

Delivering for the Eccleshall area

Community News

The aim of this Newsletter is to bring together various pieces of topical, but local, news from across the Eccleshall, Adbaston, Chebsey and Standon and Cotes Heath areas. It is not designed to be an almanac of all the things that I have supported or been involved with or even the 'most important' pieces of work - as someone badly affected by one issue can often find that their voice is drowned out by all the other issues of the day.

In this fourth local Newsletter, it covers some of the work being undertaken on a variety of projects and on issues of concern and that matter most to local residents. Since the last newsletter at Christmas, I have tried to balance local community projects and encouraging individuals and community groups to help them deliver their aspirations for the local area, whilst also supporting some of the most vulnerable in Stafford Borough to help them turn their lives around. This includes securing funding for work to prevent Rough Sleeping in the Borough and separately to support the vital work that the local Women's Refuge does in Stafford supporting those victims of Domestic Violence.

So Many Truly Remarkable Champions

Attending the annual Sports Stafford Borough awards night you can't help but notice the quality of many of our amateur sporting stars from mountain biking, athletics, golf, Nordic walking, orienteering, karate, netball, badminton, football, rugby, swimming, cycling, snooker, pool and billiards, canoe slalom and para canoeing.

With them competing on a regional, national and international stage, with the event being hosted by the latest local champion, Olympic Gold medal winner, Joe Clark MBE.

Major Investment in Leisure Locally

A new Leisure Centre is planned for Stone to replace the aging Westbridge Park Fitness Centre, which has a fitness gym and studio, and the Alleyne Sports Centre, which has a swimming pool and sports hall.

The Borough has set aside £9.5m to bring these two facilities under one roof as part of a state of the art brand new leisure centre with six lane swimming pool, state of the art gym and fitness centre and sports hall.

It is hoped that the new facility will be open by the end of 2018 and will be accessible to all residents in the north of the Borough.

Flooding Group Starts in Eccleshall

If you've experienced flooding in the Eccleshall area, then a newly set up group, supported by the National Flood Forum may be able to help you secure a respite from it.

This group will meet monthly and work with other partners including the County Council and Severn Trent Water to reduce the incidence of flooding and support individuals through the distress caused by it.

Thank You, Councillor

After more than ten years serving Eccleshall as a Councillor, both at Borough and County levels, County Councillor Frank Chapman is set to stand back from formal public life.

Being a Councillor was Councillor Chapman's second career in Public Service, having previously served in the Police working in both Staffordshire and Merseyside.



County Councillor Frank Chapman

Councillor Chapman was first elected to the Borough in 2007 in the Eccleshall ward and was elected to the County Council a year later, serving initially in Newcastle Rural before moving to Eccleshall division in 2013.

During his time, Councillor Chapman has served as the Chair of the Police & Crime Panel, on the Fire Authority, Corporate Review panel and as a trustee of the William Salt Library.

During Councillor Chapman's period he has achieved greater accountability of people spending public money, maintained all local public services, delivered a complete refurbishment of Stafford Street, a soon to be installed speed limit reduction in Slindon and resisted many inappropriate developments proposed in the local area.

IN THIS ADDITION

Front Page

- So Many Truly Remarkable Champions
- Major Investment in Leisure locally
- Flooding Group starts in Eccleshall
- Thank You, Councillor

Inside Page

- HMP Drake Hall Focuses on Rehabilitation
- Local Homes can be Used again
- Road Naming
- Joining Equalities Scrutiny Panel

Page Three

- Community Groups - Small Grants
- Trip to EU Parliament
- Other Voluntary Sector Grants
- Keeping Alert to Crime

Page Four

- Campaigning for Supported Accommodation
- Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence
- No One Wants to be Homeless
- Let's Think Food Waste

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HMP Drake Hall Focuses on Rehabilitation

There are a few key elements that help reduce reoffending rates for prisoners. One of them is having a stable environment to go back to when they are released from prison, another is a chance of paid employment, preferably in a job that the individual actually enjoys doing.

With this in mind, I recently attended the opening of the new Halfords Academy at HMP Drake Hall Prison, Eccleshall.



Dr. Phillip Lee MP, Justice Minister with Jill McDonald, Group CEO of Halfords and the latest trainee cycle mechanic

The new Academy was opened by Dr. Phillip Lee, MP, the Minister for Victims, Youth and Family Justice and Jill McDonald, Group Chief Executive of Halfords.

The aim of the Academy is for women prisoners to gain the skills and confidence to be able to mend any bicycle that is sold by Halfords or comes across their threshold. And when the women reach a certain minimum skill level, as a Cycle Mechanic, on release Halfords will guarantee that woman a job in one of their 452 retail stores local to them.

Halfords gain a lot out of this relationship – as only 17% of their workforce are women and their research shows that some women customers are put off by having too overtly ‘a male shop environment’ with no female specialists to talk to. Instead having more women helps ensure that anyone can come into a Halfords store at any time and easily get the answers to any questions they have.

Local Homes Can Be Used Again

Building more homes, to house those in our community that need them sounds a sensible way to resolving what’s now been dubbed as ‘the Housing Crisis’.

But that should not be at the expense of maintaining houses locally that are empty and unoccupied.

In the last month, two longstanding empty houses have been brought back into use, reducing the number of new homes required locally.

And whilst these are small incremental gains, they will mount up on a regional and national scale, with the homes being available sooner than any new build too.

Road Naming

Many things that can look quite simple – on first review – by residents, can eventually take a disproportionate and inordinate amount of time to resolve fully – whether that be any change to speed limits or even road naming.

Such has been the case with the proposal to name a couple of new roads in Eccleshall after their famous Ecclesiastic past – Bishops in this case.

It has taken months of to-ing and fro-ing with the developers, Parish Council, Borough Council, other key stakeholders like the Fire Service and Police, with all of this being ratified by the Borough Council’s Cabinet to get these roads finally named - after Eccleshall’s historic connections.

In the end, I think we’ve got there at long last, but not without some blood, sweat and tears - and those were just mine - as well as a bit of cajoling and cursing along the way !

Joining Equalities Scrutiny Panel

HMP Drake Hall is the first prison in the women’s estate to secure a full ‘Enabling Environment’ award from the Royal College of Psychiatrists - a quality mark to show they promote good relationships and wellbeing amongst prisoners and staff.

As part of the environment, they are also the only prison with an Equalities Scrutiny panel, which I have joined as independent member.

Wider Borough Council Work

Community Groups – Small Grants

The voluntary or third sector in Stafford Borough is extremely vibrant, with many people giving of their time freely.

Celebrating this and encouraging people to get involved in the first place is one of the important roles that Councillors – of any level – can do. It is fabulous to see groups of people come together, based on an idea or a desire to do something in the local community. Then often other people hear about it and the word seems to go round virally and for those important initiatives that grab the attention of the local community and enthuse them, it becomes like ‘a snow ball’. And suddenly there is no height that the group can’t attain.

So giving grants to help support these community groups come together, capacity build or work through a plan to become self-sustainable is critical work to support the voluntary sector. As is helping them to fund key projects.



Stafford Borough Small Grants - Grant Presentation event in February 2017, with four of the successful groups

The next round of small grants funding has just opened up, awarding anything from £200 to £1,000 to voluntary sector organisations, as part of a £10,000 fund set aside.

Further details, including the application forms, can be found at :-

www.staffsfoundation.org.uk/sbc/

Trip to EU Parliament

Off the back of a highly informative trip to both the House of Lords and House of Commons in Westminster fifteen months ago, a trip is being planned for this Autumn to see the inner workings of the EU Parliament in Brussels.

For obvious reasons, this opportunity may never come up again.

Anyone is welcome to join the visit, on a first come first served basis, but with space limited, I would recommend contacting me as soon as possible to register your interest.

Other Voluntary Sector Grants

For anyone looking for voluntary sector grants, Support Staffordshire can advise on what grants are available to any community based group, both from the local area as well as some of the more widely known national schemes.



For larger groups and agencies, this includes funding available from Staffordshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Ellis, as part of his Proceeds of Crime fund. This is targeted at improving community safety, reducing crime and disorder and increasing public confidence. Further details are available at :-

<https://www.staffordshire-pcc.gov.uk/proceeds-crime-fund/>

The Police and Crime Commissioner also runs a smaller grant scheme under the People Power Fund that offers groups between £100 and £3,000 :-

<https://www.staffordshire-pcc.gov.uk/people-power-fund/>

This supports groups to find great local solutions to support Community Safety in its broadest terms.

Keeping Alert to Crime

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has launched a web-based mobile phone (and tablet) app that allows people to receive personalised information as to what is happening in their area, helping empower communities. It also helps communities and Neighbourhood Watch to share information more easily.



The web-based app can be downloaded from all the usual application media stores and online platforms or through the link below :-

<http://www.staffordshiresmartalert.uk/staffs/>

Campaigning for Supported Accommodation

Having raised the issue of Supported Accommodation funding for the past couple of years, to ensure that there is a sensible funding formula going forwards and the existing provision in the Borough is not lost completely, I have continued to lobby the Local Government Association, MPs, Ministers of State and even the Secretary of State to



With Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

ensure the future of Supported Accommodation in the Borough, so that we can protect some of the most vulnerable people in Society.

Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence

Staffordshire Women’s Aid offers support and sanctuary for the victims of Domestic Violence – and their families — and they have been doing so for the past forty years in Stafford Borough.

The work that they do is ground-breaking and instrumental in the fight against domestic violence, where two women every week lose their lives still in the UK. With many victims taking multiple – on average 35 - incidences before they feel able to come forward to Authorities.



Celebrating grant success, with Dickie James, Chief Executive of Staffordshire Women’s Aid

So the news that the Borough, in partnership with Staffordshire Women’s Aid, had secured £145,000 over the next two years to help support its victims was great news, with a focus being to link in mental health as well as physical health support for the women involved, to help them in their journeys from ‘victims to survivors’.

No One Wants to be Homeless

CRISIS estimates that if you live rough on the streets that you lose thirty years, on average, of your life and have a life expectancy of just 47 years for a man.

Equally that if you are homeless then you are 13 times more likely to be the victim of violence and 40 times less likely to be registered with a GP than the general public.

In Stafford, the award of £211,000 in December from the Department of Communities and Local Government came as a welcome support to the work that is being driven by the Borough Council, in partnership with the Mental Health Trust and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, to help move local rough sleepers into more secure long term sustainable tenancies.

The support of the Mental Health Trust is vital as we work with those longstanding entrenched rough sleepers, as many of whom have long term mental health issues that need to be addressed as part of the plan to get them into sustainable accommodation.

Early indications on the success of the approach being taken is quietly promising.

Let’s Think Food Waste

Some initiatives start on a local level and funnel up to a national level, whilst others work the opposite way around. The objective of ensuring that no one goes to bed hungry and to end hunger in the UK, is one of the national ones but with a local resonance.

Often I struggle on first glance to see how I can impact something like ‘ending hunger’, until I look in more detail at areas like out of date food, food waste in general and the amount that is thrown away. And that’s before looking at food producers and what we ask them to do.



End Hunger, Stafford – Let’s Actively Work Together

I guess if we are more aware of the issue and actively try and work together and openly discuss how we could solve the problem collaboratively, then we could End Hunger in Stafford, Staffordshire, the West Midlands and even in the UK.

If anyone wants to volunteer to support this initiative, please feel free to contact me.