Summary of Successes as at Quarter 3**

The annual audit for 2022/23 has shown a reduction in the Council’s net carbon footprint. Research is ongoing into the feasibility of the use of HVO fuel across both its refuse and Streetscene fleets. The Council continues to work closely with its Community Panel and has started work on a Mowing and Sowing protocol.


**Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 3**



Not applicable


	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol	
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Reduce emissions from our own activities</b>								
3.1.1	Reduce emissions from our own activities	<p>Undertake an annual audit of the council's carbon footprint to derive the council's carbon equivalent inputs and output</p> <p>Embed climate change actions into council and partnership policies and plans</p> <p>Carry out feasibility studies around reducing energy usage in Council assets (i.e. battery storage; solar array; LED lighting; passive infrared sensors; renewable energy etc)</p> <p>Work on carbon reduction feasibilities studies with partners in contracted out services, (i.e. Freedom Leisure)</p>			X		<p>A report has now been prepared to illustrate Stafford Borough Councils overall carbon footprint for 2022-2023. The report shows a reduction from 2285 tCO2e last year to 1306 tCO2e this year.</p>		
						X			
						X			
		Prepare an evidence base enabling funding to					X		


	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		<p>decarbonise the Council's estate to be obtained.</p> <p>Switch to a 100% renewable energy tariff.</p> <p>Low Emission Vehicles - Explore the feasibility of the use of electric vehicles and alternative fuels such as Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel in the Council's and its waste collection fleets.</p> <p>Reduce the energy and petrochemical usage within the Council's Street Scene service in vehicles, plant and equipment by changes to working practice, vehicles, plant equipment, and operations.</p> <p>Continue to install Electric Vehicle charge points across council owned car parks, where practicable and funding becomes available.</p>			<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>X</p> <p>X</p>	<p>The Council has now switched over to 100% renewable REGO certified electricity.</p> <p>Research is ongoing to determine feasibility and benefits of utilising HVO fuel and arrangements are being made for EV trial vehicles to be tested.</p>	
3.2	<b>Work in partnership to raise awareness of and identify opportunities to implement sustainable low carbon initiatives and promote community action on reducing emissions</b>							



	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
3.2.1	Work in partnership with Staffordshire Sustainability Board and others to determine best practice and increase awareness of climate change in our council, communities, businesses, and contractors	<p>Nature Recovery Declaration and base pledge agreed and incorporated into relevant policies and plans</p> <p>Supporting the Climate Change Community Panel made up of community representatives to support formulation and delivery of community-based initiatives and to develop and deliver sustainability projects with residents and wider stakeholders throughout the Borough</p>		X			<p>Nature recovery declaration has been completed.</p> <p>The Council continues to work with the community panel and the work they are doing will greatly benefit how the public view climate change. The group help to provide a perspective on bottom-up, community-led, initiatives relating to Climate Change.</p> <p>Some of these initiatives involve practical input and support from frontline services such as Streetscene (e.g., Grass verges project). Also, the group acts a critical friend to help the Council to assess its own performance.</p>	
		Active participation in the Countywide Sustainability Board and Officers Groups.	X	X	X	X	The Council continues to actively contribute towards the County's Sustainability Board	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Mitigate and adapt to climate change</b>							
3.3.1	Deliver the measures identified in the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy	Climate Change Adaptation Strategy implemented and monitored	X	X	X	X	<p>The Council adopted its Climate Change Adaptation Strategy in January 2023. Work to progress the delivery of the actions is underway. This includes:</p> <p>Projects looking to provide nature-based solutions to climate change on council owned green spaces;</p> <p>A resilience project looking to encourage businesses to consider how future impacts of climate change might impact their premises and operations.</p> <p>Work is also continuing to increase the roll out of Electric Vehicle Charge Points across the wider Borough area; and a Local Area Energy Plan has been produced which identifies areas for the roll out of renewable energy within the Borough.</p>	
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Continue to implement our green recovery objectives</b>							
3.4.1	Develop blue and green infrastructure and public realm	Develop/implement new Open Space Strategy			X	X	Part of the Green Infrastructure Strategy	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		<p>Involvement with Stafford Brooks Project</p> <p>Strategic Green Infrastructure assessment including investigating green network enhancements in Stafford and Stone</p>			X	X	<p>work. Ongoing from Autumn 2023</p> <p>Project lead is National Highways, with SBC partnering. Final funding decision expected February 2024</p> <p>Strategic green infrastructure identified in Local Plan preferred options at Stafford &amp; Stone. Site assessment work – Autumn 2023</p>	
3.4.2	Protect and enhance our environment	Deliver Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) projects, including education and car parking enhancements	X	X	X	X	<p>Planning application submitted by National Trust to deliver new visitor facilities at Shugborough – decision awaited.</p> <p>Initial studies for punchbowl car park redevelopment – Spring 2024.</p> <p>Education engagement projects progressing</p>	
		Assessment of air quality / nitrogen dioxide for Southern Staffordshire				X	Air quality monitoring & analysis of nitrogen levels continuing with	





	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		<p>SACs leading to data monitoring and strategic mitigation assessment</p> <p>Deliver biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements through the Environment Act 2021</p> <p>Develop and implement a Biodiversity Strategy</p>			X	X	<p>collaborative mitigation programme progressing – Spring 2024</p> <p>Delivery of BNG through planning decision-making processes in line with Government timescales.</p> <p>Progress is being made through County Local Nature Recovery Strategy, leading to Biodiversity Net Gain requirements – Spring 2024</p>	
3.4.3	Adopt the New Local Plan to meet climate change mitigation and adaptation, and environmental measures through new development – Delivered by Business Objective 1	Identify the appropriate policies and mitigation measure through future development in sustainable locations for services and facilities aligned to energy efficiency standards and renewable sources		X	X	X	Evidence base published for the New Local Plan, together with work alongside other Staffordshire authorities.	
		Develop local design codes for high quality new developments				X	Consideration of Government's proposals through National	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
							Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or local design codes and green infrastructure strategy – Spring 2024.	

## The Council - Delivery Plan for 2023 - 2024

**Business Objective 4: To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives.**

### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 3



				N/A	Total Number of Projects
Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Action not yet due	
	<b>1</b>		<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>


### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 3

The new customer portal went live on 29<sup>th</sup> November. Further processes are to be added in Q4 and throughout 2024/25

### Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 3

There has been slippage on the transformation work due to capacity issues. Funding for additional capacity has been included within the budget for 2024/25 which will help to address some of the capacity issues.

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Use our resources in the most effective and efficient way by focusing on financial recovery, reform and sustainability</b>							
4.1.1	Determine a medium term financial strategy to maintain the financial resilience of the Council	A rolling Medium Term Financial Strategy produced				X	The Medium Term Financial Strategy has been produced and is due to be approved by Council in January	
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Continue to work towards organisational and transformational change, integrating equality objectives into everything we do</b>							
4.2.1	Consider the impact of change and future ways of working on the Council workforce, members and customers	Pilot of the Way We Work completed and evaluated	X				The review of the pilot has slipped due to capacity issues within the HR team. Intention is to complete this in Q1 2024/25	
		Overarching framework for workforce plan to be developed		X			Cabinet has approved deferring this to 2024/25	
		Review of digital strategy and development of action plan	X				The digital strategy is with the Deputy Chief Executive Resources for review but has been delayed by work on the budget	

	Objective & Actions	Milestones	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr4	Progress Update	Symbol
		Implementation of new Customer Portal System Phase 1		X			The new system went live on 29 <sup>th</sup> November with the garden waste permits. Other processes will be added during Q4 and the system will continue to be developed in 2024/25.	
4.2.2	Investigate the opportunity for further shared services with neighbouring authorities	Implementation and transformation of shared services including the delivery of savings	X	X	X	X	The restructure of the service manager tier has been delayed slightly but consultation will commence in Q4	



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2023/24 - as at end of Quarter 3

KPIs for Business Objective 1 - The Economy

Description	Symbol	Number of KPIs
Performance exceeds target	★	6
Performance on target	✓	
Performance below target	✗	1
Due to be reported at Year End	N/A	







	Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End	Symbol	Comments
	<b>Economic Development &amp; Planning</b>								
	Major Planning Applications determined within time	<b>60%</b>	90.9%	100%	84.6%			★	
	Non-major Planning Applications determined within time	<b>70%</b>	75.9%	81%	80.6%			★	

	Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End	Symbol	Comments
	<b>Regulatory Services</b>								
L13	Applications registered and acknowledged within 3 days of valid receipt	<b>90%</b>	99%	100%	100%			★	
L14	Full plans applications with initial full assessment within 15 days of valid receipt	<b>70%</b>	85%	96%	86%			★	
LI15	Building Control-Site visits completed on day requested	<b>99%</b>	99%	99%	100%			★	
LI16	Building Control-Customers satisfied or very satisfied with the service	<b>90%</b>	88%	100%	100%			★	
	Turnaround time for land charges searches (excluding personal searches) – average no. of working days	<b>100% within 10 working days</b>	22%	37%	55%			✘	The issues with the County Council and their systems have not been fully resolved during this quarter and this has impacted on turnaround times.
	Deliver 210 affordable homes per year working with Registered Providers, Developers and Homes England t	<b>210 homes</b>						N/A	Figures due at year end

## KPIs for Business Objective 2 - The Community

Description	Symbol	Number of KPIs
Performance exceeds target	★	6
Performance on target	✓	1
Performance below target	✗	4
Due to be reported at Year End	N/A	3

	Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End	Symbol	Comments
	<b>Regulatory Services</b>								
LI3	No of Enviro-crime complaints acknowledged and initial investigation completed within 72 hours of receipt.	<b>94%</b>	96%	99%	95.5%			★	This KPI relates to complaints about abandoned vehicles; dog fouling; fly posting; and fly tipping.
	<b>Operations</b>								
LI4	No of residents who think the town centres are clean and tidy	<b>90%</b>	97%	97%	96%			★	
LI5	Residual Household Waste Collected per household (Kgs) (target maximum given)	<b>110</b>	109.47 (act)	110.45 (act)	105.31 (est)			★	The aim here is to be below the target rather than over it.

	Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End	Symbol	Comments
LI6	% of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting	<b>51%</b>	52.13% (act)	51.36% (act)	46.29% (est)				Qtr 3 – reduced garden waste tonnage due to the season, the figure usually increases again during Q4 each year.
LI41	No of sites with green flag status	<b>6</b>	6	6	<b>6</b>				
<b>Wellbeing</b>									
LI7	% of homeless cases resolved through prevention	<b>35%</b>	39%	29%	<b>21%</b>				High levels of crisis intervention continue reflecting current economic climate.
LI8	% of homeless cases resolved through relief	<b>65%</b>	61%	71%	<b>79%</b>				
LI9	No of DFGs completed	<b>35</b>	12	23	<b>23</b>				A higher volume of works achieved practical completion in Q3 than those reported, many of which were finished on site before the Christmas break. These are not counted until inspected and signed off by officers in January
LI10	No of households referred for energy efficiency measures	<b>8</b>	13	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>				

	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Qtr 1</b>	<b>Qtr 2</b>	<b>Qtr 3</b>	<b>Qtr 4</b>	<b>Year End</b>	<b>Symbol</b>	<b>Comments</b>
LI11	Empty Homes brought back into use following Officer interventions	<b>10</b>	12	17	<b>14</b>			★	
LI12	No of households given advice on energy efficiency	<b>15</b>	113	129	<b>106</b>			★	
LI52	Overall reported crime in the Borough	<b>8410</b>						N/A	Figures due at year end
LI53	Reported incidents of domestic abuse	<b>2959</b>						N/A	Figures due at year end
LI54	Reported incidents of ASB	<b>2031</b>						N/A	Figures due at year end

## KPIs for Business Objective 4 - The Council

Description	Symbol	Number of KPIs
Performance exceeds target	★	3
Performance on target	✓	1
Performance below target	✗	2

	Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year	Symbol	Comments
	<b>Local Taxation and Benefits</b>								
L13	Days taken to process new HB/CT Claims	20 days	33.7	42.5	24.2			✗	The cause of the performance earlier in the year was largely due to a high turnover of staff and a number of new staff undergoing training). Performance has improved and was better than target during November and December. Q4 results should therefore be on target.
L14	Days taken to process new HB/CT change of circumstances	9 days	7.5	8.7	6.9			★	
	% of Council Tax collected annually	98% by year end	28.8%	56.0%	83.1%			✓	Compares to 82.3% in the same period of last year so improving toward the pre-pandemic position.

	Indicator	Target	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year	Symbol	Comments
	% National non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	98% by year end	28.9%	60.4%	83.9			★	Compares to 81% last year and better than pre-pandemic performance (83.4% in December 2019)
	<b>Calls</b>								
	% of calls answered	94%	94%	94%	88%			✘	December call volumes were very high due to residents signing up for their garden waste subscriptions. 3037 calls for garden waste were taken which accounted for 40% of our calls.
	Average call wait time	2 min	1.21	1.18	1.36			★	Despite the high call volumes the average call wait time was lower than the target

**Agenda Item 4(c)ii****Revenues and Benefits Collection Report - Quarter 3**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 March 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Resources
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources Portfolio

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**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the performance of the Revenues and Benefits Service as regards:
- The collection of Council Tax during the first three quarters of the 2023/2024 financial year.
  - The collection of Business Rates during the three quarters of the 2023/2024 financial year.
  - The recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit during the first three quarters of the 2023/2024 financial year.
- 1.2 To seek approval to the write off of the arrears listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES**.

**2 Reason(s) for Report being 'Not for Publication'**

- 2.1 In accordance with the provisions of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the report is considered 'not for publication' under the following categories of exemption:
- Exempt Paragraph 1 - Information relating to any individual.
  - Exempt Paragraph 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
  - Exempt Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council).

**3 Recommendations**

- 3.1 That the information regarding collections be noted.
- 3.2 That the arrears listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES** be written off.



## Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Efficient collection of the Council's revenues is of major importance to the funding of Council services and those provided by our preceptors.
- 3.2 Whilst our collection rates are traditionally good, regrettably not all of the monies owed to the Council can be collected and this report contains a recommendation to write off bad debts which cannot be recovered.

## 4 Key Issues

- 4.1 Council Tax due for the 2023/2024 year amounts to £99.2M of which some **83.1%** was collected by the end of December. This is slightly better than last year's performance in the same period (82.3%).
- 4.2 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £50M of which some **83.9%** was collected by the end of December, showing an increase on the previous year (81.0%).

## 5 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 5.1 Not Applicable

## 6 Report Detail

### Council Tax

- 6.1 Council Tax is collected on behalf of the District Council, Parish Councils and our Major Preceptors (Staffordshire County Council and Commissioner for Police, Crime, Fire and Rescue). The effect of the Collection fund arrangements means that Stafford Borough Council retains around 10% of the council tax collected.
- 6.2 Council Tax due for the current year amounted to £99.2M and we have collected 83.1% of this within the first three quarters of the year. This shows an improvement on last year's performance, though is lower than pre-pandemic levels (84.3% in the same period of 2019/20). This would seem to indicate that we are making progress with our recovery processes but have a little way to go before reaching pre-covid levels.
- 6.3 In accordance with the Council's approved policies, all reasonable and lawful attempts are made to recover all amounts due. In the first instance this involves the issue of bills, reminders and final notices, followed by Summonses in the Magistrates Court where the warning notices are not effective. At all stages of this process, debtors are encouraged to engage in voluntary arrangements to repay their arrears, to prevent the need for formal action.

Where necessary and when Liability Orders are granted by Magistrates, the Council uses its powers to make deductions from earnings and benefits of

debtors, where it can, and instructs Enforcement Agents where such deductions are not possible or appropriate.

In the most severe cases and for debts exceeding £5,000, the Council will consider personal bankruptcy action against individuals.

- 6.4 The recovery powers available to the Council are considerable but not completely infallible. There are occasions when bills are not paid and the debts cannot be recovered.
- 6.5 Statutory safeguards such as Debt Relief Orders and Individual's Voluntary Arrangements exist to protect debtors who are suffering hardship, to avoid the the expensive, stressful and sometimes ineffective process of personal bankruptcy. Where a debt is included in such an instrument, or when a debtor is bankrupt, our ordinary recovery powers cannot be used.
- 6.6 For any of our powers to be effective we need to know the whereabouts of a debtor, and this is not always the case. Where debtors abscond, we will use all reasonable endeavours to trace them and are often successful in doing so. Unfortunately, on occasions this is not so and we must submit a debt for write off.

Our trace procedures include:

- Checking our internal Council systems and following any information which may help us to trace the debtor.
- Use of credit reference agency data.
- Trace and collect facilities offered by our Enforcement Agencies
- Visits to the last known address by the Council's Property Inspector and use of external tracing agents.

Unfortunately, legislation does not currently permit access to DWP or HMRC records to trace Council Tax debtors or their employers, though a Cabinet Office project is currently reviewing this.

Data protection legislation allows us to receive information as to a debtor's whereabouts, but we cannot disclose information to other creditors. Reciprocal arrangements with utility companies and similar are not therefore workable.

- 6.7 3 Irrecoverable council tax debt in the sum of £15,837.57 are listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

### **Business Rates**

- 6.8 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £50M of which some **83.9%** was collected by the end of December. This compares to 81.0% collected in the same period last year and 83.4% in 2019-20. This improvement would appear to reflect some upturn in the economy following the pandemic, though in part will be caused by the rate reliefs afforded to businesses in the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sectors.

- 6.9 The recovery powers available to us are again contained in the Council's approved policies and are used in full. Those powers and our procedures are similar to the council tax powers described above, with the exception that deductions from individuals' benefits and earnings are not permissible, even if the debtor is an individual.
- 6.10 Where rates are owed by an individual, similar safeguards exist for the debtors and trace facilities are used by the Council for absconding debtors, as described above.
- 6.11 Additionally, in the case of business rates, as has been reported to Cabinet previously, our collection efforts are sometimes frustrated by weaknesses in legislation. Rates are due from the occupiers rather than the owners of property and where the occupier is a company, we can only recover from that company. Some proprietors will strip a company of its assets or dissolve the company before we have had an opportunity to implement our recovery procedures. A new company is then formed in a similar style, to trade from the same premises.

Central Government has previously undertaken to review the loopholes that exist in rating and company legislation, though no changes have yet been received. Officers continue to actively monitor these issues.

- 6.12 1 irrecoverable business rate debt in the sum of £14,577.53 are listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

### **Housing Benefit Overpayments**

- 6.13 The Council manages the Housing Benefit scheme on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, who fund the cost of benefits paid to claimants.
- 6.14 Sometimes a claimant will be paid too much Housing Benefit, for example when the Council does not become aware of a change of circumstances until after the claimant has been paid the benefit. This is called an Overpayment of Housing Benefit. The Council is expected to recover these overpayments from the claimant in all but a few limited circumstances. DWP will fund only 40% of benefit which is overpaid as a result of claimant error or fraud.
- 6.15 Where an overpayment occurs as a result of a local authority error, DWP will provide 100% funding provided our error rate remains below a threshold of 0.48% of benefit paid, as it has routinely done for many years.
- 6.16 Recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit continues to progress well, with some £410,783.8 being collected in the first three quarters of the financial year, compared to the £362,750.70 of new overpayments that were raised.
- 6.17 There is 1 irrecoverable Benefit Overpayment debt totalling £4,213.38 in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

## **7 Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Council Tax write offs are losses to the Collection Fund and, as such, form part of the cost of collection incurred by this Council. The Council Tax write offs on this report total £15,837.57. This represents 0.02% of the outstanding collectable debit for the current year.

The amounts being recommended are well below the value of the bad debt provision, which the Council includes within its accounts in expectation that some amounts owed will not be paid and cannot be recovered.

The cost of collecting the debts has been considered as part of the decision to put them forward for write off. If further information does come forward about the whereabouts of any of the individual debtors the Council will pursue recovery action.

Cabinet are asked to write off the debts as they are considered to be irrecoverable for the reasons given in the appendices. The debts remain legally due to the Council and should the circumstances causing the write off in any particular case, subsequently change, recovery action may be recommenced.

### **7.2 Legal**

Cabinet are asked to write off the debts as they are considered to be irrecoverable for the reasons given in the appendices. The debts remain legally due to the Council and should the circumstances causing the write off in any particular case, subsequently change, recovery action may be recommenced.

### **7.3 Human Resources**

None

### **7.4 Risk Management**

None

### **7.5 Equalities and Diversity**

None

### **7.6 Health**

None

### **7.7 Climate Change**

None

## 8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Council Tax to be considered for Write Off

Appendix 2: Business Rates to be considered for Write Off

Appendix 3: Housing Benefit Overpayments to be considered for Write Off

## 9 Previous Consideration

None

## 10 Background Papers

None

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<b>Ward Interest:</b>	None
<b>Report Track:</b>	Cabinet 7 March 2024 (Only)
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No