

# Philip Atkins

## Member of Staffordshire County Council for Uttoxeter Rural

Abbots Bromley, Admaston, Beamhurst, Blithfield, Bramshall, Combridge, Crakemarsh, Croxden, Denstone, Dodsleigh, Draycott in the Clay, Ellastone, Gratwich, Kingstone, Leigh, Loxley, Marchington, Marchington Woodlands, Mayfield, Newton, Okeover, Ramsor, Rocester, Stanton, Stramshall, Withington, Wootton,

### Uttoxeter Rural Division Annual Report April 2019

I continue as the Leader of the County Council with other roles on the council's behalf such as the Local Government Pension Scheme, Stoke and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Board, Midlands Engine Strategic Board and Midlands Connects. I am Vice Chairman of the County Council Network and am a Member of the Local Government Association Resources Board and the Cabinet Office's National Growth Board. A busy life as I still farm at Abbey Fields in Rocester, on South Staffordshire College Board and Rocester Parish Council.

The Conservatives retain overall control of Staffordshire County Council with 51 seats: Conservative 51, Labour 10 and Other 1.

Preparing for the next financial year 2019/20 has been one of the most difficult I have known as a county councillor. Councillors and officers have been hard at work on the budget as we have had to identify savings of £35 Million which is best explained by the Plan on a Page:

## Plan on a Page

### Our Vision: A connected Staffordshire where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

#### 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

#### Priorities



Create the right conditions for economic growth across the whole of Staffordshire that produces more, better paid jobs for residents.



Support the construction of more housing to meet the growing needs of our families and people young and old.



Improve Education and Skills provision in our schools, colleges and universities so that more people gain the training and qualifications they need to succeed.



A joined up approach to Health, Care and Wellness that encourages people to take responsibility for their own health and plan for their future, so that we can support those who really need it.



Ensure Children and Families have a network of support to help manage their own problems and stay safe and well.

#### Enablers



Our workforce is the greatest asset we have for improving the lives of Staffordshire people, so we need to give our employees the skills, tools and confidence to do their jobs well.



People Helping People is how we support citizens to help themselves and one another to improve their communities and act on the things that matter most to them.



Our digital programme will make greater use of technology and data to work in more modern, effective and lower cost ways.



Work with and through our networks of public, private and community organisations to achieve our ambitions.

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

## 6 Strands of the MTFS



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



Changing the way we use technology and data combined with closer working with communities, in a new offer to Staffordshire citizens



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

For the next financial year, we will see the County Council delivering record spending on care of the most vulnerable in our communities and still balancing the books over the next five years. This is a huge achievement at a time when financial pressures remain immensely challenging. The county council spent £200 million a year ten years ago on adult and children social care, we will be spending £316 million next year. This is because we are all living longer, that is the good news, while more children are entering the care system and the reasons for the scale of the pressure.

However, Staffordshire remains the third lowest county council tax in England, £89.03 less than the average for a Band D. Also, after receiving an additional £8.99 million for highway repair from the Government we will again be spending an extra £5 million once again to tackle potholes in 2019/20. We have also been successful in a Business Rates pilot with 75% of business rates coming back to Staffordshire, instead of 50%. In addition, there is £6.88 million for Better Care Fund for the coming years.

The winter pressures on hospitals are being successfully managed this year, with the numbers of delayed transfers out of care reducing.

We also see record levels of employment with unemployment at 1.5%

By taking decisive, early action we have managed not only to balance our books but put forward robust financial plans for the next five years. Despite this huge progress I remain acutely aware of the risks and challenges which lie ahead.

In 2019, together with partners we will continue to press the Government for a long-term solution on the funding of care. This is a national issue which needs a national discussion and a national approach on how we, as a country, can continue to fund the care of increasing numbers of vulnerable adults and children.

In Staffordshire, both the funding and delivery of our health and care economy remains complex and both ourselves and our NHS colleagues recognise this. As a county council, we remain committed to helping people stay independent for as long as possible and supporting more people in their homes and their communities when they do need a helping hand. The statistics on the Delayed Transfers of Care from hospitals for people waiting for social care have fallen steadily every month from July 2018. We are not quite there, but we are moving in the right direction and are a world away from two years ago.

This is a testament to partnerships, resilience and to the straight talking that needs to be done to make a difference and this stands us in good stead to tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities which lie ahead.

This means focusing on our key priorities including; growing a strong economy for Staffordshire, helping people lead healthier and independent lives, investing in key roads and schools, taking a stronger role in housing, promoting community solutions and focusing on digital and innovation.

To demonstrate the latter there was some good news when it was announced that a county council-led partnership had won a bid to be part of a Government funded innovation project.

The £1.9m 'live lab' project at Keele University will develop, test and demonstrate how a smart highways network can be designed, maintained and extended to local roads.

So undoubtedly a busy year ahead with further good news of the benefits of partnership working after Staffordshire County Council secured £3.8 million for a Staffordshire Warm Homes Fund. The fund will lift 1,000 households out of fuel poverty by installing mains gas connections, central heating systems and insulation work.

## **The Staffordshire Economy**

We all agree and understand that people in gainful employment are healthier, safer and less crime is committed, reducing pressures on vital public services.

New figures show that the number of people in work is at a record high and wages have risen at their fastest pace in a decade. With wages continuing to increase faster than prices in Staffordshire, more people have the security of a regular wage and can provide for their families.

People are being helped into work by reforming welfare so work always pays, while backing businesses to create more, better paying jobs across the whole country through our careful economic management and a modern Industrial Strategy.

## **Our economy plans for 2019 and beyond build on past successes**

Business development sites currently under construction in Staffordshire with county council involvement will generate over £10million a year in business rates. And figures show the county is also developing a skilled local workforce to meet the growing demands of business.

Sites such as Liberty Park in Lichfield, Four Ashes in South Staffordshire, Meaford near Stone and the MacArthurGlen Designer Retail Outlet in Cannock will bring in around £10.3million in business rates when completed which will help to fund public services.

Whilst business development continues at pace across the county, the county council's long term economic growth programme also focuses on ensuring people have the right skills to take advantage of increased employment opportunities.

Working with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, the county council's skills development programme has led to over 18,200 people improving their employability prospects or improving their in-work skills – directly benefiting local businesses.

Nearly £60million has been invested in this programme so far. In addition, the LEP's Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Hub, located at six sites, provides state of the art facilities and equipment giving people the skills they need to work in the county's key industry sectors. The £13.2 million hub has already supported over 7,300 learners since the project was launched in 2014.

More major business developments set to get under way in Staffordshire will also deliver more jobs as near full employment continues in the county.

Creating the conditions for business and investors to create more and better jobs, and making sure people have the skills to access those opportunities is the bedrock to raising people's living standards. It means they have more money in their pocket and lead healthier lives.

The economic growth programme is largely self- funding. For every £1 of county council money invested, £13.60 of external funding is secured. Much of our £1 will be repaid through business rates now and in the future

### **All county councillors are to be allocated £20,000 each to prioritise highways work in their own local communities.**

There is an additional £5 million this year on top of the annual £7.5 Million spend on highway maintenance. The one-off £20 K is on top of annual £7K funding for highways each member must allocate to local roads. I have allocated it to the rural areas as many other projects such as routine repairs, traffic calming in Bramshall, speed and road improvements in Ellastone, or traffic calming at Rocester are being funded by s106 or normal contributions.

## **Early Peak-Time Free Travel To Remain for Disabled People**

Free peak time bus travel for disabled people in Staffordshire is set to continue – following feedback from a public consultation on concessionary travel.

Staffordshire County Council is planning to follow national guidelines for concessionary travel, which means older people with bus passes in the county will still be able to travel for free between 9.30am and 11pm and at any time during the weekend or on bank holidays. However, people who choose to travel before 9.30am will need to pay the bus operator's fare.

After listening to feedback, the council has amended the proposals and disabled people will now be able to continue to use their passes for free travel before 9.30am.

## **A50 Growth Corridor update**

Despite the recent poor weather, work completed early this year. Surfacing of the new slip roads and three roundabouts is complete. The work, which started in 2016, has seen an upgraded junction with the A522, a new bridge installed, the old one demolished and the building of three new roundabouts and slip roads.

This major piece of engineering is a huge success and will deliver many economic benefits, while also improving road safety.

Project B is in the Road investment strategy Programme for delivery by 2025.

## **IRONMAN® 70.3 Staffordshire Stafford Town Centre on Sunday 9 June**

Established in 2015, the event has quickly grown to become the biggest IRONMAN 70.3 race in the UK. After three years, the event has seen nearly 8000 athletes competing, also attracting some of the UK and the world's best professional athletes. It also became the fastest selling IRONMAN 70.3 race in the UK selling out within minutes in 2015.

Stafford Town Centre will be the host venue for the athlete village, expo, second transition area, run course and finish line, bringing the festive race atmosphere right into the heart of the town.

Logistically, this makes it easier for athletes, their supporters and spectators

The move will also see a change to the run course with the second transition area located at Riverway and the run course consisting of three laps in and around the town centre, finishing in Market Square. The bike course for the most part retains all the elements that have made it an attraction over the years apart from some improvements. The swim will remain at Chasewater Country Park..

If there are any issues or questions please contact [staffordshire70.3@ironmanroadaccess.com](mailto:staffordshire70.3@ironmanroadaccess.com) or call 033 3011 6600.

## **Getting the Best Deal for Staffordshire from HS2**

The county council remains totally committed to getting the best deal for Staffordshire from HS2. This extends to getting the best deal for the county in terms of mitigation, compensation for residents, economic benefits and improved connectivity.

To achieve this, we petitioned against Phase 1 and successfully achieved the lowering of eight km of the line in Lichfield. Staffordshire County Council also secured an assurance that the Handsacre link, connecting HS2 to the West Coast Main Line, would be constructed. This will provide the infrastructure needed for Staffordshire to receive HS2 services and gain economic benefit as a result.

When the Phase 2a hybrid Bill was deposited to Parliament in July 2017, along with the associated Environmental Statement (ES), the ES was subject to a 10 week consultation. The county council submitted a joint response with Lichfield District Council, Stafford Borough Council, and Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. This response formed the basis of our petition to the House of Commons and appeared before the Select Committee.

We have also been meeting regularly with HS2 Ltd to discuss pressing issues, in particular on construction routes.

HS2 have now brought forward a proposed new Parkgate electricity connection. The original design for the Phase 2a scheme included a connection at the decommissioned Rugeley Power Station, whereas the new proposals run from Newlands Lane in Colton and ends in Newborough.

The HS2 newsletter on Parkgate mentioned that there were objections to the original proposals and states "As well as providing a more resilient energy supply, the alternative proposal means that the Rugeley Power Station site would no longer need to be used by HS2. There are separate redevelopment plans for the Rugeley Power Station site, which are supported by the local authorities."

This could be taken to mean that the objections mentioned came from the local authorities, but this is not the case.

The County Council and Lichfield District Council petitioned jointly on Rugeley to seek greater clarification on timescales and land take, so as not to stymie the planned development on the site. No request was made to consider an alternative.

The objections and request for an alternative site came from National Grid, the detail of which can be read in their petition. The solution is to bury the cable, but we must all make the case.

The Hybrid Bill for Phase 2a is going through Parliament and should be passed if Parliamentary time permits at the end of this year.

## **Superfast Staffordshire Website Shows When New Broadband Will Arrive**

Householders and businesses in East Staffordshire can find out exactly which areas will be getting faster internet speeds—the first communities already feeling the benefit. You can find when and where the faster fibre broadband will be available at the Superfast Staffordshire website [www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk/](http://www.superfaststaffordshire.co.uk/)

Staffordshire County Council, BT and Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) are working in partnership to deliver superfast broadband services across Staffordshire as part of the national programme managed by BDUK. When added to the commercial roll-out we now have 97% of premises receiving speeds in excess of 24 Mbps.

## **MyStaffs App and the shift to digital**

You can access all your council services on the move with the 'My Staffs App', free and available on Apple devices, android and Google platforms from the Apple App store and Google Play.

What is the MyStaffs app? It's a much quicker and easier way in which customers can talk to us with new technology using smart phones. If you need to report an issue, make a transaction, or request information, with the free app you access key services anytime, anywhere.

You can even specify your location so that you receive information about the services which just apply in your area.

What's more is that the app doesn't just feature key county services but some at district and borough level too, which means you can access everything all in one place, at the touch of a button.

What's available on the app?

Services available through the app include:

- School Term Date Information
- School Closures
- Childcare
- Advice and information for parents of under 5s
- Local Venues and Attractions
- Waste Services
- School Meal Menus and Pricing
- Registration Services
- Council Tax Information
- Roads and Highways

So, if you're always on the go – save time today and download the MyStaffs App for Apple and Android devices

## **Welcome to the Staffordshire Connects**

Staffordshire Connects is an online directory of local care, support and wellbeing services, activities and events across Staffordshire aimed at the whole family at <https://www.staffordshireconnects.info/kb5/staffordshire/directory/home.page>

Staffordshire Connects makes it easier for people to find and access support and wellbeing services from hundreds of organisations, all in one place. With just a few clicks of a button, you can browse, compare, book and buy activities.

## **Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS)**

SCVYS is a charitable company committed to supporting excellent outcomes for children and young people in the county since being established in 1982. Through an arrangement with Staffordshire County Council, SCVYS provides support services to over 100 voluntary youth organisations delivering in over 700 places.

Certainly young people are leading the way on social action or people helping people as we call it here in Staffordshire. Latest Office of National Statistics figures show that whilst overall volunteering is slightly down, amongst young people it is significantly up. SCVYS census data collected from our members also shows a dramatic rise, with over 1500 under 18s volunteering regularly in local member group activities, up over 60% on last year.. There is certainly a shift in emphasis from public services towards greater personal responsibility, family resilience and resourceful communities to resolve their own issues, and only involve public services with those who most need the help.

So, once again young people are leading the way. They get so much bad press maybe it is time to loudly and proudly celebrate their contribution to Staffordshire's local communities.

More details at [www.staffscvys.org.uk](http://www.staffscvys.org.uk)

## **A515 and HCVs**

With economic growth comes traffic and the issue of Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCVs) and there have been extensive discussions to find a solution to issues around HCVs using the A515 as a shortcut from the A50 to the A38.

Experimental traffic orders have reduced HGV traffic movement along sections of the road after coming into force in late February.

Communities living along the A515 have expressed concerns about increased use of the road by HGVs, rather than using the A38 and A50 trunk roads. The Staffordshire Freight Forum was formulated following a recommendation of the Prosperous Staffordshire Select Committee Report. An outcome from



the Staffordshire Freight and Communities Forum was for the creation of an A515 working group to discuss issues at a local level, leaving the Freight Forum to operate at a strategic level across Staffordshire.

The issues mainly affect the villages of Draycott in the Clay, Yoxall and Kings Bromley and the experimental order scheme will be community-driven. Local parish councils and residents took these concerns to the Staffordshire Freight and Communities Forum – which is made of a range of organisations aiming to address issues related to HGV impact on communities. The forum investigated how their concerns could be addressed in a practical and achievable way.

Phase one of the experimental orders scheme will see left and right turn bans for HGVs will introduced at three junctions on the A515 on roads which lead to the A38.

These are the junctions with the B5016 in Yoxall, the A513 in Kings Bromley and the C0183 Wood End Lane north of Lichfield. Signs have been installed to inform drivers of the new orders and businesses from across the area have been informed. Regular traffic flow reviews will be carried out to assess the impact of the orders.

These will be experimental orders lasting for a temporary period of 18 months.

Phase two will see local roads reclassified. The county council is making the case for Wood End Lane to be improved through the HS2 construction programme, after which it can be reclassified as an A or B road. The A513 and B5016 can then be reclassified to lower status roads so that weight restrictions could be applied.

On the A515 speed limit buffer zones and gateways are being introduced in Yoxall and Draycott-in-the-Clay.

It is important to everyone that we are able put forward measures that could be delivered promptly and with a relative ease. Experimental traffic orders do just that and mean that we can monitor their effectiveness during the temporary period. We can then make decisions on longer term measures or possible alternatives. If successful we can then look to reclassify some local roads to make the measures even more effective.

It is also important to note that this is a community-led scheme and has been implemented in response to community concerns.

The scheme is supported by the police who will carry out enforcement of the orders.

The Traffic Management Act 2004 places a duty on the county council to ensure traffic can move quickly and freely on its own highway network and that of nearby local highway authorities. The county council and Highways Agency has agreed emergency diversion routes in place along the A515 in the

event of a closure on the A38. It is not possible to divert non-motorway traffic onto the higher class motorway network during such a closure. The A515 is also a national priority route for high sided vehicles.

I have continued to press for additional deterrents on top of the traffic lights on Dove Bridge and the speed cameras in Draycott. These measures are in the form of the average speed cameras on the A515, village gateways and better access from the A38 to Fradley. The aim is to deter HCVs by hindrance and delay from using the A515 while improving their passage on the A50 and A38.

Locally last year's **Staffordshire Local Community Fund** went to:

Friends of Stafford Samaritans	People helping people	£250.00
Marchington Village Hall	Village/Community/Church Halls	£750.00
Abbots Bromley PCC	Repairs To Churches	£500.00
Abbots Bromley Sports Association	Sport	£2,000.00
Abbots Bromley Parish Council	Community (other)	£1,500.00
Denstone Players Amateur Society	Social/Community Projects	£500.00
St Michael's Parochial Church Council	Village/Community/Church Halls	£1,000.00
Kingstone Community Society Ltd	Community (other)	£1,000.00

Much is happening in the area. If anyone wants to apply for funding from this year's £2,500 for schemes that are new and are focused on People Helping People, the forms are available from the County Website.

This is only a snap shot of the many things that I come across in a year and if anyone wishes to know more on any subject do not hesitate to contact me.

Philip Atkins

[philip.atkins@staffordshire.gov.uk](mailto:philip.atkins@staffordshire.gov.uk) Tel: 01889 590230 Mobile: 07973 820345