

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING

Minutes

MONDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor K Mills (Chair)

Councillors M Durose, M Haines, K Hoptroff, B Hughes, M Johnson,
J Porter, R Ward and L Whitehouse

IN ATTENDANCE: C Atkins, C Beswick, B Cawley, M Gledhill, L Malyon,
A Parkers, P Roberts, M Spooner, L Swindlehurst,
M Swindlehurst and N Yates.

APOLOGIES: Councillors J Jones, J Kempster, J Salt, D Shaw and C Smith

16 **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS, IF ANY.**

The following substitutions were made:

- Councillor Parkes for Councillor Smith
- Councillor Malyon for Councillor Jones
- Councillor Spooner for Councillor Salt
- Councillor Beswick for Councillor Shaw

17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

Agenda No.	Member Declaring Interest	Nature of Interest
Agenda item 5 – Report of the Police, Fire and Crime Panel	Councillor Porter	Other Interest - Employed by Staffordshire Police
Agenda item 9 – Citizens Advice Bureau Annual Update	Councillor Hoptroff	Other Interest – Trustee of Leek CAB

18 **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING.**

DECIDED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2023, be approved and signed by the Chair.

19 **TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME PANEL.**

DECIDED:

The Panel noted the minutes of the meeting of the Police, Fire and Crime held on 3 July 2023.

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20 URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS (24 HOURS NOTICE TO BE PROVIDED TO THE CHAIRMAN).

There were none.

21 WORK PROGRAMME.

An item on community engagement and dog fouling was suggested for inclusion and members were advised this was noted and would be scored by the PAPER Analysis.

Members also discussed the frequency of updates from Your Housing Group and the benefits of the informal meetings held by the organisation.

DECIDED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

22 QUESTIONS TO PORTFOLIO HOLDERS.

None had been received.

23 CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU ANNUAL UPDATE. (PRESENTATION)

Representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau provided a presentation to the Panel which covered the following topics:

- An overview of Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke-on-Trent
- Types of services provided
- Statistical information
- Access to services
- The difference the organisation makes and reasons the advice matters
- Case study
- Volunteering information
- Thank you for the support received by the Council

Members thanked the representatives for the service delivered by the organisation in the Moorlands.

In response to a query in relation to the Cheadle Office, the Panel was informed that advice was still provided from the Library and only the administrative element had moved location.

The various types of specialist advice, training sessions, supervisory support and staff counselling was described to the Panel. A number of staff had also received mental health first aid training and attended suicide awareness courses.

There was still a high demand for advice in relation to energy and the cost of living. The Bureau had seen an increase in advice for mortgage and rents from married couples which were both working but still experienced difficulties covering these costs.

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Discussion took place around the difficulties to recruit volunteers, university placements, re-introduction of drop-in appointments and the possibility of a mobile unit.

In response to a query in relation to bailiffs and vulnerable clients, members were reassured that most bailiffs operated in-line with the code of conduct and the CAB were also involved with influencing and improvement of national policies and procedures.

A site visit to the CAB offices was offered to members should they wish to see how the service operated on a day-to-day basis.

24 **PLAN FOR NATURE**

Councillor Yates – Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Environment, introduced a report on the Plan for Nature. This was accompanied by a presentation given by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

The Plan for Nature was an opportunity to strategically enhance the natural capital and ecosystem services in Staffordshire Moorlands. Without a strategic, managed approach, good projects could happen, but with limited ability to make the most of opportunities and deliver qualitative, structured outcomes.

The Council developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy in 2018 to support development of the Local Plan. The strategy aimed to provide strategically planned networks designed to link existing (and proposed) green spaces with green corridors running through towns, villages and rural areas. The maintenance, enhancement and extension of these networks could deliver multi-functional benefits for local communities, businesses, visitors and the environment. However, although it was a helpful and detailed document, the strategy lacked a clear delivery mechanism. The Plan for Nature aimed to fill this gap by translating the Green Infrastructure Strategy into distinct actions, projects and workstreams to embed in operations and support with adoption through communities and other local stakeholders.

The Plan for Nature was intended to guide the actions that need to be taken to halt and reverse the decline of the natural world across the district by 2050. Data has been drawn together on the current state of nature within the district and offered recommendations on how and where conservation efforts should be prioritised. It contained targets and a timescale for different actions and interventions to ensure the authority could track and measure its progress on an annual basis. Key stakeholders had been involved in the development of the plan, and would also play a vital role in delivering and monitoring its implementation.

The projects and programmes initiated through the plan would support the new Local Authority duties as set out in the Environment Act 2021. These included reporting of biodiversity plans and initiating and recording Biodiversity Net Gain requirements linked to planning applications.

The Biodiversity Net Gain duty places a requirement on certain developments to improve biodiversity by 10% compared to prior to the development. This could be on site or off site but must be managed and monitored for 30 years. Mechanisms to insure compliance will need to be developed.

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The Plan for Nature suggested the following overarching vision for the district:

“In 2050 the Staffordshire Moorlands will be a district where nature has recovered to sustainable levels. Formerly declining habitats and species have been restored; both town and countryside are resilient to climate change, and everyone can access and engage with nature on their doorsteps.”

The presentation included the following subject area:-

- Reason for a Plan for Nature?
- Our vision
- Overview of the Plan for Nature
- Targets
- Next steps

Members commented that they were pleased the Council had a plan and ambitious targets. Discussion took place around biodiversity net gain, use of nature recovery network mapping, expansion of volunteer friends groups, recovery of species and proactive planning policies.

SWT were praised for the excellent work undertaken by the organisation. Members highlighted the importance of engaging with local communities and land owners and to track and measure progress against targets.

DECIDED:

That Panel recommended that Cabinet:

- 1) Adopted the Plan for Nature; and
- 2) Introduced appropriate governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

_____Chairman_____Date