

Stoke-on-Trent

ISSUE 19: JANUARY 2011

Our City

towns
10 years



VICTORIAN VAMPIRES

**add bite to
film festival**

HORROR MOVIE SHOT AT
GLADSTONE POTTERY MUSEUM
AIMS TO STOKE YOUR FIRES **PAGE SIX**

Why we are pressing the Government to give us a fairer deal

By City Council Leader
Councillor
MOHAMMED PERVEZ

IT was hard to conceal my anger when Government Minister Eric Pickles announced the city council will have to cut a massive £25 million from its budget on top of unavoidable costs of £11 million in the next financial year.

This is our worst nightmare come true and is a kick in the teeth for the people of Stoke-on-Trent.

We had already written to the Government and pressed our case at every opportunity, but it seems our pleas fell on stony ground.

Since the announcement, we have called for an urgent meeting with the minister to push the Government to treat Stoke-on-Trent, and deprived cities and towns like ours as special cases, and help them avoid the full force of the cuts.

The Let's Talk consultation exercise attracted over 2,000 comments and showed just how valued, and how needed our services are.

The response proved to us which services you think are a priority, which are the most important to your lives, and which are not.

We knew we needed to seek as much feedback as possible if the exercise was to be a success.

When we met the public face-to-face, most of them showed tremendous understanding that these proposals had only been brought forward as a response to the Government cutting council budgets.

Any reductions we have to make will be caused by the reduction in our financial settlement from Government and unavoidable cost pressures, not from our desire to reduce services.

So we are grateful to the thousands of you who spent your time to give us your views and help us understand where you want us to prioritise.

These are difficult times, but having listened to you we can try to reflect your wishes as much as we can.

Elsewhere in the city, I am delighted to see some of the pledges we said we would achieve before the end of March come to fruition.

The regeneration of the city centre, including the new Tesco store and ring road extension, mean the recovery is gathering pace and our city is changing.

Long may it continue, and long may we work together for the good of Stoke-on-Trent.

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No Cold Calling Zones further extended

AN 11th No Cold Calling Zone has been set up in Stoke-on-Trent offering residents added peace of mind in their homes.

The zone, which covers an area of Longton, will help to discourage rogue traders and reduce the fear of crime.

Each resident has been provided with a door sticker and covering letter explaining they live in a No Cold Calling Zone and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service have also put up lamppost signs in the area.

The introduction of the new zone fulfils one of the city council's cabinet's "Pledges"; a list of commitments to be carried out before March 2011. The pledges cover seven core areas including housing, education, employment, health, safety, cleanliness and delivering value for money services.

Councillor Terry Follows, Cabinet Member for Environment, Waste Management and Neighbourhood Services, said: "No Cold Calling Zones have been successfully used



in other parts of the city to reduce the levels of distraction burglary and rogue trading and to reduce the fear of crime.

"They also discourage rogue traders who target vulnerable residents – falsely claiming that work needs doing and then charging high prices for shoddy and unnecessary work."

Coalition Cabinet calls for urgent talks with minister

COUNCILLORS are seeking urgent face-to-face talks with Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles after Stoke-on-Trent was hit with far worse spending cuts than were expected.

Grant reductions imposed by the Government mean the city council will receive £25 million less for the financial year from April 2011 to March 2012 than in 2010/11. Unavoidable contractual increases and Government policy changes will cost an additional £11 million.

Previously the city council had drawn up and published proposals to save up to £33 million – but with savings now needed totalling £36 million the impact will be even harder.

Previously the city council had drawn up and published proposals to save up to £33 million – but with savings now needed totalling £36 million the impact will be even harder.

He said: "We have asked for an urgent meeting between myself, our coalition leaders, the city's Chief Executive, the three Stoke-on-Trent MPs and Mr Pickles.

"It is not fair that some local authorities, like Stoke-on-Trent, have been hit much harder than others, and that councils are not being asked to share the burden.

"These cuts are not of our making.

"They are being imposed on the city by the Government. Politicians from all parties of our own coalition are pressing the case for a fairer deal for Stoke-on-Trent.

"We are committed to providing the best services and want to improve, not cut them. But if the Government insists on this package of savings we will have no choice but to make



City Council Leader Mohammed Pervez writes to minister Eric Pickles – supported by other Coalition Cabinet political group leaders, left to right standing, Kieran Clarke, Ross Irving and Brian Ward.

some very tough decisions."

Raising the council tax level – which is already the lowest in Staffordshire and seventh lowest of all unitary authorities in the UK – may not be an option.

Councillors do not want to pass on the burden of Government funding cuts to the public, many of whom are already making sacrifices.

And the Government wants councils to freeze council tax and has offered a £2 million incentive to the city council to maintain the current level of council tax bills.

The city council would have to increase council tax bills by more than 2.5 per cent to generate more income than this.

Councillor Pervez, the Labour Leader of Stoke-on-Trent's

Coalition Cabinet, is supported by the leaders of the other political groups running the city council – Councillor Kieran Clarke (Liberal Democrat), Councillor Ross Irving (Conservative) and Councillor Brian Ward (Independent).

Legally-binding

Meanwhile, city council finance chiefs have explained the reason why an extra £11 million of savings need to be made on top of the Government's £25 million of direct cuts in grant.

Some local media have incorrectly reported that the additional £11 million represents an "overspend" by the city council, but this is untrue.

The figure is made up of

unavoidable costs – legally-binding commitments which the council cannot ignore.

It includes costs relating to staffing issues, including commitments on salaries, increasing pensions and National Insurance contributions, a new climate change levy payment and financing charges relating to investment in regeneration, infrastructure, housing and building new schools.

Assistant Director – Financial Services Peter Bates said: "This is contractually committed expenditure in line with the size and complexity of the council, which employs around 10,000 people (including schools staff) and has a total annual turnover of over £600 million."

Live webcast of full council meetings

MEETINGS of the full city 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 the council meeting webcast button. A list of dates and times of city 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.



Sculpture is symbol of city's creativity and culture

A FIVE-METRE high piece of public art, erected to mark the city's centenary celebrations, has been hailed as a symbol of Stoke-on-Trent's continuing commitment to creativity and culture.

The eye-catching Light of the City sculpture, which was unveiled outside the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery last month, features male and female figures holding a plate and a chalice. The illuminated figures stand on stainless steel hexagonal pedestals and are made of bronze and treated to look like clay.

Scottish artist David Annand produced the sculpture, while a two-line poem penned by Penkhull musician David Vickers is etched onto the underside of the plate. The verse reads:

*Salute with light, our city's year; a century embracing,
Reflect with pride our city's skills; from earth to table gracing.*

The unveiling was part of a full year of activities throughout 2010, which celebrated the 100-year anniversary of the federation of the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent. However, Councillor Hazel Lyth, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Sport, Leisure and Culture, said the sculpture was also deeply rooted in the city's creative heritage.

Councillor Lyth, who was joined by schoolchildren and other members of the community to unveil the piece of art, said: "The sculpture is wonderful and beautiful and aptly marks the 100th anniversary celebrations.

"But it also demonstrates the fact that creativity and culture are so important to the Potteries. They are part of our heritage and despite the economic situation must also be part of our future."



LET THERE BE LIGHT: Raenne Stone and Dylan Forbes, both aged seven and pupils at St Gregory's Catholic Primary School, Longton, pictured in front of the Light of the City sculpture.

Down Your Way

News from South Eastern Neighbourhood

- ▶ **WESTON AND MEIR NORTH:** Work has started on a new pavillion and green for the Meir King's Arms Bowling Club. The £82,000 for its new home behind Meir Sports and Social Club has come from ward budgets, NHS Stoke on Trent and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The 150-year-old club had to leave its original home more than a year ago to make way for a new health centre on the site of a former public house and adjacent bowling green.
- ▶ **MEIR PARK AND SANDON:** Soil tests are being carried out to see if land close to the old sand and gravel quarry is suitable for allotments. If the land is suitable and the project is backed by consultation it will be paid for by councillors' ward budgets.
- ▶ **FLORENCE AND LONGTON SOUTH:** Only two antisocial behaviour incidents have been reported since police started using Section 30 Dispersal Zone powers. Smaller groups of young people who met in Longton Park have now engaged with the city council's Youth and Play Service.
- ▶ **LONGTON NORTH:** Traffic calming measures to tackle speeding motorists are planned in Linnburn Road. Ward budgets are set to pay for speed humps and extended double yellow lines to stop congestion at the junction with Amison Street.
- ▶ **SANDFORD HILL:** More than 20 streets and walks are now covered by the city's 11th 'No Cold Calling' zone. Residents, trading standards, the police, the city council's Neighbourhood Management team and the Safer City Partnership's Respect Team, attended the launch.
- ▶ **LONGTON:** Action is being formulated to improve the visual image of the town centre by tackling the litter problem. Also, a working group is liaising with traders and property owners on plans to improve shop fronts as well as void and vacant properties.

Census is key to extra funding

HOW much do you think you are worth? As far as being a citizen of Stoke-on-Trent is concerned the answer is £2,600 a year.

That is the amount of Government funding secured for each person listed on the Census

for vital services in the city – a total of around £625 million a year for the NHS, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the city council – and why it is important for everyone to take part in the latest Census in March.

It is estimated that four per cent of people did not complete the questionnaire for the last Census in 2001 – which has cost the city approximately £26 million in lost funding during this financial year.

The numerical snapshot taken every ten years not only updates the population of the UK, it also identifies how more than £100 billion distributed by central Government each year can best be used to shape services at local

level. In March the 2011 Census questionnaires will arrive by post and can be returned using a pre-paid envelope or, for the first time, it can be completed online.

The questionnaire should take around ten minutes for each person's details to be entered and the confidential data you provide will help to plan community services – such as GP surgeries, housing, education, transport and even shops – for years to come.

Will Griffin, the city council's Assistant Census Liaison Manager, said: "The Census statistics feed into the allocation of funding for local authorities and play a major part in their ability to provide local services, so it's crucial that the population estimate is as



accurate as possible."

Help to shape tomorrow by completing your 2011 Census questionnaire on, or, as near as possible to, Sunday 27 March, 2011. Failure to do so could cost you a £1,000 fine.

For more information about the 2011 Census visit www.census.gov.uk

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▶ Pay your council tax and other bills online stoke.gov.uk/payments

Councillors' task force tackles soccer parking problem

PARKING congestion caused by football fans attending matches at Stoke City's Britannia Stadium could be kicked into touch after solutions were put forward by a task force of councillors investigating the problem.

Many roads in areas such as Heron Cross, Stoke, Fenton and Blurton are badly affected on match days, and the problem is having a knock-on effect on local communities and residents trying to park near to their own homes.

Now members of the city council's Improving Communities Committee – who have carried out a spotlight review into the Britannia Stadium parking situation following residents' concerns – have made a number of recommendations. They include:

- Plans to open up city council car parking for weekend matches and ferrying fans to the stadium by shuttle bus.
- Consulting through the neighbourhood area implementation offices to look at resident-only parking zones, or to change Traffic Regulation Orders for badly affected roads.
- Paying for enforcement officers to patrol problem areas on match days.

The recommendations will be discussed at a cabinet meeting this month and, if approved, could be implemented later in the year.

As part of the review, councillors worked with Stoke City Football Club, Staffordshire Police, city council officers and other agencies to draw up possible solutions.

They also contacted members of the community to seek their views by

sending out leaflets, through radio messages and even by Bluetooth direct to the mobile phones of those attending Stoke City matches.

Councillor Randolph Conteh, Chair of the Britannia Stadium Parking Spotlight Review, said: "It is a burning issue for residents and we are hoping the proposals will help to alleviate the frustrations and problems that can be caused on match days. The vast majority of Stoke City fans park responsibly and I would like to thank them for their consideration."

Sergeant Ian Revans, Road Policing Officer for the city, said: "We have worked very closely with the local authority and other partner agencies to come up with proposals which will work for both fans and residents."

Members of the public can get involved in overview and scrutiny by putting forward suggestions for subjects to be considered by councillors, or can take part in reviews through giving their views on issues.

Reviews that have already taken place include investigations into climate change, neighbourhood management, health effects of takeaways, small business growth and serious violent crime.

■ For more details visit stoke.gov.uk/scrutiny



Councillor Randolph Conteh, Chair of the Britannia Stadium Parking Spotlight Review, inspects a traffic regulation zone in Whittaker Road, Heron Cross – which has helped to ease match-day parking problems.

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- ➔ Tell us about fly tipping, abandoned cars at stoke.gov.uk/reportenvirocrime
- ➔ Report a housing repair at stoke.gov.uk/housingrepair



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Government dissolves board after city council progress

COUNCILLORS in Stoke-on-Trent have been given the green light to drive the city forward after the local government minister dissolved an independent board which monitored how the city council was run.

The Governance and Transition Board, whose members included academics and employers, was set up in 2008 after a report into the city council's performance described politics in Stoke-on-Trent as "broken."

But now Local Government Minister Bob

Neil said it was time to give power back to the elected officials after political stability returned to the city.

City Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez welcomed the news and said: "We have worked extremely hard with the Governance and Transition Board to address the issues that were highlighted to us in 2008.

"The decision is proof that we have made significant progress in reforming the way the city council works. The Government feels

we are now in a position to move forward on our own, and we must continue to build on the improvements we have made."

City council Chief Executive John van de Laarschot added: "We have worked hard to get our house in order and are confident that we have the political and managerial leadership to successfully steer the city forward in an open, honest and transparent way. We still have challenges to overcome but the city council is well equipped to deliver continued and rapid improvement."

Fairtrade cosy café where world comes together

THE world comes together in a small but cosy café next to the Methodist Book Centre in Hanley that does more than serve hot drinks and a bite to eat.

The tempting choices of teas, coffee and chocolate drinks and delicious snacks like cakes, muffins and cereal bars are Fairtrade and all the profits generated by the Trade Aid café in Gitana Street are ploughed back into the Fairtrade cause.

In fact Ann Worthington, who runs the café with a team of fellow volunteers, reckons that only the milk and water used to make the drinks is not sourced from farmers and producers from the developing countries across the globe.

Retired teacher Ann is among a number of Fairtrade champions in Stoke-on-Trent – one of 500 towns and cities in the UK that support the Fairtrade Foundation in its quest to ensure that farmers and producers in developing countries get a fair deal for their goods through guaranteed minimum prices and premiums for social, business and environmental projects.

Also on sale in the café are Fairtrade craft goods, such as cotton clothing from India, wooden toys made in Sri Lanka and greetings cards produced in the Philippines.

Now Ann and her friends are looking forward to a series of events that will be held in Stoke-on-Trent during this year's national Fairtrade



CHEERS!
Trade Aid café Manager Ann Worthington, left, and café Assistant Ann Weetman enjoy a cup of their Fairtrade coffee.

Fortnight between 28 February and 13 March.

A number of retailers large and small in the city are already committed to stocking Fairtrade goods and other organisations, like the city council, also offer Fairtrade products from their vending machines and canteens.

Back at Trade Aid Ann Worthington took time off from serving customers in the café to recall how her own personal Fairtrade crusade started.

She said: "When I was a primary school teacher I always enjoyed telling my pupils about countries in the developing world. When I retired in 1997 I ran a Fairtrade stall at Swan Bank

Methodist Church in Burslem, then I opened the café in 2009.

"I'm passionate about the whole ethos of Fairtrade as a way of improving the lives of millions of people across the world.

"Everyone who works in the café is an unpaid volunteer and all profits are ploughed back into the venture so we can buy more Fairtrade goods.

"We are away from the main shopping area of the city centre but we have a good number of regular customers, as well as those who find us by accident who like what we do and return."

Ann had the thrill of hearing first hand how Fairtrade helps others when banana farmer

Conrad James, from St Lucia, one of the Windward Islands in the Caribbean, visited Stoke-on-Trent when he toured the UK during the 2007 Fairtrade Fortnight.

Conrad, who farms 5.6 acres, told Ann and her friends that it was only access to Fairtrade markets that is enabling the Windward Islands banana industry to survive the competition of large scale, low cost producers from Latin America and Africa.

For details of special events to mark Fairtrade Fortnight in Stoke-on-Trent visit www.fairtrade.org.uk and click on to the calendar.

This year will see even more changes to improve services



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

IT'S no secret that 2011 will be a challenging year for the whole country, and Stoke-on-Trent will be no different. Throughout the next 12 months the city council will change even more so than it has done since January 2010.

Changes to the way we deliver services and work with you, the residents, will play a big part in the further transformation of your council.

Our housing repair service has already seen a reduction in the length of time it takes to get calls answered. During the last three weeks in November before the bad weather arrived, we were answering calls within an average of around a minute and a half. We also had an average answer percentage of around 92 per cent. The statistics show that's a notable improvement on the 67 per cent being achieved less than a year ago.

Revenues and benefits have also been part of the work we have done to improve services. Residents calling to report a change of address or requiring any other change to their council tax bill are now able to speak directly to an officer who deals with the change immediately.

In most cases the amount of the revised bill and all payment arrangements can be sorted out in one phone call. This process was previously taking up to two months to complete.

Our winter gritting policy has also had a positive impact over Christmas. The teams – who have worked to keep traffic moving throughout some of the coldest and most treacherous weather Stoke-on-Trent has ever seen – deserve a great deal of credit.

Based on last year's winter, we ordered in more stocks of salt this year, and that's been justified by the extent of the cold we have suffered.

The highways staff will be keeping a close eye on the weather over the next few weeks to ensure we are in a position to grit the roads quickly and effectively as soon as any snow or ice is forecast.

This year will also see an all out election in the city for the first time. This will reduce the number of elected members in the city and also redraw all the current wards.

The city council as a whole needs to adapt to these changes and continue to provide the services that people expect and need. Whatever the outcome of those elections, the senior officers here will be working closely with all councillors to make sure that they have the resources they need to be able to work effectively for their communities.

Stoke-on-Trent needs to meet any challenge in 2011 head on. We can only do that by working together closely with residents and making change happen sooner rather than later.

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China Tales

By Placer



Jools Holland's visit to museum goes with a boogie woogie swing

THE reconstructed Victorian public house, circa 1900 – a favourite feature in the social history galleries at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery – certainly struck a chord with music legend Jools Holland, pictured right.

The former Squeeze pianist, bandleader, singer and television presenter was in Stoke-on-Trent for a concert at the Victoria Hall with his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra and special guest vocalist Alison Moyet – part of his current 28-city UK tour which is getting rave reviews.

And the boogie woogie piano man was generous in his own praise for the museum – with a special mention for that pub exhibition, pictured top. He wrote in the visitors' book: "This is a brilliant museum. There is never a dull moment – every room offers something wonderful. Wept when I saw the preserved public bar. Congratulations to all on a fantastic celebration of the Potteries."

Jools is probably one of many to have had a tear brought to the eye by the authenticity and nostalgia of the tap room from a bygone era – based on the old Dog and Pheasant pub in Knight Street, Tunstall.

It's a heady mix of a display – men playing dominoes with a whippet and spittoon at their feet, wall-mounted music box and



mirrors advertising historic beers and the famous Parker's Brewery of Burslem.

This is just part of the gallery which is packed with fascinating displays of social history such as the terraced house, with an old iron range and clothes rack hanging from the ceiling, and the 1940s fish and chip shop which once fried for real in nearby Regent Road, Hanley.

The awe-inspiring Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire Hoard exhibition has captured the imagination of people around the globe and attracted tens of thousands of extra visitors to the museum – including many from overseas.

It is satisfying to know that those attracted to the city by the pull of the Hoard will find many other treasures in the museum to admire.

Just ask Jools.

Corrie parrot at pirate ship launch

SOAP opera fans enjoying *Coronation Street's* 51st year of broadcasting may not be aware of a visit to Stoke-on-Trent by one of the TV show's stars.

The colourful character who flew in to help officially open Blurton Children's Centre's pirate ship play area was none other than Charlie the parrot, who

played a bird called John on 'The Street.'

The three-year old McCaw is said to have caused havoc on set by mimicking actors, directors and producers. The story line saw him move into the street with children's entertainer Jesse Chadwick, played by actor and comedian John Thomson.

Planning ahead to cut flooding risks

RESIDENTS have the chance to help engineers and planners cut the risk of serious flooding in the city.

Anyone who lives in Stoke-on-Trent and whose property is regularly affected by a build-up of water whenever it has rained heavily or for a long period of time are asked to answer three questions.

The answers will help the city council to develop its Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) which local authorities are required by law to have in place to help minimise flood risk.

There may be problems that the city council is not aware of, so engineers would like anyone affected to answer the following questions so that as much information as possible can be gathered for the city's SWMP:

- **How does the build up of surface water or flooding affect you?**
- **Where does the surface water build-up or flooding take place? If possible, please provide the road name or the name of a nearby landmark.**
- **When does the problem occur? Does it happen throughout the year or is it seasonal?**

SWMPs are a useful tool to assess the risk of surface water flooding, identify ways of managing risk to an acceptable



After torrential rain this brook at Trentham became swollen and caused flooding in nearby gardens. This is the type of potential flooding and surface water problem which needs to be identified.

level, make the right investment decisions and plan action to manage flood risk.

Councillor Brian Ward, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Transportation, said: "We would like to know of any concerns that residents might have.

"For instance the problem may be a roadside drain that tends to get blocked by leaves, causing a build up of water when it rains. The SWMP covers the whole city

and we also identify areas of land near to the city boundaries in neighbouring local authorities that could potentially cause flooding problems for residents in Stoke-on-Trent."

If you have a problem with flooding or a build-up of surface water please look at the questions on the left and send your answers to FREEPOST Our City, or go online to respond at stoke.gov.uk/swmpflooding

Fangs at festival just got better

FILM fans can get their teeth into a new vampire drama when it has its world premiere at the annual Stoke Your Fires animation and film festival.

Blood and Bone China is a 12-part mini series written and directed by award-winning Stoke-on-Trent filmmaker Chris Stone set in the Potteries in Victorian times and shot at various locations across the city including the Gladstone Pottery Museum.

The first episode is screened on 2 March as part of the Festival of the Moving Image, which starts on 18 February.

Chris, who got the project off the ground with some financial support from the city council, said: "It's great filming in the city. I couldn't have done it without the support of Stoke Your Fires and the people of the city.

"We'll screen the series on-line after the premiere. We can reach the whole world that way – billions of people."

The festival, now in its fourth

year, is growing all the time and attractions include screenings of *The Insatiable Moon*, a New Zealand made film involving Tim Sanders who worked on *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. The festival will also welcome back *Soulboy*, a Northern Soul inspired story – part of which was filmed on location at the King's Hall, Stoke.

Speakers from internationally renowned companies like Wallace and Gromit producers Aardman Animations are due to share their secrets at a convention from 1- 4 March at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery.

Other attractions involve three major exhibitions, a 48-hour film challenge and awards for nominated work. Workshops are being staged at schools and colleges with many public events free of charge. Admission fees are being charged for the convention and some special events.

Festival partners include the city council, Staffordshire



COVER PICTURE: Tough guy actor David Lemberg plays villain Linus Hemlock in *The Potteries Vampire drama Blood and Bone China*.

University, The Producers Forum, Animation Forum West Midlands, Renaissance West Midlands and West Midlands based Museums, Libraries and Archives.

For more information and events listings go to www.stokeyourfires.co.uk Ticket prices range from £5 for screenings to £35 for a full festival pass and are available from www.enjoystaffordshire.com



Down Your Way

News from Northern Neighbourhood

► **TUNSTALL:** Ten offenders were put to work under the Community Payback Scheme during a multi-agency Respect Week. They worked over two days installing planters while roadside checks were carried out elsewhere. Seven cars were taken off the road and 13 motorists reported for alleged offences. Anti-theft screws were fitted to about 200 car licence plates and a tea dance was staged to encourage community spirit.

► **GOLDENHILL:** Children and community groups have been putting the golden back into the area by planting 2,000 bulbs. 40 children from St. Joseph's Catholic and Goldenhill primary schools joined forces with the Out and About Club to play their part in a citywide cleaning, greening and growing day. The bulbs, due to flower in the spring, were donated free of charge by local nurseries.

► **FEGG HAYES:** Community groups took part in a clean up day organised by the Northern Area Implementation Team. Free skips were placed around the area to encourage people to get rid of rubbish while city council environmental teams also worked on the alleyways and greenways. People were offered personal alarms, door chains and bike locks, all paid for from ward budgets.

► **WESTPORT LAKE:** Volunteers are being urged to come forward as the Friends of Westport Lake group is re-launched. The group will work in partnership with existing users of the lake, such as bird and angling clubs. Anyone interested is asked to contact city council Involvement Officer Pauline Withington on 01782 235808 or email pauline.withington@stoke.gov.uk

► **NORTON:** Antisocial behaviour reports have dropped between 25 and 30 per cent thanks to a series of initiatives and activities. Off-road motorcycling is no longer one of the top antisocial behaviour issues in the area with virtually no complaints over a three-month period.

IN GOOD HANDS:
Care Assistant Rachel Mansell with 94-year-old Abbots House resident Elsie Cyles.

One smile can ensure it's a good day at the office

IT doesn't take much to keep Rachel Mansell happy in her work. In fact nothing more than a smile is needed to ensure a "good day at the office".

Her "office" is in fact Abbots House Centre of Excellence, the award winning facility in Abbey Hulton that supports people with dementia, and that all-important smile is provided by the residents Rachel helps to look after as a

care assistant. "To see people smiling during my shift makes me go home feeling very happy and fulfilled," said 33-year-old Rachel, one of a team of often unsung heroes who work a variety of shifts to make sure the vulnerable people in their care enjoy the best possible quality of life.

She has worked in care since leaving school at 16 and has been at Abbots House for the past 14 years during which time Rachel has seen the former residential care home transformed by a £1.3 million revamp by the city council into the first of the Stoke-on-Trent's facilities that are purpose designed to meet the needs of people with dementia and their families.

Memory boxes

The centre incorporates leading-edge design to give the residents independence, self confidence and stimulation through state-of-the-art features that include memory boxes with items from the residents' past to help them find their own way to their rooms, colour schemes to aid orientation, a sensory garden and an assessment and therapy unit.

Rachel is usually responsible for nine residents in the upstairs

lounge, each with varying degrees of dementia and very different needs – though she can also be asked to help out in other parts of the centre.

Working hours for care assistants like Rachel are spread over shifts and they are on duty every other weekend.

Rachel said: "In one week I can work every kind of shift, but I don't mind because the shift system actually gives me more time with my family than a nine to five job would."

While no shift could be described as "routine," Rachel's first task is to call into the centre's office to attend a handover briefing from colleagues on the outgoing shift so she can be alerted about any issues that may have arisen and will need her attention.

Then she supports each resident in the lounge with personal care – such as helping them to eat a meal – and looking after their other practical needs.

However, just as important, Rachel always finds time to simply sit down and chat to the residents.

"Care assistants are the first point of contact and usually the first person the resident sees," explained Rachel.

"It's usually the care assistant

that is first aware if any of the residents has a problem. We get them to talk about it and build up a bond of trust so that they don't clam up.

"No one shift is ever the same because we are caring for people who have such different, and sometimes complex needs and we are an extended family for them."

Love the job

She added: "What drew me to the job in the first place was to get to know about the lives and history of people of different generations who have probably gone through world wars. Through their experiences I have learned a lot about life myself."

When Rachel goes home to husband Darren, a finance manager, and their nine-year-old son Joel, she sometimes can't help taking the job home with her, although she doesn't talk about it to her family.

She said: "You are dealing with people and it's not always possible to just switch off after your shift if one of the residents is having a problem.

"However I love the job. There is quite simply nothing else I would like to do, and I hope I'll be doing it for many more years to come."

Make it

Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

► For information on safe driving in severe weather conditions, which roads and bus routes will be gritted this winter and the location of roadside grit boxes across the city, please visit stoke.gov.uk/gritting

Celebrating top awards for children's services

CHILDREN'S services and projects in Stoke-on-Trent have scooped prestigious national accolades.

The winners overcame competition from hundreds of other entries from around the UK at the annual Children and Young People Now Awards, which took place in London.

The Socca, Rocka and Hoppa Uth Services' vehicles received the Youth Work Award, and Jane Blizzard – who promotes the rights of disabled children and their families – was "Highly Commended" in the Young People's Champion category.

Councillor Debra Gratton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services, said: "These awards recognise the excellent work being carried out throughout our children's services and highlight the valuable contributions made by the numerous groups and individuals."

Record salt stocks bolster winter gritting operations

IT has been a tough winter so far – but whatever the weather still has in store, the city's fleet of nine gritting vehicles should be able to keep traffic moving on the main routes across Stoke-on-Trent.

A record amount of 5,000 tonnes of salt grit was stockpiled at three depots in the city before the icy grip took hold in November 2010 and more grit is purchased whenever stocks fall below 2,500 tonnes.

During the severe winter of 2009/10 a total of 4,200 tonnes of grit was spread on city roads – so the decision was taken to increase stocks to 5,000 tonnes in order to be prepared for extreme conditions.

Around 550 miles of roads are treated when all of the gritting vehicles are used.

All major roads are treated, along with frequent bus routes.

In addition around 400 self-help salt bins are located around the city so residents can spread grit on pavements or local stretches of road where ice or snow is causing a problem.

Bob Brock, Team Manager, Highways Responsive Maintenance, said: "We closely monitor the Met Office weather prediction website each day before making a decision on gritting."

"In addition we are in weekly contact with the Government Office of the West Midlands as well as the salt quarries in order to ensure we have sufficient stocks to treat the roads."



A JCB Loadall scoops up another huge bucket full of rock salt as it replenishes a gritting lorry at the city council's Weighbridge Depot in Cromer Road, Northwood.

Know someone selling fakes?



Call the fakes hotline anonymously on

01782 238444

stoke.gov.uk/fakes



Ingestre Square

Modern family homes at affordable prices

Do you want to own your own home but think you can't afford? Think again!

Show home now open:
Every Wednesday 1pm - 4pm

Call to register or book an appointment on
01782 854738 or email ingestre@aspirehousing.co.uk



'...we are confident that Ingestre Square will be a popular and vibrant location for years to come...'

developed by **aspire housing**

VOLUNTEERING is just one route back into full-time employment. Here *Our City* takes a look at the cases of two women who have been helped to get relevant experience as they move on in life.

Mother pursues dream of childcare career

MUM-OF-FOUR Claire Hassall is now pursuing her dream of a career in childcare thanks to help from a number of local organisations.

The 28-year-old from Bentilee has worked intermittently while having her four children aged 11 to two but apart from a temporary Christmas job, has not been in employment for about four years.

She had completed an NVQ Level 2 in Children's Care, Learning and Development but a lack of recent experience was holding her back. Claire went to Bentilee-based pilot project STAR, which works with partners to support people in Bentilee and Townsend back into work.

Her STAR advisor Helen Allcock suggested voluntary work in a childcare environment to help her gain experience and work references towards paid employment.

Helen approached the city council's volunteer co-ordinator at Treehouse Children's Centre in Dawlish Drive, Bentilee and set up the placement. Claire now as a



Volunteer Childcare Assistant Claire Hassall with her son Kieron at the Treehouse Children Centre.

volunteer at Treehouse is working towards her NVQ Level 3. Her son Kieron uses the centre crèche while she works.

She said: "He's loving it and I'm really enjoying volunteering. It's great that it gets me out of the house.

"When I've got my NVQ Level 3, I want to get a job in a nursery setting. Jobcentre Plus and Helen Allcock at STAR have been very

helpful, pointing me in the right direction."

Helen said: "Claire's confidence is growing and she's always got a smile on her face.

"We can see a positive future shaping out for her now that Treehouse has given her a break.

"Their Volunteer Co-ordinator Michelle Fahey has been brilliant and the centre has made it all possible."

Partially sighted Carole is an inspiration



Administrator Carole McConnell at her office desk at NCA Enterprises.

BEING partially sighted has never held Carole McConnell back. She has lived life to the full, working for 17 years in the pottery industry, getting married to Stephen and spending 14 years at home bringing up their daughter Kirsty, who is now at Staffordshire University.

And although she has had a few part-time and voluntary jobs since she decided to return to work in 2004, the 52-year-old is now back in full-time employment thanks to the help and support of her disability advisor Joy Heal at Jobcentre Plus.

To gain work experience after securing IT qualifications through Access to Work, Carole started voluntary work and now works full-time at NCA Enterprises in Newstead, a social enterprise dedicated to helping people into training and work.

She looks after administration and the only concessions to her disability are a special tabletop

magnifying machine, which helps her prepare documents, and a 23-inch screen on her computer.

NCA Chief Executive Bill Hardy said: "She's brilliant, pro-active and so efficient. I know when I give her anything to do, she'll just go away and get on with it and when it comes back it'll be 100 per cent.

"You wouldn't know she was visually impaired if you met her in the street. She's a real inspiration to everyone here – not just people with disability."

Carole said: "My 18 months voluntary experience at the Douglas Macmillan Hospice helped me get this job and I'm really enjoying it. I'd like to stay here, if I can, until I retire.

"Bill has been very understanding and NCA have been hugely supportive, brilliant.

"The support I've had from my advisor at Jobcentre Plus has been excellent."

Down Your Way

News from Eastern Neighbourhood

► **BENTILEE AND TOWNSEND:** Funding and bookings are being sought to secure the future of the Beverley Drive Voluntary Centre. Ward councillors from Bentilee and Townsend as well as Berryhill and Hanley East are supporting a management committee while one of its founders, the Bentilee and District Dads Group, has made a generous donation to help the centre grow.

► **EAST VALLEY:** Residents only parking is being introduced in Adams Street, Milton, to end frustration for householders. The scheme is being funded by the ward budgets of East Valley councillors. Road and pavement work in Fitzherbert Road, Sneyd Green – now nearing completion – included 26 dropped kerb or widening improvements, provided to residents at special rates.

► **BERRYHILL AND HANLEY EAST:** Volunteers from The Prince's Trust carried out a two-week tidy up at Trentmill Nature Park near Joiners Square. Ten members of Team 240 helped at the site under the guidance of Friends of Trentmill Nature Park. Pupils from Eastwood Nursery School marked the end of the improvements by planting fruit and vegetables.

► **NEIGHBOURHOOD WIDE:** Work to support activities across the neighbourhood is continuing through the newly named Eastern Events and Activities Board. It replaces the 2010 Events Board set up to manage and share resources as part of the city's centenary celebrations. It will bid for funding on behalf of groups in its area and is planning a catalogue of information to help inexperienced groups and offer mentoring to organise their own events.

► **ABBEY GREEN:** Wild flower meadows are being created in areas where the grass is difficult to cut. The border between Leek Road and the Hulton Abbey site has been sown with seed so it only needs cutting once a year and will self-seed to create a low maintenance wild flower area every year.

The sweet taste of business success

GO-getter Aneesah Begum is just 16 but already well on her way to business success.

The Fenton teenager sells Halal and vegetarian sweets from a stall at Hanley's outdoor market after getting free help and advice from a city council funded support service.

She said: "Muslims and vegetarians have to look at the ingredients in sweets to ensure they are suitable for our diets so I thought it would be great if you could buy them without having to check."

So she took her idea to Enterprise Coach Gayle Jessiman at Business Enterprise Support and now trades as *Mr Latifs Halal and Vegetarian Confectionery*.

She sets up her stall early on a Sunday and stocks lines like jelly sweets, marshmallows and rainbow drops. She also takes orders for bespoke boxes and hampers as presents to celebrate events like Eid, Diwali and Christmas, birthdays and weddings.

"When I left school I knew I wanted to go into business," said Aneesah.

"My sister Raela is already a self-employed carer so the thought didn't frighten me.

"I went to see Gayle and got advice about how to get customers and all sorts of information.

"She was very helpful."

She said: "My sweets are not exclusively

for Muslims or vegetarians. They're for everybody to enjoy including people who suffer from Coeliac Disease, as a lot of my stock is gluten free.

"It's going well and I'm very busy. I've had help from local business to keep my start up costs down.

"The traders at the market have made me feel very welcome.

"I'm now working on an on-line personalised gifts section that complements my confectionery business and eventually want to open some shops."

Her Enterprise Coach Gayle Jessiman said: "Aneesah came along to one of our Enterprise Panels at Cobridge.

"Her sister, who we also helped, had already been trading for about 12 months so they're obviously very entrepreneurial.

"They're not afraid to take the plunge and the risk so I gave basic advice about things like bank accounts and referred Aneesah to Business Initiative and the Inland Revenue.

"Stoke-on-Trent is full of talented people with ambition just like Aneesah who maybe just need pointing in the right direction to get their business idea off the ground."

Might you benefit from the advice of an Enterprise Coach? If so call Gayle Jessiman on 07969 557915, email her on gaylej@enterprisesupport.org or go to www.enterprisesupport.org



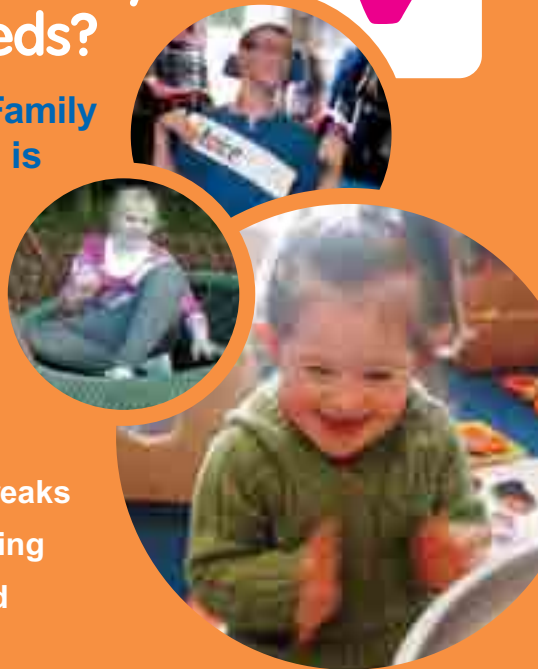
Aneesah Begum with a selection of her Halal and vegetarian confectionery.

Do you know/care for a child or young person (0-25) who has a disability or additional needs?



Your friendly local Family Information Service is here to help you.

- Support groups
- Childcare
- Local services
- Benefits
- Respite and short breaks
- Equipment and funding
- Parenting issues and much more



0800 015 1120
or **01782 232200**

www.stoke.gov.uk/stokeknowhow



family
Information Service

Your HEALTH CENTRES

ABBEY HULTON (Main) Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service	0300 123 0976 0300 123 0987	NORTON	01782 534599
BENTILEE	01782 231300	PACKMOOR	01782 794600
BLURTON (Main) Children and Adolescents Mental Health Service	0300 123 0971 0300 123 0977	PICCADILLY CENTRE (Main) Sexual health helpline	0300 123 0985 0300 123 0970
BURSLEM	0300 123 0979	SMALLTHORNE	0300 123 0982
WHITFIELD VALLEY	01782 425720	STOKE Out of Hours District Nursing Service	0300 123 0986 0300 123 0989
FENTON	01782 743100	TRENT VALE	01782 425260
HANFORD (Main) Children's Airway Support Team	0300 123 0974 0300 123 0977	TUNSTALL (Main) Dental Advice Line	0300 123 0972 0300 123 0981
HANLEY	0300 123 0980		
LONGTON	0300 123 0993		
LONGTON COTTAGE HOSPITAL	0300 123 0993		
MEIR	01782 425676		

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 Rich Williams 01785 898594	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 STATION MANAGER Stan Cooper 01785 898641	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

For all city council services contact 234234



Ways to prevent spread of winter vomiting bug

THE winter vomiting bug season is here but taking a few simple precautions can prevent the spread of the unpleasant infection also known as norovirus.

Last winter saw a high number of outbreaks that affected large numbers of elderly residents in care homes in Stoke-on-Trent and caused ward closures at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire.

However if people at home suffer the symptoms of violent vomiting, diarrhoea, fever, headache and stomach cramps, they should stay there, rest and drink plenty of fluids until the bug passes out of their system – which usually takes around 48 hours and they will recover naturally without treatment. Practising good hygiene by washing hands regularly is also important.

Kim Gunn, Head of Infection Prevention and Control for NHS Stoke on Trent, said: “The important thing is to stay away from A & E units and GP practices because norovirus is highly contagious and this could spread the illness to vulnerable people and healthcare workers. In fact most cases do not require any medical treatment.

“It’s best to keep yourself to yourself but if you are concerned then ring NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or your GP’s surgery for advice.”

She added: “The winter vomiting infection can sometimes be more severe in the elderly and very young as they may become dehydrated.”

It’s estimated that the winter vomiting bug infects up to one million people in the UK every year and is particularly common in contained communities such as hospitals,



Practicing good hygiene by regularly washing hands is a simple way to reduce the spread of norovirus. Here, Leah Frost and Elliot Healey, both aged 10 and pupils at John Baskeyfield VC Primary School in Burslem, set a good example.

schools and nursing homes. This is because the norovirus spreads easily from person to person and can survive for several days in a contaminated area.

Norovirus is one of the reasons why the NHS is busier and under greater pressure during the winter months as more elderly people are admitted from nursing or residential homes, while outbreaks occur in hospitals among patients being treated for other reasons.

As *Our City* went to press the signs were that outbreaks of the bug in Stoke-on-Trent would not be as severe as the winter of 2009/2010.

Kim Gunn said: “In the previous winter the norovirus season started in North Staffordshire in September, while this time round the first cases were reported at the beginning of December 2010 so we are hoping it will not be as widespread this winter.”

Down Your Way

News from South Western Neighbourhood

- ▶ **HARTSHILL AND PENKHULL:** Former Stoke City star Ian Cranson is helping run football skills schools for children of all abilities aged five to 16. Ian along with Ashley Hill are delivering coaching three times a week to professional UEFA and Level 3 standards. Evening sessions are staged at St Peters High School on a Wednesday and Thursday and at Richmond Street Park on Saturday mornings. For more information call Rob Simms on 01782 236602 or 07939 906168.
- ▶ **BLURTON:** Free information cafes are being staged on the first Thursday of every month at the St Albans Community Centre in Finstock Avenue. Useful information on training, jobs, employment, home improvement, family issues and ways of maximising income are all on offer. Free oatcakes as well as hot and cold drinks are provided. For more information call 01782 233265.

Building work starts on new £4.3m school



A GROUND breaking ceremony marked the start of construction work on the city’s new REACH school for up to 80 pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

The £4.3 million project at Trent Vale will replace the current award winning REACH pupil referral unit at Bucknall – and is the first school to be built under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in Stoke-on-Trent which will

eventually see every secondary and special school in the city rebuilt or refurbished.

REACH Head Teacher Lorna Matley, her staff and pupils joined members of Stoke-on-Trent City Council and representatives of developers Balfour Beatty to witness the ceremony on the site of the new school that is due to open its doors in February 2012.

Once the school is open, community use will be encouraged so local people will be able to enjoy the new facilities available at the complex, which will include an all-weather sports

pitch and indoor performance space.

Councillor Debra Gratton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, who was among the guests at the ceremony, said: “This is a hugely significant step for our BSF programme.

“The beginning of this work shows the people of the city that at last building is underway and our young people will have a new cutting-edge, 21st century facilities in which they can learn and play.

“There is still a great deal of work to do but I would like to thank all those – staff, parents and pupils – who have worked so hard to make this project a reality.”

Heavy winter rain failed to stop the ground breaking ceremony going ahead. An excavator digs the first soil on the site of the new REACH school watched by Councillor Debra Gratton, right, REACH Head Teacher Lorna Matley and pupils Ashley Prince and Josh Ward. The city council’s Cabinet made a pledge to start work on the project before the end of March.

- ▶ **STOKE AND TRENT VALE:** About 20 adults and children launched the London Road Centenary Walk to celebrate the centenary of the Six Towns Federation. The three-hour event was organised by Stoke West and Oakhill Community Association in partnership with Closer to Homes Walks. The event included a lantern making workshop.
- ▶ **TRENTHAM AND HANFORD:** New bins are being installed along the canal in Trentham after complaints from local residents about litter and dog waste. British Waterways has paid for the three dual waste bins, which will be emptied by Stoke-on-Trent City Council on a regular basis. Residents who use the canal helped to choose where the bins would go.
- ▶ **FENTON:** Two new “No Cold Calling” zones have been set up to protect people in the area. Signs have gone up around the bungalows in Mounfield Place, Hayfield Crescent and Morville Close. The idea is to improve security and make the residents feel safer in their own homes.

Residents urged to get communities blooming

GREEN fingered residents' groups throughout Stoke-on-Trent are being urged to go for gold in the next Britain in Bloom contest in 2011.

With involvement from two community groups the city council gained an award in Britain in Bloom 2010 when the city competed for the first time in nine years.

The Friends of Trentmill Nature Park in Joiner's Square, who transformed waste ground into a garden and wildlife haven with the help of Prince's Trust volunteers, and Friends of Bakewell Street Park Trust, Penkhull, who are in the process of restoring a piece of overgrown parkland, contributed to the local authority being awarded a Silver Gilt in the Heart of England in Bloom Competition.

The city council is now encouraging other residents' associations and other community groups to enter with environmental projects and impress the Royal Horticultural Society judges when the competition comes round again this year.

Horticultural map

When RHS judges visited entries around Stoke-on-Trent in 2010 they said they were pleasantly surprised by the amount of green space in the city, and one of them remarked: "The city has come back with a bang."

City council Environmental Manager Michelle Tinsley said: "After the success in 2010 I am sure that we can put Stoke-on-Trent on the horticultural map with a gold award."

"The residents who took part and helped win the award really entered into the spirit of things and involved other sections of the community like schools and even nurseries."

"The legacy of the Silver Gilt award achieved this year will be community facilities that everyone can enjoy. In Joiner's Square the group have created a plot of land where local children can grow their own vegetables and the first crops will be harvested soon."

"I would urge all residents' associations across the city to join in and make the most of the benefits that community gardens and improving the landscape can realise."

● For advice about how to enter Britain in Bloom contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01782 231914 or 01782 238515.

An idyllic setting in the Scotia Valley Greenway.



A Great Crested Grebe on Holden Lane Pools.



A panoramic view from Berryhill looking towards Bentilee - with a standing stone in the foreground.

You may be surprised but... city is brilliant for wildlife

NATURE lover Suzanne Wykes has her dream job... walking on Stoke-on-Trent's wild side. From monitoring endangered butterflies to advising on the reclamation of former industrial sites for nature, Suzanne plays a vital role in protecting the city's wildlife and green spaces.

Far from urban decay, she sees a green and pleasant land with natural parkland, hay meadows and waterways, which support a dazzling array of wildlife from skylarks to the resurgent otter.

And she has a dream to plant an urban wood in the heart of the city as other regeneration projects continue to breathe new life into former industrial and brown field sites like the £10 million creation of a country park at Chatterley Whitfield.

Green space

She said: "I love it. Stoke-on-Trent's brilliant for wildlife with a huge diversity of green and sometimes wild spaces as well as rivers, canals and brooks. It's so important that we look after all our green spaces and wildlife for everyone to enjoy."

The 38-year-old Ecology graduate has been the city council's Ecology/Environment Officer for six years, having previously worked for the world-famous Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the Natural History Museum in London and Hampshire County Council.

She advises on planning applications, building and road

schemes and planning policy to make sure green spaces, wildlife protection and enhancement are part and parcel of future development plans. Suzanne also talks to schoolchildren and lectures at Staffordshire University.

Volunteers are a vital help in her work so Suzanne liaises closely with groups trying to improve their areas. She has worked with the Friends of Cockster Brook, who have spent the last year working with the city council to transform the urban beauty spot and Townsend Community Association on their plans to develop wildlife in an area of under-used green space.

Over the past few years she has been instrumental in protecting the great crested newt, when developments have threatened their pond habitats.

Rare butterflies

She has also worked closely on the two-year transformation, for the city council, of the former Chatterley Whitfield mining site into a 50-hectare wood, grass and wetland haven with water cascades, footpaths, ponds and bridges. Her input has helped developers safeguard badgers, bats and the dingy skipper butterfly on the site.

"The dingy skipper is on Butterfly Conservation's Red List as vulnerable and only exists at a few sites in the West Midlands," said Suzanne. "We counted 50 in one day the last time we monitored them at Chatterley, which is really good."

"Otters are back on the River

The former Chatterley Whitfield colliery site has been transformed into Stoke-on-Trent's newest country park.

Trent, which shows just how much the water quality is improving and we have skylarks at Berryhill Fields Local Nature Reserve.

"I also look after plants and habitats and manage areas like hay meadows."

"I love meeting people and working in a place which is so diverse. I like to think, in my own quiet way, that I help maintain the wildlife and habitat of the city for us all. It's such a rich legacy. Imagine what it would be like if you never saw a robin or heard birds."

"There's a lot of emphasis on jobs and money at the moment so it's important to remember how much wildlife and green spaces contribute to our health and sense of wellbeing."

"It's overlooked sometimes but our

green spaces also help encourage inward investment," she added.

Suzanne continues to build strong partnerships with other agencies also working to improve the environment in the city including the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the Forestry Commission, the Environment Agency and British Waterways.

And she is also talking to the Woodland Trust and others as she promotes her dream of a new urban wood in the Potteries.

"It would add to the diversity of our habitats, be brilliant for wildlife and the people of the city - a great place to enjoy the fresh air," she said.

A fish eye lens captures another stunning view at Chatterley.



Cuckoo flowers in a meadow at Bentilee.



“““
There's a lot of emphasis on jobs and money at the moment so it's important to remember how much wildlife and green spaces contribute to our health and sense of wellbeing

CITY COUNCIL
ECOLOGY/ENVIRONMENT
OFFICER SUZANNE WYKES

The Ford Green reed beds at the Whitfield Valley nature reserve - a site of scientific interest.



Suzanne Wykes pictured at Smiths' Pool nature reserve at Fenton - one of the many wildlife havens in the city. Top, a rare dingy skipper butterfly at home in the Potteries.

Home fire risk campaign for older people

ELDERLY people, and their relatives, carers and friends are being targeted in a bid to boost fire safety this winter.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service has launched its Older Person Campaign, which aims to raise awareness about the dangers of domestic blazes in pensioners' homes.

The campaign is a priority because in just over a year there have been five fire deaths and 16 injuries involving elderly people in Staffordshire.

Hard-hitting posters and leaflets have been produced to coincide with the awareness raising initiative. They highlight the importance of fire safety and booking a free Home Fire Risk Check.

The posters have been circulated to places commonly visited by elderly people, including libraries, care associations, health and social

care centres and other organisations.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Risk Reduction Manager Dave Steele said: "We'll be running our campaign until March, as the majority of our fatal fires occur during these winter months."

"We all know elderly people whether they be grandparents, parents, neighbours or friends – we have a responsibility to ensure these people are safe from fire."

"We're asking people to think how they would feel if an elderly person they knew died in a fire, or had their home and life-long possessions lost in a house fire, knowing it could have been prevented if they'd received a free Home Fire Risk Check."

To request a check call, freephone 0800 0241 999.

■ **For more details about fire safety log onto:**
www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk or
www.direct.gov.uk/firekills



Mascot Welephant has a trunk full of fun

CHILDREN can enjoy a trunk full of fun and learn important fire safety lessons at the same time thanks to a very friendly elephant mascot.

The Welephant Club is run by Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and aimed at youngsters aged from four to eight. New members receive a Welephant joining pack, which includes a

personalised certificate and special joining gift. Youngsters also receive regular newsletters containing information on how families can stay safe, fun activities, colouring-in pages and competitions.

The club, which is free to join, is part of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's cradle to old age approach to fire safety and

links in with other important messages, such as road safety.

To find out more about joining the Welephant Club log onto www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk/welephantclub.asp

● Pictured above at the new Sandyford Fire Station is Welephant with Firefighters Craig McGlyn, left and Robert Windsor.

Wash your hands of Norovirus

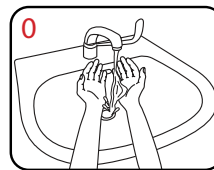
Aching muscles
Diarrhoea
Shivers
Vomiting
Fever

Stop getting all of these and more by simply washing your hands

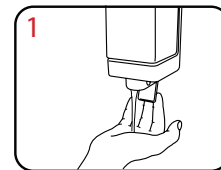
NHS
Stoke on Trent

Hand cleaning technique

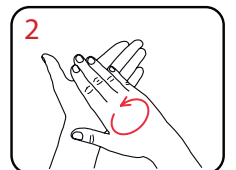
This should take around 40 - 60 seconds



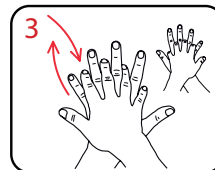
Wet hands with water



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces



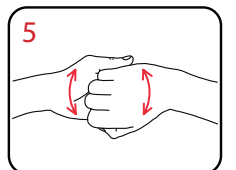
Rub hands palm to palm



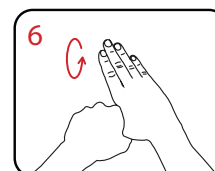
Rub back of each hand with the palm of other hand with fingers interlaced



Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



Rub with backs of finger to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using rotational movement



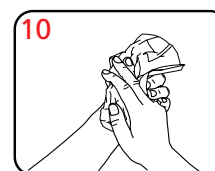
Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion



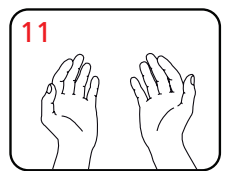
Rub each wrist with opposite hand



Rinse hands with water until all soap has gone - remember to turn off the water



Dry thoroughly with a clean paper towel, clean towel or hand dryer.



Your hands are now clean



Councillor Barbara Beeston, right, is presented with her WOW award by Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley with 19-year-old Amy Hudson – who has supported Barbara’s campaign – looking on.



Improvement and Development Support Officer Donna Hammersley with her WOW award.

Down Your Way

News from Western Neighbourhood

SHELTON SOUTH: Alleypating schemes to improve security in the area have been completed. The third and final phase covering nine streets involved 25 double gates being installed in back and side alleys. Thirty double gates were installed in the first two phases, which began in April 2009. The project was funded by Hanley West and Shelton councillors’ ward budgets together with the Safer City Partnership.

MIDDLEPORT: A local residents’ association has bought a children’s blood pressure/oxygen/heartbeat monitor for Middleport Health Centre. The Middleport, Longport and Dalehall Community Association, which meets at the centre, raised about £100 through raffles and are presenting the monitor as a thank you.

BURSLEM SOUTH: Mining communities are remembered with a new plaque at the entrance to Central Forest Park. Councillors paid for the £450 memorial, which was the idea of the Union Street and Forest Park Residents’ Association, from the Burslem South ward budget. The heather bed the plaque sits in was created by park keepers and shows a mining wheel and headstock.

NORTHWOOD AND BIRCHES HEAD: Pupils from Birches Head High School joined forces with the city council and Staffordshire Police to brainstorm ideas for improvements to a recreation ground. Their ideas on how to improve Drive Park have been relayed to landscape architects as designs are now drawn up ahead of discussions on the allocation of funds.

HANLEY PARK: Miles of railings, gates and canal side handrails at the park have been painted heritage green. Ward budgets paid for the 644 railings and gates to be spruced up by PM Training, a social enterprise that provides training and apprentice opportunities for young people. Even railings behind hedges have been tackled.

Councillor and officer both have the WOW factor

TOP quality service from Stoke-on-Trent City Council is paying off with prestigious WOW! Awards – the UK’s only national award for customer service based purely on customer nominations.

The awards normally go to members of staff of nominated organisations, but Councillor Barbara Beeston made history by becoming the first elected representative in the city to collect a WOW! Accolade.

She won her certificate for five years of

tireless campaigning for the provision of public toilets for the disabled to be provided in the city.

Last year her campaigning paid off when the first disabled toilet of its kind in the UK – complete with changing bed, hoist and shower – opened in the City Centre.

Councillor Beeston said: “I was honoured to receive the award and really thrilled to be the first councillor to win anything at the awards.”

There was national success, too, for Donna Hammersley, an Improvement and Development Support Officer in the Chief Executive’s Department, who was judged the UK’s Best Leader 2010 for her work in motivating council staff to improve their level of customer service.

Donna said: “I’m honoured to have been recognised nationally for the work I’ve done and hopefully it shows how good a job we are doing at the city council.”

Reach members speak up to shape future services



THE future of services for people with learning disabilities in Stoke-on-Trent is being shaped by the very people who use them.

A far-reaching city council strategy that spells out how improvements can be achieved in all aspects of life over the next two years has been launched after close involvement with Reach, the registered charity that supports people in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire with learning disabilities to speak up about issues that affect their lives.

Reach formed a series of focus groups of their members as part of a comprehensive consultation process, and they asked people what they wanted to see in the strategy.

The feedback provided much of the information needed for a draft strategy, and after this was published Reach held more focus groups that concentrated on asking those with learning disabilities how they think life should be in the future compared to what it is like now.

The wide range of views provided by the focus groups



Council officers and Reach members at one of the focus group meetings which helped to draw up a new strategy for the provision of services for people with learning disabilities.

have formed most of the aims and aspirations laid out in the final version of the strategy that has now been adopted by the city council.

They include measures to be taken to ensure better communication between people with learning disabilities and staff at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire after service users reported they sometimes experienced difficulty in explaining what was wrong with them or understanding the medical treatment they received.

Other key issues covered by the strategy concern a wider choice of accommodation for people with learning disabilities and the provision of support to acquire skills that will improve employment prospects and a more independent lifestyle.

Kevin Day, Joint Commissioning Manager who co-ordinated the development of the strategy, said: “The involvement of Reach and the high quality information obtained by people with learning disabilities from other service

users provided an accurate insight into the needs and aspirations of people with learning disabilities in our community.”

Andrew Garvey, a Project Worker with Reach, said: “We are all pleased that it is quite clear the work put into this consultation by the focus groups has been properly considered and that their ideas have been used.”

Alan Titley, one of the Reach members on the focus groups, said: “It was important and only right that disabled people and their carers were consulted.”

MANAGING money and the threat of debt can be stressful subjects – especially in the current economic climate. Here, *Our City* highlights the kind of support that is available to help people take control of their finances, whatever their income...



By Mark Gater
Chair of the Financial Inclusion Group for Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme

Group's work is now more crucial than ever before

WHATEVER someone's financial circumstances, they should be able to make informed choices about managing their money and have access to the right kind of advice, support and financial services.

That is why the Financial Inclusion Group (FIG) was set up just over 12 months ago.

The Group brings together public sector partners such as Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Newcastle Borough Council alongside organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, Warm Zone, Staffordshire Credit Union, Moneyline and the area's housing associations.

The aim is that by working together and pooling ideas and resources the services provided to the public are better co-ordinated, more effective and offer best value for residents.

FIG is responsible for the creation of Chatterbox and supports initiatives like the Kitted Out white goods loan scheme, both of which you can read more about on the following two pages along with other ways of accessing useful information.

We believe that it is extremely important that people in the city are able to access appropriate financial advice and services.

There are a considerable number of people in the area who have trouble managing their finances on a tight budget.

Some need to access affordable credit but have difficulty with this because they do not have bank accounts, or have a bad credit history. Given the current economic conditions, access to the kind of services that the FIG supports is more crucial now than ever before.

Low cost loans to buy essential appliances

AN INNOVATIVE partnership scheme is offering low cost loans so people can buy essential appliances for their home like cookers, fridges and washing machines.

The Kitted Out initiative is a link up between Staffordshire Credit Union, the city council's Supporting People team and The Co-operative. People moving out of temporary accommodation into a more permanent home often find their new property is not furnished and they don't have the money to buy new goods.

Now through the scheme they are referred to the Staffordshire Credit Union, which provides people with loans up to £500 so they can buy a range of white goods at low-cost prices.

Kevin Waters, Staffordshire Credit Union Chief Executive, said: "People moving into a new property from temporary accommodation often find their new home is unfurnished and they simply can't afford to buy essential items like fridges or cookers."

"Through Kitted Out, the city council's Supporting People team refer them to us and



Chief Executive of the Staffordshire Credit Union Kevin Waters, right, with Co-operative Sales Assistant Stephen Payne with a range of white goods appliances available through the Kitted Out scheme.

we can provide £500 loans with competitive interest rates. We have struck a deal with the Co-operative so all the items can be purchased at very reasonable rates compared to high street prices and delivered to the customer's door."

He added: "The scheme particularly helps people who are moving out of temporary accommodation and looking for something

more permanent. It helps them reclaim their independence as well as assisting them with their financial wellbeing. However, the white goods loan is also available to anyone who has an account with the Staffordshire Credit Union and would benefit from it."

■ **For more details about Kitted Out and the Staffordshire Credit Union log onto www.staffscu.co.uk**

Practical help to stay warm in winter

TWO schemes are helping to beat fuel poverty and keep householders in Stoke-on-Trent warm during the winter months.

North Staffordshire Warm Zone is a Government-supported initiative bringing affordable warmth and energy efficiency to privately-owned and privately-rented accommodation.

Anyone in the zone found to be suffering from fuel poverty could be eligible to receive free insulation measures and central heating measures.

Even households that do not qualify for a full grant do qualify for heavily subsidised insulation measures, and a typical household could save up to 60 per cent.

All households will be able to access free benefits advice, free energy advice, free energy-saving light bulbs and free smoke alarms.

For more details about fuel poverty and applying for a Warm Zone grant call 01782 479099.

Meanwhile, Beat the Cold provides information, advice and referrals for households vulnerable to the cold. Residents can either arrange to visit the Stoke-on-Trent-based charity or home visits can be booked.

■ **For more details call 0800 3892258.**



Residents living in the North Staffordshire Warm Zone could be eligible to receive free or subsidised energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall insulation.

Providing solutions on housing issues

HELP is on hand for people who need advice and support about housing issues.

The city council's Housing Solutions Service team can answer queries in relation to a range of issues from mortgage problems to debt or arrears.

The service works closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Staffordshire Credit Union and colleagues across the West Midlands to help people stay in their current home despite financial problems.

For more information contact the service on 01782 233696 or email housing.advice@stoke.gov.uk

Chance to chat on money matters

PEOPLE are being given the chance to talk to organisations about money matters at a series of local events across the city.

Residents who have attended Chatterbox events so far have found out how to save money through cheaper fuel tariffs and loans, where to get home content insurance, savings and current accounts and where to turn to for help when money gets tight.

Over 250 people have already come along to locations such as Asda superstore, Tunstall, Haywood Hospital and Rowan Village sheltered accommodation at Meir.

The six-month pilot scheme supported and co-ordinated through the Financial Inclusion Group also gives people the chance to talk informally to professionals about financial services that can help, particularly Moneyline and the Staffordshire Credit Union.

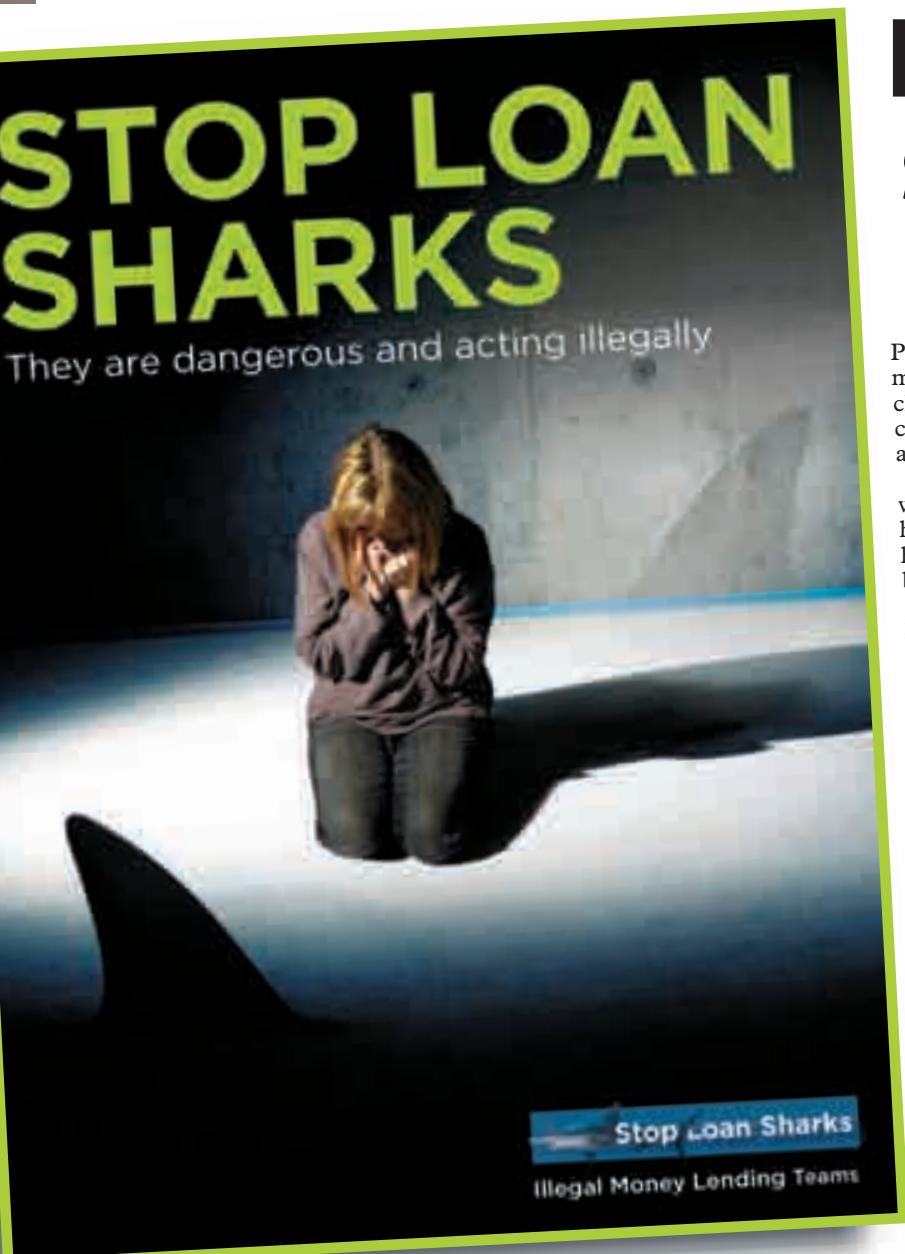
City council Sustainable Community Officer Vicki Birks said: "Chatterbox provides a useful venue for people to get information about money matters that are concerning them. It is local and friendly.

"It is only at the pilot stage at the moment but it is proving to be a real success. People are telling us the advice is useful and their comments are helping to improve the services we provide."

For more information about where Chatterbox is going to turn up next contact Vicki Birks on 01782 233060 or email vicki.birks@stoke.gov.uk



Sustainable Community Officer Vicki Birks hands out money advice leaflets at a Chatterbox event.



Keep clear of loan sharks – they cost an arm and a leg

PEOPLE looking to borrow money are being urged to stay clear of loan sharks and think carefully about lending alternatives.

Loan sharks prey on people who do not have bank accounts, have a bad credit rating and have been turned down for loans by financial organisations.

The deals offered by "sharks" have interest rates that are three times the price of the highest legal credit and in some cases as much as 1,000 per cent.

An ongoing Government campaign – backed by the city council – is helping to protect people from unscrupulous illegal lenders.

Eye-catching posters – such as the one pictured left – featuring slogans such as "Don't get in with a loan shark... it will cost you an arm and a leg" and "Stop Loan Sharks – they are dangerous." have been appearing on billboards and website advertisements.

And the campaign tries to dispel a number of myths surrounding loans sharks, which include: unlicensed money lending is not illegal;

illegal money lending is a victimless crime and loan sharks provide a reasonably-priced service.

The best advice for dealing with loan sharks is "don't".

They're unlicensed moneylenders who charge very high interest rates and sometimes use threats and violence to frighten people who can't pay back their loan.

For people who cannot lend from traditional sources, there are alternatives.

For example, Moneyline is a "not for profit" scheme which specialises in making small, affordable loans to people who are unable to get credit from banks or building societies, or are otherwise financially excluded.

Moneyline's Staffordshire Manager Karen Ankers said: "Our aim is to help anyone, regardless of financial circumstances and regardless of their credit rating. The only thing we ask is that people are totally honest with us about their circumstances."

For details about Moneyline services call 01782 206836 or log onto www.elmline.co.uk/staffordshire.html For confidential help call Illegal Money Lending Team on 0300 555 222 or email stoploansharks@birmingham.gov.uk

USEFUL CONTACTS

FOR more information about managing finances or dealing with debt log on to stoke.gov.uk and click the money matters option. Other useful contacts include:

NATIONAL DEBTLINE
www.nationaldebtline.co.uk 0808 808 4000 – Free independent advice.

PAYPLAN
www.payplan.com 0800 716239 – for debt calculating, debt solutions and budgeting.

SHELTER
www.shelter.org.uk 0808 8004444 – housing advice, including rent and mortgage arrears repossessions and eviction.

TURN 2 US
www.turn2us.or.uk 0808 802 2000 – benefits advice and details of grant-giving charities.

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
www.money.made.clear.fsa.gov.uk – interactive tools for budgeting and borrowing, information and leaflets.



Creating a healthier and safer city

Survey shows vast majority feel safe in their community

THE latest city-wide survey carried out by the partnership has revealed that eight out of 10 people feel safe or very safe in the neighbourhood where they live.

More than half the residents revealed their top community safety concerns were break-ins at home or antisocial behaviour. This is despite an 18 per cent reduction in homes being burgled and a 30 per cent reduction in loutish behaviour in the last year.

The results will be used to inform priorities over the next 12 months. Issues of most concern were:

- Domestic burglary
- Rowdy behaviour in the street
- Alcohol misuse
- Alcohol-related violence/street drinking
- Litter or rubbish
- Drug misuse

Sam Bridgett, Research and Information Analyst for the Safer City Partnership said: "A total of 1,550 surveys were completed.

"It was advertised and carried out through local newspapers and news bulletins, through the city council website and face to face with residents via PCSOs and Safer City Partnership Officers.

"The data was broken down into postcode areas so we were able to examine local trends and issues.

"Despite this, all the postcode areas named 'Groups of People Causing a Nuisance in the Street' or 'Home Burglary' as their number one concern."

Former drug and alcohol misusers help other people

PEOPLE in recovery from drug and alcohol misuse are volunteering their time to encourage people to make a new start.

Through the *Recovery Is Out There* project (RIOT) former users have become mentors, offering advice and support to people on drug and alcohol recovery programmes.

The volunteers work on an informal basis offering one-to-one help or support through group sessions. The project was set up in the city less than six months ago but is already proving to be successful with service users and treatment providers.

Suzie Kelly, Alcohol Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership said: "The volunteers act as peer mentors offering hope, inspiration and encouragement to people seeking support.

"They can really relate to their mentors because they have come through similar situations and are the proof that there is light at the end of the tunnel."

She added: "The project is in its infancy and we are still recruiting volunteers, but so far the feedback we have received is very positive. Both the people who have been helped and the support workers have noticed the benefits."



Mike Brunt, Safer Neighbourhoods Programme Lead, right, surveys the banks of CCTV monitors at the city council's central control with CCTV Manager Jason Handy. The control oversees the new deployable cameras along with the fixed units.

New mobile CCTV units set to combat crime

SAFETY and reassurance have been further enhanced in the city following investment in state-of-the-art deployable CCTV units.

A total of 14 deployable cameras have been bought and are to be installed in various locations across Stoke-on-Trent.

The images are monitored and recorded 24 hours a day and pictures of anyone involved in crime or antisocial behaviour are kept and used by the police and other agencies.

The deployable cameras have been bought by the Safer City Partnership

with the help of Neighbourhood Funding. They form part of a network of more than 200 CCTV cameras throughout the city.

CCTV operators are able to communicate and report any issues immediately to enable police or other enforcement agencies to respond.

Mike Brunt, Safer Neighbourhoods Programme Lead, said: "The cameras have a wide range of uses alongside many other schemes in Stoke-on-Trent to combat crime and disorder, which are already low compared to other areas of the country.

"The locations where the cameras are deployed are decided at monthly meetings attended by representatives from the city council, Staffordshire Police and other relevant agencies. They depend on the seriousness of local crime and disorders."

Individuals or community groups cannot apply for use of the cameras but they can influence decisions by ensuring all incidents are reported through the police or antisocial behaviour helpline – 0800 561 5610.

For more details about the CCTV scheme log onto stoke.gov.uk/cctv



Drugs can bring out the 'Mr Hyde' in users

LEGAL to Buy – Risky to Try is the stark warning being issued through the latest campaign aimed at spelling out the risks of legal highs.

Adults are being targeted with an eye-catching poster, pictured left, which features the slogan alongside a picture of horror novel characters Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.

The aim is to show people that just because there is a wide range of legal substances and stimulants available they are not necessarily safe and could have a dramatic effect on their personality or health.

Project Officer for Substance Misuse Hannah Cole said: "Legal highs contain chemicals that could permanently affect your health or state of mind. Taking them could put a person at serious risk of paranoia, coma, seizure or even death. Mixing alcohol with any drug further increases risk to your health."

For help and advice contact the Community Drug Service on 01782 219777.

A two-page special *Our City* report



Late-night help and advice in city centre

TRAINED volunteers have been patrolling the city centre as part of a nationwide scheme to make people feel safer on nights out.

Through the Street Pastors project, teams of four people head out onto the streets between 10pm and 4am to help reduce antisocial behaviour.

Wearing easily identifiable jackets they engage with people offering advice and practical help, such as making sure they get home safely after a night out.

They also pick up broken glass and hand out water to revellers who have been drinking.

The teams are trained by organisations such as Staffordshire Police and

drug awareness specialists.

Funding for the project has been provided by a number of organisations including the Safer City Partnership and comes under the banner of the Tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Programme.

In Stoke-on-Trent, the Street Pastors work alongside door staff, police and city council CCTV operators every Monday and Saturday night.

Councillor Ross Irving, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Partnerships and the Local Strategic Partnership, said: "There is a lot of support on offer for people on nights out – but Street Pastors add something different.

Street Pastors can offer



Street Pastors Andrew Tesla and Sarah de Costobadie chat with teenagers Kate McGing, left, and Beth Reid in the city centre.

emotional care and give people a friendly ear or advice which can really make a difference."

Inspector Shaun Kerrigan, commander of the city centre policing team, said: "We have been working hard with partners, including the city council and licensees, to drive down alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour.

"Street Pastors provide additional help to vulnerable people, ensuring our city centre is a safe place to visit. The volunteers are local people who offer a friendly, approachable presence and can give practical advice and help."

Volunteers are still being sought for the scheme. Street Pastors are drawn from local churches and

are expected to work from 10pm to 4am a minimum of once a month. They have to undergo a CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) check.

For more details visit www.streetpastors.org.uk or ring Stoke-on-Trent co-ordinator Barbara Bloor on 07585 150560.



Staff bake for charities

MEMBERS of the Safer City Partnership team put their best baking skills to the test to raise hundreds of pounds for the Lord Mayor's charities. A coffee and cake morning was held at the Civic Centre, Stoke, for a number of local charities. Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley is pictured sampling one of the tasty treats and a cup of tea served at one of the events, which raised £300.

Beware of driving on the 'morning after' drinking



PEOPLE are being warned about the dangers of drink driving – and then getting behind the wheel on "the morning after" – through a multi-agency campaign spearheaded by the Safer City Partnership.

Throughout the Christmas period posters were put up on billboards and displayed on the back of buses, warning motorists about the risks they were taking if they had consumed alcohol.

The campaign, backed by organisations including

Staffordshire Police, looks at the costs of driving while over the limit, which can include a 12 month driving ban, a £5,000 fine, a criminal record and, potentially, the loss of employment.

The campaign also focuses on motorists driving the morning after they have had a drink; warning of the possibility of still being over the limit.

Police handed out leaflets to motorists as part of the operation, spelling out key facts such as the drink drive

limit and the number of units of alcohol in different drinks.

Suzie Kelly, Alcohol Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership, said the campaign will be repeated in the year: "Although the campaign was launched to coincide with the Christmas period this is an issue that affects people all year round.

"Working in partnership means we can deliver one strong effective message to motorists, highlighting the risks of drink driving."

Initiative aims to get everyone online



IT Tutor Geoff Ward, right, with 70-year-old student Colin Barwick who is taking a Computers and Cameras course held at City Central Library.

ADULT and Community Learning is championing a Government campaign which aims to have everyone using a computer by 2012.

The Race Online initiative has been set up to encourage public, private and charitable organisations to sign up to help some of the 10 million adults in the UK who have never used the internet.

In Stoke-on-Trent, the Adult and Community Learning Service has a range of information and communications technology courses that have helped thousands of people log on for the first time.

For people new to computers and those feeling a little anxious about learning, the Computers for Absolute Beginners course is a perfect first step.

The course is delivered by experienced, patient tutors who understand the concerns of new learners.

It is a free six week course and it is running at venues across the city including Bentilee, Blurton, Ball Green, the City Centre, Fenton, Burslem, Meir, Milton, Stoke and Barlaston.

Last year more than 350 people came along to this specific course and feedback was extremely positive.

There are lots more computer courses people can progress on to including Beginners Excel, Powerpoint and Desk Top Publishing and several more delivered through city council libraries.

Councillor Mervin Smith, Cabinet Member for City Development (Regeneration), said: "More than 1,000 people joined our ICT courses last year and they all said what a good experience it was.

"I want to encourage people to take up this learning opportunity and remind everyone that we are never too old to learn."

■ For more details call 01782 234775; email adult.learning@stoke.gov.uk or log on to stoke.gov.uk/adultlearning

Council-run college is a key learning resource

WEDGWOOD College and Conference Centre is one of the most attractive settings for learning to be found in North Staffordshire – and that coupled with its wide range of courses means it is proving more and more popular.

The college at Barlaston, just south of the city, is a centre of community learning offering one-day or residential courses in a range of languages – including Esperanto – as well as the political sciences, history and art, cultural studies and many more.

The college is owned and operated by the city council and ties in with its programme of Adult and Community Learning.

A range of courses are offered by the college for most interests and abilities, including Sugarcraft, Sewing, Mini Manicures, Guitar for Beginners, Literature and Digital Photography. For the more adventurous there are courses including Beauty of the Russian Opera, Wash and Line Watercolours and An Appreciation of the Derbyshire Dales.

■ For more information about courses or a list of events throughout the winter and spring contact the college on 01782 372105 or email wedgwood.memorial@stoke.gov.uk



Language course paved way to employment and new lease of life

ADULT learning courses have helped former Polish clothes designer Wioletta Haras break down language barriers and paved the way to her finding work in the UK.

Mum-of-one Wioletta, 33, pictured left, came to England from Poland in March 2008 with her husband, and had very limited English skills, making it difficult to find employment.

However, she enrolled on a Family Literacy course being run at Northwood and Broom Community School – where her daughter Julia, aged eight, is a pupil.

Soon she signed up for a Family Numeracy course and a longer Family Literacy Course and achieved Level 1, and after 12 months her English skills improved dramatically.

Marie Savage, Adult and Community Learning Outreach Worker, said: "I was then able to encourage her to do voluntary work

at the school – because of her new-found confidence she said yes. She is now a lunch time supervisor and has gone on to complete a Level 2 Health and Safety Course as well as a Safeguarding Children course."

Wioletta has also enrolled on a 30-week Interpreting course at Stoke-on-Trent College and has gone on to do occasional volunteering at Jobcentre Plus as an interpreter. She is also taking a ICT course to improve her skills.

She said: "I have a degree in clothes design and had my own shop in Poland – I also worked as a chef at the weekends.

"Therefore it was quite frustrating to come to the UK, eager to work, but with limited English language skills. The Adult Learning courses have helped me to overcome this and has given me a new lease of life."

Family classes helped restore self confidence

WHEN mum-of-three Vicky Escritt first attended an adult learning session she admits to having an escape route identified.

Vicky was so short on self esteem after a series of major blows to her confidence that she was not quite sure how the family learning course could help.

But she soon realised it was just what she needed to get her back on her feet and a step closer to work.

She said: "The first time I took part I sat close to the door so that I could escape! However, the six-week course really helped me and I started to gain confidence again."

Now she has gone on to become a community learning champion, is part way through a university course and is constantly telling others about the benefit of having

a go at the courses. She is now a far cry from the person who moved back to Stoke-on-Trent from Northumberland four years ago following a divorce.

Vicky, 45, who also cares for her disabled mum and dad, said: "I trained and worked as a psychiatric nurse for a number of years but due to marriage and child care issues I was forced to give up work eight years ago.

"When I moved here I had lost all my self confidence and self esteem leaving me hiding in my home."

It was at this point Vicky first met Marie Savage, an outreach worker for Adult and Community Learning, who invited her to take part in the family learning course at her daughter's school.

"It really helped me to overcome the issues I was



FAMILY LEARNING – Vicky Escritt studies with her son Matthew, aged 15, and 10-year-old daughter Catherine.

experiencing," Vicky said. "I have gone on to complete a number of adult and family learning courses, which helped me with my English and numeracy skills."

She added: "Following all this I have gained so much confidence

and self esteem that I applied to university.

"I am presently completing a four-month Return to Practice module so that I can go back to nursing and improve my family's quality of life."

Former Michelin MD appointed LEP Chairman

JOBS and skills are top priorities for the new body set up to drive forward regeneration in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The Local Enterprise Partnership, or LEP, is one of just 24 in the country given the go-ahead by the Government.

It replaces the abolished regional development agency Regional Development Agency Advantage West Midlands, and one of the LEP's first tasks was to draw up a bid which has been submitted to the Government for cash from the first round of regional growth funding.

Former Michelin Managing Director Jim Rickard, pictured right, has been appointed as Chairman of the LEP board.

Mr Rickard said: "Our aim is for growth in the economy, which will come from the private sector. We want more employment opportunities and for our people to be equipped to do those jobs through the right training and development."

● **To find out more about the work of the LEP visit the partnership's website at www.stokestaffslep.org.uk**



JUSTICE SEEN JUSTICE DONE

Our City reports back on convictions secured to make Stoke-on-Trent safer for us all...

NORTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD – DRUG DEALER GETS 10 YEARS:

Two men have been jailed after police found drugs with a street value of £138,420 at properties in Chell Heath. Officers seized heroin, crack cocaine, cannabis and an ecstasy substitute during raids launched as part of Operation Nemesis. Peter Rogers, 23, and Carl Moreton, 28, both of Winghay Place, Chell Heath, admitted possession of drugs with intent to supply when they appeared at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court. Rogers was jailed for six and a half years while Moreton was given a four-year sentence.



WESTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD – BURGLAR NOW BEHIND BARS:

Burglar Lee Greatbatch has been locked up for 20 months after a scared woman called police as he tried to get in to her Northwood home. The 22-year-old from Truro Place, Bentilee, was caught when his blood was found on one of two motorcycles stolen from nearby garages. Greatbatch carried out the offences despite being subject to a community order and, while on bail for them, kicked his way into a flat in Bentilee. He admitted two burglaries and one attempted burglary.



SOUTH EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD – COCAINE FOUND IN CAR:

A judge dismissed Longton man Adam Day's account of why he had crack cocaine worth £2,760 in a car as being "like a colander, it has so many holes." The 38-year-old passenger from Blackheath Close said he hardly knew the driver who told him to pick two blocks off the dashboard and he only intended giving them to the owner for no payment. Day was handed a two and a half year prison term after pleading guilty at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court to possession with intent to supply.



SOUTH WESTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD – WOMAN CONFRONTS BURGLARS:

Two young children slept upstairs as a woman discovered three men in the living room of her Fenton home. A mobile phone and a laptop computer were stolen during the late-night raid at her terraced property in Victoria Road. Nathan Hopkin, 29, of City Road, Fenton admitted burglary. With 37 previous convictions, the judge jailed him for two years telling him: "This is particularly serious because when you and two others forced your way into the house, the family were present."



EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD – DRUG ADDICT JAILED:

Crime number 99 landed Scott Tinsley from Smallthorne with a two and a half year stretch in prison. He stole items worth £3,000 from a house at Causeway Drive in Sneyd Green to feed his drugs habit and was caught red-handed with some of the property the following day. Tinsley, 35, of Community Drive, first told police he had been given the goods in exchange for his bike but later admitted the offence. It was his ninth house burglary.



Access Support Assistant Fiona Evans shows a Message in your Wallet card.

This card in your wallet is the most valuable

MORE than 5,000 people in Stoke-on-Trent have made room in their wallets for something more important than bankcards, driving licences or loyalty cards.

Thanks to the Message in your Wallet scheme they carry a potentially life-saving card with personal and medical information that could save vital minutes for paramedics, police or fire crews in the case of emergency.

The wallet-sized card carries crucial information such as GP's name and

phone number, medical conditions, medication, allergies and details of people or pets who may need caring for at home.

The card is handy enough to be put in the glove box of a car, a purse, wallet or handbag, and it comes with a green cross sticker that can be put on a purse or glove box to signal that medical information can be found inside.

Alyson Shorthouse, of the city council's Access Team, said: "Demand for the wallets has been enormous since the scheme was launched six months ago.

"Stoke-on-Trent Lions Club and the city council have already produced a

second batch of wallets. Additional sponsors would enable us to produce more cards and keep them available to people in need of them."

Stoke-on-Trent Lions Club fund a similar scheme called Message in a Bottle which is left in fridges at home to assist the emergency services when called to help vulnerable people.

For more information about Message in a Wallet email: disabledaccess@stoke.gov.uk or phone 01782 236667 or contact Stoke-on-Trent Lions on 0845 8335724.

Market hamper lucky winner

CONGRATULATIONS to Mrs Mildred Dennis of Trent Vale who won a £250 hamper donated by Stoke-on-Trent markets in a special *Our City* competition.

Mildred, 86, received her prize from Lord Mayor Councillor Denver Tolley.



Making smoking less cool for children

AN anti-smoking campaign aimed at children has been launched by the city council.

Called Smokefree 4 Life, the dangers are being highlighted to Cubs and Brownies who will get embroidered badges and certificates to reward their understanding. The project, funded by the Department of Health, will focus on the health effects of smoking

and second hand smoke.

Councillor Terry Follows, Cabinet Member for the Environment, Waste Management and Neighbourhood Services, said: "The uptake of smoking amongst young people is a big concern in our area as there are high numbers of youngsters aged 11-16 who are regular smokers." Councillor Mark Wright, the

city council's Smokefree Champion, said: "This is all about making smoking less attractive to young people and ensuring that they have the information that tells them about the downside of smoking."

Groups wanting an activity pack should contact Trading Standards Officer Charlotte Coleman at regulatory.services@stoke.gov.uk

Police CONTACT NUMBERS

IT'S easy to get in touch with a local beat bobby or Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) via their digital airwave radios. All officers have individual collar numbers which are four or five digits long.

For officers with four digit numbers dial 0300 123 2345 then enter '0' followed by the four digit collar number of the officer you need to speak to. No '0' is needed for officers with five digit collar numbers.

If the officer is on duty, their radio rings like a mobile phone and you will be connected. If they are off duty or dealing with victims, witnesses or offenders, your call goes through to the officer's individual voicemail box. Remember, in an emergency, dial 999.

Stoke Neighbourhood

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Stoke Police Station,
Boothon Road,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 4AH.
Tel. 0300 123 4455
email: stoke.npu@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Inspector 3734
Christopher Harrington

Sgt 3851 Dave Fenton	Sgt 0583 Jo Blandford	Sgt 4653 Phil Eaton
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Blurton, Newstead & Hollybush

PC 4822 Sean Woodward	PC 5107 Simon Stone	PC 0873 Kate Rushton
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PCSO 6607 Phil McGlynn	PCSO 16885 Charlotte Abbotts	Fenpark ↓ PC 0905 Rob Mountford
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Fenton, Heron Cross, Mt Pleasant

PC 4475 Ivor Owens	PC 4129 Scott Bradbury	PCSO 8827 Scott Holland
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PCSO 16229 Wendy Rogers	PCSO 6443 Rachel Mountford	PC 4959 Kerrie Mayer
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Hartshill, Basford, Cliffe Vale & Hospital

PC 0991 Terry Dunn	PCSO 16852 Yvonne Klebukowski
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Penkhull

PC 4913 Barry Joynson	PCSO 16939 Katy Thornycroft
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Town Centre & Boothon

PC 4433 Andy Birchenall	PC 4990 James McWilliam	PCSO 8825 Karen Billings
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Trent Vale & Oakhill

PC 3684 Neil Russell	PC 4964 Andrea Oakes	PCSO 16634 Charlotte Bryan
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Trentham & Hanford

PC 4034 Malcolm Ford	PC 0540 Nerine Forrest	PCSO 16938 Scott Woodward
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Neighbourhood Action Team

PC 4685 Steve Wilson	PC 5133 Scott Gidman
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Bucknall Neighbourhood

NPU commander
Bucknall Police Post,
Ruxley Road, Bucknall,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST2 9BG.
Tel. 0300 123 4455
email: bucknall.npu@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Inspector 4371
Matt Bennton

Sgt 3615 Paul Clarke	Sgt 4438 John Buchan	Sgt 3415 David Lowe
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Abbey Hulton

PC 4727 Dave Tams	PCSO 16295 Steven Cowan
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PCSO 16934 Tracy Robinson	PCSO 16933 Emma Casey
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Bentilee

PC 4632 Andy Mander	PCSO 6612 Andrew Meakin	PCSO 16226 Rachel Knight
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Berry Hill & Eaton Park

PC 4953 Angela Broadhurst	PCSO 8983 Rob Guthrie	PC 5183 Natalie Lugg
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Bucknall & Townsend

PC 0975 Nathan Ames	PCSO 17023 Nia Nokes
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Joiner's Square

PC 4867 Nick Bolam	PCSO 8893 Lucy Stevenson
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Milton & Baddeley Green

PC 0865 Claire Bowker	PC 4020 Neil Whitmore	PCSO 16932 Jessica Edge
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Smallthorne

PC 3911 Kieron Edridge	PCSO 16231 Carl Radford
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Sneyd Green

PC 0886 Sarah Griffiths	PCSO 8980 Charlotte Barker	PCSO 17020 Fraser Glen
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Neighbourhood Action Team

PC 0735 Jo Powell	PC 0998 Peter Underwood	PC 5078 Scott Turner
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Burslem Neighbourhood

NPU commander
Burslem Police Station,
Jackson Street, Burslem,
Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 1AF.
Tel. 0300 123 4455
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Inspector 4465
Martin Brereton

Sgt 4602 Paul Clarke	Sgt 3840 John Hazeldine	Sgt 4019 Pete Slinn
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Birches Head East & West

PC 0848 Ruth Barlow	PC 5373 Julie Clarke	PCSO 8979 Michelle Chadwick
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Burslem & Sneyd Green West

PC 4260 Mark Trafford	PC 4210 Les Bertolone	PCSO 8984 Becky Simon
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Forest Park

PCSO 8957 Justine Marsh	PCSO 17016 Matthew Boyles	PCSO 8987 Liz Old
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Middleport & Longport

PC 0447 Claire Jervis	PC 4912 Mick Jones	PC 0805 Kate Beardmore
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PCSO 8959 Helen Rowley	PCSO 6628 Tich Nyamayaro	PC 0806 Amanda White
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Northwood

PC 3829 Ian Martin	PC 4389 Guy Wain	PC 5246 Dave Beardmore
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PCSO 9045 Sue Wall	PCSO 8985 Lucy Slater	PCSO 16230 Vicky Smith
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Shelton North & Etruria

PC 3829 Ian Martin	PC 4389 Guy Wain	PC 5246 Dave Beardmore
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PCSO 16225 Adrian Hemmings	PC 4139 Dave Marshall	PC 4483 Keith Emery (Uni Officer)
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Shelton South

PC 4139 Dave Marshall	PC 5588 Lynne Callaghan	PCSO 16299 Katie Brickley
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Neighbourhood Action Team

PC 5106 Gareth Cheetham	PC 5056 Andy Percy	PC 0821 Claire Brooker
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PC 5137 Adrian Firth	PC 0935 Graham Phillips	PC 4924 Kevin Cook
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Etruria & Festival Park

PC 5208 Andrew Sherratt	PC 4871 Lucas Hackney	PC 0605 Nicola Humphries
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PC 4452 Roger Poole	PC 4133 Craig Russell	PCSO 16227 Daniel Nettleton
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PCSO 8830 Christopher Stone	PCSO 16935 Daniel Boote
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City Centre Neighbourhood

NPU commander
Hanley Police Station,
Bethesda Street, Hanley,
Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DR.
Tel: 0300 123 4455
email: city.npu@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Inspector 3509
Shaun Kerrigan

Sgt 4777 Jonathon Ward	Sgt 4151 Brevic Jones	Sgt 4425 Phillip White
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City Centre

PC 0817 Kerry Grant	PC 5445 Gregory Hill	PC 4149 Jason Howell
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PC 0837 Sharon Ribbans	PC 5410 Steven Smith	PC 4092 Carl Kelsall
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PCSO 8955 Christopher Hill	PCSO 8516 Andrea Bolam	PCSO 16936 Matt Harrison
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PC 0726 Claire Harrison	PC 4644 Robert Kelsall	PC 5164 Natalie Ball
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PC 4634 Lee Robinson	PC 4528 Darren Belford	PC 0400 Diane Hoyle
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PCSO 8457 Simon Holmes	PCSO 16293 Melanie Bartholomew
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Longton Neighbourhood

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Longton Police Station,
Sutherland Road, Longton,
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Tel. 0300 123 4455
email: longton.npu@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Inspector 5110
Elliott Sharrard-Williams

Sgt 4336 Craig Burton	Sgt 3890 Ian Jones	Sgt 4089 Andy Duffin
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Saxonfields & Meir Hay

Sgt 4991 Steven Meigh	PC 0760 Lisa Joynson	PCSO 16856 Keith Mellor
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Meir North & Weston Coyney

PC 5274 James Ibbis	PC 5222 Matthew Hope	PCSO 16854 Sarah Cartledge
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Meir South & Meir Park

PC 4090 Russ Elliott	PC 4603 Neil Day	PCSO 16635 Emma Richards
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PCSO 16240 Leanne Sharratt	PCSO 6500 Mark Simon
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Normacot, Dresden, Florence & Lightwood

PC 5020 Jon Ash	PC 5169 Toni Sunderland	PC 3862 Tony Godwin
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PCSO 6433 George Bould	PCSO 16232 Andrew Alcock
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Neighbourhood Action Team

PC 0971 Paul Nixon	PC 4160 Paul Massey	PC 4838 Gareth Whitfield
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PC 4021 Andy Edwards	PC 5238 Scott Robson
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Tunstall Neighbourhood

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Tunstall Police Station,
Scotia Road, Tunstall,
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Tel. 0300 123 4455
email: tunstall.npu@staffordshire.pnn.police.uk

Inspector 3573
Mark Hardern

Sgt 4594 Marcus Ferns	Sgt 0852 Deb Losh	Sgt 4401 Tony Drinkwater
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Fegg Hayes & Great Chell

PC 4969 Samantha Bray	PCSO 6513 Sarah Bowen	PCSO 16941 Jon Steventon
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Chell Heath

PC (acting) 4904 John Swinerton	PC 3744 Nick Palmer	PCSO 6616 Sally Wright
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Packmoor & Brindley Ford

PC 0944 Jaime Isaacs	PCSO 17022 Tracy Hodgson	PCSO 16940 Blaine Williams
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Norton & Ball Green

PC 4383 Andy Baddeley	PC 877 Claire Crank	PCSO 16853 Simon Jones
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Burslem Park Estate, Smallthorne & Bradeley

PC 3822 Rob Thomas	PCSO 16235 Sarah Wood	PCSO 16233 Hannah Mayer
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Sandyford & Goldenhill

PC 4733 Glyn Talbot	PCSO 8953 Michael Frost
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Stanfield & Mill Hill

PC 5055 Daniel Marsh	PCSO 8841 Andy Pryce
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Tunstall Town Centre

PC 5158 Amanda Whitfield	PC 4835 Adam Edwards	PC 5086 Craig Carpenter
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PCSO 8986 Andy Wootton	PCSO 8954 Richard Farrar
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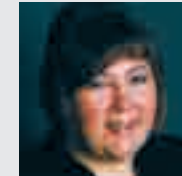
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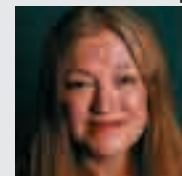


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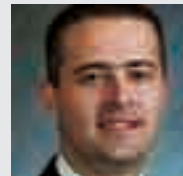
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spots &
rashes?

shivers &
a fever?

We're here.

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Call **0845 4647*** or visit
www.nhs.uk/nhsdirect