

Staffordshire County Council

Connected Staffordshire

Strategic Plan 2018-2022: Update



Foreword

This document sets out Staffordshire County Council's strategic plan for 2018 to 2022. How we will inspire and support the 867,000 people living across the 1,000 square miles of our great county to prosper, achieve their full potential and enjoy life. At the midway point of delivering this strategy, and as we enter a new decade, we have paused, reflected and updated this strategy to emphasise additional work, for instance on climate change.

Staffordshire is home to historic and vibrant market towns, picturesque villages and stunning countryside. Our economy is strong and growing, from start-ups to world-renowned businesses, and is home to many of England's leading tourist attractions.

Over the last decade much has been achieved. More people are in work, young people are leaving school and college with better qualifications, people are living longer, and tell us they feel safer and happier than ever before.

We are proud of these achievements, the result of the hard work and dedication of families and communities, schools, parish councils, the voluntary sector, employers, the NHS, local government, police and many more. But the world around us is changing fast, our society continues to face big challenges, and there is so much more we want to do.

As the largest democratic body in Staffordshire we have an important role, to work with others and to give the people we serve every opportunity to improve their lives. This spirit of collaboration defines our approach as we work with people and communities to raise aspirations and take action on the things that matter to them.

We remain hugely ambitious for Staffordshire's future yet realistic about the challenges ahead. The uncertainty surrounding the UK economy, the health and wellbeing of our growing, ageing population, and reduced Government funding demand fresh thinking and new ways of working.

We will continue our track record of delivering results for the people of Staffordshire. The digital age we are living in presents the greatest opportunity to do this. As technology alters every aspect of how we live, work and learn, it presents boundless opportunities to transform public services around the needs of individual citizens. In everything we do, this means thinking community and digital first to help realise our ambitions.

We look forward with a sense of aspiration for Staffordshire, its people and the county council. Staffordshire has a bright future. This strategy details our priorities for the years ahead and explains how we will work with people, communities and others across our diverse county to deliver an even better Staffordshire for current and future generations.



A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'Philip Atkins'.

Philip Atkins OBE
Leader of the Council



A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'John Henderson'.

John Henderson CB
Chief Executive

Creating a Bright Future

As we focus on delivery up to 2022, we also need to think about our long-term aspirations for Staffordshire, its people and our environment. Our county is already a great place to live where most people enjoy life and good prospects. We want this to be the case for everyone.

The world and the way we live our lives is changing rapidly and in 15 years our county will be a very different place. While we cannot predict the future, we can imagine the kind of Staffordshire we want to help guide the things we and others do today, tomorrow and in the years ahead.

So, here is our vision for Staffordshire in 2035...

People will aspire to live in Staffordshire; from families looking for the very best schools and space to grow and thrive, to older people seeking a great quality of life.

Staffordshire is one of the safest places to grow up in the country. Schools are the top performing in the Midlands and among the best in the country, with excellent links to employers. Our highly rated colleges and universities offer courses that attract people of all ages to learn new skills throughout their careers so that they can adapt to changes in the workplace or the job market.

We are one of the greenest counties too, doing our bit to help reduce climate change. Through appropriate, low carbon and demand-driven development, Staffordshire offers attractive homes for all, from affordable starter homes helping graduates and young families on to the property ladder, to executive houses in sought after locations.

This development is matched by investment in road and rail connections, sustainable transport, and next generation digital

communications technology. Our transport links are world class and Staffordshire is now a truly Smart County with ultra-fast digital connections to the rest of the UK and the world.

By exploiting the arrival of HS2 the county town of Stafford has undergone a renaissance with a new station quarter teeming with business start-ups and homes, all under an hour away from London, Birmingham and Manchester.

The regeneration of Stafford and our town centres, and investment in infrastructure across the county has helped balance Staffordshire's economy over the last decade as part of a thriving Midlands. The Staffordshire economy is diverse, with more people in higher value, better paid jobs across a wide range of different sectors.

Strengths remain in advanced manufacturing thanks to excellent road and rail freight links. In other areas from agri-tech to software development, employers are attracted by Staffordshire's skilled workforce, its connectivity and affordable land and premises.

Digital health and social care services are joined up and help people take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. More specialist support in communities mean people are living at home in good health for longer. Demand on services has fallen due to pioneering schemes that inspire people to prepare and plan for later years and end of life.

The appeal of more and better jobs, leading schools, greener living, and the mix of housing has also rebalanced the age of Staffordshire's population, attracting a younger generation with more disposable income. The resulting growth in council tax and business rates, coupled with reduced demand for services, means public services have the funding they need to support our growing, ageing population.

In addition, the digital transformation of public services means technology is now used to provide residents with the right support, information and advice when they need it, and to ensure taxpayers' money is spent effectively.

Our Vision and Priorities



We have a clear vision for Staffordshire: a county where big ambitions, great connections and greener living give everyone the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy. And where the people of Staffordshire will:

- 1. Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth**
- 2. Be healthier and more independent for longer**
- 3. Feel safer, happier and more supported in their community**

This vision is fundamental. It reflects what matters most to local people. We all want to be happy, have a good job, live in good health and in a great environment, and do the things that we enjoy. People want much greater control over their own lives and to influence what they want and need from public organisations. Our role, with others, is to help create the conditions for people to flourish, achieve their potential and live in good health for as long as possible.

We are clear where we need to concentrate our efforts: the economy; infrastructure and homes; schools and lifelong further education; improving health and social care; preventing ill health through lifestyle choices; and transforming support for vulnerable children and families.

These things will not happen by themselves. Four principles will underpin the work we do: encouraging residents and communities to support themselves and one another; ensuring our workforce is ambitious for Staffordshire and makes a difference for our people; making the best use of technology and data; and thinking about climate change in all we do.

Everything we do is funded by local taxpayers so we need to ensure we deliver real value for money.

Our strategy is simple and summarised on the next page, but delivering it will be much more complicated. We are developing a detailed annual delivery plan that will be refreshed every year to set out exactly what we will do.

The Staffordshire Vision: A county where big ambitions, great connections and greener living give everyone the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes

Everyone in Staffordshire will:

- Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth
- Be healthier and independent for longer
- Feel safer, happier and more supported in their community

Priorities



Help Staffordshire's economy to grow and generate more good jobs



Invest in infrastructure for growing communities



Improve education and training so that lifelong learning offers everyone the opportunity to succeed



Inspire healthy, independent living



Support more families and children to look after themselves, stay safe and well

Principles



Encourage residents and communities to help themselves and one another



Our workforce will be ambitious for Staffordshire, and make a difference for our people



Be digital, using technology and data to connect, inform and support our citizens



Think climate change in all we do to limit our impact on the planet

Our Pledge: Deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means

Economic Growth



A successful, vibrant and balanced economy is the bedrock of a successful Staffordshire. Enabling people to get better paid jobs is the best way to raise living standards, while evidence shows that being in work also improves your physical and mental health, self-esteem and confidence.

A thriving economy is increasingly important to how we fund public services too. In future, council tax and business rates will be the only way that the police, fire service and local government will be funded. So, our aim is to grow the number of businesses and build homes in a planned and environmentally friendly way, with the right schools, health services and other infrastructure that growing communities need.

This will allow us to continue investing in our communities, to keep them safe, and to support the most vulnerable people in Staffordshire.

In the last eight years our economy has grown by £3bn to £16.5bn. More than 21,000 new jobs and 4,555 businesses have been created. Unemployment is low, at just 2% of the working age population.

Since 2014, the county council has delivered or been involved in economy boosting projects with a total value of £478million. Of this total, we have spent or will commit £82million of direct investment. This means that for every £1 invested by the county council an additional £15 is leveraged in from the private sector or from Government.

We should celebrate these achievements, but we can and must do more to boost productivity and incomes, reduce carbon emissions, and be a place where everyone can feel the benefit of the growing economy.

Our ambition is to be one of the strongest performing and sustainable shire economies in the UK, driven by high-value, high-tech industries while our existing sectors, such as advanced manufacturing, continue to innovate to increase productivity and competitiveness, and reduce their carbon footprints.

We will accelerate the delivery of schemes to make Staffordshire the best-connected place in the UK, through investment in road, rail and next-generation digital communications such as 5G and ultrafast broadband.

This will see the county become a place where people aspire to live, attracting business to locate and invest here thanks to our balance of housing, excellent schools, an attractive cultural and wellbeing offer, and an outstanding environment.

Our main priorities will be:

- **Place and Infrastructure** - we will invest to create the right mix of places that are attractive as a destination to live, work and visit, with good transport connections.
- **Sites and Premises** - we will both build and support others to build employment sites and business premises that support the growth of a more diverse and eco-friendly economy, and give residents access to higher paid jobs.
- **Skills and Employability** - we will ensure that Staffordshire has an outstanding skills system that helps people to learn new skills and improve their job prospects throughout their entire career. It will help residents make informed choices about the best way to learn, develop their career, re-train or increase their skills, and in doing so, will give employers the skilled and ambitious workforce they need to drive business success.
- **Innovation** - we will support and encourage innovation across our traditional industries to increase productivity, competitiveness and sustainability, and foster growth in new, higher-value and green sectors.
- **Business Development** - we will enable and inspire our residents to start and grow their own business and provide the best possible support to help them succeed. We will make it easy for business to launch, innovate and expand in Staffordshire and promote the county to national and international investors to encourage a thriving supply chain.
- **Inclusive Growth** - we will ensure no one in the county is left behind by supporting the creation of the right types of jobs in the right locations and ensuring people can learn the skills they need for those jobs.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - we will encourage employers to promote employee wellbeing and embed greater social value into their business and supply chains.

Infrastructure



Staffordshire's population and communities are growing. Across the county new housing developments are under construction. A proposal for a new garden settlement of around 10,000 homes in Stafford received Government support in 2019.

To create the right conditions for current and new residents to enjoy a great quality of life, this growth must be carefully planned and delivered alongside investment in local schools, transport, health services and entertainment. Development must also be sensitive to the character of existing communities, and environmentally friendly as we work towards a zero-carbon future.

Currently, levels of housebuilding in Staffordshire, in common with the rest of the UK, are not keeping up with the needs and demands of our people. Not enough new homes or the right variety of low or zero-carbon homes are being built, prices are continuing to rise faster than incomes and it is becoming increasingly difficult for young people to buy a home of their own.

This needs to change. We want Staffordshire to be a place where people aspire to live with the right mix of homes for all in great communities, from first-time buyers seeking affordable starter homes to executives seeking prestige properties in sought after locations, and homes that support older people to enjoy a good quality of life.

We want the county to have a range of accommodation so that Staffordshire people can buy or rent a good home whatever they earn. We also want to attract and retain skilled workers, including graduates, through the development of smaller affordable and larger family homes in areas where people want to live.

Our main priorities will be:

- **Strategic Infrastructure Plan** - to support the construction of more environmentally friendly homes. Importantly the plan will make sure new developments are sustainable, and supported by employment opportunities, high quality transport, green spaces, places to go out and excellent digital connections like superfast broadband.
- **Housing Offer** - consider how we influence and affect the housing market in Staffordshire to deliver the right homes for our current and future residents. Housing can support a vibrant local economy, for example through the development of live/work apartments in town centres.
- **Housing Delivery** - increase choice by encouraging and supporting self-build, bespoke modular build and more developments by smaller housebuilders to increase the range of low carbon housing types and designs, and speed up construction.

Education and Skills



Every Staffordshire child deserves the best possible education and to leave school or college with the learning and skills they need to succeed in further education or the workplace. A strong economy relies on a high performing education system to produce the workforce of the future, and people with the right skills, attitude and ambition to meet the needs of our employers or to start a business of their own.

The education landscape is changing nationally and locally. In Staffordshire there is a mix of institutions providing opportunities from early years through to adulthood, from individual childminders who may be caring for just a few children, to universities with 15,000 students.

We want to offer Staffordshire parents and their children high performing early years settings, schools and colleges to attend. We also want our highly rated colleges and universities to offer courses that attract people of all ages to learn new skills throughout their careers, so that they can adapt to changes in the workplace or the job market.

These aspirations can only be delivered through a shared moral purpose and responsibility across the education landscape in Staffordshire. To do that, the county council is working with early years settings, schools, colleges and universities so that they support each other to improve, excel and contribute to their communities.

Our main priorities will be:

- To hold headteachers and governors to account for improving results and to act on underperformance in schools through the development of an Education Improvement / Challenge Board.
- Giving additional support to the most vulnerable in our communities.
- Support the delivery of high-quality independent advice and guidance to help residents make good career choices throughout their life.
- Deliver high quality school place planning, support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and work to keep children safe from harm.

Health and Care



Improving the health and wellness of the whole population, with everyone taking some responsibility, is central to our ambitions for Staffordshire. It is not just about what happens when we are sick and need to see a doctor or go to the hospital, or need longer term care and support.

Staffordshire's population is growing and ageing, and by 2026 there will be nearly 11,000 more residents aged 85 and over. More people are spending their later years in poor health. This is placing a growing and unsustainable demand on our health and care services, with Staffordshire's public sector spending nearly £2 billion on health and care services each year. Much of this is down to our modern lifestyles, with 40% of poor health down to lifestyle choices, such as smoking, drinking too much alcohol, eating a poor diet or not doing enough exercise.

The county council and the NHS cannot keep spending more money on health and care services. We will quite simply run out of money. This means that people in Staffordshire will need to take more control of their own health and wellbeing through lifestyle choices that enable them to live a full and enjoyable life well into old age.

Public and private sector organisations can help by creating an environment that supports these choices and promoting a culture of physical and mental wellbeing whereby staying fit and healthy becomes the norm. Good health and wellbeing is essential, not a luxury, particularly for young people who are our future workforce, taxpayers and carers.

Good health improves our ability to attract businesses, jobs and income to the county too. We could save up to 137.3 million working days in the county every year through better health and wellbeing.

There will always be people in need of health and care services. We will continue to offer care and support to those people who really need it.

Our main priorities will be:

- That Staffordshire is a healthy place to live with an environment that promotes wellbeing for all.
- People can find simple, clear information and advice to enable them to take responsibility for their health and plan for their later years.
- Ensuring people can find support in the community to allow them to live independently in their own home.
- To offer support at times of crisis to help people maintain their independence.
- That people know what to expect from care services, who is eligible and who will pay.
- There are quality and affordable care services available to meet people's needs.

Children and Families



Most families in Staffordshire tell us they are happy, safe and enjoy life and evidence tells us that resilient and stable families will experience a better life.

Those who do need our help tell us they do not want to be in 'systems' or 'services'. They want to be supported by their friends, families and within their communities. If people are safe, this is what we want too.

If the day-to-day challenges some families experience can be supported in this way then their lives will be better and demand for public services will reduce, at a time when other demands, such as those for adult social care, are rising.

This will involve three separate but connected elements: quality statutory children's social care where teams provide appropriate support and challenge when it is required; quality services for all children and families; and a strong working relationship with the voluntary sector and community groups.

Our main priorities will be:

- Ensure that the support for families and children either nearing the point of, or in crisis, is effective and makes a positive difference in the lives of the children, young people, and their families.
- Using local intelligence, expertise and organisations to work flexibly in districts and communities, and keep children and families together wherever possible.
- Use all available resources to ensure that high quality provision exists in communities from universal to statutory services, helping to provide the foundations for a good quality of life.
- Ensure more families and communities in Staffordshire feel supported to manage challenges and take much greater control over their own health and wellbeing.
- Support and develop the Staffordshire workforce including volunteers to better meet the needs of our residents, ensuring people are happy, safe and well.

Principles

This plan sets out our ambitious agenda for Staffordshire and its people. To be successful, we need to constantly evolve with the changing world around us to ensure we can deliver the best possible outcomes for residents. We believe there are four key principles that underpin how we must work.



Workforce

Our 4,000 employees, many of whom are Staffordshire residents, make a positive difference for our county and our people every day. We want everyone who works at the county council to be ambitious for Staffordshire, courageous in their work and empowered to make a difference for our people.

As the council continues to change we want to create a great working environment and culture, that helps us to attract and keep talented people, to develop their skills and unleash their full potential. We are investing in learning and development, and new technology, to ensure our employees have the right skills and capabilities for today and for the future.

Get this right and we will have the highly skilled, motivated and innovative workforce we need to deliver our vision and outcomes for local people.



Communities

In our rapidly changing society people want more control over their lives and greater independence. When local people come together, they bring passion and commitment for the places they live in.

There are many examples of people and organisations providing support or activities in their community, with little or no involvement or funding from the county council or wider public sector.

When communities are involved in solving problems or meeting demand in their area, the solutions are often more enduring as the people involved have a personal interest or passion for making them work.

Drawing on the strengths of our people and communities and empowering them to act on the things that matter to them, rather than looking to the council, helps find lasting solutions to local problems. Where we do get involved, we will work with the right partners in that place to make the biggest impact.

Given the funding pressures on public services, the county council and others cannot do everything we used to do or would like to do.

We must inspire more people to help themselves and each other, so that we can deliver on our vision and priorities for the county and our people.



Digital

Technology and digital communications are changing every aspect of how we live our lives. The digital age presents an exciting opportunity to transform what we do and how we do it. In short the council needs to be like the internet: always on, controlled by the citizen, responsive, personalised and supporting personal responsibility.

We will work with public and private sector leaders to create a Smart Staffordshire, a county where data and technology connect and help people and business to flourish, and lead happy and successful lives.



Climate Change

In 2019 the county council declared a climate change emergency, recognizing the need for urgent action to protect our environment and reduce our impact on the planet. This is not a new agenda for us and over the last decade we have stopped sending waste to landfill, installed LED street lights, and reduced the number of buildings we use, to significantly reduce carbon emissions.

However, we must move further and faster, and work with communities, partners and businesses to move towards a low and ultimately zero carbon future in Staffordshire.

Deliver value for money for residents and businesses and live within our means

The county council receives and generates a range of different income to fund both our day-to-day activity and long-term investments. This includes council tax and business rates, Government grants and money from fees and charges.

To deliver on the aspirations in this plan, it is essential we have affordable and sustainable funding plans over the next four years. We need to manage demand in areas such as social care and seek new opportunities to increase our income. Our pledge to Staffordshire people is that we will spend their money wisely and well to extract maximum impact from every pound we spend, and always live within our means.

Council funding has changed significantly in recent years, with significantly less grant coming from Government. Since 2009 we have reduced our costs by £240million, by changing the way we work and support Staffordshire people and businesses.

However, the financial pressures ahead are far more significant than in the recent past. Government grant will continue to reduce as costs continue to rise. We will address this, deliver value for money and live within our means by focusing on six key strands.



Creating the right conditions for our economy to grow will increase Business Rates income



As we encourage housebuilding to meet growing demand, more homes will generate more Council Tax



Lobbying Government to secure greater funding and responsibility to act on the issues that matter most to Staffordshire people



Use technology and data, and work closer with communities to encourage more residents to help themselves and one another



Using council assets such as land, buildings or money held in reserve to generate income



Continuing to reduce costs by finding new and more efficient ways of working, for instance through greater use of technology

Notes

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Notes



Staffordshire County Council

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Our Vision 2018-2022: Update

