

Statement of the Leader of the Council

1. Ivanovo

Partnerships are very much the cornerstones of our success story here in Staffordshire, whether this is with the districts and borough councils, the city of Stoke-on-Trent, the NHS, the police or the private sector.

Of course, our partnerships extend beyond the county or indeed the country and today it is with great pleasure that we welcome to our meeting a delegation from Ivanovo, led by the Head of the City - Aleksei Khokhlov. Mr. Khokhlov is joined by Anton Grachev, Iuliia Pozhidaeva and Darya Rodomanova.

As you all know, Staffordshire has a long-standing friendship with Ivanovo and for nearly twenty years the people of Staffordshire and Ivanovo have been visiting each other to share knowledge, experience, good practice and, most of all, friendship and goodwill.

Our visitors have already had a busy start to their trip, with visits to Staffordshire Place, a tour of the contact centre and our new library and a visit to the wonderful facilities at Northfield Village already taken place. They will also be visiting Keele University and the world famous Wedgwood visitor centre. I am sure you will join me in welcoming our guests today and wishing them an enjoyable, useful and informative stay in Staffordshire.

2. Devolution

Towards the end of last month, a meeting of the Staffordshire Strategic Partnership provided an excellent opportunity to focus on the devolution agenda.

The partnership really is a great platform to work together as a “whole” rather than as individuals to explore in greater detail how passing more powers and funding down from Central Government could help us all deliver greater benefits to the county and to our communities.

We remain committed to developing these proposals further and will look to include wider public and private sector partners across Staffordshire in the next phase of discussions.

3. Adult Social Care

As we are all aware, the funding of the support of a growing ageing population is both a huge priority and huge pressure.

Here in Staffordshire we want to help people lead healthy, independent lives for as long as possible, focusing more on prevention, getting people help early and supporting better community health.

Delivering integrated health and social care is key to our ambitions and this month we welcomed Dr Richard Harling to the council in the newly created role of Director of Health and Care. This role spans both adult social care and public health for adults and children and demonstrates our commitment to delivering affordable, sustainable integrated care for the benefit of Staffordshire families.

4. Review of Post-16 Education and Training Institutions in Staffordshire

Matching young adults with the right skills, education and training to get the right jobs remains high on our agenda in Staffordshire, so we will be watching with keen interest how the review of post-16 education and training progresses.

The steering group's recommendations will be made later this spring. Members include chairs of governors from each institution, LEPs, FE and Sixth Form College Commissioners, local authorities, funding agencies, regional schools commissioners and representatives from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and Department for Education.

5. Staffordshire Flag

Members will remember that at the last full council we endorsed a request from parish councils to register our Staffordshire Flag with the Flag Institute.

However, after growing concerns on how the Institute was managing the process around a second design originally put forward by an out-of-area organisation, we no longer had confidence in the impartiality of the institute and have withdrawn our application.

As the Institute's recognition has no official or legal status we will of course continue to fly our Staffordshire flag proudly from the roofs of the county as we have done for several years.