

# **STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **COUNCIL MEETING**

### **Minutes**

**WEDNESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2024**

PRESENT: Councillor I Plant (Chair)

Councillors J Aberley, C Atkins, P Barks, G Bentley, C Beswick, C Brady, B Cawley, A Church, J Cox, M Deaville, M Durose, B Emery, E Fallows, K Flunder, J Garvey, M Gledhill, M Haines, I Herdman, T Holmes, K Hoptroff, B Hughes, P Hughes, A Hulme, C Jebb, M Johnson, J Jones, J Kempster, L Malyon, K Mills, V O'Shea, A Parkes, D Pascall, J Porter, D Price, D Proudlove, P Roberts, J Salt, M Spooner, L Swindlehurst, M Swindlehurst, G Taylor, E Wain, R Ward, L Whitehouse, P Wilkinson, C Wood, M Worthington and N Yates

APOLOGIES: Councillors C Boone, C Edwards, A Hart, N Moulton, O Pointon, D Shaw and C Smith

16 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 15 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations were made:-

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Members Declaring Interest</b>	<b>Nature of Interest</b>
Item 13.4 – Notice of Motion relating to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service	Cllr. Salt Cllrs. Wood and Bentley Cllr. Deaville	Husband draws salary from SFRS In receipt of Service Pension Previous Chair of the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Item 13.3 Notice of Motion relating to Leek Minor Injuries Unit	Cllr. Porter	Employed by emergency service

18 **CHAIRMAN'S OR LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE, IF ANY.**

The Chairman confirmed that he had attended 80 engagements during the year so far and thanked members for attending his charity curry night. The charity wedding fayre would take place on 20 October 2024.

The Leader of the Council welcomed two new officers to the Council, Anna Eastgate, Executive Director (Community Services) and Adrian Marklew, Principal Policy Officer (Communications). The Leader also updated the Council on developments relating to devolution which did not include re-organisation of local government in Staffordshire, the purchase of Cheadle Market and the need to retain Leek Minor Injuries Unit for the local population.

19 **TO CONSIDER AND DEBATE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET, OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS AND COMMITTEES, IF ANY.**

20 **AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2023/24**

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Treasury Management Report 2023/24 be approved.

21 **AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

RESOLVED:

That the current Treasury Management position at the quarter ended 30 June 2024 be noted.

22 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MEETINGS IN THE INTERIM PERIOD PRIOR TO THE COUNCIL MEETING, IF ANY.**

23 **COUNCIL MEETINGS PROCEDURE RULES AND DELEGATIONS TO OFFICERS**

RESOLVED:

That the revised Council Meeting Procedure Rules and delegations to officers be approved.

24 **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW**

RESOLVED:

1. That the intention of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a full review of the Council's electoral arrangements be noted.
2. That a Sub-Committee of the Council be established to co-ordinate liaison with the LGBCE, reporting back to the Cabinet and Council with recommendations.

25 **LOCAL PLAN STEERING GROUP**

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of the Cabinet member responsible for planning matters be confirmed in an ex-officio (non-voting) capacity to the Local Plan Steering Group in addition to members and officers appointed by Council on 15 May 2024.

26 **APPOINTMENT OF SUBSTITUTE INDEPENDENT PERSONS**

RESOLVED:

That Miss Victoria Miller and Mr Peter Turner be appointed as substitute Independent Persons.

27 **NOTICES OF MOTION IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE NO. 8, IF ANY.**

28 **TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER PROCEDURE RULE NO. 10, IF ANY.**

**1. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Services received from Cllr Bentley**

“Could I ask if we can have the same price on annual parking on Well Street car park in Cheadle as the California car park in Leek (e.g. Cheadle £360 cheapest leek cheapest £55) and a 20 mins free parking outside the Post office and bakery on Tape Street car park as a trial?”

**Response:**

“Pricing is set by the Council on an annual basis as part of agreeing the forthcoming year’s Fees and Charges. There is a range of fees based on the usage of the car park, its location, and other factors. The 20 minutes free may be considered as part of the parking review and may be best done as a wider consideration to ensure benefits are maximised across the District.”

In response to supplementary questions the portfolio holder stated that the California Car Park season ticket had been available for a number of years and the cost had increased incrementally helping to avoid people parking on residential streets. Charges would be based on what the market dictates and as part of the budget but comparisons could not be made across the three towns as they have their own challenges.

**2. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Services received received from Cllr Aberley**

“Can the portfolio holder please update full council on the plans and timescales for the forthcoming parking review?”

**Response:**

“The questionnaire to Members that will provide useful information for this was delayed in circulation which has slowed progress on its input to the wider review of car parking. The intention is that the review will conclude before the end of the current financial year.”

In response to supplementary questions the portfolio holder urged councillors to complete the car park survey for their individual wards and the survey was not placed on social media by the Council. Any proposals would be consulted on more widely (e.g. parish councils) on aspects such as overnight parking, community use and season tickets. The did not include charging policy or charging periods which would be an issue for the budget. Timescales for wider consultation would be dependent on the results of the councillor survey.

### **3. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Planning received received from Cllr Flunder**

“With only about 6 months left, what promotional and supporting advice are the councils re-generation team going to offer local business’s and possibly other community/business groups. To ensure that all the allocated UKSPF funding is spent in the by the deadline in 2025?”

#### **Response:**

“With just under 6 months remaining the majority of UKSPF funds have now been allocated and provided significant improvements to business, residents, and communities across the whole of the district/Staffordshire Moorlands.

The Regeneration team have just released the final round of business grants to help stimulate growth and innovation, and to drive new employment opportunities and these are being promoted through all of our promotional channels, parishes, towns and partner agencies.

Where original plans were not feasible i.e. an ambition to develop a new business enterprise centre, we have reallocated these funds to other strategic activities such as the purchase of Cheadle Market to further ignite town centre and high street regeneration plans.

Working in partnership with multiple community and business organisations we are confident that all funding will be fully delivered and provide maximum benefit to our area.”

In response to supplementary questions the portfolio holder stated that UKSPF funds were reallocated to Cheadle market from projects that were not deliverable during the timeframe which were very challenging. Cheadle councillors had been engaged with regards to the use of unused funds for other regeneration projects.

### **4. Question to the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Tourism received received from Cllr Flunder**

“Can the portfolio holder tell us what support package the officers are proposing to support the market traders in Leek, now that the re-opening date has been delayed 6 weeks, until Nov. 25<sup>th</sup>? The Market Traders will lose 6 weeks trading in the refurbished market building, during the busiest trading period of the year, leaving only 3 weeks before Christmas, some fear that the reduction in trading will result in not being able to pay charges in the new market facilities and may have to close.”

#### **Response:**

“Prior to closing the Butter and Trestle market earlier in the year for the refurbishment, the team held one to one sessions with the markets traders and developed a suite of compensation options based on the feedback received. Compensation payments for the 6 week delay has been calculated using the same methodology as before. All traders eligible for compensation have received a communication over recent weeks setting out the sums payable and seeking confirmation of bank details to enable payments to be processed. I am pleased to confirm that all compensation payments have been processed and the final tranche of bank transfers will go out in the payment run on Thursday.

We also supported a number of market traders to trade outdoors during the closure and this option continues during this period of delay. If any traders are concerned about their ability to pay their rent on return to the market, officers would be happy to discuss this on a one-to-one basis and develop a payment plan.”

In response to supplementary questions the portfolio holder stated that he had confidence in the calculation of compensation and paid tribute to market traders operating in poor summer weather conditions. The delay in re-opening was disappointing but reflected a complex project involving an historic building. A structured approach to the future development of town centres would be presented to future scrutiny meetings. It was confirmed that the local MP was on the UKSPF Board.

## 29 **CLLR L. MALYON AND CLLR J. PORTER - WINTER FUEL PAYMENT**

Cllr. L Malyon

“Given the decision by the Government to stop the winter fuel payments to all but the poorest pensioners, this council urges the Government to:

- Reinststate immediately the winter fuel payment for those pensioners who have lost the benefit through the ‘cliff edge’ nature of the change and yet are still on low incomes.
- Investigate urgently alternative ways of supporting ALL vulnerable people with winter fuel payments, short term and long term, including the potential for creating a social tariff for gas and electricity funded through the profits currently being made by energy companies

Bearing in mind our duty of care to residents, this council must:

- Ensure that all pensioners in the district have information about all other available funds to which they may be entitled, such as pension credits, warm home discounts, Eco Flex, Hug 2, council tax support and others.
- Use all available data to identify those likely to be most disadvantaged and to contact them directly to offer help, including face to face, to complete application forms, particularly those that require online completion.
- Continue its efforts to ensure that Beat the Cold and Staffordshire Warmer Homes work as effectively as possible.
- Continue to use available council funding, such as the Cost of Living Fund, to give assistance to organisations working with vulnerable people needing support with fuel payments through the winter.”

Cllr J. Porter

“Staffordshire Moorlands District Council believes that cutting the Winter Fuel Payment this winter, with virtually no notice and no compensatory measures to protect poor and vulnerable pensioners, is the wrong decision.

We want the Government to halt their proposed change to the Winter Fuel Payment and think again. Millions of struggling pensioners won’t receive up to £300 they rely

on to pay their bills, including around 23,000 local residents across the Staffordshire Moorlands. As many as 2 million pensioners who find paying their energy bills a real stretch will be seriously hit by this cut.

As Martin Lewis, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com, recently said: "The targeting of Winter Fuel Payments is too narrow with the winter we have coming. Pensioners were already due to get less as this will be the first time since winter 2022 they haven't got the up to £300 extra winter fuel cost of living top-up."

There are 3 key groups who will be hit hardest:

- Those who just miss out on Pension Credit because their very modest incomes are slightly too high for them to be eligible, usually because they have a tiny occupational pension. Many of them are women.
- Those with high energy needs because of disability or illness, and/or who live in energy inefficient homes which cost a lot of money to heat, estimated at 200,000 people.
- A million pensioners who don't receive the Pension Credit for which they are eligible because they do not claim it. The problem of low take up with Pension Credit is deeply entrenched, with about a third of all those entitled to it consistently failing to claim it over many years.

There's only been three months warning for this change – and older people will have expected to have this money in their pockets this year. There simply isn't long enough for many to work out another plan.

The Government has said more will be done to encourage those entitled to Pension Credit to claim it, but this will take time and won't stop many missing out this year. To make matters worse, this isn't the only support with energy costs pensioners are losing meaning that pensioners could have £600 or more less this winter even though energy bills stay high.

This is because they are also losing:

- Cost of living payment - to support with high energy costs over the last two years all pensioners received up to £300 on top of their Winter Fuel Payment in the last two winters. Those on low incomes or with a disability received more.
- The Household Support Fund delivered through councils which has provided help for some struggling older people is also ending in September.

This Council resolves to:

Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be immediately paused and introduce a new threshold to determine eligibility for Winter Fuel Payments. Council further requests the Chief Executive write to our local MP Karen Bradley asking her to give their formal support to halting the changes to the Winter Fuel Payment eligibility.

Request all group leaders within the Staffordshire Moorlands sign a joint letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the new Winter Fuel Payment policy to be suspended and reviewed.

Urgently commence a significant awareness campaign to maximise uptake of pension credits. This will include use of council noticeboards, social media, promotion in local press, and also targeted letters to those who may be eligible.

Pensioners deserve to retire in dignity and it is completely immoral to force some to choose between heating and eating. The Government should halt their proposed change to the Winter Fuel Payment and think again.”

The Chairman of the Council permitted the above motions to be discussed together to help the proper conduct of the Council's business given that the motions referred to the same issue.

Members deliberated a range of issues with regards to this subject which would affect a significant number of pensioners in the District given that the Staffordshire Moorlands has a higher than average elderly population. Councillors raised concerns with regards to those who just miss out on Pension Credit or do not claim it, those with high energy needs because of disability or illness or those who live in energy inefficient homes which cost more money to heat.

Members also referred to Martin Lewis, founder of MoneySavingExpert.com, who recently said: "The targeting of Winter Fuel Payments is too narrow with the winter we have coming. Pensioners were already due to get less as this will be the first time since winter 2022 they haven't got the up to £300 extra winter fuel cost of living top-up."

It was **PROPOSED** that the **MOTION** be **AMENDED** as follows:

- That this Council urges the Government to immediately reinstate both the Winter Fuel Payment and the pensioners Cost of Living Payment for all pensioners.
- That this Council calls upon Government to delay the implementation of any regulations to restrict the eligibility of these payments until the winter of 2025/26.
- That the DWP be instructed to undertake a full impact assessment for those regulations including investigating alternative threshold for eligibility such as links to Council Tax bandings or higher income rate taxpayers.
- That the Chief Executive writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to convey the Council's concerns and incorporate the views expressed by Martin Lewis.

RESOLVED:

Having been **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED**, upon being put to the vote, the **AMENDMENT** was **CARRIED** unanimously in the terms set out above.

## 30 CLLR. J JONES - LEEK MINOR INJURIES UNIT

“This Council strongly opposes the Staffordshire Integrated Care Board's proposals to close the Minor Injuries Unit at Leek Hospital and to deliver the urgent care services Leek presently provides as part of a new Urgent Treatment Centre located at the Haywood Hospital.

The Council considers that retaining and extending the Leek Minor Injuries Unit is the only way adequate urgent medical care can be maintained for the people of the Staffordshire Moorlands.”

RESOLVED:

Having been **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED**, upon being put to the vote, the **MOTION** was **CARRIED** unanimously in the terms set out above.

31 **CLLR C. WOOD - STAFFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

“This council would like the PFCC of Staffordshire and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service to note as a part of its current consultation that SMDC is gravely concerned about the 3 rider pilot scheme.

SMDC notes that a recent incident led to a crew of 3 entering a burning building to save a casualty. This incident undoubtedly put the lives of the crew at risk and placed firefighters in an impossible situation.

Retained firefighters work in their own communities, they know their neighbours, it is unfair for Staffordshire Fire and Rescue service to put them into these situations when their full-time counterparts wouldn't face such dilemmas.

SMDC would like SFRS to receive this comment as a part of their consultation exercise.”

RESOLVED:

Having been **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED**, upon being put to the vote, the **MOTION** was **CARRIED** in the terms set out above.

The meeting closed at 8.25 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ Chairman \_\_\_\_\_ Date