

Dear Members

### **Cabinet**

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held on **Thursday 5 December 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.



Head of Law and Governance

## CABINET - 5 DECEMBER 2024

Chair - Councillor A T A Godfrey

### AGENDA

- 1 Minutes of 7 November 2024 as circulated and published on 8 November 2024
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Councillors' Question Time (if any)
- 4 Proposals of the Cabinet Members (as follows):-

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#### (a) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING PORTFOLIO

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**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 Council).**

## **Membership**

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

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| A T A Godfrey | - Leader  |
| R Kenney      | - Deputy Leader (Town Centres Regeneration Portfolio) |
| R P Cooke     | - Resources Portfolio                                 |
| I D Fordham   | - Environment Portfolio                               |
| J Hood        | - Community Portfolio                                 |
| G P K Pardesi | - Leisure Portfolio                                   |
| A N Pearce    | - Climate Action and Nature Recovery Portfolio        |
| A F Reid      | - Economic Development and Planning Portfolio         |

**Agenda Item 4(a)i**

# Fulford Parish Neighbourhood Area Application

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Economic Development and Planning
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Economic Development and Planning

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## 1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to designate Fulford Parish as a Neighbourhood Area for the purpose of producing a Neighbourhood Plan within the remit of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 and further following such designation, to publish details of the same.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To designate Fulford Parish as a Neighbourhood Area (please refer to the **APPENDIX**).
- 2.2 Once so designated to authorise the publishing of the information set out below (sub- paragraphs (a) to (c)) on the Council's website and in such other manner so as to ensure that the designation is brought to the attention of people who live, work or carry on business in the neighbourhood area:
- (a) the name of the neighbourhood area;
  - (b) a map which identifies the area; and
  - (c) the name of the relevant body who applied for the designation

### Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.3 Where an application is received from a Parish Council for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area and that area covers all of the Parish Council area (and such area does not extend into any area outside of the Parish boundary or has already been designated) then, as a result of Regulation 5A of the 2012 Regulations and Section 61G of the 1990 Act, the Borough Council has

to designate the Neighbourhood Area proposed and subsequently publish the designation in line with the relevant Regulations.

### **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Localism Act gained Royal Assent in November 2011 and amended the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 by inserting new powers to communities, principally town and parish councils, to prepare neighbourhood plans.
- 3.2 Neighbourhood plans must be prepared in general conformity with the adopted Local Plan. Neighbourhood plans cannot reduce the level of growth outlined in the strategic policies of an adopted Local Plan, but they will take precedence over non-strategic policies.

### **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 From the Corporate Business Plan 2021-2024 the following Corporate Business Objectives are relevant for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans:
- Objective 1: To deliver innovative, sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.
  - 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 resilient communities that promote health and wellbeing.

### **5 Report Detail**

- 5.1 The main driver of the amendments introduced into the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (hereafter “the 1990 Act”) by the Localism Act 2011 was to encourage a more collaborative approach to plan making, with the Council and the community working more closely together.
- 5.2 The Borough Council has responded positively to the Localism agenda and has been proactive in embracing the new approach to plan making by incorporating Neighbourhood Planning into the Local Plan and providing advice to Parish Councils interested in the Neighbourhood Planning process. The process for producing a Neighbourhood Plan is set out below:-

**Step 1: Getting started** - Formal designation of the ‘Neighbourhood Area’.

**Step 2: Identifying the Issues**

**Step 3: Develop a vision and objectives**

**Step 4: Generate options**

**Step 5: Draft your Neighbourhood plan****Step 6: Consultation and submission****Step 7: Independent examination****Step 8: Referendum and adoption****Neighbourhood areas and relevant bodies**

- 5.3 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended originally came into force on 6 April 2012 (hereafter “the 2012 Regulations”) These Regulations, together with the 1990 Act, provide the procedure for the development of Neighbourhood Plans.
- 5.4 Where the application is received from a Parish Council for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area and that area covers all of the Parish Council area (and such area does not extend into any area outside of the Parish boundary or has already been designated) then, as a result of Regulation 5A of the 2012 Regulations and Section 61G of the 1990 Act, the Council has to designate the Neighbourhood Area proposed. Once the proposed area has been designated then, in accordance with Regulation 7 of the 2012 Regulations, certain details<sup>1</sup> regarding the designation have to be published on the Council’s website and in other ways so that the relevant information is brought to the attention of all persons living or working or carrying on a business in the proposed area.
- 5.5 This report seeks authority to designate the proposed neighbourhood area put forward in the application and once designated to seek authority to publicise the designation of the neighbourhood area. The name of the neighbourhood area, a map which identifies the area and the name of the relevant body who applied for the designation must all be published.
- 5.6 Fulford Parish Council wishes to designate the whole of the Parish administrative area as a neighbourhood area; following a letter and map sent to the Borough Council dated 14 June 2024 (please refer to the **APPENDIX**).

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<sup>1</sup>(a) the name of the neighbourhood area;

(b) a map which identifies the area; and

(c) the name of the relevant body who applied for the designation

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

The costs incurred in arranging an independent Examination and Referendum are supported by grant aid from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). £20,000 can be claimed once a referendum date has been set. It is expected that this grant will cover the full costs of supporting the Examination and Referendum.

However, it should be noted that as the Council can only claim once an examination has been successful and a referendum date is set, there is a risk that if the examination were to be unsuccessful and not progressed, the Council would be liable to fund these costs.

It should be noted that as more than 5 Neighbourhood Plan Areas have been designated within Stafford Borough, it is not possible to claim £5,000 at the time of designation.

### **6.2 Legal**

The procedure relating to neighbourhood planning is contained within the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 as amended. The process starts with the submission of an application for an area designation by a qualifying body.

A Parish Council is a qualifying body and in the event of application by a Parish Council which covers all of the Parish and not beyond the parish area then the Council as the local planning authority has to designate the area proposed an application and thereafter publish the Area Designation together with a plan of the area of the area and the name of the body/organisation proposing the designation. The Council is committed to meeting its obligations pursuant to the law and will support Fulford Parish Council in meeting its requirements.

### **6.3 Human Resources**

Supporting the Parish Council in progressing the Neighbourhood Plan will require staff resources to be allocated through the Strategic Planning and Placemaking Team, together with Legal and Election Services later in the process for the Referendum aspects.

### **6.4 Risk Management**

The risk issues contained in this report are not strategic and therefore should not be included in the Strategic Risk Register.

## **6.5 Equalities and Diversity**

The Fulford Neighbourhood Plan will provide clear guidance to developers, and also members of the public, through planning policies and proposals in across the Parish. This will enable any resident or business to see the requirements related to future development. There are no direct impacts identified for Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation at this stage.

## **6.6 Health**

Working from a consistent evidence base alongside the Borough Council and with partners, ensures that recommendations made in relation to the Fulford Neighbourhood Plan with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and health outcomes. Specific reference will be made when details of the Fulford Neighbourhood Plan is made available.

## **6.7 Climate Change**

Working from a consistent evidence base alongside the Borough Council and with partners, ensures that recommendations made in relation to the Fulford Neighbourhood Plan with policy-specific areas are consistent and complementary to an approach that supports equality in both service provision and climate change outcomes. Specific reference will be made when details of the Fulford Neighbourhood Plan is made available.

## **7 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Fulford Parish Council letter dated 14 June 2024 and associated map of Parish boundary.

## **8 Previous Consideration**

None

## **9 Background Papers**

None

**Contact Officer:** Alex Yendole

**Telephone Number:** 07800 619530

**Ward Interest:** Fulford

**Report Track:** Cabinet - 5 December 2024 (Only)

**Key Decision:** No



## FULFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Parish Council:  
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ST3 9GJ

Email: [clerk@fulfordparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@fulfordparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024

Staffordshire Borough Council  
Riverside  
Civic Centre  
Stafford  
ST16 3AQ

Dear Sir/Madam

### Town and Country Planning Act 1990

### The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 Application for Designation of a Neighbourhood Area Fulford Parish Council

I am writing to request a designation of a Neighbourhood Area under Section 61 of the above act.

On Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at Fulford Parish Council Annual Meeting of the Council it was Resolved to apply for designation of the whole of Fulford Parish area as a Neighbourhood Area for the purposes of preparing a Fulford Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Minutes of the meeting were then approved at the meeting of Fulford Parish Council on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

Section 61G (4) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that in determining the application the local authority “**must have regard to the desirability of the whole area of a Parish Council as the neighbourhood area**”.

Fulford Parish Council considers that it is appropriate and desirable to designate the whole of the Fulford parish as a neighbourhood area for the following reasons:

1. Fulford Parish comprises of three parish wards; Fulford, Rough Close, Meir Heath and Blythe Bridge. The Fulford Neighbourhood Plan area will not cross parish boundaries into neighbouring parishes.

Fulford Parish Council is a 'relevant body' within the terms of section 61G (2) (a) of the above Act.

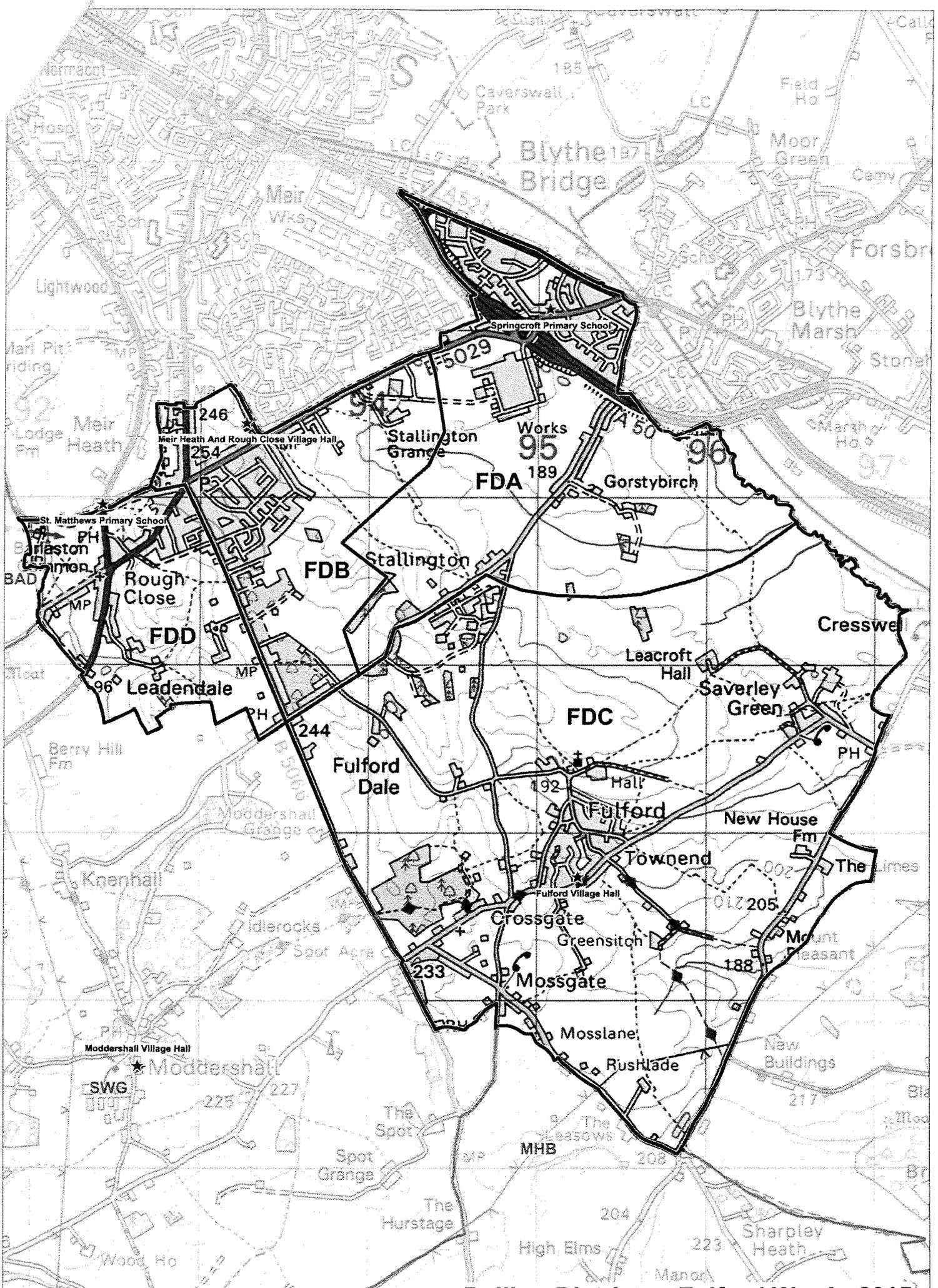
A copy of a plan showing the boundary of the proposed Neighbourhood Area is attached.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future to establish what support is available to move the Fulford Neighbourhood Plan forwards to the next stage.

Yours sincerely

G M Keiher-Knapper  
Clerk

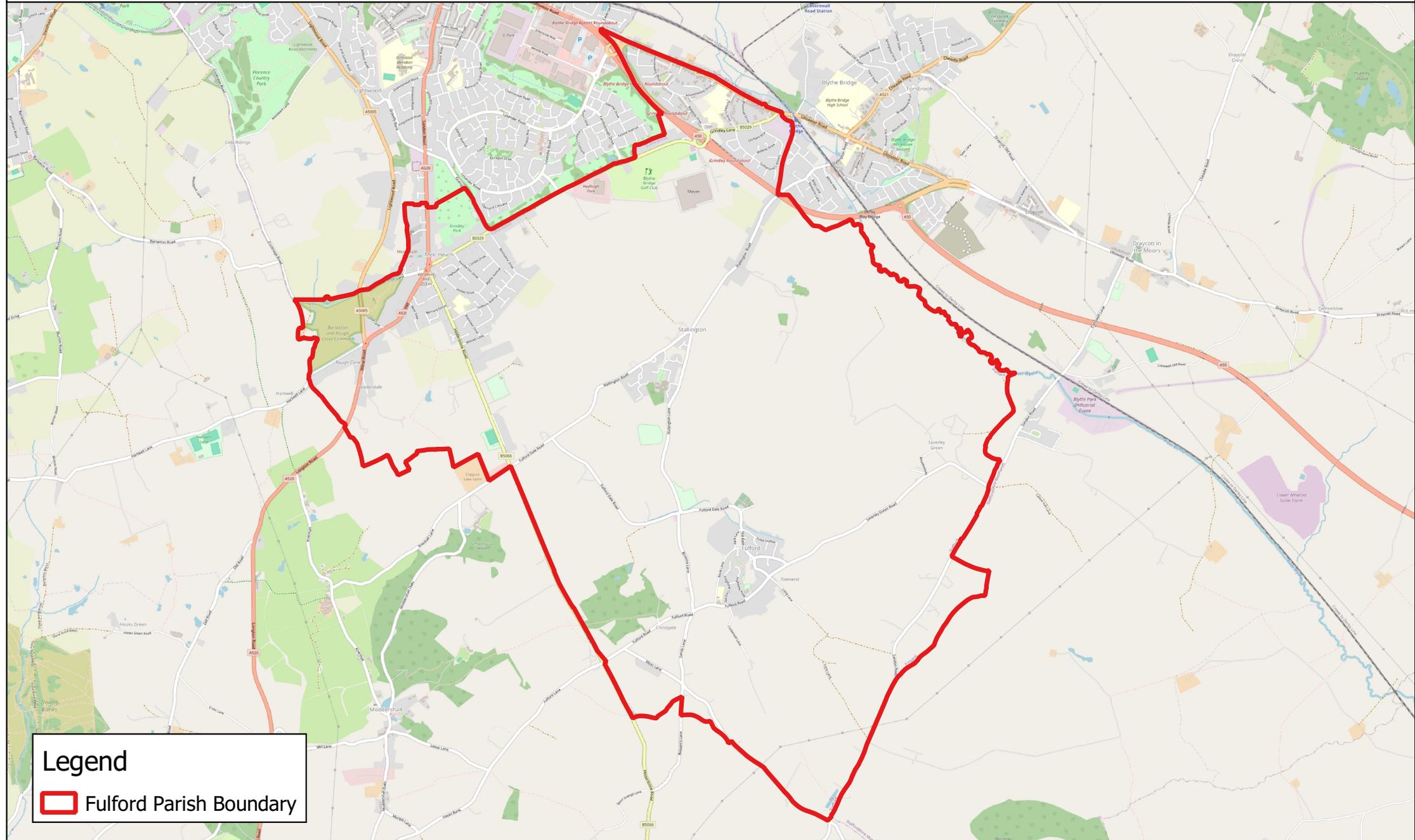
Enc: Fulford Parish Map



Contains Ordnance Survey data  
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**Polling Districts - Fulford Ward - 2015**

# Fulford Parish Boundary



**Legend**

 Fulford Parish Boundary



**Agenda Item 4(a)ii****Section 106 Monitoring Fee**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Economic Development and Planning
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Economic Development and Planning

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**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To set out a charging schedule for the monitoring of Section 106 Agreements (S106).
- 1.2 To seek approval to authorise a charging schedule for S106 monitoring fees and late payment of S106 obligations.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That a S106 monitoring fee charging schedule as follows is approved:
  - 5% fee per financial obligation, capped at £20,000
  - £900 fee per non-financial obligation, subject to officer assessment
  - £500 per additional and / or amended obligation in a Deed of Variation subject to officer assessment
- 2.2 That a S106 late payment surcharge equal to 2.5%, or £500, whichever is the greater amount, is chargeable for all S106 invoices that are not paid by the stipulated due date.
- 2.3 The implementation of the charging schedule and late payment surcharge will be linked to the Fees and Charges 2025 / 2026 onwards, with the specific date delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Planning in liaison with the Economic Development and Planning Portfolio Holder.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.4 Officers are required to monitor and report on Section 106 Agreements. Depending on the agreement, this can require significant Officer resources, with some agreements requiring monitoring and reporting over several years. To allow authorities to recoup some of the costs associated with the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements, authorities can charge a monitoring fee. This fee must be proportionate, reasonable, and reflect the estimated cost of the monitoring and reporting of S106 agreements.
- 2.5 It is estimated that, overall, SBC spends approximately £26,103 per annum, including on-costs, on the monitoring and reporting of S106 agreements, based on 30% of officers time within the Strategic Planning and Placemaking team. The recommended S106 monitoring fee charge would result in approximately £18,500 per annum, depending on the number of S106's being entered into and the obligations secured, which would contribute to the monitoring and recording of agreements.
- 2.6 The reasons for recommending a fixed percentage S106 monitoring fee is that it is proportionate, reasonable, and reflects the cost of the monitoring and reporting of S106 agreements. It is transparent and easy for developers to understand how much monitoring fee they are required to pay and is easily calculated by the Case Officer and therefore should not impact the processing of planning applications.
- 2.7 A late payment surcharge is recommended due to several instances in which developers have failed to pay SBC's S106 obligation invoices before the required due date. A late payment surcharge should therefore be implemented to provide a deterrent for late payments.

## **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 National legislation allows authorities to collect a S106 monitoring fee, of which SBC does not charge. However, national legislation and guidance does not define a specific approach to charging a S106 monitoring fee. This has resulted in several authorities introducing S106 monitoring fees with differing methods of calculation.

## **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Securing a S106 monitoring fee schedule will achieve the following Council's Corporate Priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan:
- Objective 1: To deliver innovative, sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.

- 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 resilient communities that promote health and wellbeing.
- 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.

## 5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Stafford Borough Council secure planning obligations through S106 Agreements, which are legal agreements between the Council and developer to provide the infrastructure required to mitigate the impacts of development. S106 obligations can either be:
- Financial, requiring the developer to pay a fee towards the delivery of infrastructure, i.e off-site open space, or
  - Non-financial, requiring the developer to provide physical mitigation, i.e the provision of affordable housing.
- 5.2 Each obligation has a 'trigger' point, specifying when the obligation is due to be provided to the Council, i.e. prior to commencement of development. Some obligations have several trigger points, for example a financial obligation could require payment of 50% of the financial obligation prior to the commencement of development, and the remaining 50% due on occupancy of the development.
- 5.3 Officers are required to record, monitor and report on the planning obligations secured by S106 Agreements. This includes the statutory requirement to produce and publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement which provides public facing information including how much money has been spent and allocated to providing infrastructure.
- 5.4 To cover the costs of the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements, councils can charge a S106 monitoring fee. This fee can only be spent on the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements. There is currently no set calculation for councils to use when setting a S106 monitoring fee, however, legislation requires that:
- the sum to be paid fairly and reasonably relates in scale and kind to the development; and

- the sum to be paid does not exceed the authority's estimate of its cost of monitoring the development over the lifetime of the planning obligations which relate to that development.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.5 Guidance also states that the fee must be proportionate, reasonable, and reflect the actual cost of monitoring. To ensure that these requirements are met, authorities can consider putting a cap on a fee to ensure that they are not excessive.
- 5.6 The time taken for the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements differs for each individual agreement, and it is therefore difficult to quantify time spent per agreement which would be used to frame the monitoring fee. More complex agreements which secure multiple obligations with varying trigger points can be monitored and reported on across several years. This is typical of large-scale development. Smaller development, usually with less complex agreements, can require much less time to monitor and report. Therefore, to provide an estimated cost of the monitoring and reporting of agreements, overall Officer time shall instead be considered.
- 5.7 Currently the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements is undertaken by the Strategic Planning team by a Senior Planning Officer and an Assistant Planner. Based on Officer time, when this is proportioned to their appropriate salaries, this would equate to £26,103 per annum currently being expended on the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements. It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that any monitoring fee should be able to recoup in the region of these costs to the Council.
- 5.8 As there is no specified S106 monitoring fee outlined by the Government, a review was conducted of several other authorities' S106 monitoring fees, as shown in **APPENDIX 1**. These monitoring fees can be categorised as one of four methods of calculation: a fixed percentage, a fixed monetary value based on development scale, a fixed monetary value based on obligations triggers, and the use of a formula.
- 5.9 For each of the reviewed fees, SBC's S106 data from the last five financial years, as shown in **APPENDIX 2**, has been applied to provide an approximate potential fee income for each method and to identify the most appropriate method to recoup SBC's current expenditure on the monitoring and report of agreements of £26,103 per annum (as outlined in paragraph 5.6).
- 5.10 From the evidence produced by the review, Officer's would recommend that SBC adopt a S106 monitoring fee based on the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Community Infrastructure (Amendment) (England) (No.2) Regulations 2019

- a 5% fee on financial obligations, capped at £20,000
- a £900 fee for non-financial obligations, subject to assessment
- £500 per additional and/or amended obligation in a Deed of Variation, subject to assessment

- 5.11 This fee would produce around £18,500 per annum to be used towards the monitoring and recording of S106 agreements, which is a reasonable contribution. A fixed percentage of 5% is considered fair, reasonable, and related in scale and kind to the development, as it reflects the fee set by legislation that councils can retain in Community Infrastructure Levy administration costs. A cap has been applied to ensure that the monitoring fee is proportionate to, and does not exceed, the estimated costs of monitoring. Both the charges for non-financial obligations and additional and/or amendments through a Deed of Variation have a set fee, which are subject to assessment to ensure that the fee relates in scale and kind to the development.
- 5.12 Officers would recommend that the fee is to be paid upon commencement of the development as a clause within the agreement.
- 5.13 The effects of inflation should be considered, as the costs of staff time can be expected to grow year on year. The S106 monitoring fee shall therefore be Index Linked, increasing in proportion to movement in the index between the date of the S106 Agreement and the date the payment is made, in line with the All Items Group (Item reference CHAW) of the Retail Prices Index published by HM Government Office for National Statistics.
- 5.14 Alongside the monitoring fee, consideration should also be given to introducing a late payment surcharge for those developers who do not pay within the invoicing period of 30 days. As seen in the review, East Hampshire require a late payment surcharge equal to 2.5% of the amount owed, or £500, whichever is the greater amount. There have been several instances for SBC in which developers have failed to pay S106 obligation invoices before the required due date. A late payment surcharge should therefore be considered in the hope of preventing late payments moving forward, reducing the amount of monitoring time required by Officers.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

Not imposing a monitoring fee for Section 106 Agreements would be detrimental to the Council's finances. An over-simplified charging structure could result in the Council failing to recover its costs in full or significantly over-charging. The money collected for Section 106 monitoring fee must be spent on the monitoring and reporting of Section Agreements, currently conducted by the Strategic Planning and Policy team.

### **6.2 Legal**

There are no direct legal implications of introducing a S106 monitoring fee. There is current practice already within the Council's planning legal team to charge a fee for legal time when securing Section 106 Agreements.

### **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 1: S106 Monitoring Fee Review

Appendix 2: Stafford Borough Council S106 Data

## **8 Previous Consideration**

None

## **9 Background Papers**

None

**Contact Officer:** Harriet Mallinder  
**Telephone Number:** 01785 619317  
**Ward Interest:** All  
**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024 (Only)  
**Key Decision:** No

## Appendix 1: S106 Monitoring Fee Review

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1. A total of 11 S106 monitoring fees have been reviewed. Table 1 provides a summary of each authority monitoring fee charging schedule, and the anticipated SBC monitoring fee per annum when using each of these fees.
2. Each of the monitoring fee's reviewed can be categorised as one of four methods of calculation: a fixed percentage, a fixed monetary value based on development scale, a fixed monetary value based on obligations triggers, and the use of a formula.

### Method 1: Fixed Percentage

3. Method 1 is a fixed percentage on the total financial obligations received per agreement. The monitoring fees reviewed that use this approach have a fixed percentage of 5% of all financial sums secured by an agreement, with some applying a set fee for non-financial obligations as well as Deed of Variations.
4. Using this method, SBC could anticipate collecting between £8,143 to £43,478 per annum. This figure varies due to the capping of the monitoring fee. One example does not have a cap, which means that developments of a large scale are not limited by a cap. In the last 5 years, SBC secured two large scale developments of £1.5 million and £2 million of S106 financial obligations. An uncapped 5% monitoring fee applied to these developments would result in fees of £75,000 and £100,000 per agreement.
5. It is unclear as to how authorities have determined a 5% figure as being proportional, reasonable and reflecting the estimated costs of monitoring. However, where councils collect a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), national legislation allows councils to use 5% of funds from the total CIL receipts to recover the costs of administration, indicating that 5% is considered a proportional and reasonable sum by Government.
6. If this method was adopted by SBC, Officers would recommend using the below schedule, which would have provided £18,500 per annum to cover the costs of the administration, monitoring and reporting of agreements over the previous five financial years:
  - a 5% uncapped fee on financial obligations
  - a £900 fee for non-financial obligations subject to officer assessment
  - £500 per additional and/or amended obligation in a Deed of Variation subject to officer assessment

7. A benefit of this method is that it is easy to calculate and would therefore not take up considerable time being calculated by the case officer. Due to its simplicity, it would be transparent for developers, who would be able to easily calculate the potential monitoring fee prior to submitting a planning application. Furthermore, this method would sufficiently cover the costs of the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements at SBC. Officers would therefore recommend the use of this method.

#### **Method 2: Fixed monetary amount based on development scale**

8. Method 2 is a fixed monetary value based on the scale of the development. Using this method, SBC could anticipate collecting between £8,215 to £15,150 per annum.
9. A benefit of this method is that it is a straight forward calculation and should not take up considerable time to be calculated by the case officer. It would also be transparent for developers, who would be able to easily calculate the potential monitoring fee prior to submitting a planning application. Furthermore, the fee would be proportional to the development scale, working on the assumption that larger developments require more complex agreements. However, this method does not generate a great enough fee to sufficiently cover the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements at SBC.

#### **Method 3: Fixed monetary amount per obligation trigger**

10. Method 3 is a fixed monetary value per individual obligation trigger secured by a S106 Agreement. Using this method, SBC could anticipate collecting between £7,560 to £11,214 per annum.
11. Although this method is relatively transparent, it does not generate a great enough fee to sufficiently cover the monitoring and reporting of S106 Agreements at SBC. It would also take valuable case officer time in calculating, slowing down the planning process, and would not allow for a developer to calculate the fee until the time of creating the agreement. Officers therefore would not recommend the use of this method.

#### **Method 4: Using a formula**

12. Method 4 uses a formula to calculate the monitoring fee, based on variables required for the administration, monitoring and reporting of agreements. Table 6 outlines each LPA that uses this monitoring fee and details of how the fee is calculated. Due to the nature of this method, it would take too much Officer time to provide an approximate figure for the last five years of S106 data that could have been received using this method.

13. This method creates a formula that is reasonable and proportionate to each individual S106 Agreement. However, this is particularly difficult to calculate due to the number of variables that would need to be pre-empted. It would also take valuable case officer time in calculating, slowing down the planning process, and would not allow for a developer to calculate the fee until the time of creating the agreement. Officers therefore would not recommend the use of this method.

*Table 1 - A summary of each authority monitoring fee charging schedule, and the anticipated SBC monitoring fee per annum when using each of these methods.*

Local Planning Authority	Fee details	Anticipated SBC monitoring fee per annum when using this fee
Gosport Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% of financial obligations secured capped at £10,000 per application</li> <li>No charge for non-financial obligations or DoVs</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed percentage method</i></p>	£8,143.24
East Hampshire District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% of financial obligations secured capped at £17,000 per application</li> <li>£864 for each non-financial obligation</li> <li>£350 for each DoV</li> <li>Late payment surcharge equal to two and a half per cent of the amount owed or £500, whichever is the greater amount.</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed percentage method</i></p>	£16,424
Havant Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5% of financial obligations secured (no cap)</li> <li>£914 for each non-financial obligation</li> <li>No charge for DoVs</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed percentage method</i></p>	£43,478

South Holland District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dov's £424</li> <li>• Less than 10 dwellings £1,750</li> <li>• 10-199 dwellings £2,915</li> <li>• Over 200 dwellings £3,800</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed monetary amount based on development scale</i></p>	£8,215
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 to 5 dwellings / 1 to 1,000sqm commercial floorspace/ DoV £500</li> <li>• 6-10 dwellings / 1,001 to 5,000sqm commercial floorspace £1,000</li> <li>• 11 to 50 dwellings / 5,001 to 10,000sqm commercial floorspace £3,000</li> <li>• 51 to 100 dwellings / Over 10,001sqm commercial floorspace £5,000</li> <li>• Over 101 dwellings £10,000</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed monetary amount based on development scale</i></p>	£13,500
Wealden District Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration fee of £500 for all agreements (including DoVs)</li> <li>• Less than 10 dwellings £250</li> <li>• 51-100 dwellings £2,500</li> <li>• 101-250 dwellings £7,500</li> <li>• Over 251 dwellings £10,000</li> <li>• Commercial floorspace on a case-by-case basis</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed monetary amount based on development scale</i></p>	£15,150
East Suffolk Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £445 per obligation trigger (based upon the occurrence of triggers for compliance of a planning obligation rather than each obligation individually.)</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed monetary amount per obligation trigger</i></p>	£11,214

Adur District Council and Worthing Borough Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£300 per obligation trigger</li> </ul> <p><i>Fixed monetary amount per obligation trigger</i></p>	£7,560
Staffordshire County Council	<p>3 hours x £210 (charging rate per hour) x number of schedules (or significant parts of schedules)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fee is never less than £630 i.e 3 hours x £210 x 1 schedule</li> </ul> <p><i>Using a formula</i></p>	N/A
Charnwood	<p>Based on size of development (dwellings)</p> <p>&gt;10 =£292 per obligation + £234</p> <p>11-50 = £350 per obligation + £281</p> <p>51-150 = £409 per obligation + £328</p> <p>151+ = £523 per obligation + £422</p> <p>350+ = Bespoke</p> <p><i>Using a formula</i></p>	N/A
East Staffordshire Borough Council	<p><math>A \times B \times C \times D</math></p> <p>A= number of obligations</p> <p>B= hourly rate of the officer's salary</p> <p>C=number of officer hours spent on each obligation, including time spent during site visits</p> <p>D=number of years expected to be required to monitor the site</p> <p><i>Using a formula</i></p>	N/A

## Appendix 2: Stafford Borough Council S106 data

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1. In the last five financial years SBC have secured 101 agreements. It should be noted that some agreements secured contain obligations for Staffordshire County Council (SCC). These obligations are typically for education and transport, and it is the County's responsibility to monitor these obligations. In some instances, agreements may contain County obligations only, with no SBC obligations to monitor, and would therefore be excluded from a SBC monitoring fee. Of the 101 agreements secured, 24 of these contain only SCC obligations, and will be excluded from the review, resulting in 77 agreements applicable for a SBC monitoring fee.
2. The 77 agreements include Section 106 Agreements, Unilateral Undertakings, and Deeds of Variation, all of which are considered as legal agreements applicable for securing developer contributions under the under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Of the 77 agreements:
  - 17 are Section 106 Agreements
  - 36 are Unilateral Undertakings
  - 24 Deed of Variation
3. A Unilateral Undertaking (UU) is a simplified version of a Section 106 Agreement for developments of less than 10 dwellings. Of all 36 UU's signed, all contain only one obligation, which is for the collection of Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC) funds. Since 2023, SBC have introduced the use of S111 Agreements as an alternative mechanism for collecting SAC payments under the S111 Local Government Act, which do not constitute as an agreement defined by the Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and are therefore not eligible for a S106 monitoring fee charge. It is anticipated that, moving forward, developers will choose to undertake a S111 agreement rather than a UU for developments that require SAC mitigation, due to benefits to the developer. Since their introduction, 63 S111 agreements have been entered into for SAC obligations, with only 20 UU's being secured specifically for this purpose. The expectation is that S111's will replace UU's, thus resulting in significantly less agreements applicable to a S106 monitoring fee. To provide a comparative understanding of the funding that could be received through S106 monitoring fees, it would be beneficial to exclude the 36 UU's from this review.

4. A Deed of Variation (DoV) makes legal amendments to a pre-existing agreement. Changes can be minor, such as minor re-phrasing of an obligation, or changes can be extensive, including the removal and addition of planning obligations, and additional triggers to monitor. In the previous five financial years, SBC have secured 24 Deeds of Variation. As Deeds of Variation can vary extensively depending on the individual application, it is recommended that DoVs should be included in a charging schedule, however, should be dealt with separately.
5. Of the 17 S106 agreements applicable for a monitoring fee, Table 1 outlines the number of financial and non-financial obligations secured through these agreements, how much has been secured in total, and how many trigger points have required monitoring in the last five financial years. Please note that this reflects some agreements having multiple obligations, and some obligations having multiple triggers.

*Table 1 - A breakdown of the obligations and triggers secured through S106 Agreements excluding DoVs by SBC in the last five financial years*

Number of Obligations secured	51
~Of which were financial	29
~Of which were non-financial	22
Number of Triggers	68
Total financial funding secured	£3,945,677.76

6. It should be noted that Section 106 Agreements typically have a General Obligations under the first schedule of an agreement. This includes the requirement for the developer to provide notices to the Council. Due to the generic nature of these obligations, they have not been included in Table 1 or as applicable for a monitoring fee.
7. Of the 17 agreements secured, the types of applications that have been secured include:
  - 14 for housing planning applications
  - 1 for employment planning applications
  - 2 for other uses, which includes home extensions and restrictions to the use of the land

8. Table 2 sets out the scale of development for the 17 agreements, that provide either dwellings or employment floorspace. As 2 of these agreements are for other uses, including home extensions and restrictions to the use of the land, they have not been included in Table 2.

*Table 2 - Scale of development for S106 Agreements tied to planning applications secured by SBC in the last five financial years excluding DoVs*

Scale of Development	Number of applications applicable to development scale
Less than 5 dwellings OR less than 1,000 sqm of employment floorspace	1
6-10 dwellings OR 1,001-5,000 sqm of employment floorspace	0
11-50 dwellings OR 5,001-10,000 sqm of employment floorspace	9
51-100 dwellings OR Over 10,000 sqm of employment floorspace	2
100-199 dwellings	0
200+ dwellings	3

**Agenda Item 4(a)iii**

## **Proposed Charging Scheme for Development Management Pre-Application Advice**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Economic Development and Planning
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Economic Development and Planning

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### **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To obtain Cabinet approval for the introduction of charges for the provision of Development Management pre-application advice.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the introduction of a charged for pre-application planning advice service.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve the implementation of the fee charging schedule as set out in **APPENDIX 1**.
- 2.3 That the Head of Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning be authorised to review and update the Development Management Pre-application Charging Schedule as necessary.
- 2.4 That Cabinet agree to delegate the date of implementation to be agreed by the Head of Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Planning.

#### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.5 The introduction of a comprehensive pre-application charging scheme will provide a means to improve the quality and consistency of advice provided and this should lead to better quality applications. and staff resources allocated appropriately. It would not currently be possible to resource a free of charge pre-application service.

- 2.6 There are no charging models provided by the Planning Advisory Service or Central Government so Local Authorities have discretion to set their own fee levels. In setting the proposed charging schedule, an analysis of Staffordshire authorities has been undertaken in order to set a clear structure that complies with Government guidance in that charges should not exceed the cost of providing the service. In addition, the charging rates are set at levels that should not discourage the take-up of the service.
- 2.7 The pre-application advice service will recognise the value offered by Development Management Officers to the development process. The previous practice of providing free advice enabled the use of Development Management Officers as free planning consultants was a burden to the team and unfair to those applicants that obtained this support from elsewhere at their own cost.

### **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 Stafford Borough Council's Development Management Service provided a free of charge formalised pre-application advice from 2016 to September 2020 when the service was suspended due to a lack of capacity to undertake the work.
- 3.2 Pre-application advice is a discretionary service although most local authorities provide this service at a charge. Stafford is the only authority within Staffordshire which did not charge a fee for pre-application work. The Council has the power to set fee charges under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 for discretionary services. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 extended the powers to fee charging for local planning authority activities.
- 3.3 The Development Management team had received 300 - 400 pre application advice requests per year prior to the pandemic, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to deal with these in a timely manner together with the statutory planning application work. Experience from other local authorities that have adopted a charge for a pre-application service suggest that demand will reduce by approximately half.

### **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:
- (i) Corporate Business Objective 1 - To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.
  - (ii) 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

- (iii) Corporate 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.

## **5 Report Detail**

- 5.1 Good practice is to encourage applicants to engage in pre-application discussions in order to inform a planning application.
- 5.2 Pre-application discussions assist the applicant in clarifying the information required to support the planning application; planning policy considerations; likely planning obligations (Section 106); relevant consultees on the application; site constraints and the view of other statutory and non-statutory consultees that can be approached separately for their views. Demand from applicants and agents supports the view that these discussions assist the development process and are valued by potential applicants as they can save time and additional expenditure. The planning portal and the Council's website provides further information on planning matters at no cost.
- 5.3 The authority would benefit from positive pre-application discussions as they should lead to an application submission that complies with the validation requirements to allow the application to be registered and consultation to commence promptly. A large percentage of applications received are currently invalid on receipt, and the applicant/agent is asked to submit the required information and the application remains on hold until the information is provided and can be checked for validation. In addition some valid applications need amendment after submission, sometimes on more than one occasion, which will often necessitate a re-consultation exercise. However the determination period remains the same unless a time extension is agreed, and any further consultation and assessment takes place without an additional fee. This delay can impact on the overall timeframe for determination of applications, where government targets require minor applications to be determined within 8 weeks and majors within 13 weeks.
- 5.4 Paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) encourages Local Planning Authorities to "...work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area". The provision of a chargeable pre-application service will assist with proactive work with applicants.
- 5.5 Development Management officers carry a large application caseload and will deal with pre-application queries and the provision of advice as part of their day-to-day work. A formalised system enables pre-application work to be recorded, allocated and tracked, and it will be used to monitor the overall workload of Development Management officers.

- 5.6 The 2024/25 budget setting process identified the pre-application advice service as a potential contribution to revenue streams.
- 5.7 It will be necessary to set out service standards to manage expectation of customers. It is proposed that users of the service should expect a written response within 20 working days (30 working days for a major application) of the request being registered following payment. This could also include a short consultation by way of a virtual meeting with a planning officer. It may be necessary for the planning officer to make a site visit and an additional fee would be charged at the hourly rate quoted and only accommodated where necessary. Face-to face meetings would only be arranged in special circumstances and would be available for major applications. Further consultation through subsequent meetings will be charged out at the hourly rate for each meeting organised if further meetings are agreed to be necessary by both parties.
- 5.8 Permitted Development (PD) queries can only be responded to officially through the submission of a Lawful Development Certificate (LDC) application. A LDC establishes whether a proposed or existing development accords with PD rights as set out in legislation. Informal, verbal advice cannot be relied upon and as PD regulations continue to change and evolve, they have become more complicated and as a consequence legal professionals require formal advice. PD inquiries will therefore be directed to the planning portal and a LDC application can be submitted if required.
- 5.9 It is proposed that enquiries relating to Listed Buildings, requests from Parish Councils, house extensions where the development is directly related to the needs of a registered disabled resident, and planning discussions relating to an application following an enforcement investigation would be exempt from the charging schedule.
- 5.10 A comparison of Staffordshire Local Planning Authorities has been carried out and **APPENDIX 2** identifies the charges imposed by each of them. The assessment was used to inform the proposed fees which are similar to those implemented for Cannock Chase District Council. It is proposed that the charges will be raised in future years. It should be noted that the proposed fees increase in accordance with the scale of proposal but also reflect the seniority of officer required and any additional views to be obtained from consultees.
- 5.11 It would not be possible to resource a free of charge pre-application service, therefore this option was not considered, however a number of options were considered in setting the charging schedule. An alternative would be to set an hourly rate for each type of application and charge on the basis of time and seniority of officer. Another option would be to offer different types of pre-application service such as: written advice only, written advice together with a face to face meeting and a combination of these alongside a site meeting

were also considered. However these alternative options are not easy to understand and would potentially increase the staff time required to explain the options and to calculate and collect the charges, which would adversely affect the delivery of the service. The aim of setting out a clear and transparent charging schedule could not be achieved through these alternative options.

- 5.12 Agents who had attended recent Agent Forum meetings were consulted on the draft charging schedule in August 2024. The responses received welcomed the re-introduction of a pre-application advice service, and the comments received related to the timescale for introduction and implementation, rather than the level of charges proposed.
- 5.13 The Development Management Service has worked hard to increase and maintain high performance standards, and has over the last 6 months filled the case officer vacancies which had existed for several years, albeit with some less experienced staff, and reduced the need for more expensive agency staff. It will be necessary as part of the implementation of a chargeable pre-application service to monitor the overall workload of both the case officers and Development Leads to ensure that the service has the staffing resource necessary to provide the service.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

It is anticipated that the introduction of Pre-application charging will bring in an additional revenue stream. The budget for 2024/25 includes an anticipated income generation of £30,000.00 from this type of work agreed as part of the budget savings.

The date of implementation will determine how much a pre-application charging regime would realise during the current financial year. It is estimated that this could realise approximately £5,000, assuming the service is operational from 1 February 2025. Income received from this function will be separately identifiable within the Council Finance Systems to allow the levels of income to be easily identified and assessed.

The fees proposed would not exceed the cost of providing the service as stipulated in guidance. Payment will be required before officers engage in discussions and will be a fee for an initial first consultation, after this a further meeting will be charged at the identified rate. The pre-application charging schedule will be reviewed each year and amended where needed as informed by monitoring of the service.

Any additional costs associated with the revised charging scheme will need to be contained within existing budgets. Given the current level of staffing resources within the Service the amount of time spent will need to be closely

monitored to ensure that there is no adverse affect on time spent in dealing with Planning applications. Failure to comply with Government targets could result in Planning fees having to be refunded and the overall income generated by the Service as a whole being reduced.

## **6.2 Legal**

Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 gives the Council powers to set out a charging schedule for discretionary services that it provides these services on a not-for-profit basis. The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 extended fee charging to local planning authority activities.

Pre-application advice will be issued with a disclaimer that the advice relates to the views of planning officers and cannot be construed as a decision of the Council. The advice will not influence the decision of the Local Planning Authority on any application submitted. The advice offered will be dependent on the detail provided at the time as aspects of the proposal could change at a later date that would require a new consultation. There may also be the need to obtain specialist advice, for example from the Highway Authority, that may affect the proposal and which may incur an additional fee from that specialist.

## **6.3 Human Resources**

There are no staffing implications however, in order to resource a pre-application service there must be sufficient capacity within the Development Management team. This will need to be kept under review.

The Development Management Team has limited capacity to deal with impromptu requests for information and these requests will need to be co-ordinated and a system introduced whereby they can be submitted formally, monitored and responded to appropriately. This may impact on other areas of the Council and further discussions will be required.

## **6.4 Risk Management**

The introduction of the pre-application service will increase expectation among fee-paying customers. It will be necessary to set out a service standard that can be monitored as well as internal processes to ensure that the advice provided is clear and consistent.

Poor quality submissions may continue to be received where pre-application advice is not obtained. These schemes incur delays while further details are awaited and can affect service performance. Whilst charging rates have been set so that they are affordable, submissions lacking key detail will be returned to the applicant or refused should unreasonable delays be experienced.

**6.5 Equalities and Diversity**

None

**6.6 Health**

None

**6.7 Climate Change**

None

**7 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Stafford Borough Council Development Management Pre-Application Advice - Fee Charging Schedule

Appendix 2 - Staffordshire Authorities Pre-application Fees and Charges

**8 Previous Consideration**

None

**9 Background Papers**

None

**Contact Officer:** John Holmes

**Telephone Number:** 01785 619302

**Ward Interest:** All

**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024 (Only)

**Key Decision:** N/A

# Draft Pre-Application Planning Advice Charging Schedule

Stafford Borough Council welcomes discussions with prospective applicants to discuss their development proposals prior to submission. The intention is to improve the quality of submissions and to assist the applicant in ensuring that the necessary information is provided for validation to expedite the process from submission to decision.

A planning case officer from Development Management will respond to your request and will provide high-quality timely advice. The Council will charge for the service which relates to the scale of the proposal as well as the level and range of support required from planning officers.

Application Type	Initial Meeting	Subsequent meeting	Hourly rate for additional services/travel
Householder or Advert	£60	£40	Not applicable
Change of Use	£150	£60	£60
1 to 4 dwellings	£250	£100	£60
5 to 9 dwellings Up to 999sqm commercial floorspace	£500	£150	£60
10 to 49 dwellings or 1,000 to 2,999 sqm commercial floorspace	£1000	£250	£60
50 to 199 dwellings 3000 to 9,999 sqm of commercial floorspace	£2000	£250	£60
200 dwellings or more 10,000+ sqm of commercial floorspace	£4000	£250	£60

The Council will respond within 20 working days of receipt of the request and payment of the corresponding fee for householder, advert and minor developments and 30 days for major developments. Reasons for any time extension will be explained and agreed in consultation with the applicant where it is not possible to meet the 20/30 day target.

**Draft 01 08 2024 - Subject to approval by Stafford BC Cabinet**

The pre-application service will include advice on:

- The interpretation and application of local, regional and national guidance/policies that will apply to the proposal.
- The main issues and potential conflicts raised by the proposal as well as pre-application consultation that may be necessary with stakeholders and external organisations (potential additional fees).
- The need for specialist advice (potential additional fees).
- Whether proposals are fundamentally unacceptable in planning terms to save you the cost and expense of preparing a planning application.
- The potential planning obligations generated by the proposal such as Section 106 agreements covering affordable housing, education contributions and open space requirements etc.
- Planning history relevant to the proposal.
- Procedures such as Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Extent of documents and supporting information required at application stage to ensure that the application can be validated on submission.

The advice provided will be supported by written recommendations provided by the officer. This advice is provided on a **'without prejudice'** basis and should be used to support the subsequent planning application. It should not be assumed to guarantee a decision.

#### Note on Householder applications

A site visit in relation to householder applications will not be included unless exceptional circumstances warrant it. An online meeting with a planning officer will be the default option.

Required information:

- Completed pre-application advice request form with relevant fee.
- A site location plan with the site outlined in red to a recognised scale (1:1250, 1:500 etc).
- Details of existing use, floor plans, elevations and sections.
- Summary of the proposal including details of scale and height of proposed structures and associated works accompanied by sketch drawings ideally to a recognised scale.
- Photographs of the site showing existing buildings and surrounding area for context.

**Draft 01 08 2024 - Subject to approval by Stafford BC Cabinet**

- Details of the proposed layout ideally at a recognised scale and if appropriate details of parking, access, density, landscaping and retention of trees/vegetation and structures.
- Outline of materials to be used accompanied by a design statement.
- Details of any known or anticipated concerns.

### **Large scale proposals**

Major applications (greater than 10 residential units/or greater than 1000 sqm commercial floorspace) will require a higher level of officer input including officers from different parts of the council to reflect greater levels of complexity. This may include officers from Planning Policy, Environmental Health, Parks and Open Spaces and Legal etc. This would provide a Development Team approach as a greater level of consideration and preparatory work is necessary.

A Senior Planning Officer will provide a single point of contact to manage the process and organise meetings and input of various parties. It is recognised that Large-scale proposals require time to evolve and develop negotiated solutions to identified issues before an application can be submitted. **Planning Performance Agreements (PPA)** may be recommended for larger scale/regeneration proposals. Where proposals are brought forward through a PPA a bespoke programme of engagement and activity will be developed and agreed. The PPA programme would include:

- A designated Senior Planning Officer and single point of contact.
- Access to a Senior Planning Officer who will aim to provide responses to queries within 5 working days.
- A programme of pre-application consultation meetings with officers (up to an agreed number) including site visits where necessary.
- Advice on proposed programme of engagement and scope of pre-application discussions including key tasks and actions.
- A professional support team comprising specialist officers from across the council to advise applicant.
- Arrangement of specific meetings with key officers (up to an agreed number).
- Arrangements for sub-group meetings and agreement of composition and scope (up to an agreed number).

- Identification of key stakeholders and statutory consultees that can be approached separately for their views and comments.
- A programme for the submission of a planning application (where possible) and an indicative timescale to determination.
- Written confirmation of key documents and information required to support the planning application to assist timely validation.
- Advice to support consultation activities.
- Preparation of action points arising from meetings with responsibilities and timescales for agreement and action.
- Monitoring of actions and reporting on progress.
- Discussions relating to anticipated Section 106 obligations progressing to Heads of Terms if agreement is obtained.

### **Request for Pre-application advice**

All requests for pre-application advice/meetings will be through the Pre-application Advice Request Form which is available ..... [insert link]

The form must be completed in full and all necessary information submitted with it including the appropriate fee. The request will be registered and acknowledged within 5 working days and a Development Management Officer will make contact as soon as practicable.

Required information:

- Completed pre-application advice request form with relevant fee.
- A site location plan with the site outlined in red to a recognised scale (1:1250, 1:500 etc).
- Details of existing use, floor plans, elevations and sections.
- Summary of the proposal including details of scale and height of proposed structures and associated works accompanied by sketch drawings to a recognised scale.
- Photographs of the site showing existing buildings and surrounding area for context.
- Details of the proposed layout at a recognised scale and details of parking, access, density, landscaping and retention of trees/vegetation and structures.
- Contextual sketch drawings showing the development within the immediate area and relationship to adjacent land and buildings.
- Outline of materials to be used, analysis of urban design and design statement response, streetscene images, 2D/3D computer modelling, photomontages etc.

**Draft 01 08 2024 - Subject to approval by Stafford BC Cabinet**

Advice is provided on a ‘**without prejudice**’ basis and should be used to support the subsequent planning application. It should not be assumed to guarantee a decision.

### **Fee exemptions**

- Enquiries relating to a Listed Building.
- Requests from Parish Councils.
- Applications where the development is directly related to the needs of a registered disabled resident including means of access into or within a building for disabled persons.
- Planning discussions relating to a current enforcement investigation.
- Telecommunications
- Advice on how to submit an application.

In all other circumstances, the Council will charge for providing advice. There is information available on the planning portal ..... [insert link] and general enquiries will be directed to this site. Applicants also have the option of appointing their own planning agent for advice. Permitted Development enquiries can only be formally responded to through the submission of a Lawful Development Certificate which will confirm whether the proposal accords with Permitted Development rules as set out in legislation.

### **Disclaimer**

Pre-application advice provided by Planning Officers of the Council is provided without prejudice to any formal decision of the Council. The advice does not constitute a formal decision of the Council and cannot bind the Council in reaching a decision on any planning application.

Advice is provided in the context of the adopted The Plan for Stafford Borough (2014), The Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 (2017) and the National Planning Policy Framework. The emerging Local Plan has limited weight at this time. In addition, there are neighbourhood plans in place in parts of the council area ..... [insert link]

It should be noted that the National Planning Policy Framework is periodically reviewed by Government. Discussions are carried out at the applicant’s risk and fees will not be refunded in the circumstances where the planning context changes.

Officer advice will be guided by the information provided by the requester and the planning context at the time. The advice provided is officer level advice and will not prejudice the Council's position when considering a planning application. Issues may arise at a later time following pre-application discussion and for this reason officers cannot provide any assurances of the potential outcome of a planning application.

### **Confidentiality**

Any request for a pre-application discussion as well as the Council response is potentially disclosable under a Freedom of Information request. The same applies to requests under Environmental Information Regulations. Exemptions apply within FOI and EIR legislation that sets out the circumstances where the Council can withhold information.

In certain circumstances, such as where the information is deemed to be commercially sensitive or contains sensitive personal information, the applicant can provide supporting information to illustrate their case, however it should be stressed that the final decision on whether the information should be withheld lies with the Council.

**Staffordshire Authorities Pre-applications Fees and Charges - Obtained from information on Local Authority Websites August 2024**

	H/h Advert	Change of Use	1-4 dwellings	5-9 dwellings	10-49 dwellings	50-199 dwellings	200+ dwellings	
<b>Cannock</b>	£60 +£40 meeting fee per half hour	£150 +£60 meeting fee per half hour	£250 +£100 meeting fee per half hour	£500 +£150 meeting fee per half hour <sup>1</sup>	£1000 +£250 meeting fee per half hour <sup>2</sup>	£2000 +£250 meeting fee per half hour <sup>3</sup>	£4000 +£250 meeting fee per half hour <sup>4</sup>	£60 per hour for additional services/travel <sup>1</sup> up to 999sqm <sup>2</sup> 1000-299sqm <sup>3</sup> 3000-9999sqm <sup>4</sup> 1000+sqm
<b>Lichfield</b>	£63 +£42 additional	£270 +£60 additional	£270 +£60 <sup>5</sup> additional	£540 + £120 <sup>6</sup>	£1080 + £200	£2160 + £266	£3240 + £400	<sup>5</sup> .49 ha; up to 499 sqm <sup>6</sup> sites of 0.5ha to 0.99ha; 500 to 999 sqm floor area
<b>East Staffs</b>	HOU £65 ADV £175 or £225 for enhanced service	£175 or £225 enhanced service	£385 or £550 enhanced service	£475 or £675 enhanced service	£1250 or £1625 enhanced service	£1450 or £1900 enhanced service	Fee on request	Listed Building Consent has separate costs
<b>Tamworth</b>	£60 £58 Adverts	£100	£125	£125	£250 <sup>9</sup> £1000 <sup>10</sup>	£2000	No cost noted	<sup>9</sup> 10-29 dwellings <sup>10</sup> 30-49 dwellings
<b>Newcastle Under Lyme</b>	£30 up to 30 mins £44 >30mins £73 Advert	£73	£150 - 1 dwelling £222 <sup>11</sup> - 2-9 dwellings	£222	£492	£492	£972 <sup>12</sup>	<sup>11</sup> Site area <0.5ha; <1000 sqm non-residential; < 1ha site area <sup>12</sup> Site area >2ha; >10000 sqm non-residential
<b>Stoke</b>	£120 Advert £150							See below link <a href="#">Pre-application fees   I need planning advice   Stoke-on-Trent</a>
<b>Staffs Moorlands</b>	£0	£0	£605 £302	£605 £302	£896 £450	£1200 £600	£1200 £600	First cost meeting 2 <sup>nd</sup> cost for written advice
<b>South Staffs</b>	<b>Householder</b>	<b>Advert</b>	<b>Including A and B</b>	<b>Including A and B</b>	<b>Including C and D</b>	<b>Including E and F</b>		
	£129	£289 Hoardings £82.50 Others	£500 + 500 if DTM requested	£500 + 500 if DTM requested	£1500 + £500 if DTM requested <sup>7</sup>	£3000 +500 if DTM requested <sup>8</sup>	£4500 DTM included	<sup>7</sup> 10-30 dwellings <sup>8</sup> 31-199 dwellings

NOTES:

A	Less than 1,000 square metres non-residential floorspace	G/H/I	100 to 999 sqm commercial floorspace; up to 100 sqm retail floorspace; one to nine homes or sites less than one hectare; telecommunications developments; Section 73 variation of condition (excluding retail); change of use (excluding retail); public realm work and engineering work; minerals, waste and energy projects (small-scale projects not within the above categories)
B	Site area less than 0.5 hectares		
C	1,000–3,000 square metres non-residential floorspace	J	1,000 sqm to 9,999 sqm commercial floorspace; 100 to 999 sqm retail floorspace; one to one-and-half hectare site area
D	Site area between 0.5 hectare and 2 hectares	K	10,000 sqm-plus of commercial floorspace; major infrastructure projects (roads and utilities); sites bigger than 1.5 hectares; drilling operations (energy projects)
E	More than 3,000 square metres non-residential floorspace	L	1,000 sqm-plus retail floorspace; variation of conditions (retail restriction)
F	Site area greater than 2 hectares		

**Agenda Item 4(b)i****Corporate Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 -  
Proposals**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Transformation and Assurance
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources

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**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed vision, priorities and objectives that will form the basis of the new Corporate Plan for 2025-26 to 2028-29.
- 1.2 The report also sets out the timeline for the production of the new plan and an outline of how engagement with the local community and stakeholders will be undertaken in developing the plan.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the proposed vision, priorities and objectives and the commencement of consultation on the proposals in preparation for a new Corporate Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.3 The adoption of a corporate plan, provides clarity in what the Council is seeking to achieve and allows for a framework to be put in place to deliver this and for performance to be reported against it.
- 2.4 In order to ensure that the Council's vision meets the needs of the borough, it is important to consult with the local community and stakeholders to seek their views.

**3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 Work on the current corporate plan was started during the Covid pandemic in 2020. There has been considerable change both locally and nationally since then. A full review has been undertaken of progress over the last few years and consideration given to aspirations for the future.

This has been used to frame the proposed vision, priorities and objectives for the new corporate plan.

- 3.2 We will consult with the community and our stakeholders to involve them in influencing the vision, priorities and objectives for the new Corporate Plan. It will provide us with the opportunity to explain why we are producing a new plan, what this will aim to do and, importantly, provide an opportunity to actively listen to the views of our community.

## 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The process of producing a new corporate plan will determine the Council's priorities for the next 4 years.

## 5 Report Detail

- 5.1 The Council's current Corporate Plan was developed 4 years ago. Whilst good progress has been made in the delivery of our priorities, there has been considerable change both locally and nationally.
- 5.2 Good corporate planning will ensure that the Council has a clear framework within which actions can be taken and which achieve the greatest impact on agreed priorities and objectives within the resources available. This is increasingly important due to the challenges the Council is facing.
- 5.3 Initial discussions with the Cabinet Members indicate that the overarching priorities for the new corporate plan will continue to focus on:
- the economy of the Borough;
  - the health and wellbeing of residents;
  - climate change and our environment; and
  - being a well managed Council.
- 5.4 The priorities are supported by a number of objectives that set out what the Council is aiming to achieve. The priorities are largely consistent with previous Corporate Plans. However, the vision and objectives have been updated. These are set out in **APPENDIX 1**:
- 5.5 The proposed vision, priorities and objectives will be used as the basis of engaging with local people and stakeholders in the development of a new Corporate Plan, to gauge public reaction to these.
- 5.6 We will use engagement with the community and our stakeholders to inform and involve them in determining the priorities and objectives of the Corporate Plan. The consultation will involve various channels including via the local media, our website, social media and through our Members where we can present and test our priorities for action and associated objectives.
- 5.7 It will provide us with the opportunity to explain why we are undertaking the production of a new plan now and what this will aim to do and, importantly, provide an opportunity to actively listen to the views of those we consult with.

5.8 Set out below are details of the options that we propose to use as part of the consultation. We will look at the scope of our consultation and will complete a stakeholder mapping exercise to establish who to consult with.

- Online survey;
- Local media, social media, etc;
- Consult partners and stakeholders (including the voluntary sector);
- Staff and Member engagement;

5.9 The timeline for the production of the new corporate plan is set out in **APPENDIX 2**.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

There are no direct financial implications as this stage in the development of the new corporate plan. A number of the proposed priorities/objectives have ongoing schemes for delivery which already have budget allocated to them. Where new projects come forward as part of the development of the delivery plans, these will need to be costed and consideration given to whether this can be accommodated within existing budgets or whether additional funding will be required.

### **6.2 Legal**

The Local Government Act 1999 requires local authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which their functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (the Best Value Duty). Regard must be had to the statutory guidance which advises authorities to set clear and achievable priorities, to review corporate plans to ensure they are current and realistic, and to ensure resources are used effectively considering the resources available.

### **6.3 Human Resources**

None

### **6.4 Risk Management**

The Council's Strategic Risk Register sets out the risks the Council faces in delivering its priorities. This will be updated to reflect the new priorities in due course.

## **6.5 Equalities and Diversity**

An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the development of the Corporate Plan and engagement will form a key part of this.

## **6.6 Health**

None

## **6.7 Climate Change**

It is proposed that climate change will remain a priority for the Council in the new corporate plan.

## **7 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Proposed vision, priorities and objectives

Appendix 2: Timetable for the new corporate plan

## **8 Previous Consideration**

None

## **9 Background Papers**

None

**Contact Officer:** Judith Aupers

**Telephone Number:** 01543 464411

**Ward Interest:** All

**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024

Resources Scrutiny Committee 21 January 2025

**Key Decision:** Yes

## Stafford Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2025/26 to 2028/29

### Our Vision:

To be an effective Council that promotes a growing economy, strong, healthy communities and a sustainable environment.

### Priority 1 - Prosperous Economy

#### What we want to achieve (our objectives):

1. A prosperous economy where our workforce has the skills to drive growth to benefit our communities.
2. Vibrant town centres that are the focus for economic, cultural and community life.

#### How we will deliver this:

1. Complete the delivery of our ambitious regeneration schemes to transform Stafford town centre.
2. Work with our partners to develop a new Economic Growth Strategy with a compelling and dynamic vision for the future of the Borough's economy.
3. Promote the Borough as an excellent place to do business and invest.
4. Develop a pipeline of economic projects that attract funding from the private sector and government investment.
5. Prepare a new Local Plan that identifies sites for homes, including affordable housing, with good infrastructure, land for employment, protection of our green spaces and policies that reduce the impact of climate change.

### Priority 2 - Communities and Wellbeing

#### What we want to achieve (our objectives):

1. A safe and secure place to live for local people, including social housing for those who need it.
2. The opportunity for local people and communities to enjoy healthy lifestyles by providing good leisure and cultural services.
3. A reduction in health inequalities and greater equality and inclusion.
4. A safe and cohesive Borough

#### How we will deliver this:

1. Work towards delivering council owned social housing that contributes to meeting the needs of the local authority as recognised by the new Housing Strategy
2. Reduce and prevent homelessness and rough sleeping, by delivering the commitments set out in the new Homelessness Strategy 2025 and commit to reducing the number of households in B&B accommodation.

3. We will work towards everyone having a home that meets their needs, and is conducive to a healthy living environment, providing adaptations where appropriate.
4. Review how Leisure, Culture and Heritage provision can promote healthy empowered communities.
5. Promote health in all we do and encourage opportunities for participation, engagement and wellbeing.
6. Develop a Community Wellbeing Strategy to set out the delivery of community safety and health and wellbeing priorities by the Council and the Community Wellbeing Partnership.
7. Build positive engagement between communities and partners to encourage cohesion, engagement and empowerment.

### Priority 3 - Climate Change, Nature Recovery and the Environment

#### What we want to achieve (our objectives):

1. Natural and built environments that are sustainable, protected, and enhanced.
2. Public areas that are clean and tidy.
3. Less waste.
4. Reduced carbon emissions from the Council's activities.
5. A smaller community carbon footprint and reduced borough wide carbon emissions.
6. Improved public open spaces, play areas, parks and landscapes, including increased biodiversity, and wild flowering and pollinators.

#### How we will deliver this:

1. Adopt an up-to-date Local Plan with positive policies that reduce carbon emissions and minimise the impact of climate change.
2. Deliver our Climate Change Action Plan.
3. Promote biodiversity in all new development.
4. Produce and implement a Nature Recovery Strategy.
5. Increase awareness of climate change and its causes with residents, organisations and businesses and encourage action to mitigate it.
6. Support households to minimise the waste they produce and maximise their reuse and recycling.
7. Invest more in our parks and open spaces.

## Priority 4: Well Managed Council

### What we want to achieve (our objectives):

1. Good customer experience;
2. Effective management of Council finances
3. Value for money to local taxpayers;
4. Effective use of our assets
5. Good governance across the Council;

### How we will deliver this:

1. Provide more services on-line whilst maintaining telephone and reception services for customers.
2. Fund Council services by a prudent mix of council tax, fees and charges for services and investments, whilst maintaining adequate reserves
3. Complete delivery of the value for money improvement plan
4. Deliver our transformation and digital strategies to ensure that our services are efficient and effective.
5. Undertake an asset management review of buildings and fleet.
6. Review our Code of Governance

### Core Principles / How we will deliver:

- Put our residents / customers at the centre of everything we do
- Climate change to be considered in all of our decisions and embedded in our service delivery
- Show leadership in our communities
- Build on the benefits of sharing services with Cannock Chase Council
- Transform service delivery, through the effective use of technology
- Promote good governance - integrity, accountability and transparency
- Promote a culture of one team that gets things done

**Timetable for Production of the Corporate Plan for 2025/26 - 27/28**

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Meeting Dates</b>
Cabinet - Draft Plan	5 December 2024
Consultation with stakeholders on the Draft Plan	December 2024 / January 2025
Resources Scrutiny Committee - consultation on the Draft Plan	21 January 2025
Cabinet - Final Plan	6 March 2025
Council for approval	8 April 2025

**Agenda Item 4(b)ii****VFM Progress Report - Quarter 2 2024/25**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Transformation and Assurance
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources Portfolio

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The following matter was considered by Audit and Accounts Committee at its meeting held on 20 November 2024 and is submitted to Cabinet as required.

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To advise Members on the progress in the delivery of the VFM Improvement Plan at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note the progress at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25 in the delivery of the VFM Improvement Plan set out at **APPENDIX 1**.
- 2.2 To approve the revised target timescales set out in the improvement plan at **APPENDIX 1**

**Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.3 The information allows Cabinet to ensure that all appropriate steps are being taken to address the findings of the External Auditors and improve the Council's governance arrangements.
- 2.4 The timescales have been revised to reflect ongoing capacity issues and the scale of the work to be completed.

**3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 The Council's External Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) for 2021/22 and 2022/23, highlighted several significant issues relating to the Council's financial, governance and asset arrangements and made recommendations for addressing these.
- 3.2 An improvement plan to address the issues was drawn up and approved by the Audit and Accounts Committee (13 February 2024) and subsequently by Council (27 February 2024).
- 3.3 This report sets out the progress made at the end of Quarter 2 2024/25. Of the 42 actions due to be completed, 50% have been completed or are on target.

- 3.4 Following discussions with the Council's new External Auditors a review all of the outstanding actions has been undertaken and revised target dates for completion are proposed. This reflects the capacity available and the scale of the work to be completed.

## 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 Good governance and financial management specifically links to the Council's priority to be "a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the need of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our outcomes". It also underpins the delivery of the Council's other corporate priorities and operational services.

## 5 Report Detail

- 5.1 As part of the work of the External Auditors, they are required to undertake a review of the Council's arrangements for Value for Money and their finding are set out in the Annual Audit Report for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 5.2 The AAR for 2021/22 and 2022/23 identified several areas of concern relating to the Council's financial, governance and asset arrangements and made recommendations for addressing these. One statutory recommendation was made and this is being progressed as a priority.
- 5.3 The External Auditors acknowledged that there has been a lack of capacity in key service areas to address these issues. The Council has sought to address this by agreeing additional funds as part of the budget process for the Finance and Transformation Teams.
- 5.4 A VFM improvement plan was been produced to address the issues raised in the AAR. A commentary on progress for each of the actions up to the end of quarter 2 of 2024/25 is set out in **APPENDIX 1**. Overall progress is summarised in the table below:

**Table 1: Summary of Progress - VFM Improvement Plan**

Quarter					Not applicable	Total Actions
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule		
Q4 2023/24	12	1		2	1	16
Q1 2024/25	1	1	6	1		9
Q2 2024/25	1	5	11			17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14 (33%)</b>	<b>7 (17%)</b>	<b>17 (41%)</b>	<b>3 (7%)</b>	<b>1 (2%)</b>	<b>42</b>

- 5.5 At the end of quarter 2, of the 42 actions due for delivery:
- 50% have been completed or are in progress; and
  - 50% of actions are behind schedule or are no longer applicable.
- 5.6 Good progress continues to be made in completing the actions set out in the improvement plan. As at the end of September, the majority of the actions from Q4 have now been completed including the publication of the accounts for 21/22 and 22/23. A number of outstanding actions from Q1 have also been progressed including key policy reviews for risk management and ICT Change management. There has been some slippage in Q2 as a consequence of completion of a number of the outstanding actions from Q4 and Q1 and due to ongoing capacity issues in key service areas.
- 5.7 Following discussions with the Council's new External Auditors, it has been acknowledged that the VFM improvement plan is ambitious and given the capacity issues the Council is facing, it is going to be a longer term piece of work. Consequently, a review of the target dates for all outstanding actions has been undertaken and revised where appropriate. It is intended to aim to complete the improvement plan by the end of 2025/26.
- 5.8 Progress in delivering the actions set out in the improvement plan are being overseen by:
- The Leadership Team; and
  - Audit and Accounts Committee.

The Audit and Accounts Committee will escalate any concerns to Cabinet and the Cabinet will also receive periodic updates.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

### **6.2 Legal**

None

### **6.3 Human Resources**

None

### **6.4 Risk Management**

Failure to deliver the improvement plan and address the External Auditor's recommendations has been included in the Council's Strategic Risk Register.

### **6.5 Equalities and Diversity**

None

**6.6 Health**

None

**6.7 Climate Change**

None

**7 Appendices**

Appendix 1: VFM Improvement Plan - Summary of Progress

**8 Previous Consideration**

Audit and Accounts Committee - 20 November 2024 - Minute No AAC17/24

**9 Background Papers**

Report to Audit and Accounts Committee 13 February 2024

**Contact Officer:** Judith Aupers

**Telephone Number:** 01543 464411

**Ward Interest:** All

**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024  
Audit and Accounts Committee 20 November 2024

**Key Decision:** No

## VFM Improvement Plan - Progress Report

### Summary of Progress at 30 September 2024

Quarter					No longer applicable	Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule		
Q4 2023/24	12	1		2	1	16
Q1 2024/25	1	1	6	1		9
Q2 2024/25	1	5	11			17
Q3 2024/25						18
Q4 2024/25						7
2025/26						3
<b>Cumulative Total to Date</b>	<b>14 (33%)</b>	<b>7 (17%)</b>	<b>17 (41%)</b>	<b>3 (7%)</b>	<b>1 (2%)</b>	<b>42 at the end of Q2</b>

#### Commentary on Progress

Good progress continues to be made in completing the actions set out in the improvement plan. As at the end of September, the majority of the actions from Q4 have now been completed including the publication of the accounts for 21/22 and 22/23. A number of outstanding actions from Q1 have also been progressed including key policy reviews for risk management and ICT Change management. There has been some slippage in Q2 as a consequence of completion of a number of the outstanding actions from Q4 and Q1 and due to ongoing capacity issues in key service areas.

Following discussions with the Council's new External Auditors, it has been acknowledged that the VFM improvement plan is ambitious and given the capacity issues the Council is facing, it is going to be a longer term piece of work. Consequently, a review of the target dates for all outstanding actions has been undertaken and revised where appropriate. It is intended to aim to complete the improvement plan by the end of 25/26.

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
<b>Quarter 4 2023-24</b>							
1.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2026/27 drafted and approved by Cabinet and Council. Modelling, assumptions and risk assessment included as part of the budget report. MTFS includes assessment of likely future government funding.	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer		Completed	★	
2.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Capital Strategy to be updated in accordance with the revised Prudential Code.	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer		Completed	★	
3.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Bring treasury strategy and its reporting to members up to date	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer		Completed	★	

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
4.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Produce draft financial statements in line with statutory requirements and working with external auditors to deliver audits effectively. (Decision to be made on outstanding audits as there is a consultation taking place as to how to clear the backlog of audits nationally at present)	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	This is to be discussed with Azets as to approach	Agreed with GT/Azets not to audit the 21/22 and 22/23 accounts. This is in line with the national statutory dispensation which was put back onto the work plan for Parliament to be approved December 2024.	N/A	
5.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Draft accounts published up to 2023/24	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 4 - 2023/24	The draft accounts for 2021-22 and 2022-23 have been published.		
					The accounts for 23/24 will be published late December/early January. Work is in progress		Q4 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
6.	Corporate Service Transformation & Efficiency Programme (Key Rec 1)	Consultation to take place with stakeholders as part of development of new corporate plan and priorities.	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Head of Transformation and Assurance	To be done for new Corporate Plan (s) and any savings exercises going forwards	Consultation on the new corporate plan is planned for Q3/4. Work has been completed an interim plan for 2024/25, pending the development of the new plan.		Q4 24/25
7.	Corporate Service Transformation & Efficiency Programme (Key Rec 1)	Align the MTFS to the corporate priorities in the Council's Business Plan including the costed climate change actions	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Head of Transformation and Assurance		Completed as part of budget setting 2024/25		
8.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Implement outstanding recommendation from Cyber and Network Security Audit - staff to complete cyber training	Chief Technology Officer and Information Manager	Quarter 4 - 2023/24	Staff have completed cyber training		
9.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Finalise the change management strategy	Chief Technology Officer	Quarter 4 - 2023/24	Change Management Strategy has been approved by Leadership Team		
10.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Finalise Information Governance Framework	Head of Law and Governance	Quarter 4 - 2023/24	Completed - approved by Cabinet		

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
11.	Risk Management (Improvement Rec 2)	Review of risks in annual budget report to be consistent with corporate process	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer		Completed	★	
12.	Other Related Actions	Review of Audit Reporting to Leadership Team and escalation protocols	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 4 2023/24	Completed - quarterly progress reports are being discussed at Leadership Team	★	
13.	Risk Management (Improvement Rec 2)	Review of risk management policy and framework - includes review of format of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR)	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 4 - 2023/24	Approved by Leadership Team. To be approved by Cabinet on 5 December 2024.	★	
14.	Risk Management (Improvement Rec 2)	Review of guidelines on risk implications for committee reports	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 4 - 2023/24	Approved by Leadership Team.	★	

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
15.	Procurement and Contract Management (Improvement Rec 5)	Update the contracts register and ensure it is compliant with transparency requirements	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Leadership Team	Quarter 4 - 2023/24 (this will be the first draft to be revisited Quarter 3 2024/25)	Work in progress but has been delayed. This has been rescheduled and will be completed in Q4.		Q4 24/25
<b>Quarter 1 2024-25</b>							
16.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Restructure of the Finance Team and creation of additional capacity	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	Restructure agreed.		
17.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Regular performance monitoring to be re-established with budget managers and Leadership Team.	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	Year-end outturn 2023-24 has been completed and will be reported on in Q3. Work in progress on period 6 monitoring for 2024-25		Q3 24/25
18.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Reporting on the delivery of savings to be established and discussed at Strategic Leadership Team meetings. Where	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	At present there is no intention of adding to the existing savings programme in place. Reporting against it will take place in line with		Q3 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
		appropriate, project plans will be developed to support the delivery of significant/complex savings.			budget monitoring when this has been re-established.		
19.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Update IT security policy and adopt a cyber security policy	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Technology Officer	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	The policy has been updated and includes cyber security. Review by Head of Service completed. Once amendments have been completed, the draft will be submitted to Leadership Team for approval in Q3.		Q3 24/25
20.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Provide refresher training to ensure compliance with process for 3 <sup>rd</sup> party data transfers and completion of privacy impact assessments	Chief Technology Officer and Information Manager	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	The Data Transfer Policy has been reviewed. The refresher training is going to be delivered in Q3.		Q3 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
21.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Complete the IT strategy	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources)	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	Strategy has been considered by Leadership Team. It will be submitted to Cabinet for approval in Q3 alongside the Transformation Strategy.		Q3 24/25
22.	HR related issues (Improvement Recs 1 and 3)	Establish our culture, values and type of organisation we want to be. This work will inform the following actions	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 1 2024/25	A meeting has taken place with a potential facilitator for this piece of work. Timing and scope to progress this work has yet to be agreed.		Q4 24/25
23.	HR related issues (Improvement Recs 1 and 3)	Complete review of hybrid working. This will inform the development of the workforce strategy and the review of the Code of Conduct as well as support the development of an asset strategy.	Head of Transformation and Assurance and HR Manager	Quarter 1 2024/25	Work on this has slipped further due to ongoing capacity issues in the HR Team. A report is to be prepared for Leadership Team for Q3		Q3 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
24.	Risk Management (Improvement Rec 2)	Training for Leadership Team, managers, team leaders/principal officers on risk management	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 1 - 2024/25	Deferred to Q4 due to delay in taking the updated policy/strategy to Leadership Team for approval		Q4 24/25
<b>Quarter 2 2024-25</b>							
25.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Commence recruitment to new Finance team structure	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer and Deputy S151 Officer	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Recruitment has commenced with 2 senior posts advertised - closing date 29 September.		
26.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Lesson learnt exercise to be undertaken of implementation of the finance system	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Work on this has been delayed to Q3 due to the ongoing capacity issues in the Finance Team		Q3 24/25
27.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Training of managers in budget management and use of the new finance system.	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Presentation drafted. Sessions will be scheduled in during Q3 (delayed due to the unplanned absence of the s151 Officer)		Q3 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
28.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Review of Financial Regulations	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Work on this has been delayed due other work taking precedence and the unplanned absence of the s151 Officer		Q1 25/26
29.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Training for managers on Financial Regulations	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources)	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	To be delivered once the Financial Regulations have been reviewed		Q2 25/26
30.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Develop assurance reporting for IT eg report on outcome of annual health check/penetration testing to Leadership Team and Audit Committee	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Technology Officer	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	The annual IT assurance report is to going to be produced in Q4 to align with completion of the health checks and compliance tests completed during the year.		Q4 24/25
31.	IT (Key Rec 2)	Review of what we include in procurements re ICT controls and information governance	Head of Transformation and Assurance, Chief Technology Officer, Head of Law and Governance and	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	The review re ICT controls has been completed. Work on the information governance requirements will be completed by end of Q4.		Q4 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
			Information Manager				
32.	Performance Management (Key Rec 4)	Establish a Corporate Project Management Methodology. Provide templates, guidelines, and training for key officers (LT, Service Managers and key Principal Officers/Team Leaders).	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Work on this has not yet commenced due to other work taking priority. It has been rescheduled for Q2 25/26		Q2 25/26
33.	Performance Management (Key Rec 4)	Establish corporate project resources to support transformation work (funding allocated in 2024/25 budget)	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	This is under discussion and the team structure will be included in the report to Cabinet on the Transformation Strategy in Q3		Q3 24/25
34.	Performance Management (Key Rec 4)	Review of all projects, the current governance arrangements and establish project reporting to Leadership Team	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Deputy Chief Executive (Place)	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	The review is to be undertaken in Q4 following the completion of the review of corporate priorities for 2024/25.		Q4 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
35.	Risk Management (Improvement Rec 2)	Develop risk registers for each Directorate and ICT	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources), Deputy Chief Executive (Place) and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	An IT risk register is in place. Work on the Directorate risk registers will commence in Q4 once training has been provided		Q1 25/26
36.	Risk Management (Improvement Rec 2)	Establish escalation process between other risk registers and the SRR eg services, projects	Head of Transformation & Assurance and Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	This will be set up once the new directorate risk registers have been established.		Q1 25/26
37.	Procurement and Contract Management (Improvement Rec 5)	Review and update the Procurement Regulations	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources), Head of Transformation and Assurance and Head of Law and Governance	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Work has commenced on updating the Procurement Regulations. This will be completed in Q4 ahead of the legislation coming into effect in February 2025.		Q4 24/25

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
38.	Procurement and Contract Management (Improvement Rec 5)	The key elements of the procurement strategy will be built into the procurement regulations rather than as a stand-alone document	Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Please refer to comment above		Q4 24/25
39.	Procurement and Contract Management (Improvement Rec 5)	Provide training for managers on procurement and contract management	Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Training will be provided once the Procurement Regulations have been updated and approved		Q1 25/26
40.	Other Related Actions (from AGS 2023-24)	Review of project management arrangements and project planning for the delivery of the town centre schemes.	Head of Economic Development and Planning	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	Additional interim consultancy resource has been appointed to support the programme/project management of the Stafford town centre regeneration projects.  Board meetings, steering groups and weekly project team meetings have been re-established; with regular review of project plans and programmes.		

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
41.	Other Related Actions (from AGS 2023-24)	Preparation of a transformation plan for Development Management to further reduce the backlog of planning applications and to manage this within the approved budget.	Head of Economic Development and Planning	Quarter 2 - 2024/25	<p>An action plan to maintain service delivery during 2024/25 has been prepared and this identifies associated budget and resource implications.</p> <p>A report setting out the action plan will be presented to Cabinet in November.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Council has appointed external consultants to undertake an independent external review of the planning service. The outcome of the review will inform an improvement plan for the service and help to determine the level of resource required post 2024/25.</p>		Q1 25/26

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
<b>Quarter 3 2024-25</b>							
42.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Follow-on zero-based budgeting session with managers to continue work started as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q3 25/25 for 26/27 budget setting
43.	Corporate Service Transformation and Efficiency Programme (Key Rec 1)	<p>Process to be established for developing a service transformation and efficiency programme.</p> <p>Initial steps for both:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a discussion with the Cabinet to review priorities and key projects;</li> <li>• engagement with Heads of Service and Service Managers to review current service levels for statutory and discretionary services (to include high level benchmarking) - this will be a pre-cursor to bringing the services together and establish the baseline for service</li> </ul>	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 3 - 2024/25	<p>A transformation strategy and plan has been developed. This has been discussed with Leadership Team and will be presented to Cabinet in Q3 for approval.</p> <p>A workshop has been held with managers setting out the transformation process and the preparatory work stages are underway.</p> <p>A review of key priority projects has been undertaken and this is due to be approved by Cabinet in November.</p>		

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
		<p>transformation (this will build on the initial work done on SLAs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of options for efficiency savings and transformation</li> </ul> <p>Transformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation options to be assessed and added to transformation programme for prioritisation. Will need to consider any investment required to deliver savings/service improvements; resourcing to deliver the changes, etc</li> <li>• Project Manager and Project support officer to be recruited to support delivery of transformation programme, funding allocated in budget 2024/25 to fund posts;</li> <li>• Training of managers and key officers in transformation techniques</li> </ul>					

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
44.	Corporate Service Transformation and Efficiency Programme (Key Rec 1)	Consultation and engagement to be embedded into the planning for the delivery of key projects where appropriate to ensure schemes meet community needs eg regeneration projects, redevelopment of play areas	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 3 - 2024/25	This will be embedded into the project management methodology		Q2 25/26
45.	Fraud (Key Rec 3)	Review Anti - Fraud and Bribery Policy	Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26
46.	Fraud (Key Rec 3)	Review of Confidential Reporting Policy	Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26
47.	Fraud (Key Rec 3)	Assess compliance against Cipfa 2014 Code for Fraud and develop an action plan as necessary	Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26
48.	HR related issues (Improvement Recs 1 and 3)	Develop a hybrid working policy and review other related policies and processes.	Head of Transformation and Assurance and HR Manager	Quarter 3 2024/25			Q2 25/26

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
49.	HR related issues (Improvement Recs 1 and 3)	Review and update the Employee Code of Conduct	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Head of Law and Governance	Quarter 3 2024/25			Q3 25/26
50.	Procurement and Contract Management (Improvement Rec 5)	Work with managers and the County's Procurement Team to develop a procurements pipeline	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Leadership Team	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q3 25/26
51.	Procurement and Contract Management (Improvement Rec 5)	Process to be established for publication of key data on the Council's website to meet transparency requirements re spend data, contracts register	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q3 25/26
52.	Other Related Actions	Establish an inventory of key policies and a programme of periodic reviews	Leadership Team	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Q4 25/26

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
53.	Other Related Actions (from AGS 2023-24)	Review of Scheme of Delegations as part of shared services transformation.	Monitoring Officer and Leadership Team	Quarter 3 - 2024/25			Quarter 3 - 2025/26
<b>Quarter 4 2024-25</b>							
54.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Implementation of remaining module of the finance system, ongoing development and maximising use of system functionality	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q2 25/26
55.	Financial Sustainability (Statutory Rec 1)	Performance reporting for Cabinet and Scrutiny to be developed. This will be done alongside the review and development of performance and risk reporting.	Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and S151 Officer	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q2 25/26
56.	Fraud (Key Rec 3)	Assess fraud risks and include in risk registers as appropriate	Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager and Leadership Team	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q2 25/26

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
57.	Performance Management (Key Rec 4)	Develop and adopt a performance management framework to establish golden thread from Corporate Plan to service plans through to employee reviews. Framework to include protocols for ensuring data quality	Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26
58.	Performance Management (Key Rec 4)	Review our performance report style - delivery plans and KPIs. To consider the development of performance outcome measures	Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26
59.	Performance Management (Key Rec 4)	Performance reporting for waste and leisure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• review of KPIs for monitoring and reporting on performance;</li> <li>• establish internal validation process of contract performance; and</li> </ul>	Head of Transformation and Assurance, Head of Operations and Head of Wellbeing	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26

No	Theme	Action	Lead Officer	Timescale	Progress Update	Progress Rating	Revised Timescale
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review information reported to Cabinet / Scrutiny</li> </ul>					
60.	Other Related Actions	Review of Code of Governance	Head of Transformation and Assurance	Quarter 4 - 2024/25			Q1 25/26
	<b>2025-26</b>						
61.	Fraud (Key Rec 3)	Review the information we report on fraud work (including data matching) to the Audit Committee.	Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	2025/26			Q1 25/26
62.	HR related issues (Improvement Recs 1 and 3)	Development of a workforce strategy that links to long term transformation/shared services	Head of Transformation and Assurance and HR Manager	2025/26			Q4 25/26
63.	Other Related Actions	Development of Assurance Model	Head of Transformation and Assurance and Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager	2025/26			Q4 25/26

**Agenda Item 4(b)iii****Quarter 2 Performance Report for 2024-25**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 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 2 for 2024-25.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 To note the progress made during quarter 2 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 Priority Delivery Plans (PDPs) for 2024/25 have been produced pending the development of a new Corporate Business Plan. They set out the Council's key strategic and operational priorities and the key actions to deliver these.
- 3.2 Overall, 67% of the key actions have been delivered or are on schedule to be completed. Progress in delivering the PDPs is summarised in 5.3 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, 59% of targets have been met or exceeded. Further details can be found at 5.6 and in **APPENDIX 2**.

**4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The indicators and actions contribute individually to all of the Council's priorities.

## 5 Report Detail

5.1 The Corporate Business Plan 2021-24 sets out the Council's overarching priorities. Pending the development of the new corporate business plan, the overarching priority themes remain the same but new priority delivery plans have been developed setting out the key strategic and operational priority projects and the key actions to deliver these.

### Priority Delivery Plans

5.2 The Priority Delivery Plans are set out in **APPENDICES 1A TO 1D**, to this report. These plans establish the actions and timetable for delivery and form the basis of the Council's performance reporting framework.

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 2**

Performance Rating	Action completed	Work on Target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	Actions due Quarter 2	Actions not yet due	Total Number of Actions
Corporate Business Plan Priority						N/A	
<b>The Economy</b>	3	1	4		8	19	27
<b>Community</b>	4		1		5	19	24
<b>Climate Change</b>					0	3	3
<b>The Council</b>	3	3	2		8	9	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>71</b>

5.4 At the end of quarter 2, of the 21 projects/actions due for delivery in this period:

- 14 (67%) have been completed or are on target to be completed; and
- 7 (33%) are behind schedule.

### Key Performance Indicators

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 2**

Corporate Business Plan Priority					N/A	Total Number of KPIs
	Performance exceeds target	Performance on target	Performance < 5% below target	Performance > 5% below target	Not Available / Annual	
The Economy	5		1	1		7
Community	5	3	4	1	6	19
The Council	3		3	1	6	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	12	<b>39</b>

5.6 Of the 27 indicators due to be reported on in quarter 2:

- 16 indicators show performance on or above target (59%); and
- 11 indicators show performance below target (41%).

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications arising from the report. The financial management of the PDPs is standard in accordance with Financial Regulations and any measure to address a performance shortfall as reflected in a PDP report will require compensatory savings to be identified in the current year and be referred to the budget process for additional resources in future years.

### 6.2 Legal

None

### 6.3 Human Resources

None

### 6.4 Risk Management

The Council's Strategic Risk Register sets out the risks the Council faces in delivering its priorities.

### 6.5 Equalities and Diversity

Equality and diversity matters are addressed in individual services areas and by undertaking equality impact assessments for projects and programmes of work where this is necessary and appropriate.

### 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

None

## 9 Background Papers

Corporate Plan 2021-24

**Contact Officer:** Judith Aupers

**Telephone Number:** 01543 46411

**Ward Interest:** All

**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024  
Resources Scrutiny Committee 25 November 2024  
Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny 19 November 2024  
Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 21 November 2024

**Key Decision:** No

## Priority Delivery Plan for 2024-25

### Priority 1 - The Economy

#### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

Quarter					Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	
1 and 2	3	1	4		8
3					10
4					9
TOTAL	3	1	4		8 to Q2

#### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2

Planning consent secured for the demolition of the former Co-op department store and the Guildhall Shopping Centre  
National Planning Policy Framework consultation - submission of consultation response.

#### Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2

Delays to Stafford Station Gateway project as the Council is yet to receive confirmation of the funding award from MHCLG.  
Delay in introducing S106 monitoring fees and commencing review of S106 policy and procedures.

## Priority 1 - The Economy

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Delivery of major economic growth regeneration projects</b>	<b>Stafford Town Centre Transformation (Future High Street Fund)</b>						
	• Commence work on Station Approach project		X			Works are now scheduled to commence in early 2025	
	• Conclude acquisition of former Co-operative department store		X			Contracts set to exchange/complete in early November 2024	
	• Secure planning consents for demolition of Guildhall Shopping Centre and former Co-operative department store			X			
	• Commence demolition works to Guildhall Shopping Centre			X			
	• Commence demolition works to former Co-operative department store			X			
	• Identify development delivery route for cleared Guildhall and Co-op sites including delivery model, scheme development mix, funding model and procurement and details of public consultation					X	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<b>Stafford Station Gateway</b>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish Programme Board and governance arrangements</li> </ul>		X			Confirmation of Levelling Up Funding award from MHCLG is still outstanding	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquisition of commercial interests (subject to confirmation of Levelling Up Funding award from MHCLG)</li> </ul>			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commence remediation works on site (subject to confirmation of Levelling Up Funding award from MHCLG)</li> </ul>				X		
	<b>UK Shared Prosperity Fund</b>						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement and deliver the UKSPF projects in year 3 of the Council's approved Investment Plan, working towards full allocation of spend by 31 March 2025 and delivery of outputs</li> </ul>				X		
<b>Local Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation response &amp; local impacts</li> </ul>		X			Consultation response submitted	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of evidence base for new Local Plan</li> <li>Review approach to Development Strategy for new Local Plan</li> </ul>			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) and Local Plan resource requirements including evidence base</li> <li>Agree approach to Design Coding and Conservation Area Appraisals</li> </ul>				X		
<b>Development Management service improvement and transformation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-introduce pre-application advice on a chargeable basis</li> </ul>			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission External review of Development Management service</li> </ul>		X			Consultant has been appointed following a competitive procurement exercise.	★
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete External review of Development Management service and development of improvement service delivery plan</li> </ul>			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Planning system scoping and specification</li> </ul>				X		

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review planning enforcement service provision and protocols/ policy</li> </ul>				X		
<b>Planning Obligations - Review of Policy and Allocations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charging schedules for Section 106 and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) monitoring fees               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cabinet approval</li> <li>Implementation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		X	X		BNG monitoring fees approved at Cabinet. Draft S106 charging schedule produced; currently finalising report with input from Finance.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement Exacom system for BNG</li> </ul>			X			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning Obligations Working Group               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish group and terms of reference</li> <li>Agree governance and schedule of meetings</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		X			Report to return to Leadership Team but has not been signed off by Finance. Still awaiting comments.  Governance and meeting schedule to follow once report signed off.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programme &amp; Project Allocations including Cannock Chase SAC and Leisure through updated evidence base</li> </ul>					X	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Land Charges</b>	Full review of Land Charges service to include a review of current processes and IT system		X			Land Charges service review complete. Review of IT systems carried out and recommendations made for replacement system. Processes under review to align with replacement system	★
	Transformation of Land Charges scoped and timeline in place to drive this forward			X			
	Procure replacement IT System				X		
	Working towards transformed service				X		

## Priority Delivery Plan for 2024-25

### Priority 2 - The Community

#### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

Quarter					Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	
1&2	4		1		5
3					7
4					12
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4 (80%)</b>		<b>1 (20%)</b>		<b>5 up to Q2</b>

#### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2

Health inequalities funded projects all successfully completed, utilising all £193,833 of allocated external funding.

#### Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 1

Delay in commencing water testing program due to limited availability of specialist contractor. Testing will commence Q3

## Priority 2 - The Community

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Housing and Homelessness Strategy and approach to building new Council homes</b>	Prepare documents to commission Stafford Housing Strategy including approach to developing Council Housing			X			
	Start procurement for Stafford Housing Strategy				X		
	Prepare documents to commission consultants to scope the feasibility of a housing development on Council owned land			X			
	Start procurement to scope the feasibility of development on a Council owned site				X		
	Completion of Stafford Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy				X		
<b>Review of the Leisure, Culture and Heritage Contract</b>	Finalise Freedom Leisure Strategic Partnership Plan				X		
<b>Design and Deliver Stafford Borough's approach to Health</b>	Complete delivery of health inequalities funded projects		X			All funded projects successfully completed.	★

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Evaluation of health inequalities funded projects to inform future activity			X			
	Commence work on drafting Community Wellbeing Strategy, setting out priorities across community safety and health				X		
<b>Waste and Recycling - Kerbside collection contract (2025-2032)</b>	Review current waste collection service			X			
	Review potential extension options with incumbent waste collection contractor				X		
	Report to Cabinet on extension option or re-procurement requirement				X		
<b>Waste and Recycling - Introduction of mandatory food waste kerbside collections [ * denotes action subject to confirmation of government funding settlement]</b>	Design of new service model and discussions with contractor			X			
	Consider and action revenue settlement offered by Government			X*			
	Cabinet approval for new service, start date, and permission to spend				X*		

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Prepare to tender for the procurement of food waste caddies				X*		
<b>Tree Management (OP3)</b>	Review current services and establish requirements (including Tree Protection Orders)				X		
<b>Play Area / Parks Improvements (OP4)</b>	Review condition of current play areas and funding availability for improvements and cyclical maintenance			X			
	Create improvement programme				X		
<b>Private Water Supply (OP6)</b>	Review of current position	X				Review undertaken, follow up carried out on audit reports to understand current position of the service to facilitate required changes	★
	Ensure staff have undergone training and are certified competent to deliver this testing regime	X				Water sampling training completed by 2 members of staff, who are now competent to carry out water sampling activities	★
	Formulate a delivery plan for testing for all supplies due to be tested		X			Delivery Plan has been formulated and high-risk supplies identified. Specialist contractor commissioned to lead on complex supplies will commence sampling in Q3	★

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Commence testing program		X			Due to limited availability of specialist contractor, testing will commence Q3	
	Complete testing program for 24/5. Plan program from 25/6				X		

**Priority Delivery Plan for 2024-25**

**Priority 3 - Climate Change**

**Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2**

Quarter					Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	
1 and 2					0
3					3
4					0
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>0 due to Q2</b>

<b>Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2</b>
No actions due in this quarter

<b>Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2</b>

## Priority 3 - Climate Change

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Climate Change Strategy</b>	Revised Climate Change Strategy developed and in place			X			
	Recruitment of staff to support delivery of strategy and monitor operational delivery			X			
	New Governance Structure in place to track operational delivery			X			

## Priority Delivery Plan for 2024-25

### Priority 4 - The Council

#### Summary of Progress as at end of Quarter 2

Quarter					Total Number of Projects
	Action completed	Work on target	Work < 3 months behind schedule	Work > 3 months behind schedule	
1&2	3	3	2		8
3					4
4					5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>8 to end Q2</b>

#### Summary of Successes as at Quarter 2

Work on upgrading the Council's infrastructure has commenced. The new switches have been procured and work is underway to plan for their installation.

#### Summary of Slippage as at Quarter 2

There has been some slippage on the Transformation and Digital strategies. Both strategies have been drafted and considered by Leadership Team. They are being amended and will be submitted to Cabinet for approval in quarter 3.

## Priority 4 - The Council

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
<b>Closure of the Accounts</b>	Closure of the accounts 23/24				X		
	Catch up on closure of previous years accounts			X			
<b>Transformation Strategy and Plan</b>	Approval of the Transformation Strategy and Plan		X			The strategy has been drafted and considered by Leadership Team. Strategy to be amended and submitted to Cabinet early in Q3	
	Brief Senior Management Team on the strategy		X			Completed	
	Complete scoping work to support development of the Transformation work programme			X			
	Develop the Transformation work programme				X		
<b>Digital Strategy</b>	Finalise the digital technology strategy		X			The strategy has been drafted and considered by Leadership Team. Strategy to be amended and submitted to Cabinet early in Q3	
	Procurement of switches for Infrastructure Upgrade	X				Procurement completed.	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Plan for installation of new switches		X			Planning has commenced for the installation of the new switches. Plan will be completed early in Q3	
	Installation of new switches				X		
	Identify IT systems in need of replacing over next 3 years		X			Completed - systems have been identified	
	Assessment and prioritisation of systems to be replaced		X			The list of systems to be replaced has been reviewed and priorities agreed for the next 3 years. To be discussed and agreed with Leadership Team	
	Technology Board to approve systems to be replaced			X			
	Note - Project plans will be developed for each system once prioritisation has been agreed and the PDP will be updated accordingly						
<b>Strategic asset management including the review of key assets</b>	<b>Corporate Assets ICT System</b>						
	Research Systems available		X			Alternative systems are being explored - 2 systems demos have been completed	

Project	Actions and Milestones	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Progress Update	Symbol
	Draft specification for new system				X		
	<b>Insurance Reinstatement Valuations</b>						
	Secure Budget			X			
	Commission Service Provider to complete Valuations				X		

### Summary of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2024/25 - as at end of Quarter 2

Symbol	Description	The Economy	The Community	The Council	Total
★	Performance exceeds target	5	5	3	13
✓	Performance on target		3		3
▲	Performance < 5% below target	1	4	3	8
✘	Performance > 5% below target	1	1	1	3
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable		6	6	12
	TOTAL	7	19	13	39

### KPIs for Business Objective 1 - The Economy

Symbol	Description	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
	Performance exceeds target	5			
	Performance on target				
	Performance < 5% below target	1			
	Performance > 5% below target	1			
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable				
	TOTAL	7			

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
<b>Planning</b>									
Major Planning Applications determined within time	91.89%	60%	80%	87.5%				★	
Non-major Planning Applications determined within time	78.56%	70%	87.3%	86.1%				★	
Major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	New	< 10%	1.7%	3.0%				★	Calculation is rolling 2 year period to Q2 24/25
Non-major Planning Applications overturned at appeals as percentage of no. applications determined	New	< 10%	1.3%	1.5%				★	Calculation is rolling 2 year period to Q2 24/25
<b>Building Control</b>									
Applications registered and acknowledged within 3 days of valid receipt	98%	95%	94%	92%				✘	Staff shortages have slightly delayed the processing of applications.
Full plans applications with initial full assessment within 15 days of valid receipt	85%	80%	78%	87%				★	

**Appendix 2**

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
Customers satisfied or very satisfied with the service	85%	90%	100%	80%					There were very few returns this quarter with one negative response.

## KPIs for Business Objective 2 - The Community

Symbol	Description	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
	Performance exceeds target	5			
	Performance on target	3			
	Performance < 5% below target	4			
	Performance > 5% below target	1			
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable	6			
	TOTAL	19			

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
<b>Operations - Waste and Recycling</b>									
% collections completed first time	NEW	99.90%	99.96%	99.97%					No target previously. Propose target set at 99.90% as target.
Number of missed bin collections (including assisted) / 100,000 / qtr.	NEW	<40 per 100,000	44 per 100,000	36 per 100,000					Not previously reported in this current format. 1,023,000 collections/qtr. (avg)
% Household waste sent for re-use, recycling and composting	45.4%	48%	52.17%	50.04%					Improved quality and reduced material weights have reduced overall tonnages of recycling collected.
Amount of household residual waste collected per household (Kgs)	109.68 kgs / per qtr.	<448 kgs or 110 kgs / qtr.	109.09 kgs	107.51 kgs					Target format changed from per quarter to annual total for consistency.
<b>Operations - Streetscene</b>									
% residents' satisfied with the appearance of town centres (Stafford / Stone)	97%	90%	95%	93%					Surveys taken from customers making contact with the Council

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
<b>Environmental Health</b>									
% of food businesses inspected	New	100%	27%	45%					Inspections are being carried out in line with risk ratings and backlog is being recovered
% of food businesses inspected which are broadly compliant (rating of 3 or better)	New	N/A	95%	95%				N/A	This is a measure, not a target
% of service requests responded to within target (all service areas)	New	95%	92%	90%					A small number of requests have slightly missed the allocated target response
% Environmental Protection Act permitted processes inspected in line with risk rating	New	100%	28%	52%					
% Taxi / PHV fleet inspected	New	90%	27%	41%					Small backlog will be recovered during Quarter 3
% Taxi / PHV fleet compliant	New	90%	82%	86%					Trade compliance is not quite at the level expected but is expected to improve

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
% of eligible private water supplies tested and follow up actions completed	New	100%	N/A	N/A				N/A annual target	Specialist contractor to be engaged from Q3 to undertake high risk inspections during Q3 / 4
<b>Leisure</b>									
Annual Report from Freedom Leisure setting out the performance of all facilities, including comparison to previous years as well as narrative on the wider wellbeing work and events they facilitate.								N/A	Annual report only
<b>Housing Assistance</b>									
No of DFGs completed		125	21	42				★	Quarterly Targets: 20, 30, 30, 45 And annual report with wider data.
<b>Strategic Housing and Homelessness</b>									
% households had a positive outcome and secured accommodation for 6 + months	New	41%	57%	60%				★	Target compared to previous quarters national average

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
Delivery of affordable housing per year working with Registered Providers, Developers and Homes England		210 homes						N/A	Annual figure rather than quarterly reporting
<b>Community Safety and Partnerships</b>									
Number of residents/cases dealt with via the CAB	New	N/A	689	656				N/A	Contextual information only
Total value of financial outcomes achieved as a result of the CAB contract	New	N/A Measure only	£1,476,609	£1,056,239				N/A	Dealt with debt of nearly £1.3m.
Community Safety Partnership Hub referrals and case closures within 3 months	New	90% closed within 3 months	32 referrals 91% closed	31 referrals 85% closed					This can be a measure of effectiveness - i.e. resolution provided or “managed risk” achieved. Some cases, however, require more significant work to reach this point, and need to remain open longer. This is the situation at this time.

## KPIs for Business Objective 4 - The Council

Symbol	Description	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	End of Year
	Performance exceeds target	3			
	Performance on target				
	Performance < 5% below target	3			
	Performance > 5% below target	1			
N/A	Reported Annually / Not Applicable	6			
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>			

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
<b>Local Taxation and Benefits</b>									
Days taken to process new HB/CT Claims	29.1	20 days	27.6	20.8					Performance in the first quarter is typically affected by annual billing. This continued slightly longer than normal and has also been affected by staff turnover. Performance improved in August/ September and was above the target
Days taken to process new HB/CT change of circumstances	7.1	9 days	8.3	3.3					
% of Council Tax collected annually	97.6%	98% by year end	28.8%	55.8%					Performance is only marginally below target - 55.8% compared to 56.0% in the same period last year. Changes to our Local Council Tax Reduction (LCTR) scheme to remove the temporary uplift will have contributed to as will continuing increases in the cost of living. We continue to support residents who need help and continue with our programme of recovery action against those who do not pay.

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
% National non-domestic rates (NNDR) collected	97.9%	98% by year end	31.2%	59.1%					The 59.1% compares to 60.4% in the same period last year. Recovery action is in line with the Council's protocols. Variances in collection levels can be due to ratepayers' ability to pay. There have also been instances of larger premises needing to be billed later in the year, meaning that their instalments are due later in the year. This will affect in-year collection comparisons but will correct itself when end of year collections are compared after 31 March.
<b>Transformation and Assurance</b>									
% of calls answered	92%	94%	95.8%	97.8%					
Average call wait time	1.42	2 min	1.07	0.38					
Number of calls answered	New	N/A	14747	14134				N/A	This is not a measure but gives context to the performance in call handling

Indicator	Year End 23/24	Target 24/25	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Year End 24/25	Rating Symbol	Comments
<b>Law and Governance</b>									
FOI requests within time i.e. 20 working days	New	85%	77%	76%					Delays were experienced due to a staff absence in sending out requests to departments and delays in responding by the departments
<b>Corporate Assets</b>									
% of buildings with a valid annual landlord Gas Safety Record	New	100%							Annual KPI
% of buildings with a valid Electrical Certificate (within 5 years)	New	100%							Annual KPI
% of passenger lifts that have a valid 6 monthly thorough examination record	New	100%							Annual KPI
% of buildings that have a current Legionella risk assessment	New	100%							Annual KPI
% of buildings that have a current Fire risk assessment	New	100%							Annual KPI

**Agenda Item 4(b)iv**

# Transformation and Digital Strategies

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Resources
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources Portfolio

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## 1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out the Transformation and Digital strategies that will drive the transformation work across the Council and support the delivery of shared services.
- 1.2 The report also outlines the structure for the new Transformation Team that will lead on the co-ordination and delivery of the strategy and work programme.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the:
  - (i) Transformation Strategy (**APPENDIX 1**);
  - (ii) The Transformation Plan (**APPENDIX 2**); and
  - (iii) The Digital Strategy (**APPENDIX 3**).
- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the governance arrangements for the delivery of the transformation programme set out in 3.4.
- 2.3 Cabinet is asked to note the staffing structure for the new Transformation Team (set out in 3.5) which will lead on the co-ordination and delivery of the work programme.

### Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.2 The transformation and digital strategies set out the vision and provide a framework for transformation of the Council's services. The transformation programme will drive efficiencies and improvements in services. The use of

digital technology will be a key tool in delivering improvements for customers, employees and Members.

- 2.3 Additional resources were included in the budget for 2024/25 to fund the setting up of a transformation team. This report sets out how this funding is to be used to set up this team.

### 3 Key Issues

- 3.1 The Council is ambitious to deliver significant change through delivery of its Shared Services agenda. Transformation is much broader than bringing the two council's services together, it will drive change in how we deliver better services to our customers and improve the efficiency of our operations.
- 3.2 The transformation strategy sets out our vision and objectives for transformation (**APPENDIX 1**). The strategy is underpinned by a transformation plan which sets out the process for delivering change (**APPENDIX 2**).
- 3.3 The transformation strategy is also accompanied by the Digital Strategy which set outs our vision and aims for the future use of technology and how this will support the wider transformation agenda. A technology work programme is being developed to support delivery of the digital strategy.
- 3.4 Oversight of the delivery of the Transformation work programme will be undertaken by:
- A Transformation Steering Group (Officers); and
  - The Shared Services Joint Operational Board (Members); which is to be renamed as the Transformation Board.
- 3.5 Additional resources are needed to support the co-ordination and delivery of the transformation work programme. Additional funding of £100k was agreed by each Council as part of the budget for 2024/25. At this stage it is likely that additional funding will be required moving forwards as projects are developed. Business cases will be developed on a case by case as funding requirements are identified by the work of the team. The initial funding is to be used to set up a new team which will include the following posts:
- Transformation Lead;
  - Project Manager;
  - Business Analyst;
  - Project Assistant.
- 3.6 Further specialist resources (both staff and technology) will be needed to deliver specific projects; businesses cases will be completed as and when required to support requests for additional funding.

## 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

- 4.1 The transformation and digital strategies will support the delivery of all of the Council's priorities but primarily relates to Priority 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."

## 5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Following the decision to extend the sharing of services with Cannock Chase Council, work is needed to bring the teams together and review the delivery of services. This presents an ideal opportunity to launch a wider and more ambitious transformation programme to create modern and agile Councils.

- 5.2 A transformation strategy has been drafted (**APPENDIX 1**). It sets out the vision for transformation:

*"Our authorities envision a transformed and resilient community where services are efficient and resident focused, communities are empowered, and digital innovation drives progress. Through effective transformation, we aim to create modern and agile councils that adapt to changing needs and advance the well-being of our residents".*

- 5.3 The strategy is underpinned by a transformation plan which sets out the process for delivering change (**APPENDIX 2**). Transformation will be approached both at a service level and corporately, through inter-linking workstreams.

- 5.4 The transformation strategy is also accompanied by the Digital Strategy which set outs our vision and aims for the future use of technology and how this will support the wider transformation agenda.

*"Our vision is to create a seamless digital experience for residents, businesses, and employees of Cannock Chase District Council and Stafford Borough Council. Using technological solutions, we aim to deliver efficient services, empower communities and staff, and drive economic growth while maintaining high standards of governance and data security".*

A technology work programme is being developed to support delivery of the digital strategy.

- 5.5 Oversight of the delivery of the Transformation work programme will be undertaken by:

- A Transformation Steering Group (Officers); and
- The Shared Services Joint Operational Board (Members); which is to be renamed as the Transformation Board.

- 5.6 Additional resources are needed to support the co-ordination and delivery of the transformation work programme. Funding of £100k was agreed by each Council as part of the budget for 2024/25. This funding is to be used to set up a new team. Originally it was proposed that the Head of Transformation and Assurance would take the lead on this agenda. However, the last 18 months has shown that there is insufficient capacity within this role to move the transformation agenda ahead with the pace required as well as deliver on the assurance work (including the delivery of the VFM Improvement Plan). This has necessitated the creation of a new transformation lead post, which will be job evaluated. The existing postholder is supportive of this proposal.
- 5.2 The Transformation Team will include the following posts:
- Transformation Lead;
  - Project Manager;
  - Business Analyst;
  - Project Assistant.
- 5.3 The development of the transformation work programme will commence in May 2025 and recruitment will commence in advance of this so that the team is in place ready to start co-ordination and delivery of it.
- 5.4 Further specialist resources (both staff and technology) will be needed to deliver specific projects; businesses cases will be completed as and when required to support requests for additional funding.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

A total of £200k has been budgeted for to set up the Transformation Team. Additional funding will be required in due course to deliver the improvements in technology required to support the transformation work programme. Funding has been set aside in reserves to cover some of this work and business cases will be required to support requests to call on these funds.

### **6.2 Legal**

None

### **6.3 Human Resources**

None

## 6.4 Risk Management

The delivery of the transformation work programme should help to address the organisation's capacity risk by creating efficiency savings.

Failure to deliver the transformation work programme will in itself be a risk and a comprehensive project plan and risk register will be established to manage this.

## 6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

## 6.6 Health

None

## 6.7 Climate Change

None

## 7 Appendices

Appendix 1: Transformation Strategy

Appendix 2: Transformation Plan

Appendix 3: Digital Strategy

## 8 Previous Consideration

*None*

## 9 Background Papers

<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Judith Aupers
<b>Telephone Number:</b>	01543 464411
<b>Ward Interest:</b>	All
<b>Report Track:</b>	Cabinet 5 December 2024 Resources Scrutiny Committee (date TBC)
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Yes

# Transformation Strategy

## Introduction:

This document outlines the transformation strategy and vision for Stafford Borough and Cannock Chase District Councils, focusing on key themes of customer choice, service transformation, strengthening communities, a new target operating model, and digital innovation. The strategy aims to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable transformation programme by identifying the necessary steps, tools, stakeholders, and enablers. It also highlights strategic options, success measurement techniques, and leadership approaches to ensure successful implementation.

## Vision:

Our authorities envision a transformed and resilient community where services are efficient and resident focused, communities are empowered, and digital innovation drives progress. Through effective transformation, we aim to create modern and agile councils that adapt to changing needs and advance the well-being of our residents.

## Transformation Programme Objectives:

1. Channel Shift: Enable residents to access services conveniently and efficiently through digital channels wherever possible.
2. Service Transformation: Enhance service delivery by reimagining processes, optimising resources, enabling strong financial management and embracing technology to improve outcomes, resilience, efficiency and customer satisfaction.
3. Strengthening Communities: Empower and engage communities, fostering inclusivity, social cohesion, and active participation in decision-making processes.
4. New Target Operating Model: Develop and implement a modern and flexible target operating model that aligns resources, skills, and structures with strategic priorities.
5. Digital Innovation: Embrace emerging technologies, data-driven decision-making, and digital transformation initiatives to drive efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation across all areas.

### Steps to Implement the Transformation Programme:

1. **Assess the Current State:** Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing processes, services, and systems to identify areas for improvement and set a baseline for future measurement.
2. **Define Transformation Priorities:** Prioritise areas that need transformation based on the criteria of impact, urgency, feasibility, statutory priorities, and alignment with strategic objectives.
3. **Engage Key Stakeholders:** Identify and engage relevant stakeholders, including residents, businesses, community groups, employees, elected officials, and partners, to gain insights, build consensus, and ensure collaboration throughout the transformation journey.
4. **Develop a Transformation Roadmap:** Create a detailed roadmap that outlines the sequence of initiatives, timelines, resource requirements, and dependencies for each transformation priority.
5. **Allocate Resources:** Secure adequate financial, human, and technological resources to support the transformation programme and ensure its successful implementation.
6. **Establish Governance Structure:** Set up a governance framework that provides clear roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes to oversee the transformation programme and monitor progress.
7. **Implement Initiatives:** Execute the identified initiatives, focusing on process redesign, service digitisation, community engagement, organisational restructuring, and technological innovation.
8. **Measure and Monitor Progress:** Establish performance indicators and monitoring mechanisms to track the progress and impact of the transformation programme against set objectives.
9. **Review and Refine:** Regularly review the programme's effectiveness, gather feedback, identify areas for improvement, and refine the approach as necessary to ensure continuous transformational progress.

### Key Enablers for Transformation:

1. **Programme Design and Management:** Establish a dedicated transformation team with expertise in change management, project management, and stakeholder engagement to drive and oversee the programme effectively.
2. **Efficiency/Contract Management:** Implement robust processes to enhance efficiency, optimise resources, and effectively manage contracts with service providers, suppliers, and partners.
3. **Financial Analyses/Forecasting/Planning:** Conduct thorough financial analyses, forecast future funding requirements, and develop sound financial plans to support the transformation programme.

4. Performance Management: Establish performance metrics, measurement frameworks, and reporting mechanisms to track progress, identify areas of success, and address performance gaps.
5. Commissioning: Optimise service commissioning processes to ensure that resources are allocated effectively, services meet residents' needs, and outcomes are achieved.
6. ICT/Informatics: Invest in modern and secure information and communication technology infrastructure, leverage data analytics, and enable digital innovation to transform services and operations.
7. Customer/Stakeholder/Community Engagement: Foster a culture of customer focus, active stakeholder engagement, and community involvement through various channels, seeking feedback, and incorporating it into decision-making.
8. Partnerships and Collaboration: Foster strategic partnerships and collaboration with other public sector organisations, private businesses, community groups, and academic institutions to leverage expertise, resources, and shared goals.
9. Alternative Delivery Models: Explore innovative delivery models, such as public-private partnerships, social enterprises, and outsourcing, to optimise service delivery and achieve desired outcomes. Ensure that the implementation of shared services is a focus of all transformation work so that the benefits of the two organisations coming together are maximised. Be that through increased scale, expertise or sharing of best practice.
10. Organisational Development: Invest in developing the skills, capabilities, and leadership required for a transformed organisation, fostering a culture of innovation, agility, and continuous learning. This is to include the development of a trainee programme to enable succession planning and enhance skills and diversity of thinking within the organisation.
11. Investment Vehicles: Explore and utilise various funding mechanisms and investment vehicles, including grants, loans, public-private partnerships, and revenue generation models, to secure resources for transformation initiatives.
12. Asset Utilisation: Optimise the use of physical assets, such as buildings and infrastructure, through effective asset management strategies, including rationalisation, sharing, and repurposing.

### **Strategic Options for Transformation:**

1. Collaborative Partnerships: Collaborate with neighbouring districts, higher-tier authorities, and other organisations to share resources, pool expertise, and drive joint transformation initiatives.
2. Evidence-driven Decision-making: Invest in data collection, analytics, and insights to inform evidence-based decision-making, identify trends, and drive targeted interventions.

3. **Digital Service Delivery:** Transform service delivery by developing user-friendly digital platforms, mobile applications, and online portals that offer convenient and personalised access to services.
4. **Community Empowerment:** Foster community engagement and participation through resident panels, and digital platforms, empowering residents to contribute to local decision-making.
5. **Agile Organisational Structures:** Implement flexible organisational structures and governance models that promote collaboration, empower employees, and support rapid adaptation to changing circumstances. For example, this may be in response to a large project where employees are seconded, or specific skills of employees are being deployed.
6. **Innovation and Experimentation:** Create a culture that encourages experimentation and innovation, promoting pilots and test-bed environments to explore new ideas and approaches.

### **Measuring Success:**

1. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Define specific KPIs aligned with transformation objectives, such as resident satisfaction scores, service delivery metrics, cost of the transformation, savings delivered, alignment with/delivery of corporate objectives and digital adoption rates.
2. **Baseline and Target Setting:** Establish a baseline for each KPI and set ambitious yet achievable targets to measure progress and success.
3. **Regular Reporting:** Implement a reporting mechanism to regularly monitor and communicate progress against KPIs, providing transparency and accountability to stakeholders.
4. **Feedback Mechanisms:** Gather feedback from residents, businesses, employees, and other stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, and online platforms to assess the impact and effectiveness of transformation initiatives.
5. **External Benchmarking:** Benchmark against other district authorities, best practices, and national standards to gain insights, identify areas for improvement, and drive continuous performance enhancement.
6. **Evaluation and Reviews:** Conduct periodic evaluations and reviews of the transformation programme to identify lessons learned, celebrate successes, and make informed adjustments for future initiatives.

### Leading the Transformation:

1. **Leadership Commitment:** Secure commitment from senior leaders, councillors, and key decision-makers to champion the transformation agenda, provide resources, and communicate the vision.
2. **Change Management:** Develop a change management strategy that encompasses communication, training, and support mechanisms to address resistance, build buy-in, and ensure successful adoption of new ways of working.
3. **Empowering and Engaging Employees:** Empower employees by involving them in the transformation process, providing training and development opportunities, and recognising their contributions.
4. **Agile Decision-making:** Establish agile decision-making processes that enable swift responses to changing circumstances, remove bureaucratic barriers, and foster a culture of innovation and experimentation.
5. **Collaboration and Communication:** Foster open and transparent communication channels, internally and externally, to engage stakeholders, share progress, address concerns, and celebrate achievements.
6. **Continuous Learning and Improvement:** Fostering a learning and reflective culture that encourages knowledge sharing, captures lessons learned, and promotes continuous improvement across the organisation.

### Conclusion:

By implementing this transformation strategy, the councils aim to achieve the vision of a thriving community with resident-centric services and strengthened communities. The strategy emphasises the importance of prioritising transformation areas, engaging stakeholders, utilising key enablers, measuring success, and adopting effective leadership approaches. Through these efforts, the district authority will build a future-ready and resilient organisation that meets the evolving needs of their residents and fosters inclusive and sustainable development.

# Transformation Plan

## Our approach to transformation

This document supplements the transformation strategy and sets out how it will be delivered.

We will approach transformation both at a service level and corporately. This will be done through inter-linking workstreams.

## Service level transformation

The starting point for service level transformation will be the bringing together of teams, services and processes through our shared services programme.

Each service will be responsible for developing an outline transformation plan. A template has been developed to support this and is attached at Appendix 1.

Once all of the outline transformation plans have been drafted, the Transformation Team will work with Heads of Service to prioritise the delivery of the transformation programme in order to maximise the efficient and effective use of resources and ensure cross service working.

## Transformation Themes

The service level transformation will be supported by cross cutting / thematic transformation. This will be focussed around 6 key themes:



1. **Customers** - improving the services we deliver to our customers and how they access services will be at the heart of all transformation. This will include not just our external customers but internal customers too.
2. **Workforce** - our employees are key to the delivery of services. It is therefore essential that they have the appropriate skills and experience to do this or are given training and development opportunities. The welfare of our employees is also important, not just for productivity but for motivation and creativity to support continuous improvement.
3. **Communication and Engagement** - good internal and external communication and engagement will be key to the success of delivering transformation. It will be essential to understanding what our customers want, the views of our staff and Members and celebrating our successes along the way.
4. **Digital** - digital transformation will underpin a number of the other transformation themes set out below. There is a separate digital strategy which sets out our approach and work plans.
5. **Financial** - with increasing financial pressures, it is essential that opportunities to reduce costs or generate income are considered when transforming the way we do things. But financial transformation isn't limited to cost; it's also about the way we understand and manage the Council's finances, through budget management, effective procurement, seeking out external funding and considering the revenue consequences of any capital schemes.
6. **Assets** - the management of our physical assets (buildings, land, fleet and equipment) is a key component in the delivery of services. How we manage and make best use of these will also be central to delivering transformation.

### Next steps and timeline

#### 1. Governance Arrangements

A Transformation Steering Group (Officers) will be set up, chaired by the Chief Executive.

The Steering Group will comprise:

- The Chief Executive
- The Deputy Chief Executive - Resources
- The Deputy Chief Executive - Place
- The Head of Transformation and Assurance

The Transformation Steering Group will report on progress to the Shared Services Joint Operational Board (to be renamed as the Transformation Board) (Members).

The Transformation Steering Group will act as the overarching Group for the working groups/operational boards for each of the 6 work areas as appropriate.

The Transformation Working Group will be chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive - Resources, supported by the Transformation Lead and will comprise representatives from:

- Technology;
- Human Resources;
- Finance;
- Customer Services;
- Corporate Assets (as appropriate)
- Representatives from frontline services as appropriate to each service area being transformed.

Internal Audit will also provide support where appropriate.

Communications will attend meetings as required and will assist with communicating progress with staff and celebrating successes.

Timescale:

- The Transformation Board will hold its first formal meeting in March 2025 and will meet quarterly thereafter or as necessary to approve key stages of the process.

### **2. Bringing the Teams Together**

Informal meetings may be held between Heads of Service, Managers and teams. These should just be for getting to know each other.

Formal briefings will be arranged with HR and Trade Union colleagues to set the scene for transformation and explain the TUPE transfer process.

Meetings will be held with Heads of Service in advance of this to agree the scheduling of the TUPE transfers.

Timescale:

- Formal briefings to be held between January and March 2025.
- TUPE transfers to commence April 2025.

### **3. Service Level Agreements**

Establishing Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for each Council's services is essential to ensure that we have a clear understanding of current service levels and good foundations for transformation. This process will also help managers to understand the new service areas that they are taking on responsibility for and ensure consistency in the approach to the SLAs.

Budget information will form a key part of the SLA process and this will be complex for some services where budgets and cost codes do not align currently and/or are being changed as part of the new management structure.

Timescale:

- This work will be completed by December 2024.

### **4. Service Transformation Plans**

Heads of Service will work with managers and their teams to complete the initial service transformation templates. It will be vital to engage with all employees so that they feel part of the process. A key part of this will be identifying a shared

vision for the service, what the teams have in common, identify any known issues that they are hoping to overcome and what they hope to achieve through shared services.

This stage of the process is about scoping the scale of transformation work needed. It will seek to establish where there are fundamental differences in approach, where more minor changes of processes are needed etc.

Information will need to be gathered about all aspects of the service and will start the process of prioritising what work needs to be done first. It will include identifying all processes, policies, contracts etc that will form part of the transformation process.

At this stage, we will also seek to challenge what services are currently provided and whether they need to continue to be delivered. In some areas, it may be appropriate to take an early decision (subject to Member approval where necessary) to cease to provide services/functions.

The outline transformation plans will be challenged by the Transformation Board to ensure that they are comprehensive.

Timescale:

- This work will be completed by end March 2025 with outline plans ready for the challenge process during April 2025.

### 5. Transformation Programme

Once all of the individual service outline transformation plans have been completed and signed off, the Transformation Team will meet with Heads of Service individually to assess the priorities for delivery. This process will take into account:

- capacity of relevant teams needed to support the transformation work eg IT;
- Cross cutting workstreams eg customer related processes;
- Potential impacts/ benefits of transformation eg efficiencies, financial savings, contribution to corporate priorities;
- Urgency eg key deadlines for statutory changes;
- Feasibility, complexity and interdependencies;
- Any funding needed to support the transformation work; and
- External factors eg IT systems no longer supported/ security risk.

The Transformation Team will assess the information and use it to develop the Corporate Transformation Programme. This will also include identifying cross cutting work streams that will support service transformation eg the move from paper based to digital files.

The Transformation Programme will change and evolve as we work through the process. It will be subject to quarterly reviews and progress reports to ensure that we remain focussed on our objectives and on track for delivery.

Timescale:

- This work will commence in May 2025 and should be completed by end June 2025 with the final plan ready for consideration and approval in July 2025.

### 6. Transformation Process

The transformation process will be focussed on improving service delivery and efficiency; it's not simply about aligning processes and policies across the two Councils.

The transformation process will be based on "lean thinking" techniques (or similar) for transactional processing services. For other services, we will look at best practice, benchmarking etc. In some cases, it may be necessary to consider alternative delivery models this may include bringing some services back in-house, outsourcing others, or partnership models.

As part of the transformation process, we will need to consider how we use the assets we currently have and whether they can be rationalised, shared etc.

### 7. Managing Change

Effect management of the transformation programme will be critical to its success. The key emphasis will be on:

- Good governance arrangements;
- Effective project management;
- Good communications and engagement with staff, Members, customers and stakeholders;
- Flexibility and adapting as we progress;
- Training and development to ensure we have the necessary skills; and
- Culture - empowering teams to try new ways of working and encouraging positivity.

# Digital Strategy 2024-2028



working together

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## Executive Summary

This strategy is designed to be a catalyst for technological innovation and change, propelling our organisation into the future. This will be achieved by ensuring that the necessary tools, policies, and people are in place to support.

The advances we are making with our 'cloud' systems (storing and accessing data and programmes over the internet rather than on local hard drives and servers) have created a solid foundation for the next five years, enabling us to think bigger and more creatively about the challenges and opportunities and how we are best positioned to benefit from them.

### **We are working to become digital, not just do digital.**

This strategy sets out the necessary detail, guiding principles, and objectives. It contains the key achievements we will meet, ensuring critically important and interdependent milestones are managed to completion. It aims to leverage technology to enhance service delivery, improve efficiency, and foster collaboration between the two councils. One of the primary results of the strategy will be:

- The creation of a Customer Experience platform, a digital platform that pulls together integrated data and intelligent systems, enabling us to properly integrate and automate transactions for all our customers.

Creating a new Customer Experience Platform, giving easy access to all council data and customer information, integrating remaining systems into the new Customer Experience Platform and decommission redundant systems and servers held on site that have been replaced with the more agile solutions.

We will then have positioned staff to deal with more complex, high value demand and created more opportunities for adding value to the organisation, (currently unquantified), because of better management and interrogation of our data.

## Vision

Our vision is to create a seamless digital experience for residents, businesses, and employees of Cannock Chase District Council and Stafford Borough Council. Using technological solutions, we aim to deliver efficient services, empower communities and staff, and drive economic growth while maintaining high standards of governance and data security.

## Strategic Objectives

The objectives for digital are:

- Provide a 24/7 public service available to customers wherever they are.
- Continue to drive engagement with our customers through more relevant digital channels. As well as Enhancing the quality and accessibility of services through those digital channels.
- Transforming the Technology department as we know it to become a Digital Services team.
- Moving from on-site provision of infrastructure to pure cloud and Software as a Service solutions (SaaS) and making this the standard approach moving forwards with new technology purchases
- Equip council staff with the necessary digital tools and skills to deliver services effectively, increase productivity, and adapt to changing work environments.
- Encourage innovation and experimentation with emerging technologies to address challenges, improve decision-making, and create value for stakeholders.
- Streamline internal processes, reduce administrative burden, and optimise resource utilisation through digital transformation.
- Leverage data analytics to gain insights, monitor performance, and make informed decisions that drive service improvements and innovation.
- Drive the council's green agenda by, for example, the purchase of recycled laptops, using cloud solutions which reduces council electricity usage and energy efficient technology solutions.

The strategy has been written to underpin the council's corporate business plans and define how we will meet these objectives.

## Measuring Success

- All staff having access to information and data they can use to create and provide new services and improvements to existing services.
- Elevated levels of enrolment onto the newly created digital platform 'My Account' portal by customers and a preference for the digital channel.
- Receipt of customer feedback
- Reduced carbon footprint

## Governance and Delivery

What follows outlines the proposed governance for ensuring delivery of this programme of projects.

- **Leadership Team:** will engage and support members and senior managers in understanding and embedding the principles set out in this strategy.
- **The Technology Program Board:** The Board will drive the delivery of the building blocks outlined above. The Delivery board will also agree prioritisation within the programme with service areas and transformation projects and obtain and manage the resources needed, thus ensuring delivery.
- **Service Areas:** will handle mapping and re-designing their processes to encompass channel shift and take advantage of the modern technology put in place as part of new strategies. Service areas are recognised as subject matter experts so they are best placed to design practical solutions which will improve customer service in their area.

## Business Engagement

Users are keen to see innovative and intuitive solutions as part of a value for money Technology service. Technology is an enabler for future agile work and will support the cultural shift that is required across the organisation and assist in addressing business processes. This cultural shift will be underpinned by a digital first approach to problem solving, looking towards innovative use of existing tools or looking for new tools to remedy challenges or improve service delivery.

There is also recognition that to be a digital organisation, we need our staff to use technology in a more skilled and proficient way. Users need a range of support mechanisms to build the necessary confidence and competence to get the most out of the solutions available to them.

The technology and customer service teams need to respond to the evolving needs of its user base by adapting its support services and providing more innovative ways to assist users out of core hours. We also need to ensure greater sharing and collaboration of technical options with our business areas.

## Thinking Digital

### Improve Customer access to services

We will use new technology to deliver services tailored for residents and ensure peoples information follows them through their journey regardless of who they are interacting with.

We will achieve this by:

- Developing a new customer portal to deliver better access to services online
- Communicate with residents and stakeholders using language that is clear and easy to understand
- Make services easier to find and access
- Use automation to make services better

What this means for us:

- Better access to services
- More effective public services
- Better informed residents

### Enhance the use of Technology and new ways of working

We will build on existing ways of working, improving information flow between organisations supporting the council's ambitions.

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring information can be shared between organisations, adhering to information governance policies and processes
- Investing in infrastructure to support the services we deliver
- Take a proactive approach to dealing with cyber threats
- Tools to allow working choices provided as standard based on role

What this means for us:

- Confidence that data is protected
- A modern forward thinking council

### Develop our Workforce

Our modern infrastructure and skilled workforce will attract staff and businesses to the area.

We will achieve this by:

- Introductory training for new staff on the use of hardware, software and systems used
- Promotion of self-help through guides and videos on our 'Teams and 'Intranet' sites
- Technical tips become part of global communication to encourage digital skills
- Use the intranet more effectively
- Invest in software to meet needs

What this means for us:

- Confident digitally skilled workforce
- New ideas that improve services
- Make the best use of our assets

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## Current Customer Experience

The services currently delivered by the Technology service are reflective of an era where users primarily work in a council office environment and are connected to a fixed network point or use corporate Wi-Fi to gain access to information, systems, and applications. Mobile working is available; however, it is not found everywhere due to budget limitations, network constraints, not being intuitive, and it also has some constraints around application suitability.

The provision of the current desktop, delivered by Remote Desktop Servers, has enabled many users to work in a more flexible way, as they can access a “virtual desktop” wherever they have internet connectivity.

Our users can often have two or even three phones: the traditional fixed desk telephone for office working and one or more mobile phones for business private use. Each device has a different number that makes contacting someone more complicated than it needs to be.

The estate of applications comprises of several core applications and specific business applications. Not all the functionality of these systems is being utilised and, in many cases, only basic functionality has been exploited. This partial use of systems can be symptomatic of a poor return on investment in a product and has led to business areas requesting and relying on bespoke applications as an alternative to provide missing features or functional gaps.

Traditionally applications are purchased for a specific business unit’s requirement, resulting in application and data silos. These applications cannot work with each other without costly integration that were not factored in at the time of procuring them.

Many of our staff deliver services to our residents and businesses 24/7. These users are still constrained by the technical support team, only being available during office hours. The Technology service has access to a range of self-service solutions to support customers and needs to look at what is of most benefit, to address this gap.

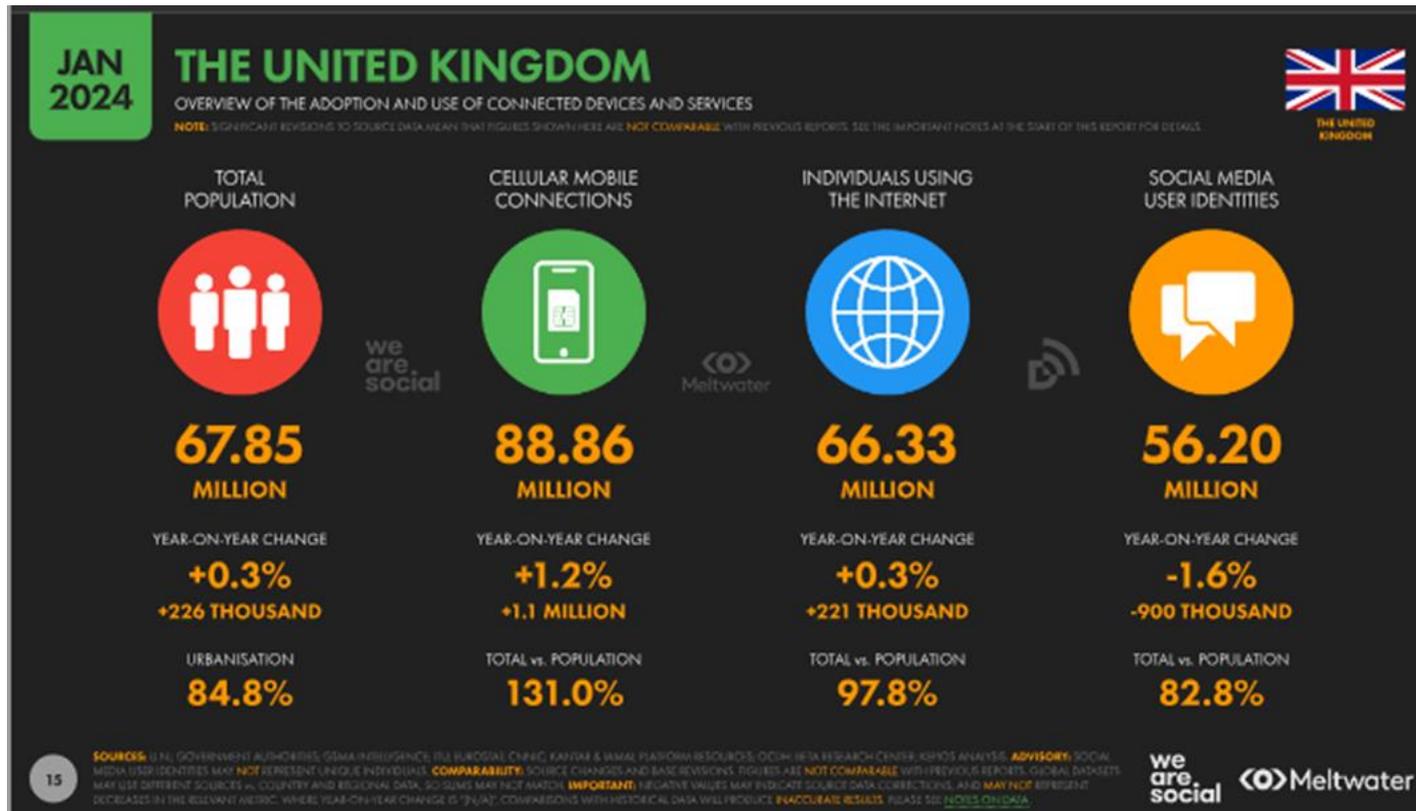
The user base has a wide range of abilities and confidence in using the technology; where this is limited or less advanced, in some cases it can prevent efficiencies from being fully achieved and opportunities are missed in identifying where ICT or data sharing could make a real difference to the value of a service.

Security and compliance standards are also of prime importance to the authority and its residents and in many cases, there are national standards that define the required controls that ensure that the delivery of solutions is secure.

## Understanding Customers

People have more access to technology today in the form of smartphones, enhanced home appliances, and the internet where they can see and buy anything.

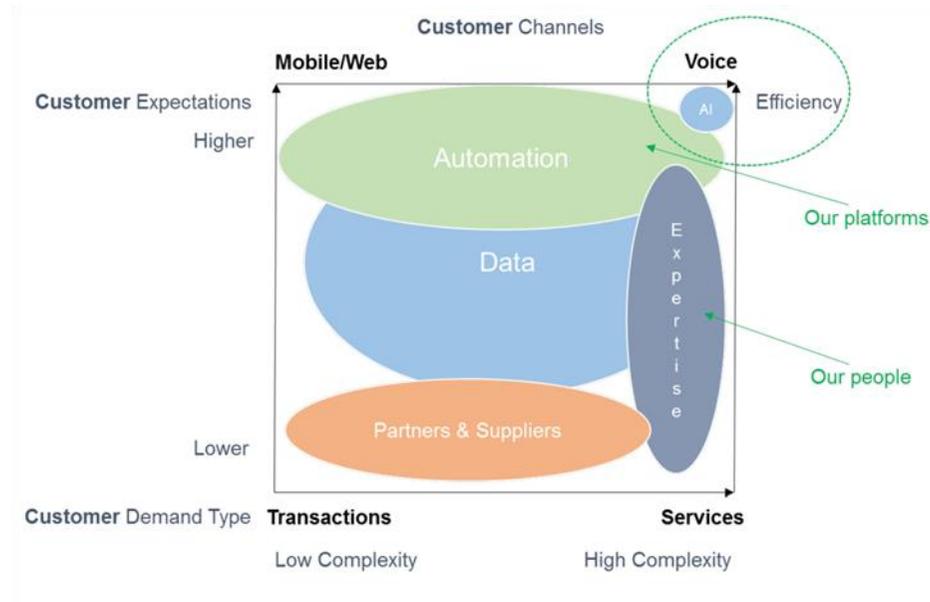
The diagram below shows the online presence of residents in the UK as of January 2023; mobile devices have overtaken laptop computers as the most used device type and is continuing to rise with a rise of +1.2million mobile connections against last year.



Customers expect things to be available all the time with clever, fast delivery of information.

As an organisation we need to ensure we are ready to meet the increasing demand of these customers while also dealing with more complex queries.

The diagram below shows the demands of today's customers and their grand expectations of a digital first experience.



Complex needs are currently met by our staff, experts, however new emerging technologies such as voice activated services and online chats are becoming more efficient at delivering some of these services, backed up by our data.

Basic transactional requests are currently automated to a degree, with some re-keying involved; customers still have high expectations of these. As expectations increase, more complex services will be delivered by people along with some artificial intelligence (AI) voice control.

In time, artificial intelligence and voice activated channels will provide the highest level of efficiencies (circled in green above)

We will utilise partners to create less visible but still important activities which give value to our customers.

This is further reinforced by the chargeable Garden Waste sign up process taken up by residents in Stafford and Cannock.

## **The Aging Population**

The combined authorities have more than 233,000 residents, 20% (1 of 5) of those residents who are over 65, 12% being over the age of 74. With an aging population comes additional social care and health needs for individuals, combined with the difficulties that come with living alone. This needs to be recognised by our strategy.

New processes and technology will free up resources to spend more time dealing with elderly and vulnerable residents across the borough/district. Advanced smart technology, for example, Alexa and other voice activated systems, can be incorporated to meet social needs. This will enable customers to ask questions, for example, "Alexa when is my bin being collected.'

## **Meeting Customer Need**

Reception should give visitors a positive impression and feel; the recent pandemic has seen our reception areas closed with residents and customers having to use online services; this has highlighted where current processes for frontline services have failed to keep up with the channel shift.

Customers expect the 'Amazon' type experience when using online services, being able to book and pay for the services while having the ability to chat with a customer service agent. Expectations are now such that residents have a video consultation with a doctor rather than attending the surgery.

To meet this new expectation the council has invested in a modern, fit for purpose, Customer Platform.

- Intuitive user interface
- Cloud based accessible on any device.
- Management reporting and data.
- Customer information is all in one place – the 'golden thread.'
- The ability to track queries online.
- The ability to book and pay for services online.

The platform has the ability for all systems to work together with ease of access and facilities for continuous improvement and better communication with our residents and stakeholders.

The meeting of customer need will always ensure that while there is focus on digital and a move to digital first no one will be left behind or unable to access customer services. Other non-digital means of accessing services will be maintained where there is a user need to ensure that services remain available to all.

### Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Whilst AI is developing quickly now it is a very resource intensive and expensive tool in the main. The council, where possible, will explore the use of AI. Taking this into account, Artificial Intelligence (AI) could benefit the councils in several ways. For example, it would:

- supply more accurate information leading to better outcomes.
- improve public services - for example personalising public services to adapt to individual circumstances.
- automate simple, manual tasks which frees up time to spend on innovative ways to improve services.

AI cannot be imaginative or consider the emotional aspects of a situation. In some cases, the financial aspect of releasing an AI process may be unrealistic as a form, with some simple logic, may be quicker and cheaper to provide.

AI systems also need to be compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). For AI to work and to support ongoing business decisions it needs access to relevant data. Our data will need to be assessed for its quality, accuracy, validity, relevancy, completeness, and consistency.

Emerging voice technologies such as 'Alexa' Google, and 'Siri' will be developed and integrated with applications such as waste to enable customers to ask questions, for example 'Alexa when is my bin being collected'.



## Conclusion

The successful implementation of the digital strategy for the shared service requires a coordinated and collaborative approach, strong leadership, and ongoing commitment to innovation and excellence in service delivery. By leveraging technology to enhance efficiency, transparency, and engagement, we can become a more connected, resilient, and responsive organisation that meets the needs and expectations of our communities now and in the future.

## Summary

### Key Messages

- Provide the same experience to internal and external customers.
- Recognising that data collection and sharing is key to achieving organisational aims.
- Staff become experts in our business, our customers, and the use of our systems.
- Specialised staff become experts in our data, turning it into information we can use.
- Security controls are transparent from the start, focusing on visibility, not deniability.
- Ensuring that “green” decision making is embedded throughout the technology decision making process.

### Overall Outcomes

- To shift to a digital customer service experience within a data driven environment.
- Focusing on serving customers, mobilising the workforce, and increasing the level of organisational expertise.
- Automate cloud-based services and solutions reducing the reliance on the internal infrastructure.
- Make the most of our data, interrogating it to provide value to all while also supporting the business.
- Where possible, we will use the same system for all that we do, reducing platforms and tools while improving skills to meet demands from our customers.
- Customers can see their own data and self-service.
- Reduced carbon footprint from the use of technology.
- Reduce avoidable contact to the contact centre to allow officers time to deal with other aspects of the role.

Key work streams that need to be fed into the overall transformation program.

1. Improving Services and Customer Access
2. Leadership of Place
3. Support Members to be effective community leaders.
4. Empower Staff to deliver Services.
5. Reducing costs and Increase Income.
6. Quality Assurance

**Author(s):**

Sarah Warren

Chris Forrester

**Contributors:**

**References/Sources:**

Government Digital Strategy

SCC Population demographics - [Population demographics and adult social care needs \(all adults\) - Staffordshire County Council](#)

We are Digital UK - [Digital 2024 United Kingdom \(February 2024\)](#)

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**Agenda Item 4(b)v**

# Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Risk Appetite Statement

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Transformation and Assurance
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources Portfolio

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The following matter is to be considered by Audit and Accounts Committee at its meeting held on 20 November 2024 and is submitted to Cabinet as required.

## **1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet approval of the Council's revised Risk Management Policy and Strategy.

## **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet to approve the Risk Management Policy and Strategy set out in **APPENDIX 1**.
- 2.2 Cabinet to approve the Risk Appetite Statement and set the risk appetite at Moderate.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.3 The Council is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to have effective arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.4 The Council needs a structured approach to direct and support managers in the effective management of risk. By defining a methodology for assessing risks the Council can ensure that decision makers are clear about the level of risk that they can take and areas where additional controls will need to be implemented to manage risks being taken.

### **3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 Risk management is a vital activity which underpins the vision, values, and corporate objectives of the Council. It should be embedded into the culture of the organisation and led by the most senior leaders and managers. In addition, by having an effective risk management framework in place it will provide the communities we serve with confidence that we can deliver the objectives we have promised.
- 3.2 The existing Risk Management Policy and Strategy was approved in 2016 and is in need of update. The current strategy is high-level and needs more detail to support effective risk management across the Council's decision-making processes.
- 3.3 The External Auditors also identified a need for the Council to improve its risk management arrangements in the Value For Money Report issued in 2023. The Improvement Plan agreed by the Council includes the update and approval of revised risk management arrangements. As part of a wider review, identified in the Annual Governance Statement the Risk Management Policy and associated procedures have been updated will be used to support the to re-launch of risk management at the Council and to ensure that it forms part of an effective governance framework.
- 3.4 As part of the update a risk appetite statement has been included to guide decision making by showing the acceptable level of risk the Council has determined it is prepared to accept. Explicit approval will be required where an action or decision is above the Council's risk appetite.

### **4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 Risk management is about putting arrangements in place to identify and manage the things that may affect the Council from successfully delivering its intended objectives. As such it is connected to the delivery of all the corporate priorities.

### **5 Report Detail**

- 5.1 The Council last updated its risk management policy and strategy in 2016. This was a high-level strategy that removed the previous requirements for service/operational risk registers to be maintained and which instead focused on the Strategic Risk Register and project risk registers.
- 5.2 However, it has become clear that the Council needs to improve its management of risk across the Council and not just at a strategic level and embed it across the Council's decision-making processes and service delivery. This was identified as an action in the Annual Governance Statement for 2023-24 and in the External Auditor's Value for Money Report for 2021-22 and 2022-23 and included as an action in the resulting Improvement Plan.

- 5.3 The new policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of Members, Leadership Team and employees, in relation to effective risk management. The new risk management policy is designed to embed a risk management culture within the Council and will establish additional mandatory risk registers enabling a greater understanding of risk to be developed.
- 5.4 The updated risk management policy has been built around guidance contained in the Association of Local Authority Risk Managers (ALARM) Risk Management Toolkit 2021. This is seen as a best practice model for Local Authority risk management.
- 5.5 The policy contains an updated risk matrix which sets out a clear statement on the Council's risk appetite. It is proposed that the level of risk the Council is prepared to accept should be set at Moderate. However there is also recognition that at times some activities may require a more risk-taking stance than the risk appetite allows and needs to take into account the opportunity risk relating to the decision - for example Economic Development regeneration opportunities. Where a scheme is deemed to be at a higher level of risk than allowed by the risk appetite an approval process is being introduced which will be overseen by the Council's statutory officers and the Leader of the Council.
- 5.6 As the revised risk management policy requires a shift in culture within the Council a programme of training will be delivered to Leadership Team, Service Managers and Members. Heads of Service and Service Managers will also be tasked with ensuring that the risk management culture is promoted and established across all employees.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Financial**

Most actions resulting from the adoption of the policy will be delivered within existing budgets. However there is a need to bring in an external trainer to support the roll-out of the policy. This will be funded from the Council's Corporate Training Budget. The cost is anticipated to be a maximum of £10,000 across the two Councils.

### **6.2 Legal**

The Council is required to establish and maintain an effective arrangement for the management of risk by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015

### **6.3 Human Resources**

The policy will need to be communicated across the workforce as applicable - including training where appropriate

## 6.4 Risk Management

Effective risk management is a fundamental element of effective governance. If risks are not appropriately identified and controlled within the Council’s agreed risk appetite, then it is likely that the intended outcomes will not be met. This could lead to significant financial and reputational impact.

## 6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

## 6.6 Health

None

## 6.7 Climate Change

None

## 7 Appendices

Appendix 1: Risk Management Policy and Strategy

## 8 Previous Consideration

Audit and Accounts Committee - 20 November 2024 - Minute No AAC15/24

## 9 Background Papers

None

**Contact Officer:** Stephen Baddeley

**Telephone Number:** 01543 464415

**Ward Interest:** Nil

**Report Track:** Cabinet 05/12/24

Audit and Accounts Committee 20/11/24

**Key Decision:** No

# Risk Management Policy and Strategy

December 2024



working together

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## Risk Management Policy Statement

We recognise risk management is a vital activity which underpins the vision, and corporate priorities of the Council. In addition, by having an effective risk management framework in place it will provide the communities we serve with confidence that we can deliver the priorities we have promised.

Risk is always present in every activity that we do, and our risk management framework sets out to be proactive in the identification, assessment, and management of key areas of risk. We seek to embed effective risk management within the operation and decision-making process of the Council. Risk management needs to be an integral part of all processes, projects and strategic decisions made. Wherever we work with partners or third parties we will ensure that they are aware of and work in line with our risk management framework or have their own suitable arrangements.

Our aim is to have a risk management framework that is fit for purpose and appropriate to the size and nature of our operations. We aim to ensure that our risk management framework is well communicated and operating effectively within the Council.

In order to assist in effective decision making it is essential for us as strategic leaders to define the level of risk exposure that we think is acceptable. This is set out in the Risk Appetite Statement. This will inform decision makers on the level of risk that they can take and areas where additional controls will need to be implemented to manage risks being taken.

The risk management framework and the effective management of risks is a key part of the Governance Framework of the Council. Its implementation will that risk identification and management plays a key role in the delivery of our Corporate Plans and strategic priorities.

Through this framework we will involve, empower, and give ownership to all employees and Members to identify and manage risk. Risk management will be supported by regular discussions and appropriate actions by Cabinet and Leadership Team including the regular review of significant risks and reviewing actions to reduce those risks to an acceptable level. The management of risk will be an integral part or strategic and operational planning as well as embedded in the day-to-day delivery of services of the Council. The Audit Committee will have oversight of the effectiveness of our risk management arrangements.

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**Tim Clegg**  
Chief Executive  
Stafford Borough Council  
and Cannock Chase  
District Council

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**Councillor Aidan Godfrey**  
Leader  
Stafford Borough Council

## **Risk Management Strategy**

### **1. What is Risk Management**

- 1.1. Risk Management is the process whereby an organisation methodically addresses the risks which may stop them from achieving their corporate priorities. The focus of good risk management is the identification and treatment of the risks to minimise any impact or maximise benefit.
- 1.2. A risk is defined as the “effect of uncertainty on the achievement of priorities” (ISO 31000). An effect is a positive or negative deviation from what is expected, and that risk is often described by an event, a change in circumstances or a consequence.
- 1.3. By accepting this definition, the Council recognises that taking the right risks in an informed way can be beneficial to the priorities and that risk management is not just a negative process used to stop opportunities being taken.
- 1.4. Risk Management should be a continuous and developing process connected with the Council’s Corporate Plan and the delivery of it in the present, and future.

### **2. Why does the Council need to carry out Risk Management?**

- 2.1. Risk management is a management tool which forms part of the governance system of the Council. When applied appropriately, risk management can be very beneficial. It can help the Council to achieve its stated priorities and deliver on intended outcomes. It can also help managers to demonstrate good governance, better understand their risk exposure and better mitigate risks (particularly uninsurable risks). Externally it can help the Council to enhance political and community support and satisfy stakeholders’ expectations on internal control.
- 2.2. The Council does not operate in isolation and is subjected to constant challenges and external changes which may pose a threat to the delivery of the Corporate Priorities or provide new opportunities which must be considered and addressed on an ongoing basis. Risk management processes provide a mechanism by which these issues and their impact can be identified, assessed, monitored and relevant actions taken to address them. Whilst it is good business practice and essential for good governance processes the Council also has a legal requirement to have a risk management process in place.

2.3. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 state:

*“A relevant authority must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which—*

*(a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and priorities.*

*(b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and*

*(c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.”*

2.4. Ultimately by having an effective, embedded Risk Management Framework in place to influence its decision making the Council can benefit by helping to ensure:

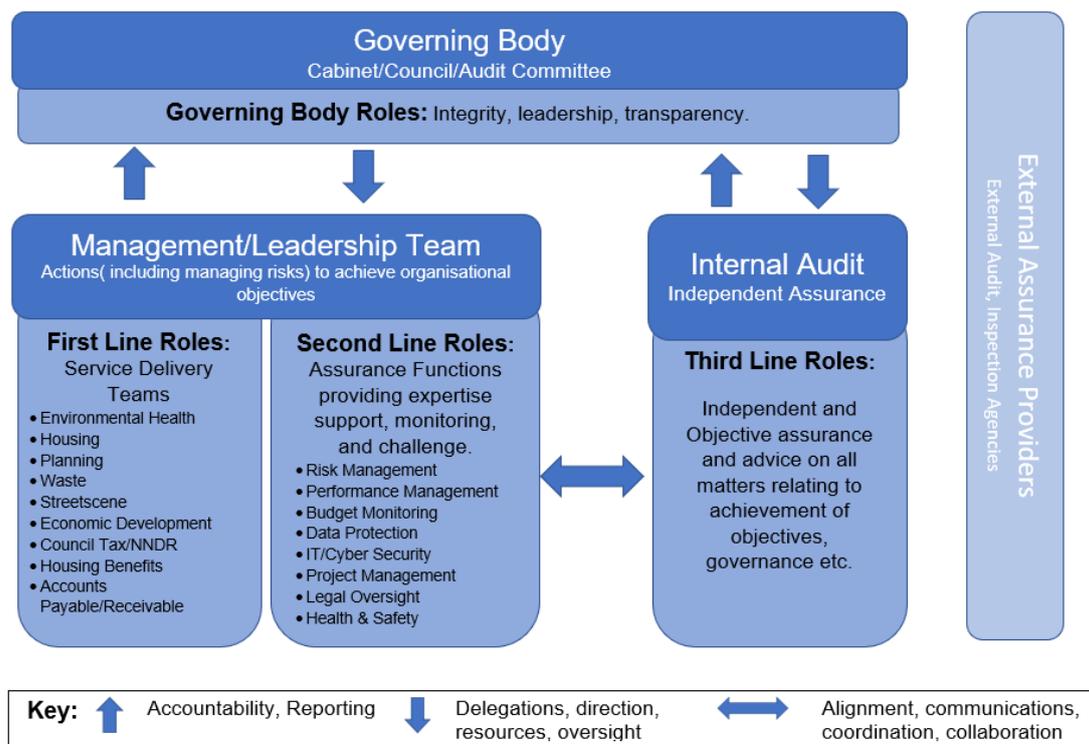
- The priorities set in the Corporate Plan can be delivered.
- All employees and Members understand the desired culture in relation to risk,
- Decisions to take appropriate risks in certain areas can be made from an informed viewpoint.
- It can protect its reputation.
- Operational and financial efficiency is ensured as resources are not lost by taking unnecessary risks.
- It can maximise opportunities.
- Good governance processes are operating.
- Assets are protected.

### **3. Governance and Infrastructure**

#### **3.1. Sponsorship and Positioning of Risk Management**

- Risk Management needs to be embedded throughout the Council and underpin all its activities. It is a key governance process and needs to have direction and leadership from the very top of the organisation; as well as being relevant and responsive to the staff delivering services on the ground. The risk matrix and risk appetite statement contained in this strategy will be used across the Council to ensure that a collective understanding and language is adopted when talking about risks.

- Management and other corporate reporting/assurance functions will help to monitor and report on the effective delivery of the Risk Management Framework in line with the Institute of Internal Auditors’ “3 Lines Model” as set out below:



### 3.2. Roles and Responsibilities

- All employees and Members have a role to play in the management of risk as it is a key part of day-to-day service delivery and management of the Council. However certain individuals or groups have specific responsibilities in the oversight and implementation of risk management, more detail on these is set out below.
- **Risk Management Sponsor - Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) and s151 Officer**
  - Act as the sponsor for the Risk Management Framework at a strategic level and with the support of the Head of Transformation and Assurance will ensure that Leadership Team decisions are taken in line with the Risk Management Strategy.
  - Champion risk management at the strategic level.
  - Ensure regular discussions are held on Risk Management and the Councils risks.
  - Encourage all members of Leadership Team to ensure they have effective risk management arrangements in place for their service areas.

- **Head of Transformation and Assurance**
  - Support the Deputy Chief Executive - Resources in their role as sponsor for risk management.
    - Regularly review the risk management policy, strategy, and framework to ensure it underpins the Council's strategy and priorities.
    - Report on behalf of Leadership Team on the strategic risks and controls in line with the organisation's risk management strategy.
- **Risk Manager (Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager)**
  - Coordinate the organisation's risk management activity.
  - Develop and maintain the risk management policy, strategy, methodologies, and tools.
  - Highlight any significant new or worsening risks to the Leadership Team or Cabinet for review and action.
  - Assist in the delivery of the risk management process across the Council.
  - Provide risk management guidance, training, and advice.
  - Promote the link between risk management and other related disciplines, for example, insurance, business continuity, emergency planning, and health and safety.
  - Promote and share best practice risk management across the Council.
- **Cabinet and Leadership Team**
  - The Cabinet and Leadership Team are responsible for giving direction, approving the Risk Management Framework, and taking ownership of the Strategic Risk Register. They will ensure that all decisions are taken in accordance with the Council's agreed risk appetite.
- **Cabinet**
  - Approve the Risk Management policy, strategy, and Risk Appetite for the Council.
  - Review key risks to the Council and controls in place via the Strategic Risk Register.
  - Provide assurance that risks are being effectively managed.

- **Leadership Team**

- Recommend the Risk Management policy, strategy, and Risk Appetite to Cabinet for approval
- Approve the processes to be used to manage and monitor risks.
- Review the strategic risks across the organisation, consider their importance against strategic priorities and action controls where required to manage those risks.
- Allocate sufficient resources to address the key strategic risks.
- Create an environment and culture where risk management is promoted, facilitated, and appropriately undertaken by the Council and is embedded in all decision making.
- Champion risk management activities, educate colleagues, and raise awareness of the benefits of managing risk effectively.

- **Deputy Chief Executives**

- To maintain a risk register of key risks for their directorate
- To raise significant risks within their directorate which could impact on delivery of the Council's corporate priorities for consideration for inclusion in the Strategic Risk Register.
- To support Heads of Service in the management of risks in their service area

- **Heads of Service**

- Communicate the benefits of risk management across service areas for which they are responsible.
- Help facilitate the risk management process and risk reporting procedures across operational areas.
- Help ensure key stakeholder commitment.
- Ensure risk management processes and risk reporting procedures are completed in line with the Council' risk management framework for each area under their responsibility.
- Monitor the key risks in each area of responsibility.

- **Service Managers**
  - Manage risk effectively in each area of responsibility.
  - Complete the risk management process and risk reporting procedures as per the Council's guidelines.
  - Complete, track and monitor the progress of action plans.
- **All Employees**
  - Understand and comply with the risk management processes and guidelines of the Council.
  - Monitor work on an ongoing basis to identify new and emerging risks and escalate as required.
- **Audit Committee**
  - Gain assurance over the governance of risk, including leadership, integration of risk management into wider governance arrangements, and the ownership and accountability for risks.
  - Monitor to ensure management are managing risks appropriately
- **Internal Audit**
  - Create an audit plan aligned with the key strategic and directorate risks.
  - Review and provide assurance on the effectiveness of the risk management framework.
  - Provide assurance on the operational arrangements for managing risks across the Council.
  - Review the progress of planned actions.
  - Test and validate existing controls.

#### **4. Pillars of the Strategy**

4.1. There are several key pillars which form the basis of the risk management strategy these are set out below

4.2. The risk management strategy encourages the use of risk registers to record key risks faced by the Council in delivering its services and objectives. The following risk registers are required to be maintained as part of this strategy:

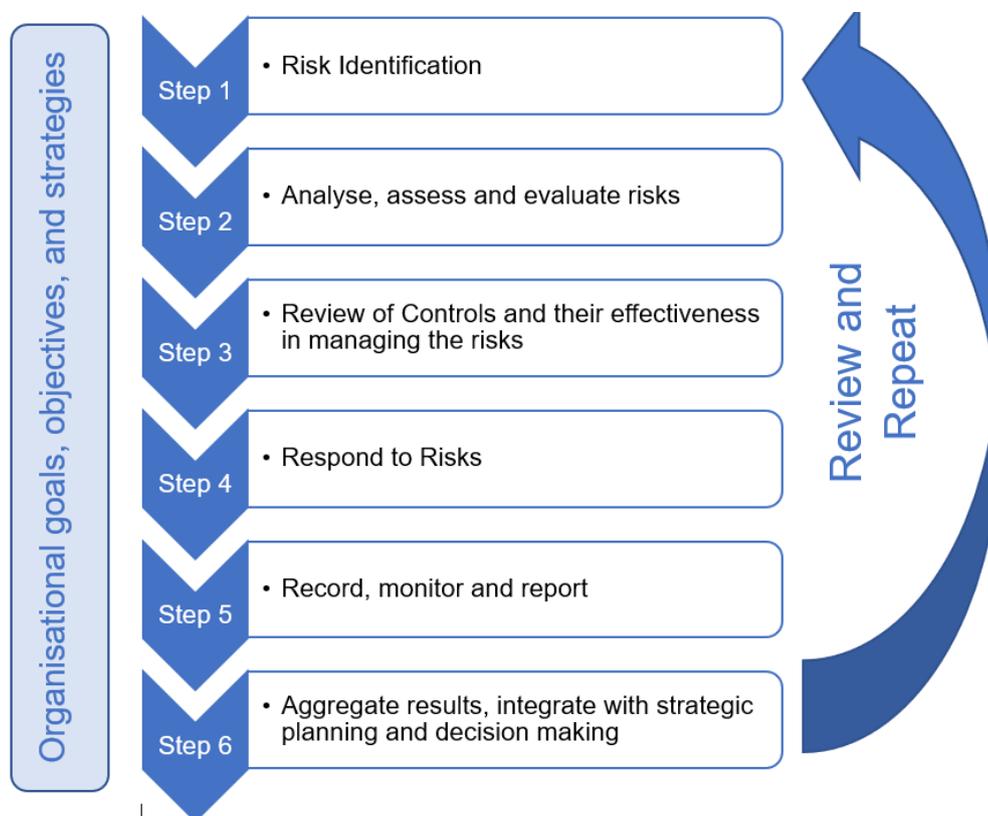
- Strategic Risk Register
- Directorate Risk Registers for Place and Resources

- IT Risk Register
  - Housing Revenue Account Risk Register
  - Project Risk Registers
- 4.3. Processes will be in place to monitor and report the risk registers to relevant levels as set out below:
- The Strategic Risk Register is monitored by Leadership Team and reported to Cabinet and the Audit Committee.
  - The relevant Deputy Chief Executive will monitor their Directorate Risk Register escalating significant risks to Leadership Team for inclusion in the Strategic Risk Register.
  - The IT Risk Register will be monitored by the Head of Transformation and Assurance and Technology Manager.
  - The Housing Board will monitor the HRA Risk Register.
  - Project Boards will be responsible for monitoring Project Risk Registers.
- 4.4. Risk management will be imbedded in all decision-making processes. All committee reports relating to decisions will clearly set out the risks relating to the proposal and any controls in place or proposed to manage the risks. Guidance and training will be provided to managers to improve the quality of risk management implications in committee reports.
- 5. Culture**
- 5.1. To be effective in the long term and to support good governance, effective risk management needs to be embedded into the Council's culture and have full support from the top of the organisation down.
- 5.2. Leadership Team and Service Managers will set an example to other employees when it comes to embracing the importance of effective, embedded risk management in all processes. All managers must support the roll-out of this framework and ensure that risk management processes once established are followed by all employees across all processes and in all decision making.
- 5.3. The risk matrix within this framework and the definitions for levels of risk set out in this policy will be used consistently across the Council to categorise all risks to ensure a common understanding of risks. This adds clarity so that the level and definition of a risk is understood and means the same thing to everyone regardless of which section or function is talking about it. Any assessments associated with risks will utilise the agreed risk matrix and definitions and operate in line with the Council's agreed risk appetite.

- 5.4. Any deviations must be agreed in advance with the Chief Internal Auditor & Risk Manager and either the Head of Transformation and Assurance or the Deputy Chief Executive - Resources.
- 5.5. Where we work closely with third party organisations, managers should ensure that the Council's Risk Appetite Statement and risk processes are communicated and understood by those we are in partnership with. Wherever possible the Council's risk management processes should be used when working with partners and contractors. Where third party funders specify a different risk management process to the Councils as a condition of funding this will be agreed and recorded at the time of application for the funding.
- 5.6. All employees and managers are required to take ownership and accountability for their role in the Risk Management process as set out in the "roles and responsibilities" section of the strategy. Employees at all levels are encouraged to raise emerging risks that they have identified with their line managers with the knowledge that the information will be considered and acted on appropriately where necessary.
- 5.7. The Deputy Chief Executive (Resources) as the Risk Management Sponsor will oversee the risk management culture at Leadership Team. They will do this by encouraging positive messages relating to risk management and challenging poor risk management practices such as the failure to adequately consider risk implications when making important decisions.

**6. Management of Risks**

6.1. The Council will implement an ongoing cyclical review process for the management of risks as set out in the diagram below.



6.2. More detail on each step and how to implement the process can be found in the Risk Management Toolkit.

**7. Risk Appetite Statement**

7.1. Risk appetite can be defined as the amount and type of risk the Council is willing to accept in the pursuit of its priorities.

7.2. The Council’s overall risk appetite is set out in reference to the risk appetite definitions below which include reference to the levels of risk. Escalation and reporting thresholds will be reassessed periodically to ensure risks are reported and reviewed within suitable defined limits and the risk appetite.

Category	Definition	Risk Levels
<b>Avoid</b>	No appetite. Not prepared to take any risks.	N/A
<b>Adverse</b>	Prepared to accept only the very lowest levels of risk, with the preference being for ultra-safe delivery options, while recognising that these will have little or no potential for reward/return	Negligible Risk

Category	Definition	Risk Levels
<b>Cautious</b>	Willing to accept some low risks, while maintaining an overall preference for safe delivery options despite the probability of these having mostly restricted potential for reward/return.	Low Risk
<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Tending always towards exposure to only modest levels of risk in order to achieve acceptable outcomes</b>	<b>Moderate Risk</b>
<b>Open</b>	Prepared to consider all delivery options and select those with the highest probability of productive outcomes, even when there are elevated levels of associate risk.	Medium Risk
<b>Hungry</b>	Eager to seek original/creative/pioneering delivery options and to accept the associated substantial risk levels in order to secure successful outcomes and meaningful reward/return.	High Risk

- 7.3. **The Council's risk appetite is defined as moderate.**
- 7.4. This means the Council remains open to innovative ways of working and to pursue options that offer potentially substantial rewards, however, also carry a moderate level of risk. The Council's preference is for safe delivery options, especially for those services required by statute and ideally all actions should be within this agreed risk appetite. This means that options should only be pursued if they can be managed as a yellow or lower risk.
- 7.5. However, it is accepted, where service delivery is diverse and risks take many forms, risk appetite may vary according to the specific circumstances being assessed. For example, an option may be considered for a regeneration scheme that is seen to have a higher level of risk for the Council than the moderate appetite would allow but where the ultimate outcome would bring significant benefits if successfully implemented. This is where the opportunity risk significantly exceeds the risks exposed to in pursuing the option.
- 7.6. Where an option or decision is being pursued that is deemed to be at a higher level of risk than Moderate then additional controls/safeguards will need to be put in place. In most situations this will need to be clearly stated in the committee report and approval or the scheme by Cabinet or Council. Where the situation does not provide for a formal committee decision where the risk is outside of our normal risk appetite formal documented agreement to proceed will be required from the 3 Statutory Officers (s151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and Head of Paid Service) and the Leader of the Council to pursue the option. When approved, increased levels of monitoring and reporting on the risk and the operation of relevant controls will need to be established.
- 7.7. There may also be occasions where a risk may score higher than our risk appetite, but which is outside of the Council's direct control. Examples of this includes the global/national financial situation which has a direct impact on the Councils financial/budgetary position and additional statutory duties/service delivery placed on the Council through Government policy/decision making.

## 8. Risk Matrix

To assist in the management of risks the Council has adopted a 4 x 4 matrix for the scoring of risks.

		<b>Impact</b>			
		<b>Minor/Non-Disruptive Impact (1)</b>	<b>Moderately Disruptive Impact (2)</b>	<b>Significant Consequences (3)</b>	<b>Serious Consequences (4)</b>
<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Very Likely (4)</b>	4	8	12	16
	<b>Probable (3)</b>	3	6	9	12
	<b>Possible (2)</b>	2	4	6	8
	<b>Unlikely (1)</b>	1	2	3	4

The matrix has been colour coded in line with the Council's risk appetite as follows.

<b>Risk Levels</b>	<b>Colour</b>
Negligible Risk	Blue
Low Risk	Green
Moderate Risk	Yellow
Medium Risk	Orange
High Risk	Red

The risk matrix is supported by the following definitions.

**Likelihood Scores**

<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>Very Likely</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Event expected to occur. Has occurred and will continue to do so without action being taken.</li> <li>• Indication of imminent occurrence</li> <li>• There are external influences which are likely to make our controls ineffective</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p>	<p><b>Probable</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a moderate exposure to the risk.</li> <li>• Reasonable to expect event to occur within a year.</li> <li>• Has occurred in the past.</li> <li>• Is likely to occur within the Council's planning cycle.</li> <li>• There are external influences which may reduce effectiveness of controls</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p>	<p><b>Possible</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a low exposure to the risk.</li> <li>• Little likelihood of event occurring - 1 in 10 years</li> <li>• There is a potential for external influences which may reduce effectiveness of controls</li> </ul>
<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>Unlikely</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely remote</li> <li>• Not expected to occur but may do so in exceptional circumstances - 1 in 100 years.</li> <li>• There are few or no external influences which may reduce effectiveness of controls</li> </ul>

## Impact Scores

4	<b>Serious Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of key front line delivery supplier/partner</li> <li>• Loss of life, significant life-changing injuries</li> <li>• Significant negative publicity - national press</li> <li>• Significant interest from regulators, external auditors or central government.</li> <li>• Significant ongoing loss of workforce (over 25%)</li> <li>• Unable to finance within existing framework/requiring additional government financial support.</li> <li>• Complete system failures/large scale data loss/breach or major Cyber Incident.</li> <li>• Significant delays, overspends or abandonment of a major project.</li> <li>• Serious frauds or criminal offences</li> <li>• Major failure to deliver services across multiple departments</li> <li>• Requires external intervention or full Council decisions.</li> </ul>
3	<b>Significant Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of suppliers/partner</li> <li>• Loss of a service area/team/software for several weeks</li> <li>• Localised pollution/contamination incident</li> <li>• Serious injury to employee or public</li> <li>• Negative short-term local publicity</li> <li>• Large data breach or cyber attack</li> <li>• Attract significant interest from regulators/external auditors</li> <li>• Overspend on project requiring fundamental redesign or significant additional resources</li> <li>• Significant additional budget pressures requiring supplementary approval</li> <li>• Requires Cabinet Intervention</li> </ul>
2	<b>Moderately Disruptive Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of systems/service delivery for a few hours</li> <li>• Loss/damage to a room or small part of a structure requiring some relocation</li> <li>• Loss of key staff member/team for short term</li> <li>• Minor injuries to staff/public</li> <li>• Small losses/thefts, minor data breaches.</li> <li>• Service performance/standards slightly below expected</li> <li>• Minor public attention or limited attention from regulators/external audit</li> <li>• Financial impact below £10,000 or 1% of budget</li> <li>• Can be resolved by Head of Service</li> </ul>
1	<b>Minor/Non-Disruptive Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negligible impact on service delivery</li> <li>• No noticeable impact to the public/environment</li> <li>• Negligible financial impact or loss/damage to assets</li> <li>• Can be resolved by Service Manager</li> </ul>

**Agenda Item 4(b)vi****Strategic Risk Register**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Head of Transformation and Assurance
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Resources Portfolio

The following matter was considered by Audit and Accounts Committee at its meeting held on 20 November 2024 and is submitted to Cabinet as required.

**1 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To set out details of the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at 30 September 2024

**2 Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the draft Strategic Risk Register and consider the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks.

**Reasons for Recommendations**

- 2.2 Cabinet are responsible for the approval of the Strategic Risk Register produced by Leadership Team and to monitor the progress made in relation to the management of the risks identified.

**3 Key Issues**

- 3.1 All Strategic Risks and associated action plans have been reviewed and the Council's current risk profile is summarised in the table below:-

<b>Risk Status</b>	<b>Number of Risks 1 April 2024</b>	<b>Number of Risks 30 September 2024</b>
Red (High)	2	3
Amber (Medium)	5	5
Green (Low)	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

- 3.2 One new red risk has been added to the risk register this review. There are currently 3 Red and 5 Amber risks.

## 4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:-

- (a) Risk management is a systematic process by which key business risks/opportunities are identified, prioritised and controlled so as to contribute towards the achievement of the Council's aims and objectives.
- (b) The strategic risks set out in the Appendices have been categorised against the Council's priorities.

## 5 Report Detail

5.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 state that:-

"A relevant body must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which:-

- (a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives;
- (b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and
- (c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk."

5.2 Risk can be defined as uncertainty of outcome (whether positive opportunity or negative threat). Risk is ever present and some amount of risk-taking is inevitable if the council is to achieve its objectives. The aim of risk management is to ensure that the council makes cost-effective use of a risk process that has a series of well-defined steps to support better decision making through good understanding of risks and their likely impact.

### Management of Strategic Risks/Opportunities

5.3 The Council's approach to risk management (including its risk appetite) is set out in the Risk Management Policy and Strategy (March 2016).

5.4 Central to the risk management process is the identification, prioritisation and management of strategic risks/opportunities. Strategic Risks are those that could have a significant impact on the Council's ability to deliver its Corporate Business Plan Objectives.

5.5 The risk register has been updated as at 30 September 2024 and a summary is attached as **APPENDIX 1**.

5.6 The risk summary illustrates the risks/opportunities using the "traffic light" method ie:-

RED	risk score 12 and above (action plan required to reduce risk and/or regular monitoring)
AMBER	risk score 5 to 10 (action plan required to reduce risk)
GREEN	risk score below 5 (risk tolerable, no action plan required)

- 5.7 As part of this review a new Red Risk has been added in relation to the delivery of the major regeneration projects *“There is a risk that the high profile large regeneration projects may not deliver as anticipated, to time or to budget, leading to reputational risks to the Council and creating financial risks that impact on the Council’s financial position and could impact on service delivery.”* The risk identifies that whilst action is being taken to manage the projects the impact on the Council could be significant if they fail to be delivered on time and within budget. In addition the time and resources going into the management of the projects may have an impact on the delivery of other services.
- 5.8 Whilst there has not been any movement in scores of the remaining risks action plans are being progressed and relevant comments detail the progress made to deliver the identified controls.
- 5.9 The key information and progress for each risk is set out in the strategic risk register attached at **APPENDIX 2**. A full strategic risk register including detailed controls and actions for each risk is held on file by the Chief Internal Auditor Risk Manager.

## 6 Implications

### 6.1 Financial

None

### 6.2 Legal

None

### 6.3 Human Resources

None

### 6.4 Risk Management

As set out in the report

### 6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None

**6.6 Health**

None

**6.7 Climate Change**

None

**7 Appendices**

Appendix 1: Summary of the Strategic Risk Register

Appendix 2: Strategic Risk Register Key Information

**8 Previous Consideration**

Audit and Accounts Committee - 20 November 2024 - Minute No AAC16/24

**9 Background Papers**

File available in Internal Audit and Risk Section including the full Strategic Risk Register action plan.

**Contact Officer:** Stephen Baddeley

**Telephone Number:** 01543 464415

**Ward Interest:** None

**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024  
Audit and Accounts Committee 20 November 2024

**Key Decision:** No

**Stafford Borough Council**  
**Summary of the Strategic Risk Register as at 30 September 2024**

**Summary of Red Risks**

Risk No	Risk Name	Risk Owner	Date Added to Register	Residual Risk Score at April 2024	Residual Risk Score at Sep 2024	Direction of Travel over period reported
C1	Finance Risk	Deputy Chief Executive Resources	May 2020	20 Red	20 Red	↔
2024-02	Meeting Homelessness Statutory Duty	Head of Wellbeing	April 2024	12 Red	12 Red	↔
2024-03	Town Centre Regeneration Projects	Head of Economic Development and Planning	Sept 2024	N/A	15 Red	New Risk

**Summary of Amber Risks**

Risk No	Risk Name	Risk Owner	Date Added to Register	Residual Risk Score at April 2023	Residual Risk Score at April 2023	Direction of Travel over period reported
C2	Economy Risk	Head of Economic Development and Planning	May 2020	9 Amber	9 Amber	↔
C5	Key Contractors Risk	Head of Operations/Head of Wellbeing	May 2020	10 Amber	10 Amber	↔
C6	Organisational Resilience Risk	Chief Executive	May 2020	9 Amber	9 Amber	↔
C7	Cyber Attack Risk	Head of Transformation and Assurance	May 2020	9 Amber	9 Amber	↔
2024-01	Governance Risk	Deputy Chief Executive - Resources	April 2024	9 Amber	9 Amber	↔

**Key to Direction of Travel**

↓	Risk has decreased	↔	Risk level unchanged	↑	Risk has increased
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## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

<b>Ref No:</b>	<b>C1</b>
Risk Name:	Finance Risk
Risk Description:	The funding available to the Council from central Government resulting from potential changes to Business Rates, New Homes Bonus etc. will not be known until late October at the earliest, although the final detail will not be received until December. This together with fluctuations in inflation and interest rates makes accurate budget planning difficult, resulting in a risk of over commitment of financial resources or inappropriate use of reserves.
Risk Owner:	Deputy Chief Executive - Resources
Portfolio:	Resources
Gross Risk Score (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 5 Total Score: 20 - RED
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 4 Impact: 5 Total Score 20 - RED</b>
Overall Progress Summary:	<p>The medium-term financial stability of the Council is dependent upon its ability to set a 2025-26 budget that minimises the use of reserves, and the impact of changes arising from the future funding regime for local government. Details in relation to the implementation of 50% Business Rates Retention, a Business Rates Reset and Fair Funding are still awaited.</p> <p>A consultation document in relation to the Future of New Homes Bonus was published in February 2021 (a response from the Council was submitted in advance of the closing date). The Council is awaiting details of the financial Settlement for 2025-26, including New Homes Bonus, to be provided by Central Government, likely in the Autumn.</p> <p>Events which have had an impact include the fluctuations in inflation and geopolitical instability creating a cost-of-living crisis and interest rate uncertainty. These issues, as well as uncertainty regarding national fiscal and monetary policy, the direction of the new Government and the impact on the local government financial settlement, have created substantial risk to financial sustainability.</p>

## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ref No:	<b>C2</b>
Risk Name:	<b>Economy Risk</b>
Risk Description:	<b>The economy of the Borough is adversely impacted limiting the ability to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough</b>
Risk Owner:	Head of Economic Development and Planning
Portfolio:	Economic Development and Planning
Gross Risk Score (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 3 Impact: 5 Total Score: 15 - Red
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 3 Impact: 3 Total Score: 9 - Amber</b>
Overall Progress Summary:	Immediate and longer terms interventions identified and being implemented. Local Plan progression under regular review. Emerging pressures linked to global supply chain issues and costs of goods, services and labour impacting on contracts/delivery.

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ref No:	<b>C5</b>
Risk Name:	<b>Key Contractors Risk</b>
Risk Description:	<b>The Council’s key contractors remain sustainable and continue to provide value for money</b>
Risk Owner:	Head of Operations/Head of Wellbeing
Portfolio:	Environment/Leisure/Resources
Gross Risk Scout (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 5 Total Score: 20 - RED
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 2 Impact: 5 Total Score: 10 - Amber</b>
Overall Progress Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk is not at the same level with all contractors.</li> <li>• We are closely monitoring the Leisure contractor which currently carries the highest risk.</li> <li>• Services have been re-introduced following the lifting of Government Covid-19 restrictions/return of work force.</li> <li>• High energy prices coupled with local residents struggling with the cost of living is a significant risk to operators.</li> </ul> <p>During the Covid pandemic lockdown periods and associated restrictions the Council worked with its contractors to support them in implementing their recovery plans However, the rises in energy prices, taken together with rising inflation, emerged as a significant risk, particularly to the Leisure contractor. The Council provided support to its leisure and culture service provider with its energy costs, based on an open book approach for a fixed term. Energy costs for 2024, although still high are not at the level seen in 2023. At the last review of this risk the likelihood of service failure was reduced, it is proposed that it remains at this level given the ongoing uncertainty in energy markets.</p> <p>The Council successfully applied for the first round of the Swimming Pool Support Fund (revenue) in August 2023 that was launched to provide financial assistance with rising energy costs. The second round of the Swimming Pool Support Fund (capital) was launched in September 2023 and Stafford Leisure Centre has been successful in receiving funding for measures to reduce energy costs and carbon output. Installation of Solar PV will be completed by the end of March 2025. UKSPF funding has enabled Stone Leisure Centre to have Solar PV installed, with the same timeframe for installation.</p>

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

	<p>The Council’s waste and recycling collection contract (2018-2028) is considered to continue to offer an appropriate level of service and value for money. The Council has begun discussions with its provider around the 10-year (2028-2038) extension option allowed for by the current contract. Should these discussions prove unsuccessful the Council will return to the market and reprocure the service in full. Discussions are taking place with the Council’s waste collection contractor around the future requirement for the statutory introduction of weekly food waste collections from 2026 for all domestic properties across the borough. This will also require the procurement of containers for the collection and storage of food waste from all domestic dwellings including communal properties. The Council has received the capital from central government for the purchase of the containers and towards the cost of the vehicles, but along with all other councils, it is awaiting details of the 2-3-year revenue settlement to be offered by them. The Council is also seeking confirmation whether it would be allowed to introduce its food waste collections from 2028, as part of its contract renewal or possible reprocurement, as it may be more beneficial to do so. This will avoid the inevitable rush to market for containers and vehicles, as is expected across the industry, when settle details are finally released.</p> <p>Once details of the settlement have been received and the Council has confirmed its start date, it will be able to move forward with the procurement of the containers and instruct its contractor to mobilise the new service provision.</p>
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## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ref No:	<b>C6</b>
Risk Name:	<b>Organisational Resilience Risk</b>
Risk Description:	<b>Reduced Organisational resilience may lead to reduced resources to support Council's service delivery and transformation.</b>
Risk Owner:	Chief Executive
Portfolio:	Resources
Gross Risk Scout (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 3 Impact: 5 Total Score: 15- RED
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 3 Impact: 3 Total Score 9- Amber</b>
Overall Progress Summary:	Capacity is an ongoing issue across a range of services due to vacancies and problems in recruiting new staff. A review of corporate priorities and work projects has recently been completed to manage workload within existing resources.

## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ref No:	<b>C7</b>
Risk Name:	<b>Cyber Attack Risk</b>
Risk Description:	<b>Failure to repel or recover from cyber-attack including targeted ransomware, malware and Distributed Denial of Service attacks</b>
Risk Owner:	Head of Transformation and Assurance
Portfolio:	Resources
Gross Risk Scout (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 5 Total Score: 20 - RED
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 3 Impact: 3 Total Score 9 - AMBER</b>
Overall Progress Summary:	<p>Cyber attacks are a global issue, and the operating environment means that new risks and challenges are always developing, and attacks are becoming more sophisticated.</p> <p>The Technology Team has achieved Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation for 2024; this is a government-backed, industry-supported scheme to help organisations protect themselves against common online threats. About Cyber Essentials - NCSC.GOV.UK. The accreditation is renewed annually</p> <p>The infrastructure hardware refresh is to be completed in 2024 providing a modern up to date infrastructure with enhanced security features.</p> <p>Quarterly internal vulnerability scans are performed by the IT Security officer producing an action plan to remove or mitigate any risks found.</p> <p>A new Cyber Security training program has been put in place for all staff</p>

## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ref No:	<b>2024-01</b>
Risk Name:	<b>Governance Risk</b>
Risk Description:	<b>If the recommendations from the External Auditor's VFM report are not implemented it would lead to a failure in the Council's governance arrangements</b>
Risk Owner:	Deputy Chief Executive - Resources
Portfolio:	Resources
Gross Risk Score (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 4      Impact: 5      Total Score: 20 - RED
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	Likelihood: 3      Impact: 3      Total Score: 9 AMBER
Overall Progress Summary:	Progress is reported quarterly to the Cabinet and Audit and Accounts Committee. Progress is being made in delivering the actions set out in the VFM Improvement Plan, to address the External Audit recommendations. However, as at the end of Quarter 1, there has been some slippage.

## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

Ref No:	20024-02
Risk Name:	<b>Meeting Homelessness Statutory Duty</b>
Risk Description:	Demand on the Homelessness Service is at the highest level recorded with an increase in presentations of over 100% between 2021/22 and 2023/24. Most are approaching the service having been served notice from their private rented accommodation, or, having been asked to leave their home by friends or family. The ability to place households in settled accommodation is increasingly challenging with delivery of affordable housing lower than previous years and the private rented sector being largely unaffordable for those on benefits. Housing Plus owns 80% of the social stock in Stafford and void times are problematic, meaning people are having to stay in temporary accommodation longer as their property is not ready to occupy. There is an increasing number of people approaching the service with many complex needs. The Council is incurring significant temporary accommodation costs and may fail to deliver its statutory duty, in particular relating to families in B&B for less than 6 weeks. Sourcing off the street nightly accommodation remains a challenge and the Council's key provision is currently on the market for sale.
Risk Owner:	Head of Wellbeing
Portfolio:	Communities
Gross Risk Score (Without Controls in Place)	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 3 Total Score: 12 RED
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 4 Impact: 3 Total Score: 12 RED</b>
Overall Progress Summary:	<p>Good quality data gives a clear understanding of the challenges facing the service.</p> <p>The increase in the local housing allowance to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on 01 April 2024 may enable some more placements into the private rented sector.</p> <p>The Renters Reform Bill is still in Parliament but in the meantime, eviction from the private rented sector remains the principal cause of homelessness.</p> <p>Out of area placements are increasingly challenging to secure and, there is no direct access accommodation in Stafford Borough. Grant arrangements are in place for limited local accommodation provision with work progressing to consider alternative options and long-term funding arrangements.</p>

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

	<p>Constructive discussions are ongoing with partner agencies to address the high level of support needs seen by many of the households presenting to the service. This needs to translate into joint commissioning of accommodation or, contributions towards support provision within accommodation.</p> <p>Positive work continues with Registered Providers to ensure access to social housing for those presenting to the service. In 23/24 most homeless applications ended with an offer of either social housing or supported housing.</p> <p>Forward projections of new affordable housing are lower than previously delivered. When the new Local Plan is in place, it is anticipated there will be increased opportunities for delivery.</p> <p>Work ongoing to ensure correct housing benefit levels to minimise risk to the General Fund.</p>
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## STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024

<b>Ref No:</b>	<b>2024-03</b>
<b>Risk Name:</b>	<b>Town centre regeneration projects</b>
<b>Risk Description:</b>	There is a risk that the high profile large regeneration projects may not deliver as anticipated, to time or to budget, leading to reputational risks to the Council and creating financial risks that impact on the Council's financial position and could impact on service delivery.
<b>Risk Owner(s):</b>	Deputy Chief Executive - Place Head of Economic Development and Planning
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Economic Development and Planning
<b>Gross Risk Score (Without Controls in Place)</b>	Likelihood: 4 Impact: 5 Total Score: 20
<b>Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)</b>	<b>Likelihood: 3      Impact: 5      Total Score : 15</b>
<b>Overall Progress Summary:</b>	The Council is actively seeking to mitigate the risks associated with the delivery of the regeneration schemes by establishing robust programme/project management arrangements, documenting risks and identifying appropriate mitigation measures, ensuring that contracts are pro-actively managed, and budgets are monitored frequently with corrective action taken where budget issues arise.

**Agenda Item 4(b)vii****Revenues and Benefits Collection Report - Quarter 2**

<b>Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	5 December 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 half of the financial year.
- The collection of Business Rates during the half of the financial year.
- The recovery of overpaid Housing Benefit during the first half of the 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**

- 3.3 Efficient collection of the Council's revenues is of major importance to the funding of Council services and those provided by our preceptors.
- 3.4 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 2024/2025 year amounts to £105.3M of which some **56.0%** was collected by the end of September. This is the same as last year's performance in the same period (56.0%).
- 4.2 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £55.9M of which some **59.1%** was collected by the end of September, showing a decrease on the previous year (60.4%).

## **5 Relationship to Corporate Priorities**

- 5.1 Not applicable

## **6 Report Detail**

- 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 £105.3M and we have collected 56.0% of this within the first half of the year. This is the same as last year's performance, though is slightly lower than pre-pandemic levels (56.7% 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, Individual's Voluntary Arrangements exist to protect debtors suffering hardship, to attempt to 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 1 Irrecoverable council tax debt in the sum of £10,512.84 are listed in the **CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX** to this report.

### **Business Rates**

- 6.8 Business Rates due for the current year amounts to £55.9M of which some **59.1%** was collected by the end of September. This compares to 60.4% collected in the same period last year. There is no obvious single reason for this marginal reduction as recovery action has been taken against defaulters

in the usual way. Officer will work hard to try to reverse the dip, in the second half of the year.

- 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 5 irrecoverable business rate debt in the sum of £90,458.14 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 £231K being collected in the first half of the financial year.

- 6.17 There are no irrecoverable Benefit Overpayment debts included 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 off on this report total £10,512.84. This represents 0.01% 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 recommended.

### **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 recommended.

### **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

**9 Previous Consideration**

None

**10 Background Papers**

None

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**Ward Interest:** None

**Report Track:** Cabinet 5 December 2024 (Only)

**Key Decision:** No