



Civic Centre
Riverside
Stafford
ST16 3AQ

2 September 2024

Dear Members

Council Meeting

I hereby give notice that a meeting of the Council will be held in the **Council Chamber, County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford** on **Tuesday 10 September 2024 at 7.00pm** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tim Clegg", enclosed in a thin black rectangular box.

Tim Clegg
Chief Executive

COUNCIL MEETING - 10 SEPTEMBER 2024

Mayor, Councillor Frank James

AGENDA

- 1 Approval of the Minutes of the meetings of Council held on 30 July 2024 as published on the Council's website.
- 2 Apologies for Absence
- 3 Declarations of Interest
- 4 Announcements (Paragraph 3.2(iii) of the Council Procedure Rules)
- 5 Public Question Time - Nil
- 6 Councillor Session

Councillor F Beatty has submitted the following question in accordance with Paragraph 12.3(a) of the Council Procedure Rules:-

Due to the failure of the Labour, Independent and Green coalition to take forward any local plan (including the previous Conservative administration plan) to a Regulation 19 stage over the last 16 months, the new government's mandatory housing targets and 'top-ups' will soon be applied.

One of the consequences of this failure by the coalition to prioritise this important issue over the last 16 months is that 8,500 additional new homes in the Borough - on top of those already planned - will have to be built during the next 20 years.

Can the Cabinet Member for Planning and Regeneration please confirm where will the 8,500 further new homes be placed, as the new targets could be applied within months, or is he going to allow the Borough to become open season for any developer?

- 7 Notice(s) of Motion
 - (a) A Notice of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules has been proposed by Councillors S N Spencer and J T Rose as follows:-

'To formally declare that Staffordshire now faces a Roads Emergency.'

The state of our borough highways is now at breaking point. Road users risk damage to their vehicles and injury to themselves travelling on our roads and it is unacceptable. It is time now for us all to hold the

County Council and their contractors to account and demand that action is taken. Research by the LGA has calculated that to catch-up with the backlog of existing pothole repairs across England and Wales would need a cash injection of £12 Billion, and take 12 years to complete – by comparison with the £200 Million ‘Pothole Fund’ recently announced by Government. The annual local authority road maintenance survey reveals that potholes now account for around 70% of all requests reported to Local Authorities for repairs.

The Borough Council Believes:

- That we have roads in a worryingly poor state of repair across our County.
- Concern about the state of our roads is one of the top priorities and worries amongst our residents, as expressed in the feedback being received by Councillors.
- By leading the way in declaring a roads emergency, we need to place pressure on the County Council and Government to act on our residents’ concerns.
- Investing in our road network is not just a benefit to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians, but a vital component of our local infrastructure, supporting local businesses and our tourism sector.
- Residents regularly report that repairs are executed, followed by more repairs on the same stretch of the road, whilst other nearby sections of the same road are left untouched.
- That encouraging cycling on our roads is important, and to encourage cyclists to be confident using roads local authorities need to review all roads regularly and bring them up to a standard of safety required for cycling.
- The poor state of repair of the roads are causing damage to vehicles, injuries to cyclists and are causing numerous safety risks from users veering across carriageways to avoid road defects.
- Some roads are close to impassable due to defects, with motorists opting for alternative, longer routes, with the associated environmental and climatic impacts.
- Pothole/road repairs when conducted are of poor quality and require further repairs in a very short period of time.
- Priority needs to be directed away from A-roads and concentrate on B-roads, unclassified rural and urban roads that the majority of residents live on or along.

Actions:

- More frequent quality control inspections by the County Council and the imposition of financial penalties for inadequate work, demonstrated by the need to return to any given pothole or equivalent piece of work within a six month period.
- All potholes/repairs to a road to be conducted within the specified road closure/stretch of road at that time. Not 'cherry picked'.
- Request that the County Council debate the state of our county roads and provide a clear plan of action to tackle the issue, in a cost effective and logical manner.
- Request the County Council to establish joint committees with each district council to discuss prioritisation and phasing of road maintenance and improvements across the county.
- For the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, calling on central government to provide an additional one off, lump sum to enable Councils to provide a start to clear the backlog of repairs.'

- (b) A Notice of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules has been proposed by Councillors J M Pert and A P Edgeller as follows:-

'Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

Council notes:

- The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Stafford Borough and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.
- This is on top of the recently announced increase in the Fuel Price Cap by 10% on 1 October 2024, making it doubly difficult for many pensioners to stay warm without risking turning their heating down or not using it at all this Winter.

Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Stafford Borough sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council resolves to:

- 1) Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- 2) Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- 3) Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all Members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- 4) Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Stafford Borough are supported in claiming their entitlement.
- 5) Find ways to support some of the most vulnerable pensioners locally affected by this policy decision throughout the Winter, so that they don't face 'heating or eating dilemma' at a time when some pensioners cannot afford to meet the most basic of needs, especially those in rural areas who have some of the least energy efficient housing.
- 6) Prioritise funding to support those worst affected struggling pensioners by realigning budgets and funding.

8 Recommendation Referred from Cabinet

Council is requested to consider a recommendation from the Cabinet meeting held on 8 August 2024 in respect of the following matter:

- (i) Additional Funding Request for Environmental Health Services - Confidential - Minute Number CAB21/24.

“That:-

- (a) Cabinet recommends to Council funding of £61,940 for the permanent establishment of the Senior Environmental Health Officer post;
- (b) Cabinet recommends to Council temporary additional funding of £112,840 to maintain the current agency support for work on food safety and environmental protection;
- (c) Cabinet recommends to Council temporary additional funding of £96,200 to provide additional support to improve work relating to environmental permitting and regulatory checks on private water supplies.”

9 Any items referred from Scrutiny Committee(s)

Chief Executive

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