

Stafford Borough Council

Corporate Business Plan

2018 - 2021

A prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities







Foreword

Growth, wellbeing and financial sustainability are the council's key objectives over the next three years.

Our borough is growing. Recent figures show around **£2 billion** has been invested in, or planned for, the area. More than **three thousand jobs** have been created and **hundreds of new homes** have been built each year.

There has been a **£100 million retail investment** in Stafford town and a major expansion of the Beacon Barracks.

This level of growth is set to continue with work already underway for:

£10 million
Council funded leisure scheme for Stone

£2.5 million
Heritage project for the restoration of Stafford's award-winning Victoria Park

£83 million
Business park is underway at Meaford

£500 million
Masterplan for the station gateway for new homes, businesses and leisure.

Our robust Local Plan (which specifies the appropriate location and type of development for the borough) encourages construction and house building, which has nearly doubled in the last couple of years. It has also protected the area's rural communities and natural environment while allowing them to be vibrant

places where business can thrive. This growth enables the Council to protect services and invest more in those areas that our residents and businesses tell us are important to them.

We work closely with our communities to encourage families and individuals to build strong, resilient, self-reliant communities with real influence on local decisions, able to do more for themselves.

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

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

Utilising our assets in more efficient ways

This allows the Council to generate much needed resources delivering important frontline services. For example our Civic Centre has become a central hub for public services which has been achieved by utilising our space more effectively.

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

Councillor Patrick Farrington
Leader of the Council



Victoria Park, Stafford.



New Riverside retail development.

Introduction

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

Stafford Borough has strong partnership links with private, public and voluntary sector organisations and has delivered some great outcomes because of this.

Our business plan details a shared vision of economic growth and community wellbeing.

We will capitalise on existing partnerships with health providers, community safety and the voluntary sector, and also forge new economic partnerships to deliver the outcomes outlined in this plan.

Our Vision

A prosperous and attractive borough with strong communities.

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

- 1 To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs.
 - 2 To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing.
 - 3 To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives.
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New cinema under construction.



High speed trains will stop at Stafford station.

Making HS2 Work for Stafford Borough

In July 2017, the Secretary of State deposited in Parliament the Hybrid Bill for Phase 2a of the HS2 railway.

This is another step towards creating a fast route from the West Midlands to Crewe, Stafford, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester (*see map on back cover*).

If what is proposed as part of the HS2 project goes ahead, as a borough we should capitalise on the economic opportunities this could bring. At the same time we will continue to work to mitigate any disruption this will have on our communities while helping to make sure that those most affected are properly compensated.

HS2 trains stopping at Stafford station will mean that the town is only 50 minutes from London, 20 minutes from Birmingham and 30 minutes from Manchester. Local people will be able to live and work in Stafford and do business in our capital city and enjoy a great quality of life. We have undertaken master-planning to show how the land adjacent to Stafford station could be developed to provide 28 hectares in a prime location to develop a new hotel, an office quarter, urban style live/work housing and high quality public spaces for people to meet and enjoy. Stafford Station Gateway is within easy walking distance of Victoria Park and the town centre and its development would boost town centre businesses. We will continue to identify and develop new opportunities to maximise the benefits of HS2 for the borough.



Proposals for Stafford Gateway.



Risual.



Woolcool.

Corporate Business Objective 1

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

Growing a healthy economy

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

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

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

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



Profile

Stafford Borough is Staffordshire's largest district

It covers an area of approximately **230 square miles**. The population is currently **131,000** and this figure is expected to increase to approximately **142,900** by 2033.

There are around **58,000 households** in the borough which are mostly owner-occupied. The average price of a house in Stafford Borough is **£184,156***.

Visitors generate more than **£200 million** for the local economy with the sector employing around **4,000 people**.

HS2 will be a significant development within the Borough and we are proud to be one of the main partners on the Constellation economic development partnership which aims to deliver 100,000 new homes and 120,000 new jobs by 2040 as a result of HS2 national infrastructure. The partnership spans two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and seven Local Authorities (Stafford Borough Council, Staffordshire County Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, Cheshire East Council, Cheshire West and Chester Council.

*ONS median price for the Borough as a whole.



The new planned Stone Leisure Centre will be built in 2018.

The Borough has great transport links and is a pivotal location in the West Midlands region. Stafford as a hub station will boost growth for the area.

To support the level of growth that is happening we are working with partners to develop the Stafford Western Access Route. This will improve access by road to the town centre and attract additional employment and housing in the west of Stafford.

Over the next three years we will:

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

Improving the quality of life for our residents by design

We want to build high quality developments that provide attractive, well connected places for local people to live and work. We will create cohesive communities that promote vibrancy, encourage

healthy living and support community engagement and social capital. The borough has a lot of green open space which is essential to individual wellbeing. We want to encourage developers to include habitats in their plans (including wildlife corridors) that are beneficial for wildlife and communities.

Good design of settlements and individual buildings can improve the health, wellbeing and resilience of the general public, encouraging physical activity and improving mental health. We will make significant investments in leisure and recreation facilities in Stone and enhance our award-winning Victoria Park over the next three years.

Good design is essential if we are to produce attractive, high-quality, sustainable places.

This type of innovative design can be seen in St Georges Parkway, the expansion of Beacon Barracks, Redhill Business Park and the new Waterfront Riverside development.

Over the next three years we will:

- › Encourage all new development and design to achieve the highest standard
- › Identify the appropriate sites for future development for housing and employment
- › Include sufficient open space in plans for new developments
- › Provide new leisure and recreation facilities



Clean Streets.



Planned £2.5million investment in Victoria Park.

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.

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

Stafford Borough has a rich history and culture. A good range of leisure and cultural facilities help to bring local people together to enjoy plays, concerts and films. We want to create safe and attractive environments which our residents use, creating a strong and positive sense of communal identity.

Over the next three years we will:

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

We proactively work with our 'Friends of' groups to maintain our local nature reserves and parks. Our new Community Awards recognise the contribution that individuals have made to improve their communities

and surrounding areas. We want to ensure that these areas are kept clean and are protected from fly tipping, litter, dog fouling and pests that are harmful to public health.

Residents of Stafford Borough generally live longer and are happy with their local area as a place to live compared to the overall figure for the county.

The general health of our population is important to the future prosperity of the borough. Both males and females in Stafford live for significantly longer in good health compared to the national average.

The population is ageing, with the number of people above the age of 65 in our borough expected to increase by up to 17,500 people by 2033. The ethnicity of the population is approximately 94% White British, which is comparable to the population of Staffordshire.

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

Up to 23% of the population are smokers and up to 22% drink beyond recommended limits. We will work with partners to support our residents to make healthy lifestyle choices.

We want to change this by actively looking for opportunities to promote the health of local people in all of the services we provide.



Three quarters of runners in the Stafford 10k said that they would increase their regular physical activity levels following their decision to enter.

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

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

Supporting vibrant town centres in Stafford and Stone

Over the next three years we will:

- › Encourage and support our residents to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and lifestyle
- › Work with our partners to maintain the borough as a safe place
- › Ensure that businesses operating in the Borough comply with health and safety and food hygiene legislation
- › Work towards everyone having access to safe and suitable accommodation
- › Provide support so that more people participate in healthy lifestyle choices





Stone.



Grounds maintenance.

Corporate Business Objective 3

To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives.

The funding to local authorities through the Revenue Support Grant and other budgets has been substantially reduced in recent years and will be completely phased out for the financial year 2019/20.

From this date the Council will be dependent on the monies it raises from council tax, its share of business rates and income generated from a limited number of services.

The council will work to protect front-line services by reducing the cost of the services we provide by cutting waste and looking for different ways to provide them. Examples of these we have already implemented include the provision of Leisure and Culture Services in partnership with a not for profit trust, re tendering the refuse collection service and sharing services with other authorities. We also share the Civic Centre with other organisations to reduce our costs, improve partnership working and make access to services easier for local people.

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

To be a fit for purpose self-sustaining organisation

The Council approved its 2019/20 medium term plan in February 2017. The Plan was set against a balanced budget in 2017/18 but facing shortfalls in 2018/19 and 2019/20 because of a change in Government funding. These changes will see

resources diminish by £1.4 million in 2018/19 and £1.7 million in 2019/20 and the Council agreed its efficiency plan in November 2016 to address these shortfalls. The Council has now delivered this efficiency plan to provide a balanced budget through to 2020/21.

By 2020/21 it is forecast that the Council will have reduced its cost base and increased its resources by nearly £2.9 million, enabling cost pressures to be offset and the dependency on New Homes Bonus reduced.

How we will deliver £2.9 million of savings



£1.5m > Changes to Service Delivery

£0.83m > Economic and Housing Growth

£0.55m > Income Generation



Major Chinese investment from the New Beacon Group for an international school, specialised University and Innovation Centre for graduate-level entrepreneurship and start-up companies to make the most of the growing business opportunities in the UK and overseas.

We will continue to explore other avenues for income generation such as commercial opportunities and maximising our assets including the Civic Centre, in order to reduce the dependency on New Homes Bonus in particular. In addition, we need to be as efficient and effective as possible and this will mean that as an authority we will need to look at our own ways of working.

Stafford Borough Council has a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer. How people contact us (be that via telephone, online, in person or via other means) is a critical part of public service provision. We will improve the ways in which our customers can contact us.

Over the next three years we will:

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



“The Borough Council worked in partnership with us to develop a new, purpose built refuge - ForWard House which provides high quality accommodation and support for vulnerable families fleeing domestic violence.

This innovative investment has already led to very positive outcomes for those families using the refuge, and is a testament to the Borough Council's willingness to respond to local needs and invest in its population creatively.”

Dickie James,
Chief Executive, Staffordshire Women's Aid

Monitoring and Review

This Corporate Business Plan will run for a period of three years from 2018 - 2021 performance managed by elected members of the Council's Cabinet and the Scrutiny Committees. The delivery plan will be subject to an annual review to determine what progress is being made against each of the business objectives.

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

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

We will be open and transparent in how we work and conduct consultation and engagement activities for all of our major projects so that our residents are able to have their say and be part of the process.

This will be evidenced through the completion of Community Impact Assessments which we will publish on our website.



HS2 will provide increased connectivity for Stafford.

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