Leading for a Connected Staffordshire

Our vision for 2014–2018
Foreword

Welcome to Staffordshire County Council’s strategic plan for 2014 to 2018.

Staffordshire is a great place to live, work and invest where most people enjoy a good quality of life. Our county has a proud heritage and bright hopes for the future – well positioned at the heart of the West Midlands to create jobs, growth and prosperity for local people and to make a mark on the world stage.

Working in partnership, much has been achieved over the last four years – a better quality of life for local people, major programmes delivered to secure future growth and jobs as well as substantial changes to how we operate, ensuring we can continue to deliver better outcomes for Staffordshire people while managing the financial pressures we face.

Our previous strategic plan was developed three years ago, and much has changed during that time. We have therefore reviewed our strategy – building on the strong foundations of the last four years and setting out a clear vision for the future of Staffordshire and the role of the County Council in delivering that vision.

This vision matches our detailed understanding of what matters to residents and a belief that we can all work better together, in a more affordable way, to improve lives.

Whilst we know there will be challenges ahead and tough decisions to be made, there are also many exciting opportunities. Working with partners, communities, families and individuals, we can deliver a better Staffordshire for current and future generations.

Philip Atkins,
Leader of Staffordshire County Council
Introduction

Over the last 20 years there has been a major change in the way people live their lives. Technology has transformed how people work, play and connect, employment patterns have fundamentally changed, family structures are more varied and complex, and we have more choices about how we spend our time and money. We live in a global economy with more connections than ever before to friends, family, employers and information.

Today, we all want greater choice and control of our own lives. People’s expectations have changed and we are no longer happy to receive what the state says is best. This has profound implications for all public services. Whilst this means that we have to change, we must also maintain our role of protecting the vulnerable in our communities and helping those who need it most. Getting the balance right means looking carefully at how we use our resources to make sure we can target our support where it is most needed.

The worst global recession since the 1930s has resulted in a prolonged period of austerity that will continue for many years to come. Whilst the economy is recovering, the message is clear - doing more with less is the new normal. This has led to significant questions about what the state can afford to do in the future, particularly as demand continues to grow and needs become more complex.

Staffordshire County Council’s response to this new environment is clear. We need to provide strong leadership alongside our partners to transform what we do and focus on what matters most to local people.

We can rightly be proud of our achievements over the last four years. Working together as one Staffordshire we have created new jobs and better opportunities for our workforce. We have improved standards of education and training, and continued to reduce levels of crime and disorder.

At the same time, we have made major changes to the council and the way we operate. We have transformed ourselves into an organisation focused on achieving positive outcomes for ‘people’ and ‘place’, with a much stronger focus on what matters to local people, and a transformation in the way that we commission and secure better outcomes for local people. Over the last five years, we have successfully made £130m of savings and frozen council tax, whilst continuing to invest in our economy and achieve better value for money for the taxpayer.

Whilst we should celebrate our successes and achievements, we also know there is much more to do.
Our New Strategy – 2014 to 2018

With our strong track record of delivery we should be confident about our ability to deliver in the future. The economic situation remains tough and we are now in a period of sustained, if slow recovery. However, the financial pressures facing local government - and all parts of the public sector - will continue for many years to come. More importantly, the needs and wants of communities, families and individuals continue to change.

We have listened to what local people tell us. We are not always the best placed to be the provider of what local people or businesses need - nor do we have a monopoly on good ideas or solutions for the issues faced by our communities. This is why we are redoubling our efforts to work with residents, voluntary groups, partners and the private sector to find new and different ways to improve lives through building stronger communities. Our approach is about providing the connections and creating the right conditions for Staffordshire people to flourish and prosper, without state interference.

We firmly believe this is both the right thing to do and what local people want us to do. However, we also know that the current approach to services and delivery is not affordable; nor is it delivering the outcomes that people want.

In short, the status quo is not an option.
As a democratically accountable organisation we need to provide strong leadership to all partners from across the public, private and voluntary sector and work effectively with local communities to deliver a better quality of life for all. While we need to fundamentally review what we do, our role as community leader is enduring and will be significantly strengthened in the future.

The County Council and its partners, including national government, spend over £7.5bn of public money in Staffordshire every year. We all have a duty to make sure this money is spent as wisely and effectively as possible. Significant savings need to be made, - but there is still considerable capacity and resources that can make a difference to people’s lives.

In August 2013, the County Council agreed a new vision and three interconnected priority outcomes providing a simple and clear description of what we will focus on over the next four years:

**Vision**

*A connected Staffordshire, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.*

**Our three priority outcomes**

The people of Staffordshire will:

- Be able to access more good jobs and feel the benefits of economic growth
- Be healthier and more independent
- Feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community.

Our priority outcomes are clearly interlinked. Making a real difference against these outcomes will require stronger and closer working connections to allow individuals, families and communities to flourish. All partners will need to work together, coordinating their activities and making the best use of their resources to offer the best for Staffordshire people.
Delivering the vision will require strong leadership from elected members, hard work from all staff, stronger partnership working and a new relationship with individuals, families and their communities. The council has agreed a set of values and behaviours that will guide how we will think and work together on a day-to-day basis to help deliver the vision.

### Values

- Put the people of Staffordshire first
- Value each other
- Embrace doing things differently
- Do the right things

### Behaviours

- Insightful thinking
- Driving for performance and results
- Understanding the wider perspective
- Communicating compellingly
- Seeking out improvement and innovation
- Leading self and others

To deliver the vision, we need to continue to fundamentally review everything we do, how we do it and develop new and different ways of achieving outcomes with less resources. We need to retain what has worked well over the last four years, but challenge ourselves hard to develop new ways of working and delivering to respond to the challenges and opportunities ahead of us.

Our new approach is captured in a series of operating principles that will guide our thinking and choices over the next four years. A new philosophy that will redefine the role of the County Council and how we are organised to deliver:
Our vision for Staffordshire

Operating Principles

Evolve our relationship with residents

- Think individual, families and communities first, state last, promoting personal responsibility, resilience and independence in all our actions.

- Give a stronger voice and more clout to the people of Staffordshire on the issues that matter to them, not just those issues we have a statutory responsibility to deliver.

- Encourage and support all Elected Members to be true community leaders, informing and influencing at a local and county level to create great places to live.

- Collaborate with residents and communities to identify the best long-term solutions to problems, whether that’s from within the community itself or from the voluntary, private or public sector.

One Staffordshire:

- Focus on leading and influencing for the good of Staffordshire - it doesn't matter who does what as long as it gets done.

- Integrate insight, creative thinking and planning with partners inside and outside Staffordshire as appropriate.

- Integrate back office, delivery and governance with partners inside and outside Staffordshire as appropriate.

Staffordshire County Council will:

- Promote Staffordshire as the place to invest, live, learn and visit.

- Be the passionate advocate for Staffordshire locally, nationally and internationally, seeking to deal with only the things that matter to our residents.

How we work:

- Get more joined up, locally and corporately, so we can work with residents, communities and partners to meet local needs more effectively.

- Get our financial systems, governance processes and commissioning support aligned to enable delivery of our ambitions.
Everyone associated with the council (employees, Members, providers etc.) will go out of their way to understand what local people need, put their needs at the centre of what we do and find new and better ways to improve their lives.

The principles will be applied to everything we do, providing a framework to challenge, test and fundamentally review. Tough decisions must be made over the next four years and we will be open and transparent about the basis of our choices and actions. At the core of this is a commitment to have an open and honest dialogue with residents of Staffordshire, listening, consulting and engaging with them and other stakeholders.

To achieve this, elected members will lead the delivery of this strategy, shaping the debate and discussions with local people, and presenting the case for the decisions we need to make in the future.

**Leading For Better Outcomes**

We understand that we need to rethink our relationship with communities, families and individuals. We need to make sure we acutely understand what people want and need, and be guided by them about how we work together to develop shared solutions to long-standing issues. We need to find new ways of unlocking the capacity that sits within our communities and families to help deliver a better and more sustainable future, and we need to do this within the context of being part of a global society.

We need to do the right thing by stepping away when the County Council is not needed and thinking innovatively about how to fill gaps to avoid creating dependency or detracting from existing community capacity.

The County Council’s vision and strategic plan can only be achieved by working with others from the public, private and voluntary sector, not just within Staffordshire but across regional and national boundaries as well.

Securing economic growth, driving up educational attainment and skills, tackling health inequalities and reducing crime are difficult issues that defy ‘quick fixes’ and are beyond the control of a single agency. Only by working together will we deliver a better quality of life for the people of Staffordshire and respond to the financial pressures facing all partners.

We start from a good position; partnership working in Staffordshire is strong and improving all
Our vision for Staffordshire

the time. The improvements around jobs, health, education and crime have only happened because of the continued commitment and hard work of all partners. Our challenge now is to build on the excellent foundations of recent years and redouble our efforts.

Supporting the continued development of the Local Enterprise Partnership, Education Trust, Health and Wellbeing Board and Police and Crime Commissioner will be important. All partners need to challenge what we do to make sure we have strong and ambitious strategies supported by sound delivery plans.

All partners are united about what we need to do to deliver a better quality of life for local people:

- Create economic growth and jobs that benefit local businesses and people
- Improve health and wellbeing and support people to become more independent
- Reduce crime, the fear of crime and make people feel safer in their communities.

Firm plans are in place and being delivered by all partners to achieve these shared outcomes but we need to review and strengthen our approach to make sure we can continue to deliver in the future. Success will only come through working with partners, residents, businesses and others to share our thinking and resources and develop new and different solutions to the challenges and opportunities facing Staffordshire. These are not just challenges for our county but are global issues requiring new ways of working and different solutions. Staffordshire will be at the forefront of this thinking.

Looking to the Future

Whilst this strategic plan rightly focuses on what will we do over the next four years, we need to think about the long-term future of Staffordshire. Modern life continues to change and this will only accelerate in the future. Whilst no-one can predict with complete certainty what life will be like in the future, we have a duty with our partners to prepare as best we can for future generations. Delivering this strategy will lay the foundations for a bright future for Staffordshire and its residents. We want people to be happy, prosperous, independent, safe and connected.

In short, our long-term vision for the future is that by 2033, Staffordshire:

- Is a place where individuals and families take responsibility for their own lives, happiness and futures
- Is a place where families inspire and support each other to fulfil their potential
• Is a place where communities support each other and have responsibility for making decisions

• Is a place where there is a clear understanding that the state is only there to provide support as a last line of defence

• Has a world-class, dynamic economy with a highly skilled workforce

• Is the ‘go to’ location for business, both nationally and internationally

• Has a reputation as an area for innovation, ambition and forward thinking

• Is a great place to live, seen as number one in the UK.

There will be challenges along the way, particularly as we move away from traditional building-based delivery, but we will be bold and ambitious about the future of our county and work together to deliver an even better place to live for current and future generations.

Conclusions

Staffordshire is already a great place to live, work and invest and there is much that we should rightly be proud of. We will be ambitious for our county and bring more investment and more good jobs for local people. This is how we will deliver a better quality of life for all.

We can only do this by working with other partners and local people. This strategy sets out a clear vision for the kind of Staffordshire we want to see in the future and what we will do as the County Council, together with partners, to deliver that vision.
If you would like this information in large print, Braille, audio tape/disc, British Sign Language or any other language, please ring 0300 111 8000