

**Stafford Borough Council**

**Corporate Business Plan  
2018 - 2021**

*'A prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities'*

## Foreword

Growth, wellbeing and financial sustainability sum up the Council's key objectives for the next three years. Our borough is successful and growing; recent figures show around **£2 billion has been invested in**, or planned for, the area. Here are some examples of what has taken place so far:

- ***£100 million retail scheme***
- ***Expansion of the Beacon Barracks***
- ***More than three thousand jobs created***
- ***Over 500 new homes built per year***

This level of growth is set to continue with work underway on a nearly **£10 million council funded leisure scheme for Stone** and advanced plans for a **£2.5 million heritage project** for the restoration of Stafford's award-winning Victoria Park. If this was not enough, further investment in an £83 million business park is underway at **Meaford** and we have an ambitious **£500 million masterplan** at the forthcoming HS2 hub station in Stafford.

Our robust Local Plan (which specifies the appropriate location and type of development for the borough) has ensured we are able to encourage construction and house building, which has nearly doubled in the last couple of years. It has also protected the area's rural communities and natural environment while allowing them to be vibrant places where business can thrive. This growth enables the Council to protect services and invest more in those areas that our residents and businesses tell us are important to them.

We work closely with our communities to encourage families and individuals to build strong, resilient, self-reliant communities with

real influence on local decisions, able to do more for themselves.

People who live, work and visit the borough are able to enjoy areas of outstanding beauty, with waterways that complement the striking landscape. We will protect and enhance this environment ensuring our borough is somewhere that people want to come to and stay. Our award-winning parks and open spaces are attractive and bring people together to walk, cycle or spend time with family and friends.

The Council is financially resilient and sustainable and we will continue to reduce waste and ensure that our services are effective and efficient.

***Utilising our assets in more efficient ways*** allows the Council to generate much needed resources as a financially sustainable organisation, delivering important frontline services. For example our Civic Centre has become a central hub for public services which has been achieved by utilising our space more effectively.

We are an ambitious, proactive council that delivers good value for money. A council that has the courage to change; to share our successes and be honest about where we need to improve. We hope that you will be part of our journey.

**Councillor Patrick Farrington**  
**Leader of the Council**

## **Introduction**

Our three year Corporate Business Plan sets out how we will deliver economic growth and new houses, supporting our communities and ensuring that the borough is a great place in which to live, work and visit. We will continue to make the Council efficient and effective and financially sustainable

Stafford Borough has been very fortunate to have had strong partnership links with private, public and voluntary sector organisations for a number of years and has delivered some great outcomes because of this. This business plan details a shared vision of economic growth and community wellbeing which encapsulates the ethos of collaborative working and sharing of resources to improve outcomes for all those people who live, work and visit the borough.

We will capitalise on existing partnerships with health providers, community safety and the voluntary sector, and also forge new economic partnerships, such as the Constellation partnership, to ensure there is a shared vision of place, joint priorities and commissioning strategies that will help us to deliver the outcomes outlined in this plan.

## **Our Vision**

### **A prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities**

Over the next three years we will focus on the following corporate business objectives:

1. To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs<sup>1</sup>.
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.
3. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> In July 2017, the Secretary of State deposited in Parliament the hybrid Bill for Phase 2a of the HS2 railway. This is another step on the pathway to building a route from the West Midlands to Crewe. We will ensure we get the maximum benefits for our economy that this project will bring. But we will continue to work to mitigate the disruption this will have on our communities while helping to making sure that those most affected will be properly compensated.

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

## **1.1 Growing a healthy economy**

A dynamic local enterprise culture is vital for the long-term competitiveness and overall economic success of the borough. Private sector businesses such as Screwfix and GE have made significant investments which are contributing to the creation of hundreds of new jobs in the borough. GE is one of the largest employers in Stafford, with around 1,750 employees. They have invested in Stafford, developing an additional 180,000 square foot manufacturing facility at Redhill Business Park. Significant investment has been made by Perkins Engines to support investment in the borough and they employ around 800 highly skilled staff at its factory close to the centre of town.

Stafford is the home of entrepreneurs with more people starting, and successfully running, their own business compared to the rest of the county:

- Risual – set up by two young entrepreneurs and now has a workforce of around 150 on the town's Staffordshire Technology Park;
- Woolcool – an innovative award-winning firm using sheep's wool for packaging based at the Walton Industrial Estate in Stone.

We will build on what is already a sustainable and vibrant economy attracting further investment to attract people to locate here. HS2 will enable business leaders to travel to London in just over 50 minutes, Manchester in 30 minutes and Birmingham in only 20 minutes. This, together with the access to the M6 and A50, makes the borough an attractive location for businesses to expand or re-locate. In addition the public sector is important to our economy with the Borough and County Councils, County hospital, Police and Fire Service headquarters, and higher and further education providing some 40% of employment in the borough.

### **Profile**

Stafford Borough is Staffordshire's largest district and encompasses the towns of Stone and Eccleshall as well as many picturesque and vibrant villages. Stafford and Stone act as the hubs delivering services to large rural hinterlands, and are important economic centres.

Stafford Borough covers an area of approximately 230 square miles. The population is currently 131,000 and this figure is expected to increase to approximately 142,900 by 2033. Therefore we need to ensure that there is a housing and employment offer that will be attractive enough for people to stay here and also move here.

There are approximately 58,000 households in the borough which are predominantly owner-occupied. The average price of a house in Stafford Borough is £184,156<sup>2</sup>. This is above the Staffordshire average price, but below the West Midlands average. We will be building more homes that people can afford, to address the lower proportion of social and privately rented housing in the borough.

Visitors to our area generate more than £200 million for the local economy with the sector employing around 4,000 people. As well as being home to major tourist attractions including the Trentham Estate, Shugborough and Cannock Chase, the borough also caters for

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<sup>2</sup> ONS median price for the Borough as a whole.

business tourism and conferencing with first class facilities at the County Showground and Yarnfield Park.

HS2 will be a significant development within the Borough and we are proud to be one of the main partners on the Constellation economic development partnership which aims to deliver 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs by 2040 as a result of HS2 national infrastructure. The partnership spans two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and seven Local Authorities. In terms of connectivity the Borough already holds a pivotal location in the West Midlands region and Stafford as a hub station will catalyse growth for the area. To support the level of growth that is happening we are working with partners to develop the Stafford Western Access Route. This will improve access by road to the town centre and attract additional employment and housing in the west of Stafford.

#### **Over the next three years we will:**

- Deliver 600 new homes in the borough per year with 210 being affordable homes
- Generate the creation of 3,750 new jobs across the Borough by 2021
- Support the development of key infrastructure projects including the Stafford Western Access Route and Stafford Gateway
- Support the development of key projects proposed as part of the HS2 investment that will deliver economic development and housing
- Grow the visitor economy
- Ensure vibrant Town centres in Stafford and Stone
- Attract new businesses and help existing businesses to expand

### **1.2 Improving the quality of life for our residents by planning design**

We want to build high quality developments that provide attractive, well connected places for local people to live and work. We will create cohesive communities that promote vibrancy, encourage healthy living and support community engagement and social capital. The borough has a lot of green open space which is essential to individual wellbeing. We want to encourage developers to include habitats in their plans (including wildlife corridors) that are beneficial for wildlife and communities.

Good design of settlements and individual buildings can improve the health, wellbeing and resilience of the general public in various ways, from encouraging physical activity and improving mental health, to creating healthy living in safe environments. We will make significant investments in leisure and recreation facilities in Stone and restore our award-winning Victoria Park over the next three years.

Good design is essential if we are to produce attractive, high-quality, sustainable places. This type of innovative design was considered when developing St Georges Parkway, the expansion of Beacon Barracks, Redhill Business Park and the new Waterfront Riverside development

#### **Over the next three years we will:**

- Ensure that all new development and design is to the highest standard
- Identify the appropriate sites for future development for housing and employment
- Ensure sufficient open space is provided as part of making new developments more attractive
- Provide new leisure and recreation facilities

**Corporate 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.

Residents of Stafford Borough generally live longer and are happy with their local area as a place to live compared to the overall figure for the county. We want to ensure that quality of life is maintained.

**There are two areas of focus that will enable us to deliver our vision under this objective and these are:**

### **2.1 Providing an attractive, safe and healthy place to live, work and enjoy**

Stafford Borough has a rich history and culture that is evident whenever you visit here. A good range of leisure and cultural facilities help to bring local people together to enjoy plays, concerts and films. As part of our community wellbeing agenda we want to work together with our communities to continue to create safe and attractive environments which our residents want to occupy and use, creating a strong and positive sense of communal identity. We proactively work with our 'Friends' of groups to maintain our local nature reserves and parks, and our new Community Awards will recognise the contribution that individuals have made to improve their communities and surrounding areas. We want to ensure that these areas are kept clean and are protected from fly tipping, litter, dog fouling and pests that are harmful to public health.

**Over the next three years we will:**

- Ensure that the streets and parks are kept clean and attractive for everyone to enjoy by dealing with enviro-crime complaints promptly, maintaining green flag status and encouraging businesses to sign up to a 'Keep the Borough Clean' charter.
- Invest £2.5 million in Victoria Park.
- Encourage volunteering to assist with the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- Develop 'Health in All Policies' approach with our partners to ensure that the health of local people is paramount in everything we do.
- Continue to work to mitigate the disruption that HS2 will have on our communities whilst maximising the benefits for our economy.

### **2.2 Supporting and promoting community wellbeing to all of our residents**

The general health of our population is important to the future prosperity of the borough. Both males and females in Stafford live for significantly longer in good health compared to the national average. Life expectancy in the district is better than the national average for both males and females. The population is ageing, with the number of people above the age of 65 in our borough expected to increase by up to 17,500 people by 2033. The ethnicity of the population is approximately 94% White British, which is comparable to the population of Staffordshire.

Indications are that adult obesity rates are increasing with approximately 20% of the population falling within this category. In addition only 13% of males and just 6% of females in the borough achieve the chief medical officer's recommendation of 30 minutes of

moderate activity five times a week. Up to 23% of the population are smokers and up to 22% drink beyond recommended limits. We will work with partners to support our residents to make healthy lifestyle choices. We will actively look for opportunities to promote the health of local people in all of the services we provide.

Stafford Borough is a safe place to be. We will continue working with our partners to focus on a prevention and early intervention approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour.

Feeling safe and being able to live independently in your own home and surrounding area are vital to our wellbeing. As part of our wellbeing agenda we want to work with all our communities to support them to help themselves.

**Over the next three years we will:**

- Encourage and support our residents to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and lifestyle
- Work with our partners to ensure the borough is a safe place
- Ensure that businesses operating in the borough comply with relevant legislation
- Ensure everyone has access to safe and suitable accommodation
- Provide support so that more people participate in healthy lifestyle choices

**Corporate Business Objective 3:** 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.

The funding to local authorities through the Rate Support Grant and other budgets has been substantially reduced in recent years and will be completely phased out for the financial year 2019/20. From this date the Council will be dependent on the monies it raises from council tax, its share of business rates and income generated from a limited number of services.

The council will work to protect front-line services by reducing the cost of the services we provide by cutting waste and looking for different ways to provide services. Examples of this are providing Leisure and Culture Services in partnership with a non for profit trust, tendering for a new provider of refuse collection and sharing services with other authorities. We will also share the Civic Centre with other organisations to reduce our costs, improve partnership working and make access to services easier for local people.

**3.1 To be a fit for purpose self-sustaining organisation**

The Council approved its 2019/20 medium term plan in February 2017. The Plan was set against a balanced budget in 2017/18 but facing material shortfalls in 2018/19 and 2019/20 as a result of a changing Government funding regime. Changes in funding streams will see resources diminish by £1.4 million and £1.7 million in 2018/19 and 2019/20 respectively. In November 2016 Council ratified the Council's Efficiency Plan to address this shortfall. The plan identified savings in relation to the leisure partnership, organisational restructure, income generation, likelihood for further shared services with a potential on-going savings of £1.4 million.

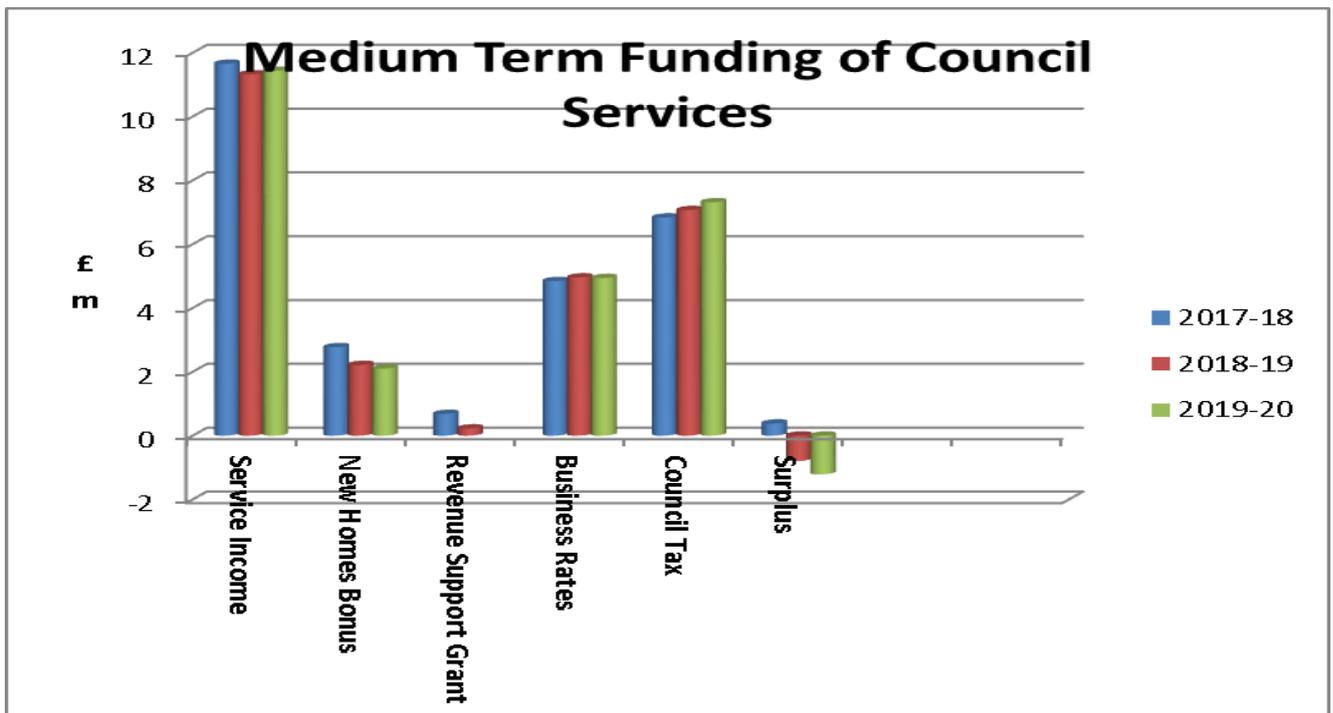
Stafford Borough residents have in 2017/18 experienced the first rise in council tax for six years. The increase was kept to 1.9% and was a necessary step to ensure services are not only maintained but invested in to deliver the Council's objectives.

The Budget is underpinned by £2.3 million of Business Rates Growth as part of the 50% Business Rates Retention Scheme. The Scheme was due to be fundamentally changed with effect from 2019/20, however uncertainty now exists in relation to the date of implementation with the required primary legislation not achieving Royal Assent before the end of the last parliament. The proposed scheme will see 100% of new Growth retained within local government however how this is shared in two tier authorities is yet to be determined. Business rates will be shared between the Borough Council, County Council, Police and Fire and Rescue Services.

The Council has currently a gross expenditure of £26.4 million excluding Housing Benefit payments (which is fully reimbursed by DWP). The current budget is also underpinned by £2.1 million of New Homes Bonus. New Homes Bonus is a four year rolling programme dependent upon more than 600 properties being built each year (based on the average Band D property) so will eventually become time expired.

Our budget plan for the next three years is based upon three main business areas: Development and the Economy, Community Wellbeing and Financial Resilience and Sustainability.

The chart below indicates the key dependencies associated in providing £26 million of services:



We will continue to explore other avenues for income generation such as commercial opportunities and maximising our assets including the Civic Centre, in order to reduce the dependency on New Homes Bonus in particular. In addition we need to be as efficient and effective as possible and this will mean that as an authority we will need to look at our own ways of working. Stafford Borough Council has a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer. How people contact us (be that

via telephone, online, in person or via other means) is a critical part of public service provision. We will improve the ways in which our customers can contact us.

**Over the next three years we will:**

- Use our resources in the most effective, efficient way by having a balanced budget, without the use of reserves, that is set for the duration of the Plan
- Introduce additional ways for our customers to access our services
- Ensure resident satisfaction with our services remains good
- Have robust contract management processes in place for those services provided to the Council by other organisations

**Monitoring and Review**

This Corporate Business Plan will run for a period of three years 2018 – 2021. There will be a delivery plan that will sit behind this plan that will be proactively performance managed through our senior management team and elected members by the Council’s Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees. This delivery plan will be subject to an annual review to determine what progress is being made against each of the business objectives.

As part of this process we will ensure that progress is reported to our residents via:

- Publishing progress on the website, social media and the local press
- Sharing our progress with our partners

We will be open and transparent in how we work and conduct consultation and engagement activities for all of our major projects so that we can ensure our residents are able to have their say and be part of the process. This will be evidenced through the completion of Community Impact Assessments which we will publish on our website.

You can contact Stafford Borough Council in the following ways:

Telephone: 01785 619000

E mail: [info@staffordbc.gov.uk](mailto:info@staffordbc.gov.uk)

Twitter: @staffordbc

Website: [www.staffordbc.gov.uk](http://www.staffordbc.gov.uk)



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