

Dear Members

Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

A meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside Stafford** on **Tuesday 19 August 2025 at 6.30pm** 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.



Head of Law and Governance

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

19 AUGUST 2025

Chair - Councillor F Beatty

AGENDA

- 1 Minutes of 2 July 2025 as previously published on the Council's website.
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Public Question Time - Nil
- 4 Councillor Session - Nil
- 5 Members' Items - Nil
- 6 Called In Items - Nil
- 7 Presentation and Question and Answer Session
(outside agencies) - Protecting Our Rivers
and Oceans Motion 3 - 8

Please submit your questions in advance of the meeting to Democratic Services

Page Nos

- 8 Officers' Reports
- ITEM NO 7(a) **Work Programme** 9 - 13

HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE

Membership

Chair - Councillor F Beatty

F Beatty	A M Loughran
B M Cross	B McKeown
P C Edgeller	D M McNaughton
F D J James	J S Powell
P W Jones	D P Rouxel

COUNCIL MEETING - 28 NOVEMBER 2023

7 Notice of Motion

A Notice of Motion pursuant to Paragraph 13.1 of the Council Procedure Rules has been proposed by Councillors J T Rose and D P Rouxel as follows:-

Protecting our rivers and oceans

This Council notes:

- No matter where we live in the UK, we are never more than 70 miles from the ocean. We all benefit from our ocean through the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the way our ocean regulates the climate. We all impact our ocean not only if we visit the coast but every day through our consumer choices, what we put down the drain, the litter and pollution that flows into our rivers, and the carbon emissions we produce. Our local stream or river is our direct link to the ocean. The evidence is clear that our ocean is in a state of emergency and that this impacts us all, no matter where we live. The burden of taking care of our ocean falls to communities at the coast; but they are at the end of the line, receiving pollution and problems from inland communities. Inland councils have an essential role to play in recovering the health of our ocean through increasing awareness of how local actions can affect the ocean and by acting as responsible custodians of the rivers, streams and waterways that run through their area on their way to the sea.
- The River Trent starts and passes through much of Staffordshire, making its way through Nottingham before joining the Humber Estuary and entering the North Sea. This river is our direct link to the ocean and has sustained Staffordshire's population for centuries. The River Trent and its wetlands, provide habitation for many species of bird, fish, insects but also otters and other mammalsⁱ.
- The River Sow also provides much habitation for species and passes through the heart of our town and Victoria Park. The River Penk joins the River Sow by Baswich, before both joining the River Trent by Shugborough Estate. The Environment Agency has a responsibility to care for the River Trent and its tributaries, for residents of Stafford Borough and communities across the UK that are downstream of us. The Borough Council must press Government to ensure that the Environment Agency is properly funded to fulfil its duties and that the Agency takes all reasonable steps to do so.
- Local residents are concerned regarding the health of our local rivers due to regular wastewater discharge, which includes untreated sewage. This has dire consequences both for human healthⁱⁱ and wildlife, damaging biodiversityⁱⁱⁱ.

- Only 14% of rivers nationally can be classified as in ‘good’ ecological status^{iv}.
- The Government is weakening environmental protections^v and monitoring of English rivers^{vi}.
- Seven Trent Water is currently described as a ‘industry leading company’ whilst having 204 pollution incidents in 2021^{vii}. Seven Trent Water has already been fined £1.5 million for illegal sewage discharges in Worcestershire and £800,000 for discharging 3.8 million litres of raw sewage in Shropshire^{viii}. The Water Regulator, Severn Trent Water and the Environment Agency must ensure protections are put in place to protect Rivers.
- Whilst there are long term commitments, there are no plans in place which will address the immediate unacceptable situation either locally by Seven Trent^{ix} or by national government^x.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Recognise this Council's role in helping to protect its rivers and seas, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, in line with its local planning policy, and the National Planning Policy Framework.
2. Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events or ‘sewage overload’.
3. Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on the Borough's rivers, wildlife and the health of its residents.
4. Take a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.
5. Ensure the evidence base being compiled for the new local plan fully assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge so that this is factored into decisions made in the new local plan, including the overall level of future development.
6. Fully incorporate JBA consulting's recommendation for 1.) Early engagement with water companies as part of the planning process. 2.) That more detailed water quality modelling is carried out in a Phase 2 Outline study to assess the cumulative impact of growth across the whole study area on the Water Framework Directive classification of the receiving waterbodies in order to ensure that the environmental capacity of the catchment is not a constraint to growth. 3.) Further study of the wastewater network is also recommended once greater certainty over which sites will be brought forward for development.^{xi} As set out in *Southern Staffordshire Councils Water Cycle Study – Phase 1 Scoping Report*.

7. To work with Seven Trent to aim for water neutrality defined by the Government and the Environment Agency as “For every development, total water use in the wider area after the development must be equal to or less than total water use in the wider area before development”. Achieved by reducing leakage from the water supply networks; making new developments more water-efficient; “offsetting” new demand by retrofitting existing homes with water-efficient devices; encouraging existing commercial premises to use less water; implementing metering and tariffs to encourage the wise use of water’ education and awareness-raising amongst individuals.
8. Write to the Environment Agency asking it to issue a position statement in relation to Stafford Borough, which sets out its understanding of the cumulative impact of 200+ sewage discharge on our rivers, or if it is not willing to do, the reasons why.
9. Ask Natural England for an ecological assessment of the River Trent and its tributaries.
10. Invite the Chief Executive of Seven Trent plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Natural England to attend a Stafford Borough Council Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny meeting to answer questions on the current levels of sewage discharge, the ecological health of our rivers, and their plans moving forward.
11. Ask Seven Trent Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage; and whether it has the information available to assess the impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that this can only be requested not required).
12. Request that Borough Council planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the provision of adequate arrangements for the disposal of foul sewage trade effluent and surface water as set out in Policy N2 of the local plan under sustainable drainage, and the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.
13. Embed protection and recovery of the Sow, Penk and Trent in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets, procurement and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, waste, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, and considering nature-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.

14. Ensure that the Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Plan support ocean recovery through a focus on the protection and recovery of the Sow, Penk and Trent, and the implementation of nature-based solutions.
15. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver improved water quality and increased sustainability, including other Staffordshire district Councils, the Staffordshire County Council, Staffordshire Sustainability Board, Staffordshire Nature Recovery Strategy Board, other local community groups, clubs and other organisations that have a recreational, economic or other interest in its protection and recovery.
16. Use the Council website and other communication channels to update on the Sow, Penk and Trent recovery progress, and signpost to opportunities and guidance that enable residents to become more ocean literate and to get involved with river and marine citizenship activities.
17. Recognising that wherever we live we share responsibility for good marine management, we will write to the Government asking them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by:
 - (a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.
 - (b) Working with coastal, estuarine and maritime communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
 - (c) Appointing a dedicated Minister for the Coast.
 - (d) Embedding ocean and civic literacy into the national curriculum.
 - (e) Stopping plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle and support the solutions needed to address the threat posed by historic coastal landfill sites.
 - (f) Improving the water quality of our rivers, estuarine and coastal waters leading to the ocean to benefit nature and the health and wellbeing of all UK residents, including by stopping the regular pollution of our rivers and seas.

- (g) And by listening to marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
 - (i) Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
 - (ii) Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
 - (iii) Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
 - (iv) Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of ocean recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.

18. Report to Full Council within [12] months on the actions and projects that will contribute to the recovery of the Sow, Penk and Trent and their tributaries and the nature and wildlife that they support within Stafford Borough.

ⁱ <https://www.worldatlas.com/rivers/river-trent.html>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.sas.org.uk/water-quality/water-quality-facts-and-figures/the-risks-of-mixing-with-sewage/> and <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/8460/documents/88412/default/> (pages 23-25)

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/news/2021/november/the-deadly-effects-of-sewage-pollution-on-nature.html>

^{iv} <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/6730f10b64184200b171a57750890643?item=1>

^v <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9850/#:~:text=In%20August%202023%2C%20the%20government,of%20Lords%20in%20September%202023.>

^{vi} <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/oct/27/england-to-diverge-from-eu-water-monitoring-standards>

^{vii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-and-sewerage-companies-in-england-environmental-performance-report-2021/severn-trent-water-epa-data-report-2021>

^{viii} <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/dec/08/severn-water-fined-15m-for-sewage-discharges>

^{ix} <https://www.stwater.co.uk/about-us/our-plans-2025-2030/>

^x <https://deframedia.blog.gov.uk/2020/09/18/latest-water-classifications-results-published/>

^{xi} <https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/cme/DocMan1/Planning%20Policy/New%20Stafford%20Borough%20Local%20Plan%202020-2040/Evidence%20Base%20Documents/Southern-Staffordshire-Water-Cycle-Study-Feb-2020-Accessible.pdf> (page vii)

Agenda Item 8(a)**Work Programme - Resources Scrutiny Committee**

Committee: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 19 August 2025

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

Portfolio: Economic Development and Planning

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The first stage in achieving a Member-led Overview and Scrutiny process is to develop a Work Programme for the Members of the Committee to own.
- 3.2 Accordingly, an up-to-date copy of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme is provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 This report is most closely associated with the following Corporate Business Objective 1:-

To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Members will recall that one of the fundamental philosophies behind the creation of Overview and Scrutiny is that the process should be Member-led and the first stage in achieving this is to develop a Work Programme that is:-
- Owned by all Members of the Scrutiny Committee
 - Flexible to allow the Committee to react to urgent items
 - Contain aspects of both Overview and Scrutiny
- 5.2 Therefore, at each scheduled meeting of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee, an up-to-date copy of the Work Programme will be provided for Members to consider or amend as appropriate.
- 5.3 The Work Programme includes provision for the Committee to scrutinise appropriate items delivered through the Council's Service Delivery Plan up to twelve months in advance, whilst maintaining the flexibility to respond to any issues that may arise.
- 5.4 Accordingly, attached at **APPENDIX** is the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee's current Work Programme to consider or amend as appropriate.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None

6.2 Legal

None

6.3 Human Resources

None

6.4 Risk Management

None

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

6.6 Health

None

6.7 Climate Change

None

7 Appendices

Appendix: Work Programme

8 Previous Consideration

None

9 Background Papers

File available in Law and Governance

Contact Officer: Jackie Allen

Telephone Number: 01785 619552

Ward Interest: Nil

Report Track: Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny
Committee - 19 August 2025 (Only)

Key Decision: N/A

Appendix

Work Programme - Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 1 October 2025 at 6:30pm

Report Deadline 15 September 2025

Officer Reports:

- Enforcement Policy and Protocol**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Gateway Update**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Solar Farms Policy**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Work Programme 2025/26**
Head of Law and Governance

Thursday 18 December 2025 at 6:30pm

Report Deadline 1 December 2025

Officer Reports:

- Masterplan, including Parking Strategy**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Historic Buildings, Conservation Areas, Listing Policies**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Cumulative Impact Assessment**
Head of Regulatory Services
- S106**
Head of Economic Development and Planning
- Work Programme 2025/26**
Head of Law and Governance

Thursday 19 March 2026 at 6:30pm**Report Deadline****2 March 2026****Officer Reports:****Biodiversity Net Gain**

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Rural Economy

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Development Management Progress Review

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Draft Business Report

Head of Economic Development and Planning

Work Programme 2025/26

Head of Law and Governance

Future Items:

New Local Plan progress report

Development Strategy / Investment Prospectus