

our city

Dancing Plates

CITY'S DISPLAY WOWS THE CROWDS IN LORD MAYOR OF LONDON'S PARADE

SEE PAGE 10



**Pull-out
guide to city
children's
centres**

SEE CENTRE
PAGES

Hoard treasure a tremendous springboard for promoting city jobs initiative



By City Council Leader
Councillor
MOHAMMED PERVEZ

MY trip to Washington to visit the Staffordshire Hoard exhibition and make some important connections was an important part of our drive to market Stoke-on-Trent to investors.

The Hoard literally is a treasure and has drawn the world's attention to our city and there will be many more opportunities for us to capitalise on that. During the trip I met the British Embassy's Trade and Investment Team who were impressed by our commitment to attracting investment and creating jobs.

They said the warm welcome and "can do" attitude we are promoting through our red carpet treatment was just what employers and investors were looking for. They also noted the positive way in which we support and nurture existing businesses, a factor which investors will seriously consider when relocating here.

We are not the first local authority to be promoting itself in Washington, but it is a first for our city and is exactly what we should be doing to raise the area's profile and attract new business.

In the current global economic climate we need to shout from the rooftops, in the UK and around the world, that Stoke-on-Trent is open and ready for business.

Congresswoman Marcia Fudge, who we met in the USA, was impressed by our Mandate for Change programme and our commitment to doing everything we can to create jobs and bring in investment.

Unless we continue to work hard together, and push and push at every half open door, we will not succeed.

An important part of the council's business now is to generate the money we need to keep up the momentum for change.

The Government has made it clear there is limited additional money to enable councils to stimulate growth in the local economy. We are consulting on a total of £24million worth of budget proposals to offset cost pressures, Government cuts and to invest in economic growth.

We are identifying the services our citizens really need, removing duplication and, by saving money, we will create funds to continue to grow.

There is more information about the choices we need to make and how you can have your say on page 13 of this issue of *Our City*.

This is an important part of driving forward the accelerated development of our city to provide benefits for everyone who lives and works here.



Our City is printed on recycled paper. When you have finished with this publication please help the environment by passing it on to a friend or recycling it.



A computer generated artist's impression showing the new bus station, with the Victoria Hall in the background, and City Sentral on the site of the current bus station.

City centre regeneration turns a dream into a reality

WORK progressing on the city centre's new bus station clears the way for the massive City Sentral development at the former East West Precinct.

When the first buses pull into new bays and boarding areas in Autumn 2012, long awaited demolition work will start to transform the 1960s concrete old bus station into one of the UK's most modern

retail and leisure destinations.

The development is the result of years of hard work and negotiation by the council to attract a developer who will provide the public transport hub and retail elements including entertainment and food.

Birmingham-based Realis Estates will pump around £350 million into the development, which will see a flagship new M&S department store – three times bigger than the existing one – and a Vue multiplex cinema surrounded by 80 stores, 11 food and drink units, an 80-bed hotel and parking for over 1,000 cars.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development said the appointment of contractors Vinci to build the new bus station was a landmark in the regeneration of the City Centre.

He said: "The progress on the ground at the site of the new bus station means the process has started to turn the

city's dreams into a reality. By hard work and perseverance by the council and private sector partners we will see an investment of hundreds of millions of pounds as the existing East West Precinct is demolished and City Sentral is built.

"We have often talked about the importance of transforming that part of the City Centre... now we, with our partners, are delivering that plan, making our city's main shopping area more attractive not only to local residents but also to people from further afield who would previously have gone elsewhere, attracted by a better offer."

Back on the map

As work on the bus station gathers pace, Potteries Shopping Centre owners put forward proposals for their own extension called The Avenue, complete with an 8-10 screen digital cinema, six high quality restaurants, attractive pedestrianised areas and additional car parking.

Councillor Meredith said: "A city of our size should be one of the top 30 retail destinations in the UK, rather than outside the top 50 as we are now."

"Developments of this quality will put that right and put Stoke-on-Trent back on the map, where it should be, as one of the top retail destinations in the region and among the best in the country."



THE AVENUE... a proposed extension to the Potteries Shopping Centre complete with cinema and restaurants.

Live webcast of full council meetings

MEETINGS of the full council can now be viewed online. To see and hear the debates and decisions which affect life in Stoke-on-Trent, visit stoke.gov.uk and click on webcasting. A list of dates and times of council meetings and committee meetings can be found on our website at stoke.gov.uk/meetingdates

Give us your feedback on this issue of **Our City** by emailing ourcity@stoke.gov.uk or write to: FREEPOST *Our City*.



Companies flock to city talks after 'let's do business' call

THE city's dedicated investment development service is working with more than 200 businesses on a wide range of projects, with the potential to create hundreds of new jobs.

Since its launch in August 2010, the Make It Stoke-on-Trent Team has fielded investment and development enquiries from companies working in sectors such as light manufacturing, the automotive supply chain and logistics.

Everything from planning support and labour force costs, to purchasing land and access to training and recruitment services has been discussed. And if all the potential projects come to fruition it could see more than 1,000 new jobs created in the city.

The positive response is a major boost to the work of the Make It Stoke-on-Trent Team, which provides a one-stop-shop for inward investment and development.

And it ties in with the vision of the *Mandate for Change* initiative, which aims to make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city by rolling out the "red carpet" treatment to potential investors.

John Willis, Strategic Investment Manager for the council, said: "These are positive, realistic enquiries which have the potential to be very good news for the city.

A great place to invest

"The Investment Development Team is working hard to provide the kind of packages of support requested and draw on the expertise available at the council and partner organisations to tailor these packages to particular needs.

"We are very enthusiastic about the kind of companies that have approached us – including companies in the light manufacturing sector and in automotive parts.

"They are keen to take advantage of Stoke-on-Trent's strategic location, with its excellent communications and connectivity to the rest of the country, as well as the range of development opportunities that are available.

"The kinds of questions the team have been asked to look into include enquiries into receiving recruitment support through the award-winning JET programme, planning support and advice and details on supply chains and labour force costs."

He added: "The team is really getting the message out there that Stoke-on-Trent and its surrounding area is a great place to invest and a great place to do business.

"We have been attending conferences and key business events across the country and are working with the local MPs and business support leaders to help generate interest.

"We are also liaising closely with the existing North Staffordshire business community because they have a big role to play in banging the drum for the area too."

On top of the new enquiries, many local businesses have also benefited from the kind of support packages that are on offer.

These have helped many organisations to expand existing operations or to relocate to a bigger site in other areas of the city.

Mandate for Change



SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE...
Apprentice Wiring Operative Aidan Rawlinson soldering precision connectors in the training academy at Tekdata's new Festival Park headquarters, pictured below.

These include Tekdata Interconnections, which has moved to new state-of-the-art premises at Festival Park and set up a new training academy as part of the Reroor programme.

Another example is Aerotherm, an industrial engineering group which expanded and relocated from Longton to a new base at Scotia Business Park, Tunstall.

The move allowed the company to diversify into three divisions and Aerotherm was able to recruit and source funding for new positions through the JET (Jobs, Enterprise and Training) programme.

All the relocation and expansion plans are tailored to individual needs while small start up business grants of up to £1,500 are available to help fledgling firms.

For more information call the hotline to the city's Investment Development Team 01782 234747 or visit stoke.gov.uk



Volunteers needed for bloom plan

VOLUNTEERS are being urged to come forward as a Potteries nature group prepares for next year's Britain in Bloom awards.

Friends of Trent Mill Nature Park at Joiners Square have plenty of imaginative ideas up their sleeves to further transform the park into a winning entry for the Our Neighbourhood category.

But they need help as they work alongside council Countryside Officers on the site. Funding applications are in as the Friends plan to re-vamp the pond and build a platform for pond dipping, plant a wild-flower meadow and construct an insect hotel.

Val Platt, who is Chair of the Friends and Manager of Eastwood Neighbourhood Nursery, said: "The little ones from the nursery and children from Waterside Primary are already heavily involved along with their mums and dads.

"We have more working party days planned between now and judging next July.

"The park is really bringing the community together and that's absolutely fabulous so anyone who would like to join in should get in touch."

● **For more information about Trent Mill Nature Park and how you can help, call Val or Christine on 01782 283222 or email enquiries@eastwoodnursery.com**



Woods mark royal jubilee

TWO woods are planned for Stoke-on-Trent as part of celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

The so called Diamond Woods form part of the Woodland Trust's plan for 60 acres of new woodland across the country to mark Her Majesty's 60 years on the throne.

The council plans to plant native species like silver birch, ash, hazel and oak on land either side of Biddulph Road in Great Chell and Packmoor.

Another site has been chosen off Fenpark Road in the Fenton East ward.

Both areas are currently open space and mainly mown grassland. A two-month consultation earlier in the year showed over-whelming support for the idea.

The council has now applied to the Forestry Commission for funding and plans community planting events this winter.

Police thank public after **crime raids**

POLICE have thanked residents whose vigilance and concern about suspicious activity sparked a major operation which clamped down on criminals.

Sixteen people were arrested during raids at 12 homes throughout the north of the city as part of Staffordshire Police's enforcement day.

The pre-planned operation involving 80 officers and support teams targeted people and properties believed to be involved in drug-related offences and crimes like burglary, robbery and vehicle theft.

Police carried out the hard-hitting action as a result of community concerns about suspicious incidents taking place in properties in their neighbourhoods.

Working with partnership agencies, they also targeted known drug users in a bid to get them into rehabilitation and "rat trap" vehicles were deployed in an attempt to catch thieves red-handed.

Clamping down

Inspector Martin Brereton, from Stoke-on-Trent North Local Policing Team (LPT), said: "This operation sends out a clear message to offenders that police are serious about tackling drug-related and associated crimes like theft and robbery and at the same time reassures members of the public that we are clamping down."

"The enforcement day had a dual purpose. As well as targeting suspected drug dealers we have also arrested those we believe to be involved in stealing or handling stolen goods. There is a definite link between Class A and B drugs misuse and this type of crime, which is why both elements were targeted."

"The information we acted on was based on the concerns of members of the public about suspicious activity in their communities. People drew up a wish list of their concerns – and we acted in a very positive way."

Inspector Brereton added: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank those members of the community who came forward with



PC Jenny Dawson with evidence taken from one of the raids.

information. Without their support operations such as this would be very difficult if not impossible."

Detailed searches were carried out at each address raided and high visibility patrols were carried out to reassure local residents and keep them informed with leaflets and crime-reduction advice.

Warrants executed under the Misuse of Drugs Act were part of Staffordshire Police's Operation Nemesis, which is driving drug crime out of the city.

Inspector Brereton added: "This has been a very successful operation from the police's point of view as well as the community's. It also sent out a message to criminals that their behaviour won't be tolerated and enforcement days such as this will stop them in their tracks."

More enforcement days are planned for the area as well as the rest of the city.



PC Anthony Baddeley batters down a front door during the day of enforcement arrests carried out after concerns from the public.



PC Alan Woolridge posting flyers to neighbours.

Excitement mounts as lucky Torchbearers set to find out about their role in city's Olympic dream



ABOUT 20 lucky people chosen to carry the Olympic Flame through the city in May will find out they have been successful in the next few weeks.

Local people nominated by friends, family and the community will take the Olympic Flame on its journey through Shelton, the City Centre, Cobridge, Burslem and Middleport on 30 and 31 May 2012.

The evening of 30 May will see a glittering celebration event with up to 15,000 people watching a stage show marking the Flame's passage through the city on its way to the London Games.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "This route takes in five of our city's wonderful communities and will mean residents, businesses and visitors will get this once in a lifetime chance to see the Olympic Flame alight in Stoke-on-Trent."

"The arrival of the Flame highlights Stoke-on-Trent's ability to host events of international significance, galvanise public support for our talented athletes and showcase Stoke-on-Trent on the national and international stage."

"This will go a long way to showing prospective businesses just what facilities and infrastructure are already in place for them to make a success of themselves in the city."

The Flame will be kept burning all night at a secret location and will be guarded by officers from the Metropolitan Police.

Torchbearers will be contacted during December by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) and partners Coca-Cola, Lloyds TSB and Samsung.

Sebastian Coe, Chair of LOCOG said: "We are thrilled to confirm that Stoke-on-Trent's City Centre, Shelton, Cobridge, Burslem and Middleport will act as host locations for the Olympic Flame, extending an invitation to people in Stoke-on-Trent to welcome the Olympic Torch Relay during its journey around the UK."

"This is the UK's moment to shine and I want to encourage people across Stoke-on-Trent to start planning how they can be part of this once in a lifetime opportunity and show their support for the inspirational Torchbearers chosen to carry the Olympic Flame as we count down to the start of the Olympic Games."



Prince Charles talks with Hand Dipper Christopher Kiff in the glazing department.



The Prince of Wales tries his hand at transferring with a little coaching from Transferer Bridget Dix, watched by entrepreneur John Caudwell, Ros Kerlake, Chief Executive of The Prince's Regeneration Trust and Tim Johnston of English Heritage.

Prince's charities in talks over Burslem regeneration

TALKS are set to take place between Stoke-on-Trent City Council and The Prince of Wales's charities including his Regeneration Trust over new initiatives for the regeneration of Burslem.

Trust officials have toured historic buildings in the Mother Town – including the iconic Wedgwood Institute which is standing empty and in urgent need of restoration.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "We have held preliminary discussions with the Trust with a view to involving them in projects in Burslem and we would welcome the opportunity to take this forward."

The Prince's Regeneration Trust has already invested £7.5 million to acquire and restore the Grade II*-listed Middleport Pottery and secure the manufacturing future of the current occupiers, Burgess, Dorling and Leigh – makers of the famous blue and white Burleigh ware.

And when The Prince of Wales made a recent high-profile visit to Middleport Pottery to see the work of one of his charities, his cavalcade made a detour through Burslem town centre

passing the Wedgwood Institute. Prince Charles was taken on a tour of the factory – the last working steam-powered Victorian pottery in the UK – where he met many of the 40-strong workforce and tried his hand at delicate transfer work.

The Prince said Middleport Pottery was a "special and unique" survival story and Burleigh was "incredibly popular around the world".

Expansion

He said: "I also want to try to see if we could use this remarkable place as a means of helping to gradually regenerate other parts of Burslem – and perhaps to spread things further into Stoke-on-Trent."

Restoration and expansion work at the pottery will start next year paving the way for the development of a visitor centre with the aim of attracting 30,000 visitors a year within five years. It is envisaged the scheme could create around 100 jobs.

Ros Kerlake, Chief Executive of The Prince's Regeneration Trust, said: "We are very excited about the prospects for employees, suppliers and the local community as a result of this project. Middleport will act as a catalyst for further regeneration in Burslem and beyond."



Prince Charles holds a Burleigh Dutch flower jug decorated with a Victorian blue bird pattern. The jug was one of two presented to him during his visit to Middleport Pottery.



The Prince chats with Biscuit Ware Selector Mary Adams.

Taking confident steps towards a better future for our city

By City Council Chief Executive **John van de Laarschot**



IT'S been three months since we launched our Mandate for Change and unveiled our vision to make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city by enabling and supporting business.

Since then, as you will read elsewhere in this issue of *Our City*, our Investment Development Team are working with more than 200 businesses looking to base themselves here or to expand their current premises.

That work could lead to more than 1,000 new jobs being created in the short term, and is exactly the kind of target we are aiming for. Incorporating the success of our existing schemes, like the JET (Jobs, Enterprise and Training) programme, we are creating an attractive landscape for potential investors.

Add to that the £2.5m we have received from the Government's Regional Growth Fund for transport improvements around Etruria Valley, and we are rolling out the "red carpet" to potential investors.

It will allow us to create a development site with easy access to road and rail, meaning manufacturers can guarantee easy supply lines and that businesses are easily accessible for their staff and clients.

Couple that with the worldwide acclaim that the Staffordshire Hoard gained during its stay in Washington, and the links our Investment Development Team made whilst in the United States, and we have an ideal platform to bring the best to our city.

We also had another royal visitor, HRH The Prince of Wales, who said, during his recent visit to Middleport Pottery, that he wanted business to be a catalyst for Stoke-on-Trent to regenerate itself.

There is much more to do but we are certainly taking important and confident steps towards a better future for Stoke-on-Trent.

China Tales

By Placer

Civic couple's Costa coincidences prove again... it's a small world

A HOLIDAY trip to Spain by Stoke-on-Trent Lord Mayor Councillor Terry Follows and Lady Mayoress Jacqueline Pearson turned out to be proof of the old adage "it's a small world"

On their first morning in the resort of Benalmadena on the Costa del Sol, the civic couple decided to head for the beach across the road from their hotel.

Of hundreds of loungers laid out on the sands they choose two conveniently placed in close proximity to the beach snack bar.

A few minutes had elapsed when a sun-tanned angler, fishing rod in hand, walked up the beach from the sea and plonked on the lounge next to Terry and they struck up a conversation.

Terry recalled: "I thought, as he was fishing, he was perhaps more permanently based in the resort – so I asked if he lived in Benalmadena?"

To which the angler

replied: "No. I live somewhere better than here – Stoke-on-Trent!"

Terry continued: "I said to him 'Well, in that case – I'm your Lord Mayor! And he said – you know, I thought I recognised you."

The angler and his wife – who turned out to be Vic and Elaine from Malcolm Close, Baddeley Green – were soon chatting away with Terry and Jacqueline about all things Stokie.

After a while, the two couples left the beach together to stroll back to their hotels – or hotel, as it turned out, they were staying at the same accommodation.

"We walked together to the hotel lift and – another coincidence – our rooms were on the same floor," said Terry.

"And then we discovered – would you believe it – our rooms were next door to each other. That set the trend for the week and we enjoyed a nice holiday friendship with Vic and Elaine. Small world."



LITTLE TREASURES...
Year 2 pupils Maddison Molloy, Dennis Warr and Jalisa Betton dressed up for their pirate themed lessons.

School pirate crew scores an 'outstanding' achievement

SWASHBUCKLING pirates have given young pupils the cutting edge when it comes to the best possible start to their education.

Children at Glebe Primary School, in Fenton, have been learning all about the escapades of infamous seadogs and their high seas adventures as a way of making English, maths and science lessons fun, as well as educational.

Teachers devised a programme that wove a pirates theme into the National Curriculum – and it has paid dividends.

The school has notched up successes in the latest Key Stage 1 figures – which are based on the achievements of five to seven year olds.

And Glebe Primary was rated as "Outstanding" by Ofsted Inspectors, who said its innovative curriculum should be seen as a flagship model for others to aspire to.

Deputy headteacher Nicky Broomhill said: "Over the last four years we have had a real overhaul of the curriculum and we have introduced many more creative teaching and learning

opportunities. Teachers have been given more of a free rein to push the boundaries and develop programmes that really engage children and involve their parents.

"For instance, Year 2 children told us to they really wanted to learn about pirates.

So we set the question: "Are Pirates real" and wove it into all aspects of the curriculum.

"All the subjects addressed issues around this. So, for instance, in maths we worked on compass bearings, directions and geometry.

Push the boundaries

"It has made learning a lot of fun while making sure the key skills set down in the National Curriculum are passed on."

Nicky added: "Where possible we really have tried to push the boundaries and make the work as relevant to the pupils as possible.

"For instance, part of the programme is to study a famous person from the past.

"Many schools will pick someone like Florence Nightingale or William Shakespeare but we went for Princess Diana because it is something the children can relate to, especially because of William

and Kate's royal wedding earlier this year."

Glebe is one of many primary schools in the city which have notched up early educational successes.

St Augustine's Catholic Primary, Meir; Our Lady and St. Benedict RC Primary, Abbey Hulton; St John's CE, Trent Vale; Holden Lane Primary, Sneyd Green; Carmountside Primary, Stoke; Crescent Primary, Meir; and St Gregory's Catholic Primary, Longton are all improving at Key Stage 1.

The statistics are based on achievements in reading, writing, maths and science.



Sign of a club full of memories

IT'S not quite the Staffordshire Hoard, but another treasure trove has been discovered which tells the story of a colourful period in local history.

Revellers with happy memories of the popular Chico's nightclub – which enjoyed its swinging heyday between 1980 and its closure in 2003 – have removed the old club sign from the building which will eventually be developed as part of the City Central development.

While doing so they were shown an old store room packed with reminders from the club, including the old mirror

ball that hung above the Chico's dancefloor.

Former DJ Ben Bowker played top alternative tunes at the club's legendary Saturday night sessions.

Ben, who runs twice-yearly sell-out reunion parties for Chico's members, said the sign would be auctioned off and the proceeds donated to charity.

He added: "The treasures we discovered when we went back into the building for one last time brought back lots of memories. I'm glad we saved some of them and we'll be doing something special with them in the future."

Make it

Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

Report a housing repair:
stoke.gov.uk/housingrepair

Hoard creates golden opportunity to forge US trade links

GLITTERING gold from the Staffordshire Hoard is proving a record-breaking hit in the United States capital, and is helping Stoke-on-Trent to forge US trade links.

One-hundred pieces have gone on display in Washington DC and became the second most popular exhibition ever to open at the National Geographic Museum (second only to the Terracotta Warriors).

Council leader Mohammed Pervez headed a small delegation from the council for the launch, and met key business leaders to explain how the council's Mandate for Change is giving companies the red carpet treatment to invest in Stoke-on-Trent through streamlined planning processes and tailored solutions for employers.

Spencer Mahony, HM Consul director (south east) at the British Embassy in Washington said: "It was really useful to hear from Stoke-on-Trent's team face-to-face. It is clear that Staffordshire has a lot to offer, and is the perfect hub for companies that don't want to locate in London. It really helps having a personal visit because it gives me the confidence when speaking to US businesses to say that Stoke-on-Trent will look after you."

Councillor Pervez explained Mandate for Change to Congresswoman Marcia Fudge in the House of Representatives. She said: "Stoke-on-Trent is a great location for businesses to come into the UK community. Your city is doing everything it can to promote itself and would seem like a natural fit to partner with cities in the US."

Landscape is changing

"You are a progressive council. You have to be creative and innovative, in precisely the ways you are doing, in order to keep businesses because the landscape is changing so quickly."

The council delegation also met representatives from the DC Chamber of Commerce, which represents 1,700 members, including Microsoft, FedEx and Google. As a result of the meeting, the North Staffordshire Chamber of Trade will also be able to forge links with chambers in Maryland and Virginia. The team met the British-American Business Association, which helps major companies develop UK-US business links.

During the four-day visit – which was paid for by National Geographic, through an agreement to display the treasure – the team also met Destination DC, Washington's tourism board to promote Stoke-on-Trent's world-leading ceramics companies and explain how the Hoard is a global tourist attraction.

Councillor Pervez said: "The



MAN ON A MISSION...
Council Leader Mohammed Pervez on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington DC, and below, Congresswoman Marcia Fudge tells Councillor Pervez and Curator Deb Klemperer that coming to Washington and promoting Stoke-on-Trent is exactly the type of profile raising work needed to attract business to the city.

Staffordshire Hoard is a truly world class treasure and the overwhelming response from visitors in Washington mirrors that here in Stoke-on-Trent.

"If we are serious about bringing jobs and investment opportunities to our city, then the meetings and contacts that we have made in Washington are exactly the kind of thing that we should be doing. We have had a very encouraging response from the people we met in Washington, and we will be looking to promote our city more and more, particularly to overseas markets, in order to show off the best Stoke-on-Trent has to offer."



Extra officers deployed on safer streets in the run up to busy Christmas party season

EXTRA police officers are being deployed on the streets of Stoke-on-Trent over the festive period as part of the latest Safer Nights operation.

Working with the city's Nightlife Partnership, the police are leading an operation designed to help people stay safe while out having fun in the six towns over Christmas and the New Year.

Officers will brief door staff and the managers of pubs, clubs and nightclubs as they launch the 13-night operation from Monday, 19 December.

They will check venues for underage drinkers while compliance visits are also planned to make sure licences are not being breached. Off licences will also be checked.

Street pastors, who took part for the first time last year, will be out again as they continue the work they have been carrying out on key nights all this year. Two teams of four in high visibility jackets will offer advice and support to vulnerable people.

Up to four taxi marshals, also in high visibility vests and equipped with radios, will make sure people stay safe by using only licensed vehicles.

Inspector Shaun Kerrigan, Deputy Commander for the Stoke-on-Trent Police Central Sector, said: "We've been running these operations for about 10 years now and they are highly successful."

"The street pastors were really helpful last year and they'll be out again supporting people who need it and, if they have to, liaising with parents and partners and staying with people until they can get them home."

"The aim of the partners involved in Safer Nights is to reduce violence so we want to ensure people coming into town for a night out or to work are able to do so in a safe and friendly way."

"We're here to help rather than hinder, we're very community spirited but we won't tolerate bad behaviour."

Powers used to reduce antisocial behaviour

POLICE powers to break up groups of young people and even take them home have slashed antisocial behaviour in Fegg Hayes and Packmoor.

Since a Section 30 Dispersal Order was introduced in April this year, incidences of antisocial behaviour fell by almost 80 per cent.

Section 30 of the Antisocial Behaviour Act 2003 contains powers to disperse groups of two or more people.

It also allows the police to return a young person home if they are under 16 years old and unsupervised in a public place after 9pm. If they return to the same place within 24 hours they can be arrested and prosecuted.

The law applies if a police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the presence or behaviour of a group has resulted, or is likely to result, in any member of the public being intimidated, harassed, alarmed or distressed.

In Fegg Hayes and Packmoor, police arrested eight young people between March and September this year, seven of whom were referred to the council's Youth Offending Team.

Fifty youths were taken home with advice given to them and their parents. In the same period, 100 dispersal notices were issued, preventing groups of two or more people from gathering in the area.

Large quantities of alcohol were also seized on three occasions from Tin Tunnel – a popular meeting place.

Inspector Martin Brereton said Neighbourhood Officers had explained the reasons for the order to young people in schools and youth clubs and to local residents' associations.

He said: "Together with our partners we have achieved excellent results and the positive feedback we hear from the public is encouraging."

"Local officers will continue to patrol the Section 30 area tackling any issues and talking to young people to make sure antisocial behaviour problems do not arise."

"We would like to thank all members of the local communities for working with us to reduce antisocial behaviour in Packmoor and Fegg Hayes."

● **Neighbourhood Officers stage regular meetings for residents to air their concerns. Anyone unable to attend the meetings can call the local officers on 101 to arrange a chat.**

Make it

Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

► Apply for a local land search at:
stoke.gov.uk/searches

Museums bid for UK accolade

THE city's four museums are looking for local people to vote for them as they bid to become the nation's favourite family friendly museum.

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Etruria Industrial Museum and Ford Green Hall are asking people to nominate them for the Kids in Museums award for encouraging and welcoming families through their doors.

For the past two years, the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery has been in the top six of the competition; being praised along the way for its commitment to family learning and making sure children are still seen in museums.

The competition, sponsored by the Daily Telegraph, is now accepting nominations ahead of next year's judging. Nominations must be in by Friday 2 December, 2011.

To make a nomination, people can email award@kidsinmuseums.org.uk or post to Family Friendly Museum Award Kids in Museums, 49-51 East Road, London, N1 6AH.

City centre hub provides the skills for **jobs in retail industry**

A NEW skills centre has opened in the City Centre to train people for jobs in retail.

The Store in Tontine Street is one of a growing network of centres across the country offering training leading to national qualifications and support for businesses.

Backed by TV shopping guru Mary Portas, it features conference facilities, two IT training suites and a mock shop. Its delivery partners are the National Skills Academy for Retail, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Stoke on Trent College and Jobcentre Plus.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "This is a truly exciting project in the heart of the city.

Thousands of new jobs

"Over the next few years the retail sector in our city will be changing as developments like City Central bring thousands of new jobs. The Store will be helping to recruit staff for the high profile retail outlets that will fill the regional shopping centre. It will provide a unique opportunity for individuals to train and get the skills to be able to secure retail jobs – creating local jobs and

opportunities for local people."

One of them is Jane Moss who was offered a job as a receptionist and customer advisor at The Store after 20 years out of work while her daughter was growing up

She said: "I'd been looking for a job for about four years. It was very disheartening. I felt like a second-class citizen because all I wanted to do was work. I was in shock when I got this job but it's brilliant. This has given me my life back."

More information on courses and business support is available by calling 01782 238492 or going to www.the-store.org.uk

Jane Moss, who visited the Store, was helped to find a job as a receptionist and customer advisor.






Thought you couldn't afford a home of your own? Think again!

We are the HomeBuy Agent for Shropshire and Staffordshire, and we help people of all ages in all sorts of circumstances to find their dream home.

In this role, we act as the first point of contact for all those seeking a home through one of the range of HomeBuy low-cost home ownership and discounted market rent products.

SEE OUR VIDEO AT
www.orbithomebuyagents.co.uk



Visit www.orbithomebuyagents.co.uk or call 03458 50 20 50 (select option 2)

Open the door to your new home with Orbit HomeBuy Agents



Terms and conditions apply – ask for details. Orbit HomeBuy Agents is managed by Orbit Homes (2020) Limited, a member of Orbit Group Limited which is an exempt charity registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965.



School's Out... for Winter



There's plenty to keep you entertained over the winter holidays, with events and activities taking place in the City's libraries, leisure centres, museums, parks and Children's Centres.

To find out what's going on, visit stoke.gov.uk/schoolholidayevents

For more information tel 0800 015 1120
or 01782 232200 or email FIS@stoke.gov.uk
stoke.gov.uk/schoolholidayevents





Dr Chandra Kanneganti, the city's Clinical Commissioning Group Lead for Non-Elective Care examines three-month-old Saira Khaiiq with mother Noren Akhtar from Cobridge at the Five Towns Surgery.

Winter health advice helps patients choose the right care

STOKE-ON-TRENT patients are urged to get the right treatment in the right place this winter.

A wide range of NHS services are available in the Potteries which can often meet people's minor needs and save them a wait in one of the busiest A&E units in the West Midlands.

Doctor Chandra Kanneganti, the city's Clinical Commissioning Group Lead for Non-Elective Care, said: "We get an average of 300 patients a day coming into A&E and that can rise to 360 during the winter.

"Of those, about 20 or 30 people will have minor ailments and they could go elsewhere for treatment.

"This would save a lot of time for both our

medical staff and the patients themselves."

He is reminding people that A&E is for accident and emergencies only including conditions like choking, chest pain, loss of consciousness, severe blood loss, broken bones, deep wounds or a suspected stroke.

Walk-in services

For more minor issues like colds and coughs or medical advice and an examination, patients should first make an appointment with their GP. If their surgery is closed, people should call the GP Out-of-Hours Service on 01782 719100 within 24 hours.

Walk-in services are available at the Hanley Health and Wellbeing Centre in Stafford

Street, Hanley, which is open from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year. No registration is necessary and the centre can be contacted on 0300 123 6759.

Minor injuries can be treated at the Haywood Walk-in Centre in Burslem. Call 01782 673500.

NHS Direct on 0845 4647 is the place to go for health information and advice around the clock. Pharmacists can also offer advice on common winter illnesses and the best medicines to treat them.

People are being advised to keep a medical cabinet well stocked with cough and cold remedies, pain and indigestion relief and plasters so they can treat themselves for minor winter illnesses and injuries.

Free flu jabs advised for people in 'at-risk' groups

HEALTH bosses are urging "at-risk" people in Stoke-on-Trent to take up the offer of free flu vaccinations.

Letters have been sent by GPs to everyone over 65, pregnant women and people with long-term conditions such as heart problems, asthma, diabetes, multiple sclerosis and serious liver or kidney disease.

The offer is also open to those living in long-stay residential care homes or other long-stay care facilities.

The vaccination produces antibodies about a week to 10 days after injection and protects people for a whole year against similar seasonal flu viruses.

People can further protect themselves and those around them by practising good hand hygiene with the "Catch it, Bin it, Kill it" technique, which involves covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, throwing it away and then cleaning hands as soon as possible with soap and water or an alcohol hand gel.

Those not eligible for the free jab are being advised to contact their local chemist as many are offering flu vaccinations at a reasonable cost.

Anyone who believes they may have flu is asked to stay at home if possible and call their doctor for an assessment and advice on what to do.



Anyone in one of the 'at-risk' groups is advised to visit their GP for a free flu jab.

twitter

twitter.com/SoTCityCouncil

Find us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/stokeontrent.citycouncil

YouTube

www.youtube.com/user/StokeOnTrentCouncil

flickr

www.flickr.com/photos/stoke-on-trent/

Thousands in touch on social media

THOUSANDS of web surfers are keeping in touch with the council through social media sites.

As well as hearing up-to-the-minute news from big events like the Tour of Britain or a blow by blow account of full council meetings on Twitter, they can report issues and send feedback which will be forwarded to the relevant council teams.

From reporting a highways problem to having a say on the council's spending plans, Twitter and Facebook can be a great way to send a point of view right to the heart of local Government.

The Facebook page has links to news about council services, as well as useful information from partners including Staffordshire Police and NHS Stoke on Trent.

There is also a Flickr page containing photographs from council events and a YouTube channel which contains the video made to launch the council's Mandate for Change initiative in the Summer.

Web Editor Karen Steel said: "We want as many people as possible to sign up as followers on Twitter or as friends on Facebook so they can use social media to keep in touch with what the council is doing.

"The sites are updated several times a day and are reaching out around the world to give great publicity for Stoke-on-Trent.

"We welcome responses and feedback through social networks and the sites are monitored so we can try to respond as quickly as possible or pass the information on to relevant council teams."

Dazzling display watched by millions



ROBBIIE Williams, Sir Stanley Matthews, children, our Lord Mayor and even a lady called Delilah gave a “never-to-be-forgotten” vision of everything good about Stoke-on-Trent when the city’s float took its place in the Lord Mayor of London’s parade.

An open topped bus stylishly decorated with city icons like Sir Stan, Robbie, the Spitfire, world famous ceramics and a flame

COVER PICTURE: dancers Melissa Potts aged 18, wearing a Moorcroft costume, and Kate Sanders-Peppitt aged 19, whose plate shows an Emma Bridgewater pattern. Both were part of Stoke-on-Trent’s colourful display in the Lord Mayor of London’s Parade.

signifying next year’s visit of the Olympic Flame wowed the crowds on the three mile route round the capital, and was watched by a global TV audience.

Graphics on the bus, which would be seen by millions worldwide, promoted the city’s business hotline telephone number and the fact that Stoke-on-Trent is a great place to do business.

Lord Mayor Councillor Terry Follows, who invited 12 students from Trentham High School to join him on the bus, beamed with pride all the way round the three-and-a-half hour route.

The children, aged between 11 and 13 waved their city flags and even started an impromptu

Lord Mayor Terry Follows and Lady Mayoress Jacqueline Pearson are joined by Year 7 and 8 pupils from Trentham High School for the Lord Mayor of London’s Parade.

version of Stoke City’s anthem, the Tom Jones classic Delilah to delight the crowds.

Councillor Follows had been invited to represent the city in the parade by Lord Mayor of London David Wootton, who has a soft spot for Stoke-on-Trent and whose father lives in Burslem.

A dazzling display by dancers from the Jill Clewes Academy, wearing costumes representing plates from the biggest names in Stoke-on-Trent ceramics, was among the most photographed performances of the day... even though the dancers did have to

negotiate their way round some surprises left by hundreds of horses in the parade.

Councillor Follows said: “It was the most amazing day and we were overwhelmed by the reception we were given by the crowds.

“It was a day of smiles and pride for everyone who took part, and the children from Trentham High School were tremendous ambassadors for the city.”

Among the many high points was when the bus drove past grandstands at St Paul’s Cathedral, where the children’s

parents were watching the parade and gave a rousing welcome, complete with flag-waving.

Dancer Bekha Kilincarslan, said: “It was such a great honour to represent Stoke-on-Trent in such an amazing event. It was and always will be a truly memorable experience.”

● Councillor Follows was invited back down to London two days later to attend the Lord Mayor of London’s glittering banquet in Whitehall. The dinner was addressed by Prime Minister David Cameron.

Fostering and Adoption in Stoke-on-Trent
Making a difference

☎ 01782 234555



stoke.gov.uk/fostering
stoke.gov.uk/adoption



Do you have a child celebrating their third birthday between September and December of this year?

FREE early education for three and four year olds

If so, your child is entitled to receive up to 15 hours a week of **FREE** Early Education from January 2012.



Early Education is part of the foundation stage and helps children to develop a strong basis for future learning. Early Education can help your child to learn through hands-on activities and play, supported by staff who understand how children grow, learn and develop.

To find out more, including a list of local childcare settings who deliver Free Early Education, contact the

family Information Service

tel: 0800 015 1120 or 01782 232200



www.facebook.com and search for Stoke Family Information Service

stoke.gov.uk



www.twitter.com/StokeFIS



Personal budget puts Charlotte in control of care

STOKE City fan Charlotte Mountjoy is highly educated, loves the theatre, having a laugh and making her own choices like any independent young woman.

The 34-year-old goes to watch the Potters when she can, takes the train to Birmingham, Manchester and London, and enjoys the cut and thrust of politics. The Jane Austen classic *Persuasion* is her favourite book.

She has a degree from Staffordshire University in European Culture and Cultural Studies and a Masters in Social and Cultural Theory. She also has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair.

Her condition can be limiting but it did not stop her moving the 166 miles from Glastonbury to the Potteries when she was 18. Charlotte has built her own life since then and now has added independence thanks to Personalisation – the Government policy which has given her complete control of her own finances and budget.

She is now paid directly each month through social care and the Independent Living Fund administered by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, an arrangement that enables her to make her own care choices.

Charlotte, who has lived in the same adapted flat in Fenton for 13 years, now employs three personal assistants and uses some agency care staff. She also has an advisor who supplies pay slips and helps with advertising if she ever needs staff.

A real inspiration

She said: “The traditional system of care meant I had agency staff coming in every few hours which meant I wasn’t always able to do what I wanted when I wanted. That’s not to criticise the agencies. It just wasn’t right for me.

“I was worried about organising my own cover at first in case of emergencies but started off one day a week which helped me get used to it.

“Now it’s much more flexible than it was before and I employ people who I want to be in my house.”

She now contacts her care team to provide support at staggered intervals seven days a week between 9.30am and 7pm. An agency night carer pops in around 9pm. One of her personal assistants, Pippa Birch, 43, said of her employer: “She’s a real inspiration, just how confident she is and how she lives her life. She’s amazing to work for.”

Charlotte now has plenty of time for her own interests and enjoys seeing her family, most of whom have moved to the Potteries and Cheshire. Her mum



INDEPENDENT WOMAN...
Charlotte Mountjoy pictured with one of her three personal assistants, Pippa Birch.

“““

I was worried about organising my own cover at first in case of emergencies but started off one day a week which helped me get used to it. Now it’s much more flexible than it was before and I employ people who I want to be in my house.

CHARLOTTE MOUNTJOY

Janet lives in Northwich, she has four brothers and a sister and is aunt to three nieces and a nephew.

“Life is a lot more flexible for me now,” said Charlotte. “I’m in control so I’ve been to Stratford to see *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and I went to Tutbury Castle near Derby for a special do to watch the Royal Wedding.”

Her care package is monitored

by the council’s Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment Team – a team of social workers who are committed to providing the right services for people with disabilities while encouraging them to be independent.

Social Worker Michelle Beaman, who worked with Charlotte for two years, said: “Our team see the person first.

Their individual wishes and desires are actively promoted within their community care assessments. Working with Charlotte was a great pleasure and it’s been so fulfilling for all of us to stand back and see her do so well.”

For more information on Personalisation, call 0800 561 0015 or go to stoke.gov.uk/socialcare



Fire safety campaign steps up alarm drive

FIREFIGHTERS are launching a new campaign to remind people to test their smoke detector batteries every week.

The lifesaving Push the Button campaign simply asks residents to check their alarms by pushing the test button once a week.

If the batteries are OK the alarm will sound – if not, they need replacing.

To follow on from last year’s launch – which featured a fire safety-related version of the Sugababes’ hit Push the Button – Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has even launched a smartphone app which can be downloaded from the internet and will issue a weekly reminder.

Fire safety officers launched the campaign after it was revealed that although nine out of ten households have smoke alarms, a shocking seven out of ten never test them.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service asked the public to send in their tips on how to remember to Push the Button. The most imaginative – which won a family day out at Alton Towers – was to tape a weekly lottery ticket next to the alarm, and every time you renew it, to push the button!

Risk Reduction Manager Dave Steele said last year’s pop song campaign had attracted tens of thousands of hits on YouTube and the fire service’s website, and this year the aim was to build on its success.

He said: “We want to ask members of the public ‘How will you remember?’ in an attempt to encourage weekly smoke alarm testing to become part of a resident’s weekly routine.

“We want to ensure that the public are always as safe as possible from fire in their own homes.”

● Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service’s smartphone app costs 59p to download and all the money raised will go to the Firefighters’ Charity.

To find out more visit www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk

City parents sign up to use online applications

OVER half the parents applying for a September 2012 secondary school place in Stoke-on-Trent have made their application online.

Primary school, reception class and nursery class online admissions have also already doubled at this stage, although the increase is expected to be even greater by the time the application deadlines are reached.

The changes come following a continued push to reduce the number of paper applications received and to help the process become more efficient and error free.

Using the online system means that data does not have to be re-entered and applicants receive an instant receipt by email.

Parents can also amend their preferences online at any time before the application deadline.

Councillor Debra Gratton, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, said: "By submitting an application via the internet it allows for the whole process to go through quickly and efficiently while also allowing for changes to be made instantly if mistakes have been made."

"On top of this it saves time and money sending application forms by post."

● Secondary applications have now closed. Nursery applications have to be back by Friday 2 December, and reception applications need to be returned by Monday 16 January, 2012.

Applications can be made online at stoke.gov.uk/admissions

Young writers celebrate city

YOUNG writers are being encouraged to pick up their pens to celebrate their cultural heritage.

Write the World encourages young people to create a piece inspired by documents normally housed in the city's archives department. These will be on display at a special event for young people in the archives section of the City Central Library.

The library service wants young people between the ages of 11 and 20 to join in. A prize of £100 will be awarded to the winning entry. People looking to take part can contact Anne Mackey on 01782 238401 or anne.mackey@stoke.gov.uk for more details.

City's Tour of Britain stage draws record ITV audience

EXCITING TV coverage of this year's Tour of Britain stage through Stoke-on-Trent attracted a record-breaking audience.

Almost three quarters of a million people tuned in to ITV 4's coverage showing highlights of the 80 mile stage which began at Trentham Gardens and finished with a dramatic sprint through the city centre.

A total audience of 719,000 made Stoke-on-Trent the most-watched stage this year, followed by the Welshpool to Caerphilly stage, which attracted an audience of 649,000.

The figures represent a record for the four-year period the event has been shown on ITV4 and was 250,000 more than watched the televised Stoke-on-Trent stage last year.

Organisers are delighted with the statistics, released by the Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, which indicate the UK's growing fascination with cycling.

Hugh Roberts, Chief Executive of the Tour of Britain, said: "The figures all over the country were vastly up on last year, with Stoke-on-Trent breaking records."

"Nearly three quarters of a million is on a par with ITV4's Tour De France figures. It is great news for everyone and shows that the event and the sport is growing rapidly in popularity."

£3.5million impact

This year's event was the fourth time the Tour of Britain has come to Stoke-on-Trent, with more and more local people coming out to watch each year.

In September Mark Cavendish took part in the race, using it as a warm-up event for the World Championships a week later – which he duly won.

Since then Cavendish, a favourite for Olympic Gold next July in London, has joined Team Sky which increases the chances of the 20-times Tour De France Stage winner taking part in his home tour each year.

Initial reports suggest that the Tour resulted in a net economic impact of over £3.5 million for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire region, with further results expected next week.

In further good news, the city council Event's Team has won



Olympic favourite Mark Cavendish, in gold jersey, leads the field out of Trentham Gardens at the start of the Stoke-on-Trent stage.

recognition after being awarded a runner's up place in a competition run by sponsors Halfords for the Tour Series Event back in June.

The award was based on the supporting events, promotion and effort. Stoke-on-Trent was judged second out of eight venues.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "All of this is really good news."

"This year's cycle events have been better than ever. That so

many people tuned into our stage shows how popular cycling is in this region and how good a job our team do in putting it on with partners.

"It is great to see Stoke-on-Trent setting records and that our Events Team has also been recognised for their excellent work is fantastic."

"London has a stage of the Tour of Britain and also a leg of the Tour Series and more people watched on TV to see our city's Tour of Britain stage than they did for the one in the Capital."

Our leg of the Tour Series has been judged a better event than the one in Canary Wharf by sponsors.

"This shows exactly what the city is capable of and is reward for everyone's good work."

Mike Herbert, Regional Director for St Modwen who own the Trentham Estate, said: "It is fantastic that so many people watched the stage on television – and a record too!"

"It was a wonderful day, it is a great event and let's hope we can bring it back next year."

Changes to festive bin collections announced

THERE will be no bin collections in Stoke-on-Trent between Monday 26 December and Friday 30 December inclusive. Bins due to be collected during that week will be collected on the usual day the next week. Extra waste which will

not fit in the bin will be collected as long as it is securely bagged.

Residents can still take their waste to either of the city's two household waste and recycling centres at Campbell Road, Hanford and Federation Road, Burslem.

Both sites are open every day except for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Normal waste collections begin again on Monday 2 January, 2012.

For more information please log on to stoke.gov.uk or telephone 01782 234000.

Councillors face the challenge of proposing a budget which meets the strictest cutbacks imposed by the Government for decades while generating cash to invest in a city reinventing itself successfully as a great place to do business and create jobs. Here *Our City* reports on the council's commitment to continue to transform Stoke-on-Trent while listening to the people and investing hundreds of millions of pounds in the services they need...

Budget 2012/13



BIG NAME EMPLOYERS...

the Vodafone complex at Festival Park, where more land will be opened up to create jobs through a £2.5million grant from the Regional Growth Fund to further develop the business park.

Council budget savings will help drive city growth initiatives

MILLIONS of pounds worth of savings achieved by the council for the next financial year will not only balance the books but will also provide the funding to continue the city's transformation.

As Government spending cuts continue to bite, and Whitehall has made it clear there will only be limited additional funding to drive the regeneration of areas like North Staffordshire, the council has set its stall out to find the cash it needs to see through its ambitious Mandate for Change programme.

Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez explained that the cabinet needed to find a further £24million for the year 2012-13, but that some of that money saved would be reinvested in vital initiatives to boost the city's future.

The proposed £24million figure, made up of cost pressures,

direct government cuts and save to invest proposals will generate an additional £5million for reinvestment in the city's future which will be used to lever in more money from partnerships and the private sector.

In setting the budget, Councillor Pervez said priorities will remain focused on the services the public need, as well as the drive to create jobs and attract new employers and investment.

He said: "The Government gave us a two year settlement with some deep cuts which we have been forced to implement.

"We recognise that moving forward with confidence we need to stimulate growth within our city and it is therefore important that some of the savings we make are used to reinvest in key projects to create much needed jobs and stimulate the economy.

"Things are going to get tighter and tighter from a financial point of view but on the other hand we have started a programme to

attract inward investment and create confidence that this city is a great place to do business.

"This is not an easy time for any local authority, but by working with elected members, council staff, our partners and the public we will deliver a budget that people understand, and can see why we have made certain decisions, even if they do not agree with all of them.

Ambitious programme

"We are totally committed to an ambitious capital programme and to spending hundreds of millions of pounds on services the people of our city need."

As councillors work to put together a budget to take the city forward, growth initiatives included in last year's budget are coming to fruition.

Work has now started on the multi-million pound new bus station which will be a catalyst for the transformation of the city centre.

The council is committed to

investing £75.6million during the current financial year in the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Work on the new Reach Short Stay facility at Trent Vale started on site in January 2011 and will be completed in February 2012. This school will act as a hub for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

To date work has started to rebuild seven high schools and before the end of March 2012 construction will start at another seven, with work starting at two more in 2012-13.

Almost £8.5million has been spent on providing new facilities for 14 primary schools.

The CoRE Centre of Refurbishment Excellence at Longton opens its doors to its first students in January and will create tradespeople with the skills required by local employers.

The council's partners have provided boosts with the opening of the £350million superhospital, and health centres at Cobridge, Tunstall and Meir.

Councillor Pervez added: "It is clear we need to make tough decisions to make the savings. We are committed to continuing to invest in our city and providing more of the kind of landmark developments already delivered which will continue to improve quality of life.

"All this will help us to sustain and accelerate the Mandate for Change initiative promoting Stoke-on-Trent as a great place to do business, create jobs and attract new investment."

Cabinet tour city to hear public views

MEMBERS of the cabinet are out and about in the city listening to people's views on how the savings can be made.

A series of public meetings are being staged to give people the opportunity to have their say before final decisions are made.

Meetings will take place throughout the city and details will be posted on the council website at stoke.gov.uk

Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez said it was important that the public shared their views on the council's spending priorities and let councillors know the services they used and valued.

Councillor Pervez said: "We will listen to our customers and will also explain our priorities, what we want to achieve and how the decisions are made to set a budget which works for Stoke-on-Trent.

"We know we cannot please everyone, but our residents should be assured we have the city's long term interests at heart and are striving to build a stronger future for us all."

● Please note that because of pre-agreed production and distribution schedules, some households will not receive this issue of *Our City* until after some of the meetings have taken place. Anyone who misses a meeting or is unable to attend can make their comments by writing to Freepost Our City or emailing budget2012@stoke.gov.uk by 23 December 2011.

Spending and saving proposals announced

THE current budget adds up to a massive £656 million to be spent on the services people need including education, waste collection, social care, benefit payments and regenerating the city.

In spite of the cuts and difficult financial conditions the council is also investing almost £183.5million on capital programmes to provide new buildings and facilities across Stoke-on-Trent.

In order just to stand still, the council needs to find £19million but its ambitions are greater than that.

It is hoping to invest an additional £5million in its Mandate for Change initiatives through a combination of income generation, including council tax and savings proposals.

The consultation proposes savings of almost £21million across the following departments: Adult and Neighbourhood Services – £5.8million; Children and Young People's Services – £5.1million; City Renewal – £4.6million; Business Services – £4.2million; Chief Executive's Office – £1.1million.

Figures show city's adoption success story

NATIONAL adoption figures published by the Government have highlighted two areas where Stoke-on-Trent City Council is succeeding.

The city is rated 14th for percentage of children adopted and 8th for special guardianships achieved. It means the city is amongst the highest ranked in the country when it comes to placing children in permanent care.

The figures, released by the Government as part of National Adoption Week, also show that the city council is reaching the top third for children being adopted within a set timescale.

The city council has also increased its number of adoptions year on year. In 2010-11 there were 35 children adopted compared to 30 the year before and another 14 have been adopted since April 2011.

There are also 20 children currently living with their new families awaiting their final adoption hearing.

Councillor Debra Gratton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, said: "It's good to see that we are doing well, particularly when it comes to getting children into permanent homes.

"It means that children who leave our care have a good chance of going into a stable environment and finding a family who will support them in the long term.

"We do though; need to acknowledge that there are many areas we can improve on.

"Older children obviously have different requirements than younger ones and can be more difficult to place, so we need people to come forward and say that they want to adopt.

"We also need more people to volunteer as foster carers, as they can often provide the grounding a child needs before permanent adoption.

"Overall, we must continue to try and help as many children as possible and we are firmly committed to making sure every child in need of adoption in the city gets the right care and support."

Building work starts at school

WORK has started on another school being transformed under the city's programme to provide 21st Century learning facilities.

A £3million project will see a new sports hall and refurbished classrooms at Aynsley School in Blythe Bridge as part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

Head Teacher Angela Hardstaff said: "Pupils are following progress and are enjoying making some of the decisions about what their school will look like."

Designer and maker Ruth Spaak, left, with participant Kelly Rowley and their ceramic artwork made from found and waste goods.



Partners prove clay can be the best medicine

FAMILY doctors' patients can sign up to a series of ceramic design workshops as part of a pilot project to boost health through art therapy.

The new "clay on prescription" project is being trialled at the Willow Bank Surgery, Longton, throughout the Autumn.

Patients are given the opportunity to enrol on a programme of creative classes with a resident artist. The objective is to see whether taking part will help to relieve symptoms such as anxiety, stress or depression.

If successful the aim is to roll out the innovative programme to other surgeries across the city.

The project is being run as part of the



British Ceramics Biennial – a six-week festival which showcases the best of contemporary artists.

Resident artist Ruth Spaak said: "This is an exciting partnership and a fantastic opportunity for the city.

"Art is a very therapeutic process and I think patients find it an enjoyable and interesting healing process. It is certainly a different and unique treatment."

Patients taking part are being given the chance to learn a range of ceramic processes and skills, with the aim of creating a unique piece of ceramic work for the surgery.

Techniques used are inspired by the local art of ceramic flower-making made famous by firms such as Aynsley China and Gladstone Pottery.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "This is a unique and exciting opportunity for people to improve their general wellbeing through art.

"The use of art therapy isn't a new concept but this is a unique partnership for the city that uses one of our biggest assets – ceramics – to provide natural benefits to residents."

Campaign to protect vulnerable adults

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to better protect vulnerable adults across Stoke-on-Trent from physical, emotional and financial abuse.

It comes after a survey revealed people did not understand the full extent of the problem, were fearful of raising any concerns they might have and did not know who they should contact.

More than 1,200 council staff have already been trained to spot possible problems involving people who may be at risk, such

as elderly people or adults with learning difficulties. The training is ongoing.

A Safeguarding Hub is due to be launched in December to share information with partners, including the police, the county council, NHS Stoke on Trent, private sector providers and the voluntary sector.

A campaign on Signal 1 and 2 highlighted the range of abuse vulnerable adults can suffer.

Councillor Olwen Hamer, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and

Commissioning, said: "Around 80 per cent of the calls we receive about possible abuse come from professionals.

"However friends, families and neighbours spend more time with vulnerable adults than professionals do.

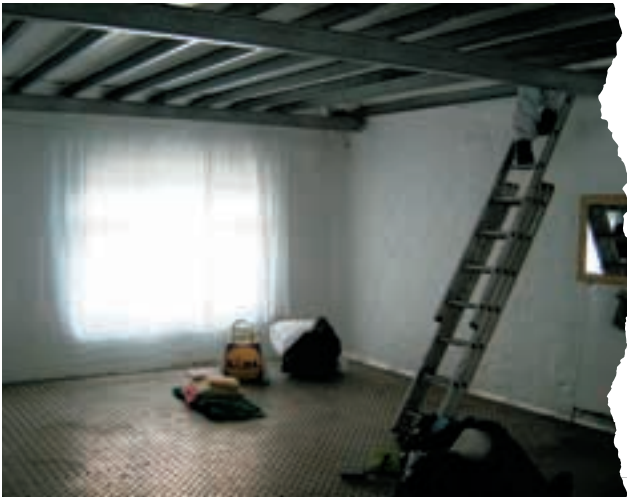
"Sometimes they notice something which is not quite right but they don't recognise it as possible abuse.

"We want to increase awareness about the signs of neglect, emotional abuse and financial abuse.

"Without calls from friends, family and neighbours the problems might go unreported and people will suffer.

"We want to work together with the residents of Stoke-on-Trent to make sure that vulnerable adults are safe wherever they live and whoever is caring for them."

● To report any suspicions of abuse call the Adult Social Care Centre on 0800 561 0015 or adult.protection@stoke.gov.uk For more information about abuse visit stopabuse.info

WARNING ISSUED TO DO-IT-YOURSELF ENTHUSIASTS AS OFFICERS UNCOVER CATALOGUE OF DISASTERS

A bedroom with no lights and no electricity supply... and no heating. It all adds up to an illegal DIY disaster.



The ceiling in this loft conversion was about 3ft from the floor and the space had no safe stairs access.



A staircase made out of spare bits of wood.

Householders urged to ensure DIY work is lawful

HOUSEHOLDERS considering DIY improvements to their homes are being warned to check thoroughly that they are not breaking the law.

Every year Environmental Health Officers are called in to inspect dozens of properties where residents or landlords have made illegal alterations – often inadvertently.

Everything from unsafe, open plan staircases and faulty electrical wiring jobs to party walls or extensions without planning permission are spotted, and the mistakes can cost the homeowner a lot to be put right.

However, by planning ahead and discussing any changes with planning experts people can avoid making mistakes in the first place.

The warning comes after a resident from Abbey Hulton was banned from living in his own home after carrying out a staggering range of potentially dangerous and illegal alterations.

Investigation

The man, who was renting out the house to a private tenant, was successfully prosecuted following a detailed investigation by council Environmental Health Officers.

The inspection found the house in Uplands Road had no heating or fixed lighting, no kitchen provision, low headroom and not enough space to sleep in a converted loft used as a bedroom.

There was also no fixed form of stairs to the loft and no handrail or guards on the ground floor stairs, all electrical sockets were moved to one central downstairs location and a chimney was unsupported after the breast column was removed.

Senior Environmental Health Officer Simon Anderson said: "Clearly this is an extreme case. However we do find some of the underlying problems encountered at this property at other houses we



Senior Environmental Health Officer Simon Anderson inspects a properly-built staircase.

inspect. Often we deal with properties being excessively cold due to poor heating or insulation. Another common problem is staircases.

"In these cases we not only have to take into account the health and safety of the homeowner but also visitors. For instance an open plan staircase without any protective

rails can be a hazard to a child or older person. Electrical work should only be carried out by a registered installer and the same applies to fitting double glazing."

Simon added: "Even if these problems are not picked up by an Environmental Health Officer, the owners will have difficulties when they come to sell the house."

For more information on carrying out DIY work, homeowners are urged to speak to the council's Planning Team on 01782 238947 or log onto the website stoke.gov.uk and search for building regulations.

Public asked for views on bus passes

MEMBERS of the public are being consulted over new plans for free bus passes.

At the moment pass holders can take advantage of an enhanced scheme funded by the council, which is above and beyond the Government's concessionary fares scheme. It means they can access free travel 24 hours a day, seven days a week. However, the council is considering adopting a statutory only scheme, bringing it in line with national guidelines.

This would allow residents to travel for free between the hours of 9.30am and 11pm, Monday to Friday, and all day at weekends and bank holidays.

Following consultation and approval by full council, the new scheme will be introduced on 1 April 2012 and all pass holders would be affected, regardless of whether they have a senior citizen pass or a disabled persons pass.

People can make comments about the proposal by writing to Concessionary Fares Scheme Officer, Safe and Sustainable Transport, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Floor 3, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH

Bulbs set to brighten park

SCHOOLCHILDREN are planting bulbs in a city park as more than 35,000 new plants are brought into Burslem to create a year of colour. Up to 30 pupils from Mill Hill Primary, St Margaret Ward, Jackfield Infant School and Moorpark Infant School have visited Burslem Park to plant bulbs ready for the new year.

PULL OUT GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S CENTRES ACTIVITIES



NORTH LOCALITY CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Ball Green

01782 231096

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Ball Green Primary School, Whitfield Road, Ball Green ST6 8AJ

MONDAY		OTHER SERVICES	
Stay and Play Drop-In	9:30-11am	Toy Library	
		Volunteering Programme	
		Jumping Beans	
		Tiny Talkers	
TUESDAY			
Adult Learning (Ask at reception)	12:45-2:45pm		
Crèche	12:45-2:45pm		
FRIDAY			
Little Sprouts Stay and Play Gardening Group (0-5yrs)	1-2:30pm		



Burslem

01782 238989

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Vale Park, Hamill Road, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 1AW

MONDAY		FRIDAY	
Crèche	9:30-11am	Lets Get Creative (Messy play Drop-In, please bring a change of clothing)	9:30-11am
Maths Course (Ask at reception)	9:30-11am	Childminders Stay and Play Drop-In (Childminders only)	12:45-2:45pm
Stay and Play Drop-In	1-2:30pm		
TUESDAY			
Crèche	9:30-11am		
English Course (Ask at reception)	9:30-11am		
Growing Together (Referral only)	1-2:30pm		
WEDNESDAY			
Stay and Play Drop-In	9:30-11am		
THURSDAY			
Tiny Explorers Baby Group (0-18mths)	9:30-11am		
Baby Massage Drop-In	9:30-10:30am		
Adult Learning (Ask at reception)	12:45-2:45pm		
Crèche	12:45-2:45pm		



Families welcome to take part in packed activity programme

EVERY family in Stoke-on-Trent can make the most of a great range of services and facilities at the city's children's centres.

The teams reach out into their local communities to support families and give children the very best start in life.

But anyone is welcome to pop into their local centre and take part in one of the dozens of activities featured on this pull out and keep special feature.

Children's centres provide a range of services including:

- childcare and children's learning and development
- health services
- family support
- specialist support for children with additional needs
- outreach workers
- information for parents
- activities to help parents and carers get back to work.

Each children's centre also delivers additional services tailored to meet local needs. There are even opportunities to volunteer and learn new skills that could lead to qualifications, a job or career change.

Contact details are included with each centre's calendar.



SOUTH LOCALITY CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Blurton

01782 231815

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Oakwood Road, Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 3AR

MONDAY		THURSDAY	
Midwife Clinic	9-1pm	Growing Together (0-5yrs, book at reception)	9:30-11am
Jo Jingles (1-5yrs, £2 per family, term time, book at reception)	11:15-12:00	Start Up Literacy	12:30-2:30pm
Growing Together (0-5yrs, book at reception)	1-2:30pm	Little Sunshine Group (Grange Children's Centre 0-5yrs, Drop-In)	1-2:30pm
		Baby Club (Blurton Health Centre)	2-3pm
TUESDAY			
Baby Clinic	9:30-10:30am		
Blurton Health Centre	1:30-3:30pm		
WEDNESDAY			
Job Club (Hollybush Community Centre)	9:30-12pm		
Jabadao 0-12mths	9:15-10:15am		
1-2yrs	10:30-11:30am		
Baby Clinic	11-12pm		
Blurton Children's Centre	1:30-3:30pm		
Start Up Numeracy	12:30-2:30pm		
Parent Forum	1-2:30pm		

TUESDAY		FRIDAY	
Baby Clinic	9:30-10:30am	Growing Together (0-5yrs, book at reception)	9:30-11am
Blurton Health Centre	1:30-3:30pm	Birth Preparation (First Fri every month)	10-11:00
Job Club	9:30-12pm	Baby Signing (10:30-11:30am (4.11.18 Nov, ask at reception))	10:30-11:30am
Jabadao 0-12mths	9:15-10:15am	Growing Together (Newstead Primary School, term time only)	1:30-3pm
1-2yrs	10:30-11:30am		
Baby Clinic	11-12pm		
Blurton Children's Centre	1:30-3:30pm		
Start Up Numeracy	12:30-2:30pm		
Parent Forum	1-2:30pm		

The Crescent

01782 596421

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Pinewood Crescent, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 6HZ

MONDAY		THURSDAY	
Crèche Training, Volunteering and Respite	9-11:30am	Midwife Clinic	9-1pm
Parent Forum	9:30-11:30am	Crèche Training, Volunteering & Respite	9-11:30am
Jo Jingles (£2, book)	10-10:45am	Child Health Clinic (Weston Heights Community Centre)	9-11am
Job Club - Merit	1-3pm	Numeracy	9:30-11:30am
Jabadao 0-12mths	12:45-1:45pm	Literacy (At The Community House)	12:30-2:30pm
1-2yrs	2-3pm		
TUESDAY			
Midwife Clinic	9-1pm		
Caudwell Children Family Support Service (Drop-In, 22 Nov)	9:15-11:30am		
Play and Stay (Weston Coyne Infants School)	9:15-10:45am		
Child Health Clinic	9:15-11:30am		
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am		
Busybodies (Meir Park Playgroup)	9:30-10:15am		
Baby Club	10-11:30am		
WEDNESDAY			
Midwife Clinic	9-1pm		
Crèche Training, Volunteering and Respite	9-11:30am		

TUESDAY		FRIDAY	
Midwife Clinic	9-1pm	Crèche Training, Volunteering and Respite	9-11:30am
Caudwell Children Family Support Service (Drop-In, 22 Nov)	9:15-11:30am	Fitness/Zumba (Book at reception)	9:45-10:45am
Play and Stay (Weston Coyne Infants School)	9:15-10:45am	Job Club - Merit (Weston Heights Community Centre)	10-12pm
Child Health Clinic	9:15-11:30am	Growing Together 0-5yrs	1-2:30pm
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am		
Busybodies (Meir Park Playgroup)	9:30-10:15am		
Baby Club	10-11:30am		
WEDNESDAY			
Midwife Clinic	9-1pm		
Crèche Training, Volunteering and Respite	9-11:30am		



Norton

01782 231096

A Sure Start Children's Centre

St Nicholas Avenue, Norton, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 8JW

MONDAY		OTHER SERVICES	
English Course (Ask at reception)	12:45-2:45pm	Toy Library	
Crèche	12:45-2:45pm	Volunteering Programme	
		Jumping Beans	
		Tiny Talkers	
TUESDAY			
Sweet Peas Baby Group (0-18mths)	9:30-11am		
WEDNESDAY			
Stay and Play Drop-In	9:30-11am		
THURSDAY			
Childminders Stay and Play Drop-In (Childminders only)	9:30-11:30am		
Growing Together (Referral only)	1-2:30pm		
FRIDAY			
Maths Course (Ask at reception)	9:30-11:30am		
Crèche	9:30-11:30am		



Stoke-on-Trent North

01782 232977

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Bishop Road, Chell Heath, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6QW

MONDAY		FRIDAY	
Stay and Play Drop-In	9:30-11am	Growing Together (Referral only)	9:30-11:30am
Adult Learning (Ask at reception)	12:45-2:45pm		
Crèche	12:45-2:45pm		
TUESDAY			
Messy Monkeys Baby Group (0-18mths)	9:30-11am		
English Course (Ask at reception)	12:45-2:45pm		
Crèche	12:45-2:45pm		
WEDNESDAY			
Stay and Play Drop-In	9:30-11am		
THURSDAY			
Maths Course (Ask at reception)	9:30-11:30am		
Crèche	9:30-11:30am		
FRIDAY			
Maths Course (Ask at reception)	9:30-11:30am		
Crèche	9:30-11:30am		



CENTRAL LOCALITY CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Kingsland

01782 238352

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Eaves Lane, Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent ST2 9AS

MONDAY		OTHER SERVICES	
Start Up Crèche*	9:30-11:30am	Toy Library	
Time 4 You*	12:30-2:30pm	Sensory Room (By request)	
		Speech and Language Support*	
		Play and Learning in the Home*	
TUESDAY			
Baby Weighing Clinic	9-10:30am		
Babbling Babes	10:30-11:30am		
Every Child Matters (Day Care)	12:30-2:30pm		
Crèche*			
WEDNESDAY			
Stay and Play (PICL)	10-11:30am		
Stay and Play (PICL)	1-15-2:45pm (Abbey Hulton Primary)		
THURSDAY			
Ready Steady Learn	9:30-11:30am		
Baby Weighing Clinic (Abbey Hulton Clinic)	1:30-3:30pm		
FRIDAY			
Breastfeeding Café	10:30-12:30pm		
Baby Massage/Yoga*	10-11am		
Messy Monsters Craft	1-2:30pm		



Penkull

01782 236333

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Greatbatch Avenue, Penkull, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 7JU

MONDAY		THURSDAY	
Stay and Play (PICL)	9:30-11am	Health Visitor Drop-In (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am
Growing Together (Baby Stay and Play for 0-18mths)	1:30-3pm	New Birth Registration Drop-In (Last Thur of every month)	9:30-11am
		Every Child Matters	9:30-11:30am
		Crèche*	
TUESDAY			
Triple P (Booking)	9:30-11:30am		
Breastfeeding Café	10:30-12pm		
Additional Needs Group*	1-3pm		
WEDNESDAY			
Family Support Drop-In	1:30-3pm		
Transition Group*	1-3pm		
Baby Massage (Invitation)	1:30-2:30pm		
THURSDAY			
Health Visitor Drop-In (First Wed of every month, 0-5yrs)	3-4pm		
New Birth Registration Drop-In (Last Wed of every month, Trent Vale Health Centre)	10-12pm		

TUESDAY		FRIDAY	
Family Support Drop-In	1:30-3pm	Singing Sunflowers	9:30-10am & (0-5yrs, Stoke Library)
Transition Group*	1-3pm	New Birth Registration Drop-In (Last Fri of every month, Stoke Library)	10:15-10:45am
Baby Massage (Invitation)	1:30-2:30pm		
Health Visitor Drop-In (First Wed of every month, 0-5yrs)	3-4pm		
New Birth Registration Drop-In (Last Fri of every month, Trent Vale Health Centre)	10-12pm		
WEDNESDAY			
Family Support Drop-In	1:30-3pm		
Transition Group*	1-3pm		
Baby Massage (Invitation)	1:30-2:30pm		
THURSDAY			
Health Visitor Drop-In (First Wed of every month, 0-5yrs)	3-4pm		
New Birth Registration Drop-In (Last Fri of every month, Trent Vale Health Centre)	10-12pm		

Fenton

01782 237650

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Travers Court, Temple Street, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 3FE

MONDAY		WEDNESDAY	
Zumba Fitness Class	10-11am	Literacy Course	9:30-11:30am
Health Visitor Drop-In	9:30-11am	Breastfeeding Café	10:30-12pm
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	1-2:30pm	Job Club	1-3pm
Baby Massage/Yoga	10:30-11:30am	Parents Forum (9, 30 Nov)	1-3pm
Fenton Book Buddies (28 Nov)	1:30-2:30pm		
TUESDAY			
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am		
Coffee Morning Drop-In	9:30-11:30am		
Bumps to Babies Antenatal Labour Sessions (1 Nov)			
WEDNESDAY			
Zumba Fitness Class	10-11am		
Health Visitor Drop-In	9:30-11am		
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	1-2:30pm		
Baby Massage/Yoga	10:30-11:30am		
Fenton Book Buddies (28 Nov)	1:30-2:30pm		
THURSDAY			
Jabadao 0-12mths	10:30-11:30am		
1-2yrs	9:15-10:15am		
Little Sunshine Group (Grange Children's Centre 0-5yrs, Drop-In)	1-2:30pm		
FRIDAY			
Cook and Eat	9:30-11:30am		
Baby Jabadao	1-2:30pm		
SATURDAY			
Fathers Dad's Group (5 Nov)	10-12pm		



The Grange

01782 233775

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Normacot Grange Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 7AW

MONDAY		THURSDAY	
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am	Jo Jingles (£2 per family, book call 01782 233775)	10-10:45am
Midwife Clinic	9:30-2pm	Baby Club	11-12:30pm
		Little Sunshine's Group (0-5yrs, Drop-In)	1-2:30pm
		Child Health Clinic	1:15-2:45pm
TUESDAY			
Midwife Clinic	9:30-1pm		
Busybodies (Meir Park Playgroup)	9:30-10:15am		
WEDNESDAY			
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am		
Midwife Clinic	9:30-2pm		
THURSDAY			
Jo Jingles (£2 per family, book call 01782 233775)	10-10:45am		
Baby Club	11-12:30pm		
Little Sunshine's Group (0-5yrs, Drop-In)	1-2:30pm		
Child Health Clinic	1:15-2:45pm		
FRIDAY			
Jabadao 0-12mths	9:15-10:15am		
1-2yrs	10:30-11:30am		
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	1-2:30pm		
OTHER SERVICES			
Baby Massage (Call 01782 596421)			
Birth Preparation Classes			
Crèche			
Baby Club			
Volunteering Programme			



Hanford

01782 234024

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Jubilee Road, Trentham ST4 8EF

MONDAY		OTHER SERVICES	
Priory Playgroup (Term time only)	9:15-11:30am	Outdoor Play Area	
Jabadao 0-12mths	12:30-1:30pm	Volunteering Programme	
1-2yrs	2-3pm	Christmas Activities	
TUESDAY			
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	9:30-11am		
WEDNESDAY			
Crèche	9:30-11am		
Parent Forum	9:30-11am		
Pandas Group	12-2:30pm		
THURSDAY			
Growing Together (0-5yrs)	1-2:30pm		
Little Sunshine Group (Grange Children's Centre 0-5yrs, Drop-In)	1-2:30pm		



Tunstall

01782 236655

A Sure Start Children's Centre

Woodland Street, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6AP

MONDAY		THURSDAY	
Stay and Play (Booking)	9:30-11am	Stay and Play (Booking)	9:30-11am

New centre at the CoRE of training boost

INNOVATIVE training facilities at a hi-tech hub in a former pottery factory will open to the first students in January.

Around 300 students will enrol at the Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE) at the former Enson Works in Longton.

The skills they learn will be tailored to meet the needs of employers and will be vitally important to the city's regeneration.

They will also address the nationwide need for tradesmen and women to work on regeneration projects like modernising millions of ageing homes.

The project is a partnership between the council, Stoke on Trent College and sustainable buildings specialist BRE, with funding from the Department of Education, the council, the European Regional Development Fund and the private sector.

Phase one of the £11.4m project, completed in November 2011, will provide specialist training facilities for students of all age groups who attend the college and will complement Stoke on Trent College's other sites.

Colin Briley, Stoke on Trent College's Executive Director of Finance and Information Systems said the centre would create a new breed of multi-skilled tradespeople who would boost the efficiency and effectiveness of regeneration initiatives.

He said: "Where previously a refurbishment job would require separate tradespeople, like bricklayers, plasterers, tilers, electricians and plumbers, we aim to provide multiskilled people who can not only turn their hands to different trades, but also understand the overall process which has a huge impact on the viability of a project."

Energy efficiency and renewable energy technology are important elements of the



Site Manager
Simon Walker,
working foreman
Dave Quinn, Cabinet
Member for Regeneration
Ruth Rosenau and
Stoke on Trent College
Co-ordinator for the
CoRE project Ken
Burgess.

training students will receive at the CoRE, and will enable its graduates to go to work on major projects like the initiative to install photovoltaic solar power panels on thousands of homes in Stoke-on-Trent.

Mr Briley said equipping young people with the skills to match jobs would be a major step forward for the construction industry.

People with the right skills

He added: "The construction workforce is seen to be an ageing workforce, but there is a growing demand for services and people with the right skills.

"The CoRE will help us to meet that demand and provide employable people, ready for work, with the skills the job market needs."

CoRE's second phase, which is due to open in early 2013, offers a huge demonstration space big enough for trainees to learn on house sized constructions, as well as special areas where new products and techniques can be showcased to learners.

Adding a new dimension to training, the facilities will use living, working models to give all construction-related tradespeople hands-on experience.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, the council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "This centre is as much about economic development as it is about regeneration and is a reflection of the council's Mandate for Change commitment.

"It is about preserving the city's past while building a future for citizens, giving people skills they haven't got while moving the city forward. It will improve homes by driving forward the retrofit and refurbishment agenda and green agendas.

"Mandate for Change is about giving the citizens the best city to live and work in... CoRE is about giving them the best facilities to learn and train in.

"We will market the centre's facilities across the UK and will also encourage links with similar centres across Europe and the USA as part of the CoRE's truly international outreach."

“““
Mandate for Change is about giving the citizens the best city to live and work in... CoRE is about giving them the best facilities to learn and train in.



Partners sign up to provide new safe havens throughout the city

SAFE havens are being provided throughout the city for people with learning disabilities who need support while they are out and about.

Anyone who needs help because they feel worried, upset or have lost their way or belongings in the city will be able to pop into a participating shop or business.

People taking part in the scheme will be given a Keep Safe card which will have two contact numbers for the person and also the number of Staffordshire Police in case the initial contacts cannot be reached.

As well as the card, people will be provided with a list of places that can offer help, which includes 19 Co-operative stores.

Martin Ellis, Regional Operations Manager for The Co-operative, said: "Everyone within the company is committed to supporting people with learning disabilities... it will have a huge

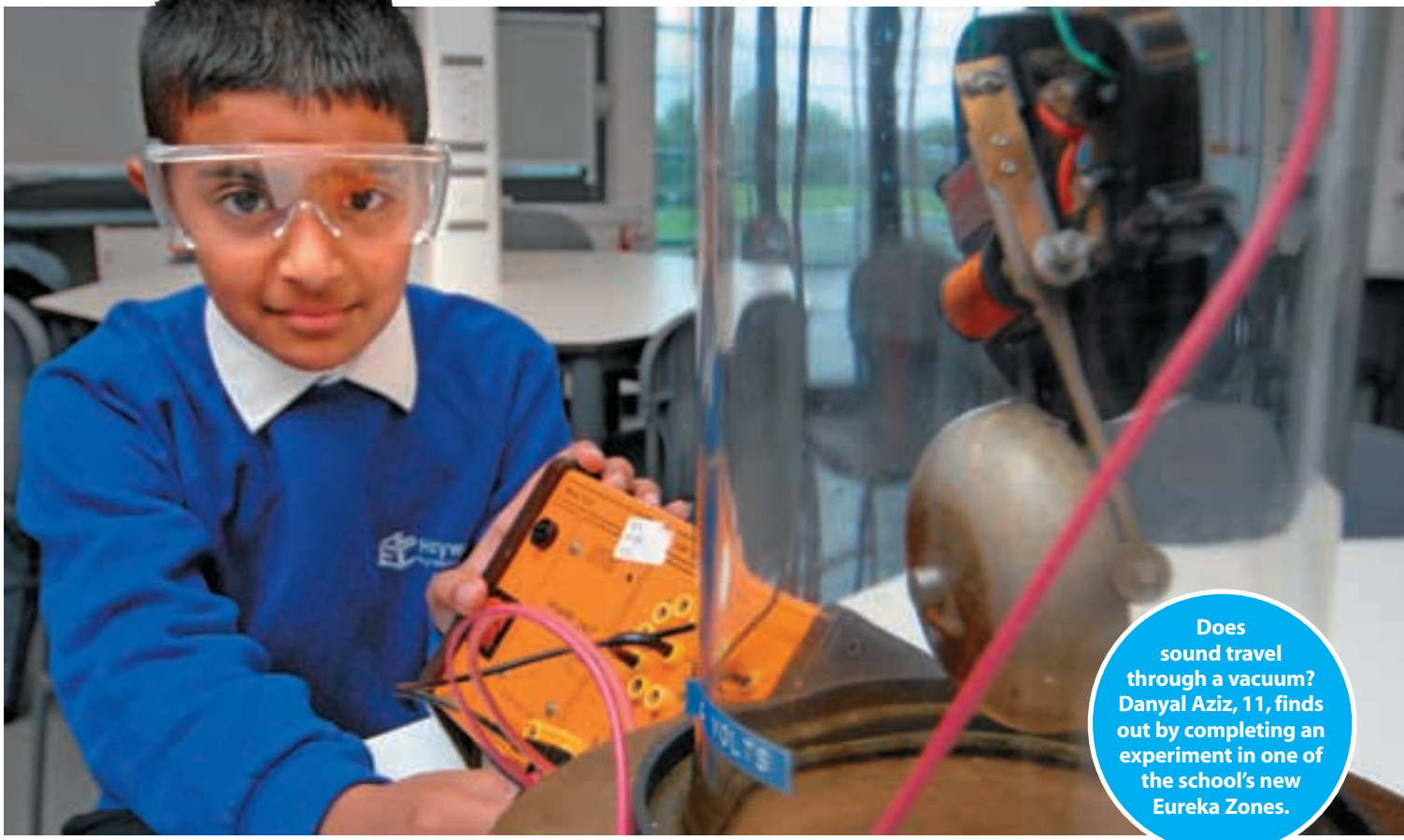
impact on the lives of many people living within our local communities."

The scheme ensures that when someone shows their 'Keep Safe' card at a place on the list, such as the Co-operative, they will be welcomed, supported and made to feel safe.

To identify that they are a part of the scheme, the premises involved will display a sticker to clearly show that they are able to offer help and support to individuals.

The places of refuge will also offer awareness sessions about disability and adult protection training so that they are able to provide the best possible help. They will also educate people on how to offer support and assistance to someone with a learning disability who feels vulnerable in the city.

The scheme will run across Stoke-on-Trent, and it will help people with learning disabilities feel secure, confident and valued in their community.



Does sound travel through a vacuum? Danyal Aziz, 11, finds out by completing an experiment in one of the school's new Eureka Zones.



Police unveil non-emergency number: 101

A NEW non-emergency telephone number – 101 – has been introduced to make it easier for people to contact the police.

All calls to 101 are answered in local control rooms and do not go to a national call centre. Calls from landlines and mobiles cost a flat rate of 15 pence with operators able to patch someone direct to their local police office if they are available.

The number should be used for less urgent crime and disorder, to report minor traffic collisions or just to speak to the police about a general enquiry. For serious incidents like a crime in progress or when there is danger to life, use 999.

Local and direct dial numbers are being maintained in Stoke-on-Trent and the new number replaces the 0300 123 4455 number which will continue to work whilst everyone becomes familiar with 101.

Students celebrate £8.2 million rebirth of high school

NEARLY five years ago Haywood Engineering College was facing a bleak future. Under plans to re-organise education, the secondary school based on High Lane, Burslem, was facing possible closure – despite being rated Good with Outstanding features by OFSTED and consistently over-subscribed.

But students, staff and the local community rallied around and the overwhelming show of support helped to keep it open. Now the school is facing the brightest future possible.

It is part way through a £8.2 million transformation, which is reshaping classrooms and learning facilities for pupils and teachers alike. The remodelling and refurbishments form part of the £250 million Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, the biggest ever school building initiative in Stoke-on-Trent. Work at Haywood has been phased to minimise disruption to students' education and halfway through the project the developments are really taking shape.

Phase one, which started in April and was completed for the start of the new school year in September, included the creation of a 21st Century science area with specialist labs and an innovative discovery zone.

Music, technology and performing arts blocks have also been remodelled to provide exciting and interactive opportunities for learning.

The second phase of work, which is currently underway, includes the creation of a series of "super" classrooms and an iconic learning tower as well as landscaping work to create outdoor learning spaces and a drama amphitheatre.

'Super' classrooms

The final phase, which is set to be completed by June 2012, will see the construction of a multi-purpose sports hall and activity studio, which will be open to the public during after-school hours.

Chris Chapman, Assistant Head Teacher at Haywood, said: "The school is definitely looking forward to a very bright future thanks to the improvements being carried out.



Rebekah Mohring, 11 and Ryan Callaghan, 11 in the science area.

"The work has been phenomenally well-received by pupils as well as teachers and there is a real enthusiasm for learning. "In addition, approximately £1.5 million is being invested in state-of-the-art ICT equipment and infrastructure, so pupils have the very latest technology and learning resources at their fingertips."

In total, nineteen school projects are being delivered in the city as part of the BSF programme. Work is due to be completed by January 2014.

Zest for life earns tribute

A CITY youth choir has received praise from a prominent vocal judge after racking up two winning performances.

The City Youth Training Choir was given special praise for their zest for life by renowned vocal adjudicator, Dr Eileen Bentley MBE.

The choir, who are aged between nine and 11, scooped the Childrens' Choral Classes Laurence Pickstock Memorial Shield and Youth Choral Classes George S. Finney Trophy.

Tile winners to build Wonderwall

A COMPETITION challenging children to design their own ceramic tile has been launched to create an Olympic themed wonderwall.

The winning designs will be hand painted onto the tiles by world famous skilled artists from Anita Harris Art Pottery.

Each winner will attend an award ceremony where they will receive a limited edition tile valued at £350, a winners' medal and art equipment.

The competition is open to all children, schools, colleges, and youth organisations. Tile designs must be sized 30cm by 20cm. Entries need to be returned by Friday December 9, 2011.

Further information contact ray.elks@archnorthstaffs.org.uk or visit clients.cyberzia.org/arch

Reading volunteers boost quality of life

READING volunteers are already enhancing the lives of housebound people in the Potteries as part of a newly launched library service.

Six have been recruited so far to visit people who may be visually impaired or are isolated and would benefit from the company and enjoy hearing a story.

The clients choose a book, which the volunteers pick up at libraries and bring along with them. All volunteers undergo enhanced CRB checks, carry identification and always come at the same time so the client knows who is at the door.

Anne Mackey, the city council's Principal Librarian for Service

Development, said: "We already operate a Homelink service, where a member of staff delivers books and talking books to people who can't get out of the house.

"We thought there was huge potential to take it one step further and read to clients as well. We recruited more volunteers; the youngest is in her 30s and the eldest is 79.

"Our volunteers read for about half an hour each session and the rest of the time provide invaluable company. It all helps reduce people's isolation and loneliness so we're delighted with how it's going."

Volunteer Julie Pennill said: "People can feel isolated when they are not able

to get out of the house, and visiting them to read gives them companionship and helps them feel more involved.

"As a library volunteer I find it very rewarding to open up the world for someone in this way. Society needs people to help each other out and we need the community spirit we used to have."

● Now the service is up and running, more volunteers are being recruited so if you have time to spare and would like to get involved, call Anne Mackey on 01782 238401 or email anne.mackey@stoke.gov.uk



The council's use of consultants frequently comes under the spotlight... here *Our City* reports on the next phase of a bold decision by the council to bring in Vanguard Consulting which has paid off with massive savings and service improvements... with the people of Stoke-on-Trent seeing a difference to the services they receive.

“”
The standard of the work and how it is carried out has also improved by 200%.

CLARE WATERS



▶▶ Clare Waters of Goldenhill was delighted with the service she received when she needed help with her back door.

She said: "Since the new system, the standard of the work and how it is carried out has improved by 200%.

"I called about this repair to my door on the Tuesday morning. I was going on holiday the next day – and I wanted to make sure my property was secure. I was well pleased because it was completed in just over 2 hours from the moment I called, to the tradesman finishing the job.

"This would not have happened in the old system.

"I would rate it 15 out of 10. The tradesman asked if anything else could be done and an internal door to the lounge was sticking and he did that repair too there and then.

"Being a disabled person I found it an excellent service and the young man was very polite, showed his ID badge and was very tidy as he worked."

▶▶ Elizabeth Arevalo of Blurton said the service to allocate a new home went smoothly and quickly. She said: "I gave the service a score of 10 out of 10. I am really happy with the service from start to finish.

"I requested a council house a couple of years ago and they were sending letters back and forth for proof of income and other evidence. Then I had a letter stating that customers are not going to bid for properties anymore.

"I responded to the letter to update my details and within 2 weeks, I had a telephone call to say that they had a property for me to view. I am really pleased with the service and all the people I spoke to at the council were very appreciative and helpful regarding my situation".

Applications, lettings and void properties

IN the previous system to allocate council housing, customers who approached the council were encouraged to join the housing register.

This meant people could be on a waiting list for years and their housing situation may never get

any better. The process was complicated and costly, and had an amazing 365 steps.

Following a successful intervention, the new system helps people to stay in their homes, if they want to, or identify more appropriate housing.

Customers enjoy services as efficient as **saves city**

SPECIALIST council officers have been trained to continue the work started by consultants last year to make hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of cash savings by making the council more efficient.

Already the savings achieved are totalling almost £600,000 against a cost of £228,226, with an estimated return of almost £3 million over the drive's first five years.

As well as the financial savings, intervention by specialists has also led to major improvements to services in areas like responsive repairs of council houses and benefits claims.

Greatest benefits for customers

Other interventions have led to more savings and some which are currently in the pipeline are expected to start bearing fruit soon. And the fact that the council's own officers have been trained to carry out the efficiency drive means even more savings as the council becomes less dependant on outside consultants.

But the greatest benefits have been for customers using the services which have already been assessed.

Residents now find it easier to report repairs needed in their homes, and the work is completed more efficiently. Elsewhere it now takes far less time to apply for benefits in the city, with some people knowing the outcome of their claim before they leave the council office.

Councillor Sarah Hill, Cabinet Member for Finance, said: "The savings and service improvements achieved

Responsive maintenance

THE first area targeted by the efficiency experts was the responsive maintenance contract run by Kier Stoke.

The complex, old-fashioned system was often inaccurate and led to delays. Changes have reduced the time it takes to report, log and complete a job from an average of 20 days to 3.2 days.

Previously it could take as long as 20 minutes to report a problem. The average time is now four minutes.

The transformed service means customers can not only make a simple call to report the problem but can also discuss any other issues they may have.

Customers are asked to choose an appointment time which is convenient to them. Wherever possible jobs are completed in a single visit. Customers are asked to score their satisfaction with the job out of 10, and the current average is running around 9.6.

Further cost benefits are being achieved by cutting out waste.

By stopping sending out 1,350 letters each week to confirm a job has been logged the council aims to save around £35,000 each year.

The number of vans in the Kier Stoke fleet will also be reduced to save cash.

It is estimated these efficiencies could save the council up to £175,500 before 2015/16.

Additional interventions have also taken place to boost efficiency and improve customer service in the revenues and benefits service, finance and place, which includes highways and transportation, regeneration, environmental services (including waste services and neighbourhood management), regulatory services including car parks and markets, property services and housing.



Elizabeth and Art Arevalo in their new house in Blurton.

“““
I am really happy with the service from start to finish.

ELIZABETH AREVALO

The Housing Solutions Service aims to make sure that customers have a single point of contact for their housing enquiries, and that the right properties are matched to the right people.

The service saved money immediately by ending the

costly advertising process for properties.

It is hoped by matching customers and properties more effectively there will be more sustainable tenancies and fewer expensive and disruptive neighbourhood management issues.



“““
The work has made a big difference to my quality of life.

CAROL BELL

▶▶ Multiple sclerosis sufferer Carol Bell of Hartshill needed special adaptations to her home to improve her quality of life.

A ramp, special bathroom and vertical lift were installed at her home to enable her to move around the house better and make her more comfortable.

Carol said: “I’m very happy with how things have worked out. I was initially assessed because life is difficult and within five months all the work had been completed.

“It was a big job but the workmen were very good.”

Carol uses a

wheelchair to get out and about and a walker at home.

She said: “The work has made a big difference to my quality of life.

“It has made it easier for me to get around the house and take a shower.

“The adaptations have made such a difference.”

Adult Social Care

WORK to improve the customer journey for Equipment, Aids and Adaptations is continuing, however initial results show an improvement in key areas.

A process which used to take 63 steps, now takes only 18. Whereas eight professionals were involved in the provision of equipment, this is now only four. The team reduced the time taken to deliver equipment after the first call

to the council from an average of 29 days to an average of eight days.

Customer feedback has been very positive about the changes made. One relative said: “This has restored my faith in local government; the service was absolutely superb.”

Lessons learned from this work are now being applied to other areas of Adult Social Care.

joying better efficient approach y money

The financial benefits

Cost to the council

£228,226

Savings achieved so far

£593,991

Projected savings over the next five years

£2,969,955



already show that challenging how we do things, reducing waste and looking at new ways of working have paid off.

“It was important that we trained our own officers to take the process forward and we will carry on using this approach across other areas.”

See the panels on these pages for information on how efficiency measures are saving the council hundreds of thousands of pounds while making services more responsive to customers’ needs.

How an intervention works

Front-line teams act to transform their services

WHEN a council service is identified to go through the intervention process, teams of front line staff who do the job every day are taken away from their work for around three months to analyse what they do and how they do it.

They look at all aspects of how they do their job, particularly from a customer viewpoint.

At the end of the first phase the staff involved in the intervention make a presentation to senior management, outlining compelling reasons for redesigning the way they work to cut out waste and improve customer service.

Strategy Manager (Transformation) Denise Grant said the teams then started with a “blank piece of paper” to look at how the service can be redesigned by only doing things that matter to the customer and eliminating



Strategy Manager (Transformation) Denise Grant trains a team from Kier Stoke to analyse their service and act to improve it.

bureaucracy and waste.

They then test the new way of working in a few cases to see how successful it is, before bringing in more cases to increase the volume of the test.

Once the team is happy that the new way of working achieves their goals, the rest of the service is rolled in. Even at this stage of the process there is scope to continue the redesign by evolving the way things are done to carry on with the improvements.

Denise, who has completed training to drive forward the interventions and has already facilitated major intervention work, said: “There are more interventions in the pipeline which will bring about greater efficiencies, more savings and more improvements in customer service.

“These include an intervention in planning which is currently being trialled, and a future intervention in customer access, including local centres and contact centres.”

Stoke-on-Trent City Council – Summary Accounts 2010/11

FACTS AND FIGURES

The Housing Revenue Account

The council maintains a Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This account shows the income and expenditure associated with the provision, management and maintenance of council housing.

The account is 'ring-fenced', which means that rents cannot be subsidised from Council Tax or vice versa. The council owns just over 19,000 properties and spent £51million on maintaining them, managing the service and meeting other costs, such as interest on loans to fund improvements.

At the end of the year, the Housing Revenue Account made a deficit of £806,000, which was met from existing reserves. The value of the council's housing stock was written down by £173million during the year to reflect the fall in house prices nationally.

Net worth

The 'net worth' of the council is worked out by comparing everything that it owns (its assets) with everything that it owes (its liabilities).

At the end of each financial year the council draws up a balance sheet. This shows how much the assets of the council are worth, what is owed to the council, and what is owed by the council. A summarised balance sheet is shown below.

Summary Balance Sheet	31/03/11 £million
Land, Buildings and Other Fixed Assets	1,136.6
Other Assets (including cash)	51.5
Money Owed to the council	46.0
Money Owed by the council	(723.1)
Net Worth (Total Assets less Total Liabilities)	511.0
Represented By	
Usable Reserves	97.8
Unusable Reserves	413.2
Total Reserves	511.0

The council's net worth at the end of March 2011 was, therefore, £511million which is represented by usable and unusable reserves. Unusable reserves represent balances which cannot be spent such as those arising from changes in asset values during the year.

The council holds several usable reserves, some of which are earmarked for specific future use and some which are held as a general contingency for unforeseen items of spend. The table below summarises the position at the end of the last two financial years. The council reviews its usable reserves on an on-going basis to ensure any balances held are relevant for the purpose for which they have been set aside.

Reserves and Balances	31/03/10 £million	31/03/11 £million
Non-Earmarked Reserves		
General Fund Working Balance	5.3	5.8
HRA Working Balance	8.3	7.5
Capital Receipts (long term asset sale proceeds)	7.8	5.5
Capital Grants	1.2	15.4
Earmarked Reserves		
School Balances	6.0	5.4
Education PFI	31.5	14.8
Street Lighting	7.3	7.8
Insurance	6.7	5.8
Revenue Grants	5.0	8.1
Housing Capital Reserve	3.9	1.8
Other Earmarked Reserves	12.1	19.9
Total	95.1	97.8

The council has a duty under legislation to maintain a prudent level of reserves, including the General Fund working balance. Due to an underspend of £500,000 against the budget during 2010/11, this reserve has increased from £5.3million to £5.8million.

If you would like more detailed information, the full Statement of Accounts, including a glossary of terms, is also available on the council's website at stoke.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can contact: Corporate Financial Services, Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Business Services Directorate, Financial Services Division, Civic Centre, Glebe Street, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1HH.

Telephone: 01782 232615 Email: finance@stoke.gov.uk

Council works hard through unprecedented spending put residents first

THE 2010/11 financial year was unprecedented as the impact of Government spending restrictions on local authorities like Stoke-on-Trent City Council became clear.

The council began preparations early for an expected, significant reduction in future years' funding, while retaining its focus to deliver service priorities for 2010/11.

Officers and councillors worked together to prepare for the future but the eventual funding cuts were even harsher than expected.

The council's annual *Statement of Accounts* is a lengthy document showing its complex financial activities for the year. The council also produces *Summary Accounts* which are more user-friendly and present the same information in a simplified format.

Broadly speaking the council spends money in two areas:

- Revenue spend on day to day services such as housing, waste collection, adult social care and education services. This is split into expenditure on public sector housing services, mainly the day to day maintenance of council houses (accounted for via the council's Housing Revenue Account); and expenditure on other day to day services such as teachers' salaries, waste collection and leisure services (which are accounted for via the General Fund Account).
- Capital investment on items providing a service for a longer period of time such as vehicles for transport and buildings to house council staff or elderly residents, for example.

Notable outcomes achieved during 2010/11 include:

Financial Highlights 2010/11

- Set a balanced budget for 2011/12 against the most challenging financial settlement and economic climate ever.
- Produced a Statement of Accounts for 2010/11 that was fully compliant with legislative requirements and received a positive independent opinion from the Audit Commission as giving a 'true and fair view'.
- Was commended by the Audit Commission for its 'good quality' *Statement of Accounts* and 'comprehensive' supporting working papers together with its generally 'good arrangements to secure value for money'.
- Achieved savings of £500,000 against the General Fund revenue budget.
- Invested £97.2million on capital projects within the city.

Children and Young People

- Apprenticeship programme in children's centres recognised as 'Best Practice' by Government.
- Best GCSE results ever in 2010 and the sixth most improved area nationally.
- Lowest ever rates of young people not in Education, Employment or Training – Winter 2010/11.
- Better early intervention resulting in no permanent exclusions for any pupil with a Special Educational Needs Statement – first time ever.
- 33 new foster carers were approved in the year – more than twice as many as in the previous year.

- Uth Centres were refurbished and the Hanley centre opened.
- Pre-construction work completed to deliver 30 new primary classrooms by September 2011.
- Wide-ranging activities and short breaks delivered for over 900 children with disabilities – Summer programme, plus weekend and weekday clubs.
- Children's homes – all judged as good or outstanding.
- Fostering service judged as outstanding.

Corporate Services

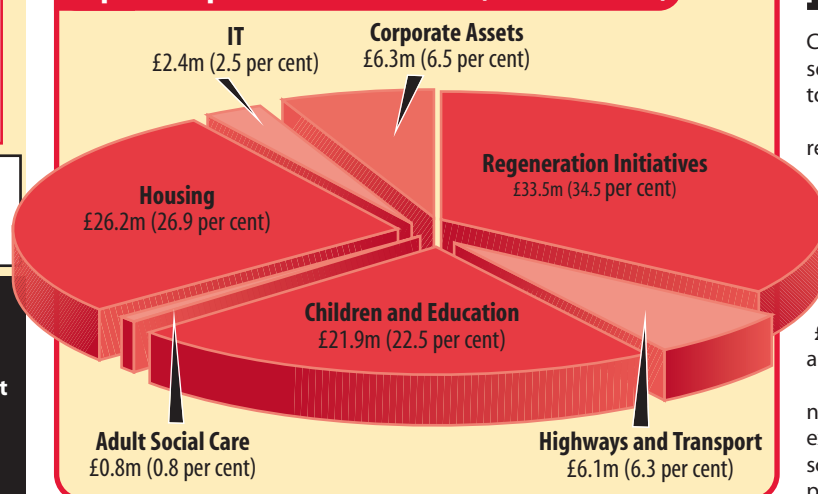
- Delivered Centenary events including the 2010 Live concert and finale in Hanley Park.
- Delivered sporting events including the Tour of Britain and Halfords Tour Series.

Adult and Neighbourhood Services

- Returned over 100 empty properties back into use and enabled the delivery of over 300 new affordable homes.



Capital Expenditure 2010/11 (£97.2million)



Investments

CAPITAL expenditure is accounted for separately from the cost of providing day to day services.

This type of expenditure generally represents investment in purchasing, upgrading or improving council assets such as land and buildings.

The local community benefits from capital expenditure over a longer period of time.

In 2010/11 the council spent £97.2 million on capital expenditure as analysed in the chart on the left.

Budgetary pressures have resulted in a need to re-examine our capital expenditure plans, through careful scrutiny of the capital programme and prioritisation of investment within the city.

The council's Safe and Sustainable Transport team give advice for a safe Winter on the roads and pavements

Get set for cold weather driving

DRIVERS are urged to prepare for difficult driving conditions on cold Winter days and nights by simply following the Highway Code.

The guide which should be learned and understood by all drivers contains a useful, common sense section on adverse weather conditions.

As well as insisting that headlights be used when visibility is reduced and that all windows must be clear of snow and ice before driving, the booklet contains a series of practical tips on how to prepare for winter weather.

In wet weather, stopping distances will be at least double those required for stopping on a dry road because tyres have less grip on the road.

Drivers are warned to:

- stay well back from the vehicle in front;
- ease off the accelerator and slow down if steering becomes unresponsive because of water on the road;
- be aware that rain and spray might make it difficult to see;
- take extra care around pedestrians; cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders.

Journeys in icy and snowy weather should be avoided unless they are absolutely necessary. Drivers who have to travel in frozen conditions are advised to:

- take care and allow more time for their journey;
- carry an emergency kit of de-icer, scraper, torch, warm clothing and boots, first aid kit, jump leads and a shovel, together with a hot drink and food.

Before setting off in snow and ice drivers must be able to see out of all windows and make sure lights are clean and number plates are visible.

For more information and advice please visit direct.gov.uk and search for the Highway Code.

Simple equipment can make difference in murky winter conditions

TOP tips to stay safe on the city's roads have been issued for the dark nights, mornings and murky days of winter.

Council experts are sending out advice to children and older people, cyclists and motorists to help each do their bit to prevent accidents.

Parents can help children stay safe by making sure they wear brightly coloured or fluorescent clothing with reflective strips, clip on reflectors or arm bands and stickers on a school bag.

Older children should make sure they do not take unnecessary risks and use safe crossing places that are well-lit.

Older people are especially vulnerable at this time of year and are urged to:

- be attentive;
- avoid crossing between parked vehicles;
- wear bright or reflective clothing (where possible).

When cycling in the dark or in poor visibility your cycle must have front and rear lights lit. It must also be fitted with a red rear reflector. Wearing safety accessories such as a cycle helmet and hi-viz jacket is also sensible.

Motorists can do their bit by making sure lights, washers and wipers are working properly, keeping windows clean, checking brakes and tyres, driving within the speed limit and road conditions and staying alert to see cyclists and pedestrians.

Councillor Adrian Knapper, Cabinet Member for Transport and Planning, said: "Now the clocks have gone back, darker mornings and afternoons can be a concerning time for vulnerable road users.

"The 'Be Bright Be Seen' initiative is just one of many that are organised to encourage safe and sustainable travel in our city."

High-visibility waistcoats are particularly beneficial for cyclists and motorcyclists while the

reflective discs are great for child and elderly pedestrians to attach to bags and ensure they are seen this Autumn and Winter.

"Motorists can also play a part by driving to the conditions of the road, making sure lights are in good working order and the car is completely roadworthy."



CYCLE SAFETY
Neil Donlan and his son Alfie, aged two, on their bike at Meir wearing the hi-viz jackets, snap on reflector bracelets and keyrings.

Pick up free reflective kit

TO help road users stay safe this winter, 300 high-visibility jackets and reflective discs are available on a first come first served basis from the council (one jacket and disc per person). To obtain your free road safety kit pop into one of the local centres below:

HANLEY LOCAL CENTRE
– Old Hall Street, Hanley

STOKE LOCAL CENTRE
– Church Street, Stoke

CHELL HEATH LOCAL CENTRE
– Cornhill Road, Chell Heath

BENTILEE NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE
– Dawlish Drive, Bentilee

MEIR LOCAL CENTRE
– Uttoxeter Road, Meir

LONGTON LOCAL CENTRE
– Commerce Street, Longton

For further information on road safety please contact the team on 232164.

Revellers warned of drink-drive dangers



A HARD-HITTING campaign will warn drivers it could be GAME OVER if they drink alcohol and get behind the wheel. The potentially lifesaving promotion run by the council and its partners will last from now until the New Year.

A unique 'Morning After' calculator features on the www.staffsaferroads.co.uk/gameover website, and helps motorists to calculate how long it could take for alcohol to leave their system.

Nationally one in five people caught drink driving have been breathalysed the morning after drinking alcohol. The

safety situation is made even worse by the fact that many young people ignore the law and repeated warnings and refuse to wear their seatbelts.

Nationally, it is estimated drivers aged 17-34 have the lowest seatbelt wearing rates. 21 per cent of car occupants killed in accidents were not wearing seat belts.

In the run up to the festive period police officers will be undertaking a number of operations across the city to promote road safety and will take enforcement action where appropriate.

Playing the safety game

CHILDREN can learn road safety lessons through fun games on a Government website.

Tales of the Road is targeted at six to 11 year-olds and is run by the Department of Transport.

Visit <http://talesoftheroad.direct.gov.uk> to find out more.

Derelict land transformed into healthy growing areas

VOLUNTEERS in Meir are spending the winter clearing a derelict site to create their own community garden complete with 10 growing spaces.

With £5,000 previously donated from local councillors' ward budgets and £9,400 from the Big Lottery Fund, the Woodfarm Residents' Association is now transforming the plot off Harvey Road.

The idea is to create a memorial garden with benches and have residents growing their own fruit and vegetables on the site before next Easter.

Four of the 10 growing spaces

have been specially designed for disabled gardeners.

Association Chairman Brian Jones said: "I'm over the moon we've got to this stage because the site was such a dump.

"Now the funding is confirmed we'll have volunteers clearing the site and getting it ready for early next year. We've given local people first choice on the growing spaces and most have already gone."

The site will be named after Brian's wife Josie, who is Secretary of the Association. If you would like to help prepare the site, call 01782 333094.



Pictured at the Harvey Road site are, left to right, gardener Ron Mason, Woodfarm Residents' Association member Pam Burton, Secretary Josie Jones and Chairman Brian Jones.

Party season health warning issued over dangerous glut of counterfeit booze

PUBLIC protection teams are fighting a battle to remove hundreds of bottles of potentially lethal counterfeit booze before the Christmas party season.

Fake vodka produced from industrial alcohol, containing twice the safe level of methanol, has been seized from certain shops across the city. In Stoke-on-Trent 25 per cent of shops visited by Trading Standards Officers had been selling counterfeit booze.

Problems mainly relate to vodka, which is usually drunk with a mixer which masks any unusual flavours. Counterfeiting normally happens in one of three ways:

- Genuine branded drinks are relabelled to avoid payment of duty.
- Genuine bottles are filled with poorly manufactured alcohol.
- Totally counterfeit brands are created which can contain dangerous levels of methanol.

Convincing

While expert officers have a number of ways of spotting counterfeit goods, some of the fakes are so convincing it can be difficult for consumers to spot them.

Lead Investigating Officer Neil Horton said teams of council specialists had been visiting shops around Stoke-on-Trent to find and seize counterfeit booze.

Shopkeepers trying to avoid paying duty are referred to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) while those selling counterfeit products face action and potentially serious penalties.

Neil said as well as health risks which could include blindness or even death, the fake booze was

such big business that inevitably it was linked to raising money to fund serious organised crime like drug running and people trafficking.

He said: "It's a massive issue affecting the whole country and we are determined to take as much of this illegal, counterfeit booze off the streets as we can.

"Unfortunately there is that much of it about that it is not difficult to find. But we are concerned that people will end up with these bottles in their drinks cabinet and we do not want to see anyone seriously ill or worse because they have drunk counterfeit alcohol.

"As a public protection service we have mounted special exercises targeting illegal alcohol and tobacco which could be risks to public health and which are used to fund serious organised crime. But this is a multi-million pound business with an impact across the UK and we will continue to focus on removing these items from sale."

Traders must ensure they buy from reputable wholesalers and if they want advice they should contact Trading Standards on 232065.

Anyone with information about counterfeit booze or cigarettes can call the Fake Goods Hotline on 01782 238444.



Lead Officer for Investigations Neil Horton with just a few bottles of the fake booze seized from shops in the city.

Councillor scoops accolade

SURGERY for a brain aneurysm prevented a city councillor picking up a top national award in person.

Councillor Randolph Conteh was recovering in hospital when he was named runner up Non-Executive Councillor of the Year for 2011 at the Centre for Public Scrutiny annual awards in London.

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Terry Follows, has since presented him with his CfPS certificate.

The City Independent Councillor for Penkhill and Stoke said: "I feel extremely proud and privileged to be both nominated and then to receive a national runner-up award for my city council scrutiny work efforts.

"It's nice to be recognised nationally for the local work I do for, and on behalf of, the communities of Stoke-on-Trent."

Nominations are now being taken for next years Local Government Information Unit Achievement Awards, which recognises the contribution of councillors to their communities.

Three new categories include a Judges' Special Award for Contribution to Local Government and an Age UK Pride of Place award, to honour councillors who make a difference to the lives of older people.

- To nominate your councillor, go to www.lgiu.org.uk and follow the links.



Service tops hundredth Hepatitis C recovery

A SPECIAL event has been organised to mark a key achievement in the treatment of Hepatitis C by a pioneering community based service.

The 100th person to be treated for the disease has passed through the doors of the Routes to Recovery service in Stoke-on-Trent.

Treating the disease as early as possible can save the NHS hundreds of thousands of pounds in more extensive treatment or liver transplants and also helps to eradicate its spread.

This is why the Safer City Partnership, using money made available by the Primary Care Trust, initially laid out more than £600,000 funding for the community-based service, which is unique throughout the UK.

In just over a year 100 people have been tested for Hepatitis C by the specialist team, who are backed by a consultant at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire.

The milestone is being marked with a special achievement day to be held on 15 December at the Roots to Recovery hub at Canalside, Festival Park. Key project partners will visit the service and people will be able to ask questions about the testing and treatment process.

Lisa Durber, Clinical Nurse Specialist for Hepatitis C, said: "Hepatitis C is known as the silent killer. It is four times more infectious than HIV and people who have contracted it may not show any symptoms for years. However during this time it is continuing to do damage to their liver and they may pass it on to others totally unaware.

"Drug users are susceptible because it is a blood borne disease, so sharing needles can put people at risk. But it can even be passed on by sharing a crack pipe, or snorting cocaine with a shared £10 note or, for that matter, sharing a razor blade.

"Testing and treatment is available to anyone who feels they may have contracted the disease from using drugs either currently or in the past and can be accessed through our community hubs and GP surgeries throughout the city. In this respect it is unique throughout the country as normally testing and treatment is carried out at hospitals. The process starts with a simple dry blood test and it normally takes three to four days for results to be processed. If required, treatment is then arranged."

● For more details about Hepatitis C testing and treatment, people are invited to attend the achievement day. Alternatively, they can call the service on 07500 118375.

Partners aim to make it an unhappy Christmas for criminals

A Respect Action Day has been planned for the city centre in the build up to Christmas to help clamp down on festive crime.

The day of action will take place on Monday, 19 December and is aimed at everyone who uses the city centre in the build up to 25 December, including shoppers, the business community, partygoers and late night revellers.

Organisations such as Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Safer City Partnership will be on hand to offer crime prevention and safety advice and hand out useful safety items.

These include purse bells, which can help deter thieves and pick pockets, personal attack alarms and cycle marking kits.

Pro-active approach

There will also be the opportunity to register mobile phones and other valuable electrical items on the national property register, Immobilise, in order to easily identify handsets if they are stolen or lost.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service will be offering Winter fire safety advice.

Bill James, Respect Co-ordinator for the Safer City Partnership, said: "This has become an established event in the city centre in the run up to Christmas and gives us a great opportunity to target shoppers and members of the business community with basic crime prevention advice.

"Taking this kind of pro-active approach has helped to reduce crime in general and prevent it from rising at a very busy time of the year."



Staffordshire Police Force Intelligence Manager Detective Sergeant Rachel Joyce demonstrates the Immobilise national property register, which will be available at the Christmas Respect event.

IMMOBILISE

Online registration helps return stolen kit

HUNDREDS of new students in North Staffordshire have signed up to an innovative crime reduction initiative which helps combat theft and reunites owners with stolen goods.

Through the Immobilise scheme, valuable electrical items such as mobile phones, laptops, and iPads can be scanned and their details stored on a national online property register.

Because each item has a unique barcode, police forces are able to use the register to identify the owners of lost and stolen devices. This also helps to simplify insurance sales, clamp down on the sale of stolen property and enables police to prosecute offenders more easily. Earlier this year, The Safer City

Partnership invested £2,500 in a new scanner and software, linked to the national register, to make it easy for people to sign up to the scheme.

Partnership officers promoted the Immobilise scheme at Freshers' Week events at both Staffordshire and Keele Universities.

It went down a storm with new students – as more than 350 signed up for it at Staffordshire's two campuses in Stoke and Stafford, and 293 more at Keele.

● Immobilise was launched in March 2003 and has since grown to represent 24 million members in the UK alone. For more details about the scheme log onto www.immobilise.com

Tests to beat link between drugs and crime

THOUSANDS of suspected criminals are being tested for drugs when they are arrested in a bid to combat the link between addiction and crime.

People arrested on suspicion of burglary, shoplifting and fraud will be asked to undergo a mouth swab test for Class A drugs when they are brought into police custody.

Anyone testing positive will be sent for assessments with drug workers; anyone who refuses or fails to attend the sessions can be fined up to £2,500 or even jailed.

The testing began at the start of November following a £250,000 Government funding grant. The latest figures show that more than 3,000 people living in Stoke-on-Trent during the 12-month period up to July 2011 were arrested for offences triggered by drugs.

Vicki Yates, Adult Drug Treatment Programme Lead for Safer City Partnership,



said: "The aim of the scheme is to improve health, reduce crime and make communities safer places to live.

"By carrying out the tests we are hoping to encourage people who may have a problem the chance to engage with drug services, where experts can help them look at their problems and make positive behaviour changes."

Sergeant Matt Bennion, from Stoke-on-Trent Safer City Partnership, said: "This is a really

good opportunity for North Staffordshire to cut crime and improve people's health.

"If we think an offence may have been triggered by drugs, the arrested person will be tested.

"It will be an offence to refuse to provide a swab and it will also be an offence if the person fails to turn up to their sessions."

Four new members of staff have been taken on to provide cover at Etruria's Northern Area Custody Facility between 7am and midnight.

Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, said: "The 'test on arrest' system is designed to help people who are using drugs to shake their habit and give them a chance to rehabilitate.

"This is a national programme that has yielded positive results in crime reduction in other parts of the country, and we want this to happen in Staffordshire too."

Look out for older neighbours plea

PEOPLE are being asked to look out for elderly neighbours and relatives this Winter, as they might be at particular risk of a fire in the home.

Statistics show that the number of fatal domestic blazes rises considerably around the Christmas and Winter months' period and that older or vulnerable people are most susceptible.

That is why residents are being encouraged to phone or pop in to see vulnerable neighbours to make sure things are ok.

They are also being asked to encourage neighbours to take part in a free fire home risk check and have life-saving smoke detectors fitted.

Donna Broadhead, Fire Partnership Officer with the Safer City Partnership, said: "We do see a considerable increase in the number of home fire incidents in the Winter and around Christmas, and elderly people are much more vulnerable.

"Not only can their senses be more diminished, which can lead to an incident in the first place, but also escaping a fire in their home can be more difficult because of mobility issues.

"That is why, despite it being a very busy time of the year, we are urging people to be good neighbours and keep an eye on residents in their streets, and have a think about who might need help."

She added: "The most proactive approach is to encourage neighbours to have a home fire risk check. This is carried out completely free of charge by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and also involves having smoke detectors fitted.

"It is a peace of mind check that can prove to be invaluable in saving lives."

● For more information, or to book a home fire risk check, call 0800 0241 999 or log on to www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk



Community Safety Officer Pete Hall advises 78 year old Olwyn Douglas on fire safety at her home in Cobridge.

Support for domestic abuse victims

FUNDING from the Safer City Partnership is ensuring multi-agency support is available in the city to help the victims of domestic abuse.

The Partnership has teamed up with a wide range of organisations to provide all-encompassing help to women and men, who are being abused, threatened or physically or sexually abused by a partner.

Research shows that domestic abuse can happen in all kinds of relationships and for any reason, regardless of age, race, sex, disability, wealth, geography and lifestyle. As well as physical violence it can also involve a wide range of abusive and controlling behaviours.

People in same sex relationships can encounter additional problems – for instance gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender victims are likely to face additional concerns about homophobia and gender discrimination.

People who are disabled may be in the situation where their abuser is also their carer, while victims from black minority or ethnic backgrounds may also face religious and cultural pressures.

Nicky Jolley, Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership, said: "No one should be abused and people shouldn't have to put up with it, whatever their circumstances or background. There are a number of agencies people can contact who can offer varying levels of support.

"They can also support victim's children should they require it and very importantly the information provided is strictly confidential."

Organisations that offer support include:

Arch North Staffs – practical and emotional support to victims, including the BME community (if English is a spoken language). Tel 01782 683763.

Family Support Services – offering a counselling service. Tel 01782 287902

Refuge – a support and refuge service specifically for South Asian women. Tel 01782 822885.

Potteries Women's Refuge – a 24 hour refuge offering a day or night admission service. Tel 01782 822885.

Broken Rainbow – support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people over the telephone. Tel 0300 999 5428

Anyone in immediate danger is urged to call the Police emergency number – 999.

Latest smartphone 'app' technology catches car-theft crook

SMARTphone owners are being encouraged to look at new security applications which can help catch thieves who try to use stolen mobiles.

The recommendation comes from the Safer City Partnership after police used the latest technology to help catch an offender who stole a car containing the owner's iPhone. The phone had the software installed which works by taking a photograph of anyone who incorrectly enters the device's security code.

It then sends the photo, along with the current GPS location of the mobile, to the owner's email account.

From this information Staffordshire Police were able to track down the thief, recover the stolen phone and vehicle – as well as make arrests in connection with a related attempted burglary.

Inspector Martin Brereton, Deputy Commander of the Stoke North Local Policing Team, said: "This relates to a robbery of a car on Smithyfield Road, Norton, in August.

"A delivery driver was dragged from his car by an offender who then stole it.

"Inside the car was the victim's Apple iPhone and on it was the iGotya application, which was activated when the offender punched in an incorrect four digit code.

"The local PCSO was able to identify the person in the photograph sent to the owner's email address, as a result we were able to act quickly to recover the victim's phone and car.

Chances of stopping theft

"In addition, the stolen car was also used in a ram raid style attempted burglary at a newsagents and off-licence in Ball Green. Four suspects were arrested for this offence and are currently on police bail pending forensic evidence."

Jon Connolly, from the Safer City Partnership, said: "These sophisticated apps are really proving their usefulness in apprehending thieves. Combined with schemes such as Immobilise they can effectively secure people's smart phones.

"We recommend people take the time to look at downloading a security application for their mobiles – there are many on the market which vary from being free to a small fee and can really enhance the chances of stopping theft or recovery after theft."





Litter pick stops canal problems

CHILDREN turned their back on antisocial behaviour to help clean up the city's historic canals.

A group of young boys, who got into trouble for cutting free or untying boats and throwing property into the water at Etruria locks, near to Etruria Industrial Museum, signed up for a restorative justice initiative through the Safer City Partnership.

They teamed up with volunteers from the museum, Safer City Partnership, British Waterways and the Riverside Adult Training Centre for a big litter pick. They travelled on the historic motorboat *Lindsay* and managed to collect 20 bin bags of rubbish, fished out of the water between Etruria and Harecastle on the Trent and Mersey Canal.

Andrew Watts, Museum Volunteer Co-ordinator said: "The police and the Safer City Partnership were a great help and came up with a fitting restorative justice project. The lads worked hard all day and got the idea that the canal was something to enjoy, not to throw rubbish into."

Safer City Partnership Volunteer Chris Smith said: "We felt the day was a great success. The children were made to understand what problems their behaviour had caused.

"They thoroughly enjoyed the event and learnt about the museum and the canal boat they travelled on.

"Since the litter pick day, the community around Etruria Industrial Museum has not experienced any recurrence of the problems."

Team issues quad safety warning

THE Safer City Partnership has teamed up with the council's Youth Offending Team to highlight the dangers of riding unlicensed quad bikes and mini motorbikes.

Off-roading is not only illegal but is also extremely dangerous – and has led to a number of incidents in which young people have been injured while riding these vehicles.

Working alongside Staffordshire Police officers, the Safer City Partnership and youth teams will be targeting hotspot areas with flyers, asking people to report incidents and generally raise awareness of the dangers involved.

The flyer highlights the legal and cost implications of riding an off-road bike, which may include being issued with an ASBO, being disqualified from driving or even being imprisoned. It also features a list of do's and don'ts about riding quad bikes or mini bikes safely and legally.

● **Anyone who wants to report illegal activity or nuisance behaviour can call the Stoke-on-Trent Antisocial Behaviour hotline on 0800 561 5610 or call Staffordshire Police on 101.**



Manager Steven Sanger (left) with former client Steve Salt who now volunteers at the Adsis centre.

Achievement day staged to celebrate beating alcohol issues

AN achievement day was held to recognise the successes of 18 people who are on the road to overcoming serious alcohol addiction problems.

The event held by the Stoke-on-Trent Community Alcohol Service marked clients coming to the end of their formal treatment process.

They were presented with certificates in front of their families, friends and other treatment providers at the service's new base at Balwant House in Shelton.

Steven Sanger, Operational Manager for

Adsis, said: "This event was of great importance and real significance to those that attended. It marked the journey they had come on and helped them reflect on what they had achieved so far.

Abstinence

"Most of those present had set their goals as abstinence and others had been working hard towards a sensible, reduced drinking pattern. From our point of view these events are crucial to help dispel the perceived stigmas surrounding alcohol use and alcohol treatment.

"They also help individuals who have been through the treatment programme, who are now on the next step of their journey, to remain clear and focussed in maintaining their goal."

The new integrated Community Alcohol Service – which brings together the work of support services such as Adsis and North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust – is funded by the Safer City Partnership.

It provides seamless support for people referred for help in relation to alcohol misuse.

● **For more information about the service provided call Adsis on 01782 271096.**

Should the ARZ go ahead?

MEMBERS of the public are being consulted over a proposed new Alcohol Restriction Zone in the north of the city.

If given the green light, the latest Order will encompass a large part of Tunstall town centre and the surrounding area and will aim to reduce alcohol-related antisocial behaviour.

Hundreds of traders and residents have signed a petition backing the creation of a new Alcohol Restriction Zone.

Now the council is listening to feedback from the public before the application is considered by its Licensing Committee.

Alcohol Restriction Zones provide Staffordshire Police with the power to ask people to stop drinking and give up

any cans, bottles or containers of alcohol. People who refuse to do so face arrest and fines of up to £500. It does not mean a ban on alcohol, and will not affect people drinking responsibly in licensed premises.

There are currently 12 Alcohol Restriction Zones throughout the city.

The boundary of the proposed zone in Tunstall is outlined in the adjacent map and the full public notice has been published in the local press.

However, the proposed order does not include off licences and public houses located within the zone during licensing hours and for 30 minutes after.

● **For more details, or to make a comment, contact Jenny Lawson at the Safer City Partnership on 236103.**



New website offers pointers to support and advice



PEOPLE looking for budgeting and money advice can take advantage of the brand new Chatterbox North Staffordshire website.

The website, designed by the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG), is linked to key local and national organisations, councils and money experts.

The key aim is to give members of the public easy access to support and benefit advice, and to help them take control of their personal money matters and make the most of their finances.

People who log onto the website are first asked a series of simple questions which helps to signpost them to the most relevant help and advice depending on their circumstances.

Information is available on banking, loans, welfare benefits, housing and tenancy support as well as debt, fuel debt and energy advice.

There are links to numerous organisations including Staffordshire Credit Union, Moneyline, Aspire Housing, Staffordshire University and Stoke-on-Trent Citizens Advice Bureau. There is plenty of self-help information as well and links to

national bodies such as the Money Advice Service.

Rachel Arulanantham, Student Money Adviser for Staffordshire University's Money Doctors Service and FIG sub-group member, said: "The idea was to set up a central website through which people wanting help and advice on money, debt matters and benefits could easily access help and relevant organisations.

All walks of life

"It is aimed at people from all walks of life and all kinds of circumstances, so is as relevant to a young student as it is to an elderly person living in sheltered accommodation.

"People accessing Chatterbox North Staffordshire are asked a series of questions and are then directed towards the most relevant agencies or individuals.

"In addition, all agencies taking part are asked on a regular basis to update their information and contacts, so website users have the latest details at their fingertips."

For more information log on to www.chatterboxns.com – alternatively, type "Chatterbox North Staffs" into an internet search engine such as Google.

Rachel Arulanantham, Student Money Adviser for Staffordshire University, and Student Engagement Assistant Ithsham Pevrez access the new Chatterbox site.



LOOK OUT FOR THE PIG: The Chatterbox logo is this piggy bank which appears on the new website.

Christmas on a tight budget

CHRISTMAS can be a tough time for many households – and inevitably it is a season when money can matter even more.

Making ends meet and staying within budget can be really difficult – especially for low-income families who want to enjoy the festive fun and may look at loans to supplement a tight budget.

However, there are ways to stay in budget and still have a merry Christmas – often it takes a little bit of simple planning.

Sticking to a plan and spending sensibly is the key – so here are some top tips from the Financial Inclusion Group on making the best of it:

- Plan early for Christmas. Be realistic and budget accordingly. Work out how much you are going to spend on each person – and stick to it. Manage expectations as to what you – or Santa – can give.
- **Don't forget the everyday bills. Remember that rent, the mortgage, utility bills, food bills and other existing debts still have to be paid. Even though it's Christmas, get your priorities right.**
- Don't bank on an overdraft. If you do need more money, don't just run up an overdraft without talking to your bank first – it will work out much more expensive.
- **Keep things simple. If you can afford to pay for your goods outright by cash, cheque, or debit card, don't be persuaded to take out extended credit agreements unless they really do work out cheaper.**
- Shop around. Try as many different places as possible to find the best price. Buy what you want and not what other people say you need. Also, be wary of extended warranties.
- **Buy safe to be safe. Whatever the deal, whatever the temptation, don't buy from unauthorised traders and don't borrow from unauthorised lenders.**
- Read the small print. Check for hidden extras in any credit agreement. Work out the total amount payable. Ensure that the monthly instalments are within your budget before signing.
- **If you are going to use a credit card, shop around and compare terms. Some cards charge high interest rates, but provide interest free periods or discounts. Budget for all these costs and put the payment dates in your diary.**
- Be organised. There's a lot to remember at Christmas. If you've borrowed money don't forget that it won't be long before you have to make a payment. Make sure you pay on time, even if it is only the minimum, or you will be faced with additional charges.

Try a locally-based responsible lender

RESIDENTS can take advantage of a locally-based service which provides affordable loans as an alternative to loan sharks and expensive doorstep lenders.

The Stoke-on-Trent branch of Moneyline, which is based in Cheapside, Hanley, also provides savings accounts and access to basic bank accounts. The national organisation, which is a social enterprise, completed more than 10,500 loans in 2010 as well as opening more than 3,500 saving accounts. It was also named as Responsible Lender of the Year – Short Term Loans by *Credit Today*.

For more details or to apply for a loan or open an account, pop along to the offices or call 01782 206836 or log onto www.mline.co.uk

Credit union provides affordable solutions

THE Staffordshire Credit Union (SCU) can provide residents with an affordable and ethical solution to money management.

The SCU is a not-for-profit financial co-operative, which invites residents, who may not have access to high street banking services or have been refused credit to open a savings account and become a member of the Credit Union, allowing them to borrow small amounts.

Members are able to save up £10,000 and borrow up to £5,000, with the possible benefit of accumulating interest in the account. A Credit Union loan is low-cost – for example, a loan of £300 has an

interest rate of 26.8 per cent and a weekly repayment of £6.59. This is much lower compared to the 1,000 per cent and £57.70 repayments of a typical loan shark.

However it is always worth checking whether a cheaper loan might be available from a high street bank or another lender.

The SCU does not pressure residents into borrowing, or to borrow more than they can afford to pay back. The scheme is available to anyone who lives, works, volunteers or studies in Staffordshire.

For more information on the SCU, call 0845 224 1215 or email info@staffscu.co.uk

City hygiene rating idea goes national

PIONEERING work by the council over four years has contributed to the introduction of a new national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

The council's own "Scores on the Doors" award paved the way for the Food Standards Agency scheme, which will now rate all outlets including food shops, restaurants, takeaways, pubs and school kitchens.

Establishments inspected to make sure they meet legal requirements, will be issued with scores ranging from zero for urgent improvement to five meaning very good.

Food businesses will also get a certificate and a window sticker so customers can check their rating.

Dawn Birkin, Compliance and Health Protection Manager for Public Protection, said: "Our scheme was highly successful in driving up standards and cutting food poisoning cases and we're sure the national scheme will work just as well."

Ratings will be displayed on the FSA website at www.food.gov.uk/ ratings.

For more information about the scheme call the council on 01782 232065.



OH BROTHER IT'S TASTY...
Ben and Harry Ford, aged three and six, with catering supervisor Julie Banks at St Theresa's Primary, Trent Vale, which scored top marks of five after its food hygiene inspection.



Cafe - Life

Hayley Redgrift, a member of the Cafe Life team, serves up another tasty meal at Burslem's latest eatery. The cafe has been awarded a food hygiene level five rating.

Café serves up opportunities to enter the world of work

TASTY dishes on the menu at a new cafe in a historic Burslem building are giving people with learning disabilities a step up toward the world of work.

Catering, serving the public and taking payment for food are giving people the skills and confidence they need to live more independently, and maybe even move out of residential care and into their own supported housing.

Everyone working at the cafe has gone through an interview and induction process, including hygiene training, and the initiative is proving a very popular addition to the Richmond Care Group's programme to enrich the quality

of life of its service users. The cafe is open Monday to Friday in the Mother Town's School of Art in in The Orangery, restored through the Burslem Townscape Heritage Initiative (supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands and the Burslem School of Art Trust).

Director of Client Services Jim Cullen said: "This is a real life experience for our service users.

"Being a part of something so exciting helps them to engage with society and is highly rewarding. It is a joy to see staff with learning disabilities making such a positive contribution with great ideas and real enthusiasm.

"The food is great too, and soon the cafe will be launching its executive menu, created by the service users themselves."

For all city council services contact **234234**



YOUR HEALTH CENTRES

ABBEY HULTON (Main) 0300 123 0976 Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service 0300 123 0987	PACKMOOR 0300 123 0874
BENTILEE 01782 425900	PICCADILLY CENTRE (Main) 0300 123 0985 Sexual health helpline 0300 123 0970
BLURTON (Main) 0300 123 0971 Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service 0300 123 0977	SMALLTHORNE 0300 123 0982
BURSLEM 0300 123 0979	STOKE 0300 123 0986 Out of Hours District Nursing Service 0300 123 0989
FENTON 0300 123 0875	TRENT VALE 0300 123 0876
HANFORD (Main) 0300 123 0974 Children's Airway Support Team 0300 123 0988	TUNSTALL (Main) 0300 123 0972 Dental Advice Line 0300 123 0981
HANLEY 0300 123 0980	WHITFIELD VALLEY 0300 123 1453
LONGTON 0300 123 0993	
LONGTON COTTAGE HOSPITAL 0300 123 0975	
MEIR 0300 123 1452	
NORTON 0300 123 1454	

For more information and advice on health issues please call NHS Direct - 24 hrs a day **0845 46 47** or visit www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk or www.nhs.uk

Fire & Rescue contact numbers

EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANAGER Wayne Bowcock 01785 898894	LONGTON STATION MANAGER Andy Leedham 01785 898765	SANDYFORD NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-ORDINATOR Pete Hall 01785 898886
PREVENTION AND PROTECTION MANAGER Rebecca Bryant 01785 898542	SANDYFORD STATION MANAGER Glynn Luznyj 01785 898693	RISK REDUCTION CO-ORDINATOR Rehana Iqbal 01785 898891
RISK REDUCTION MANAGER Mick Daniels 01785 898927	HANLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-ORDINATOR Mick Warrilow 01785 898902	SAFER CITY PARTNERSHIP OFFICER Donna Broadhead 01785 898904
HANLEY & BURSLEM STATION MANAGER Ian Read 01785 898591	LONGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-ORDINATOR Tracey Cresswell 01785 898951	

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 999 AND ASK FOR THE FIRE SERVICE

To book your home fire risk check ring: 0800 0241 999



Your Councillors

Baddeley, Milton and Norton



JACK BRERETON
(Conservative)
07855 916134
jack.brereton@stoke.gov.uk



ANDREW LILLEY
(Labour)
07717 714010
andy.lilley@stoke.gov.uk



DUNCAN WALKER
(Labour)
(01782) 912422
07748 504149
duncan.walker@stoke.gov.uk

Abbey Hulton and Townsend



GWEN HASSALL
(Labour)
(01782) 263166
07557 848765
gwen.hassall@stoke.gov.uk



ADRIAN KNAPPER
(Labour)
07714 334453
adrian.knapper@stoke.gov.uk

Birches Head and Central Forest Park



PAUL BREEZE
(Unaffiliated)
(01782) 279684
paul.breeze@stoke.gov.uk



MARK MEREDITH
(Labour)
07717 714020
mark.meredith@stoke.gov.uk

Blurton East



GLENYS WARD
(City Independents)
(01782) 312670
07922 909545
glenys.ward@stoke.gov.uk

Bentilee and Uubberley



SHEILA PITT
(Labour)
07957 948896
sheila.pitt@stoke.gov.uk



ALISON WEDGWOOD
(Labour)
07968 477901
alison.wedgwood@stoke.gov.uk

Birches Head and Central Forest Park



PAUL BREEZE
(Unaffiliated)
(01782) 279684
paul.breeze@stoke.gov.uk



MARK MEREDITH
(Labour)
07717 714020
mark.meredith@stoke.gov.uk

Blurton East



GLENYS WARD
(City Independents)
(01782) 312670
07922 909545
glenys.ward@stoke.gov.uk

Blurton West and Newstead



NEIL DAY
(Labour)
(01782) 598844
07796 040002
neil.day@stoke.gov.uk

Boothen and Oakhill



ANDY PLATT
Labour
07919 660221
andy.platt@stoke.gov.uk

Bradeley and Chell Heath



GURMEET SINGH KALLAR
(Labour)
07900 604232
gurmeetsingh.kallar@stoke.gov.uk

Broadway and Longton East



TOM REYNOLDS
(Labour)
07850 828717
tom.reynolds@stoke.gov.uk

Burslem Central



ALAN DUTTON
(Labour)
(01782) 824051
07982 231567
alan.dutton@stoke.gov.uk

Burslem Park



JOY GARNER
(Labour)
(01782) 768846
07986 442770
joy.garner@stoke.gov.uk

Dresden and Florence



SHAZAD HUSSAIN
(Labour)
07899 771815
shazad.hussain@stoke.gov.uk

Eaton Park



TERRY CROWE
(Labour)
(01782) 269422
07818 044755
terry.crowe@stoke.gov.uk

Etruria and Hanley



MAJID KHAN
(Labour)
07989 441707
majid.khan@stoke.gov.uk

Fenton East



PAUL SHOTTON
(Labour)
(01782) 434445
paul.shotton@stoke.gov.uk

Fenton West and Mount Pleasant



KAREN CLARKE
(Labour)
07917 270594
karen.clarke@stoke.gov.uk

Ford Green and Smallthorne



MATT WILCOX
(Labour)
07810 825600
matt.wilcox@stoke.gov.uk

Goldenhill and Sandyford



MARTIN GARNER
(Labour)
(01782) 768846
07759 863615
martin.garner@stoke.gov.uk

Great Chell and Packmoor



JANINE BRIDGES
(Labour)
(01782) 851842
07989 385631/
07717 714205
janine.bridges@stoke.gov.uk

Fenton West



ANN JAMES
(City Independents)
(01782) 836766
ann.james@stoke.gov.uk

Hanford and Trentham



TERENCE FOLLOWS
(City Independents)
(01782) 318127
07944 055379
terence.follows@stoke.gov.uk



PETER HAYWARD
(City Independents)
(01782) 644052
07920 835839
peter.hayward@stoke.gov.uk

Hanley Park and Shelton



AMJID WAZIR
(Labour)
07747 830461
amjid.wazir@stoke.gov.uk

Hartshill and Basford



SHAUN PENDER
(Labour)
(01782) 632104
07920 835836
shaun.pender@stoke.gov.uk

Hollybush and Longton West



KATH BANKS
(Labour)
(01782) 399759
07790 699379
kath.banks@stoke.gov.uk

Joiner's Square



ALASTAIR WATSON
(Labour)
07736 837822
alastair.watson@stoke.gov.uk

Lightwood North and Normacot



BAGH ALI
(Labour)
(01782) 343246
07973 848428
bagh.ali@stoke.gov.uk

Little Chell and Stanfield



DAVID CONWAY
(City Independents)
(01782) 790922
david.conway@stoke.gov.uk

Meir Hay



MUHAMMAD AUMIR
(Labour)
07413 205979
muhammad.aumir@stoke.gov.uk

Meir North



RUTH ROSENAU
(Labour)
(01782) 501940
07870 503575
ruth.rosenau@stoke.gov.uk

Meir Park



ABI BROWN
(Conservative)
07793 844169
abi.brown@stoke.gov.uk

Meir South



DEBBIE WHEELDON
(Labour)
(01782) 595043
07870 777807
debbie.wheeldon@stoke.gov.uk

Moorcroft



MOHAMMED PERVEZ
(Labour)
(01782) 232468
07919 917632
mohammed.pervez@stoke.gov.uk

Penkhull and Stoke



RANDOLPH CONTEH
(City Independents)
(01782) 256869
07920 835902
randolph.conteh@stoke.gov.uk

Sandford Hill



OLWEN HAMER
(Labour)
07717 714207
olwen.hamer@stoke.gov.uk

Sneyd Green



DEBRA GRATTON
(Labour)
07748 251695
debra.gratton@stoke.gov.uk

Springfields and Trent Vale



SARAH HILL
(Labour)
(01782) 845044
07584 607624
sarah.hill@stoke.gov.uk

Tunstall



LEE WANGER
(City Independents)
07971 303729
lee.wanger@stoke.gov.uk

Weston Coyney



MATTHEW FRY
(Labour)
07826 891801
matthew.fry@stoke.gov.uk

FORTHCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, STOKE:

- The Cabinet meetings are scheduled as follows at 5.30pm: 24 November 2011, 15 December 2011 and 26 January 2012.
- The full City Council meetings are at 5.30pm on 8 December 2011, 2 February 2012 and 23 February 2012 (Budget).

For more information on your councillors go to stoke.gov.uk/councillors
Councillors can also be contacted through the Councillor and Civic Support Team who can take messages and forward them on. They can be contacted on 01782 231922 or 231924.

Support for vulnerable residents pays off

A DEDICATED team is funding services to help hundreds of vulnerable people lead independent lives in their own homes.

The Supporting People Team works with 30 organisations across the city to provide housing related services for a wide range of people.

These include residents with mental health problems, older people with support needs, people with learning disabilities, single homeless people and homeless families and women escaping domestic violence.

Through a multi-agency approach Supporting People funded services provide assistance in helping to find and set up a new home, access an alarm system or Telecare as well as access to training, employment, health and education services.

They will also help with applying for benefits, managing money and filling forms as well as getting to know the surrounding area.

The team is also responsible for making sure that there are services available for vulnerable people in the city and that these services are of a good standard.

Chris Dale of the Supporting People Team said: "Each service helps by assisting with a range of practical things and the team are responsible for making sure that there are services available for vulnerable people and that they are of a good standard."

"Each service has its own application process and eligibility criteria and people looking to access them can contact us."

The Supporting People programme is managed by a commissioning body made up of partners from housing, health, social services, corporate resources and probation.

A Supporting People service guide has been produced to help people gain access to a full list of services available.

● For more details about the services call 01782 232123 or email supporting.people@stoke.gov.uk



IN TUNE...
Peter Whitehead hopes to realise his ambition of becoming a professional musician.

FROM special school to mainstream education and violin beginner to talented violinist – teenager Peter Whitehead has made huge progress over the past two years.

The 14-year-old, who was diagnosed with autism when he was three, is now dreaming of a career as a professional musician as his own hard work and the support of both his family and Stoke-on-Trent's City Music Service pay off.

He first picked up a violin at Abbey Hill School and Performing Arts College in 2009 after his dad, Andrew Whitehead, approached the City Music Service looking for tuition.

Andrew, a former music teacher and violinist said: "His autism means he finds some things physically difficult to do so I thought the idea of him even holding a violin correctly was too much of a stretch."

"His teacher from the City Music Service has helped him go from zero to Grade 6 in two years. It took me four years to do the same so he's done amazingly well. I don't see it as autistic ability; he just works hard so we're really proud. Music is one of the things that helps him shine. He's loving it."

Peter, who is now settling in

Violinist eyes career after falling for the power of music

full-time at Trentham High School, said: "I like the violin because I do really well with it. I'm more confident and now have a much bigger ambition that I did."

He performs in the City Youth String Orchestra and the City Youth Choir, while his 12-year-old brother Tim – who also has autism – is a talented trumpeter who achieved Grade 4 with distinction last year.

They have both benefited from City Music Service tuition. A staff of around 35 music teachers run classes, workshops and one-to-one sessions for youngsters at 64 primary and secondary schools across the city.

They also organise choirs, orchestras and ensembles who performed a packed calendar of events last year. The City Youth Training Choir of eight to 11 year-olds won two classes at the

Biddulph Music Festival.

The service also has a music technology suite complete with computers, electric guitars and a drum kit. The suite is used for group and individual learning and was very popular during the school summer holidays.

Boosting self esteem

Of the thousands of children who enjoy music lessons across the city, 200 sat instrumental practical exams in 2010-2011 and achieved a 100 per cent pass rate while a further 213 won music medals... an increase of 30 per cent on the previous year.

Music Service Acting Leader Harry Hitchen said: "Music gives children so much; they get a sense of achievement, experience teamworking, develop socially and learn new skills whilst boosting their confidence and self esteem."

"We provide whole-class

instrumental and curriculum music teaching as well as individual tuition. A significant number of our older students go on to study at university or music college.

"Peter shows just what can be achieved so we're proud of him and all the other young people across the city who love and enjoy their music."

Andrew Whitehead, who is also chair of Governors at two city primary schools, added: "The City Music Service is phenomenal. The strides Peter has made are absolutely huge."

"The service has taken so much care of him, I'd say it's excellent and encourage more schools to get involved."

● For more information on the City Music Service and the opportunities on offer please call 01782 233794/233792

Our City is published by a partnership of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, NHS Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue and Jobcentre Plus



Stoke on Trent



Contact us by mail at **FREEPOST Our City** or by email at ourcity@stoke.gov.uk or telephone **01782 236703**