

our city

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fires city pottery and
creates 200 new jobs**

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Job creation commitment pays off with good news for the New Year



By City Council Leader Councillor **MOHAMMED PERVEZ**

MAY I wish everyone who lives and works in Stoke-on-Trent a happy and prosperous New Year. 2012 will be another challenging period for us all at the council, but I am delighted to be able to highlight some very good news so early in the year.

This issue of *Our City* features successes of our Mandate for Change initiative which aims to create private sector jobs by supporting existing businesses and attracting new investment.

It is excellent to hear Steelite's commitment to extend their factory and create 200 new jobs, and even better to have a business leader like Steelite Chief Executive Kevin Oakes saying the council's support was so important to the company's success.

The Steelite story on page seven shows how the council can support businesses in more than financial terms. Our help with land acquisitions and planning matters can be just as fundamental to business growth.

On this page you will read about a company bringing its production back from the Far East to Stoke-on-Trent, and later in the magazine is the story of our bid to bring the new Green Investment Bank's headquarters to our city. It is an ambitious bid against some of the biggest cities in the UK but we believe we have a sound argument to bring 50 prestigious jobs here and we are lobbying the Government hard to press our case.

We have been delighted with the response from within the city and around the country to our commitment to roll out the "red carpet" to create jobs in Stoke-on-Trent. At first we reported a good response to our business hotline.

Now we are reporting that real jobs are being created... and more announcements are in the pipeline.

Even at a time when we are having to manage Government cuts and unavoidable cost pressures equating to £19m we are going further to save to invest in our Mandate for Change to create the much needed jobs for our citizens. Times are tough but there has never been this level of drive to stimulate the local economy.

Remember: £11m unavoidable cost pressures, £8m direct Government cuts, £5m save to invest – Total: £24m.

COVER PICTURE: Overlooker Marie Tinsley checks on freshly fired ware at the Steelite factory in Middleport. A £2million grant from the Regional Growth Fund will help pay for an extension to the plant and will create 200 jobs. See page seven.



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Fancy dress firm brings production back from the Far East

A fancy dress supplier has reversed the trend to take manufacturing abroad by bringing the majority of its Far East production back to Stoke-on-Trent.

With the help of enterprise funding, Party Shop Supplies (which trades as Charlie Crow) has also created four full-time jobs at its Fenton-based premises and is now looking to export into new overseas markets.

The company received a five-figure loan from the Michelin Development programme, which is dedicated to helping small and medium-sized businesses create new employment in the city.

It meant it could buy new machinery for its manufacturing operation in the city, enabling it to establish around 80 per cent of its production at its premises – up until 2010, 50 per cent of its production was based in China.

Michelin works closely with the council to make sure the exclusive investment pot is made available to as wide a range of businesses in Stoke-on-Trent as possible.

The council routinely offers businesses it works with the option to take up the Michelin Development Programme loan, while the tyre manufacturing giant passes on details of any company looking to expand or take on new staff.

Meeting market demands

Sue Crowder, Party Shop Supplies Managing Director, said: "By moving our production process back to our Stoke-on-Trent premises it has enabled us to be more flexible in meeting the demands of the market.

"We can now produce new designs and styles that fit with the demands of the market, such as our new Kings and Queens range, which was generated in response to last year's Royal Wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge."

Along with taking on more staff, 2012 promises to be another positive year for Party Shop Supplies, with plans to expand further into the US and Australian markets, alongside current footholds in Europe.

This includes a first time



Mandate for Change



CELEBRATING IN STYLE...
Sales Manager Charlie Crowder (tiger), Warehouse Assistant Justyna Trudzik (bunny) and Production Manager Pete Crowder (chicken).

appearance at a large US trade show in Houston to help facilitate American expansion plans.

The production and jobs boost comes at a time when the city council's Make It Stoke-on-Trent team has fielded investment and development enquiries from more than 200 businesses.

If they bear fruit they have the potential to create hundreds of jobs.

The work of the team, which provides a one-stop-shop for potential investors, ties in with the council's Mandate for

Change strategy, which aims to make Stoke-on-Trent a great working city by rolling out "red carpet" treatment to potential investors.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "The successful link up between Party Shop Supplies and Michelin is a great example of how manufacturing in the city can flourish under the right conditions and shows how one of the city's biggest companies is firmly behind Mandate for Change. Through the Make It

Stoke-on-Trent investment development service we are aiming to provide attractive packages of support that will ensure dozens more companies either expand or invest for the first time in the city."

● For more details about the city's Investment Development call 01782 234747 or visit www.makeitstokeontrent.com

Live webcast of full council meetings

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

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



FLY ON THE WALL...
Council Leader Mohammed Pervez and his colleagues were filmed making decisions that shape the city's future for the three-part BBC documentary to be broadcast soon.



Checking up on most vulnerable

VULNERABLE adults across Stoke-on-Trent are being re-assured that council help is on hand in an emergency this winter.

The council maintains a register of 1,300 people who may have extra problems because of a learning disability, dementia, hearing loss or visual impairment.

Others may be dependent on help with eating, drinking, going to the toilet or just taking their medication.

Avril Frankish, the council's Strategic Manager for Safeguarding and Innovation, said: "Although their normal arrangements work well, these people may become vulnerable if usual carers cannot reach them because of the weather.

"So we operate a system where we can check on the people on our register to make sure they're all right and if they have any particular needs we can send a home care worker out to see them.

"We'd also ask neighbours to keep an eye out and help wherever they can with things like shopping and so on.

"If there is a really serious problem that they can't help with and they think we should know about it, they can call us and alert us."

● To report serious concerns about a particularly vulnerable person in the event of bad weather this winter, you can call the council's Customer Access Centre on 0800 561 0015.

BBC TV documentary shows council meeting budget challenge

BLEAK it might be but filmmaker David Nath insists his three-part TV documentary about the politics and pain of multi-million pound cutbacks at Stoke-on-Trent City Council is a tale of our time that had to be told.

In applauding the authority for allowing him historic all areas access for 10 months, David says his fly-on-the-wall films due to be screened on the BBC soon, chart what happens when a Government pulls the financial plug.

Three one-hour episodes focus on the fallout for jobs and services as politicians, staff and the people of the city wrestle with a £36 million deficit, then an election and finally the devastating news of further cuts of £20 million.



The films are bound to provoke different views and get people talking. Hopefully they will show the realities of local Government and the brutal facts about the impact of central Government imposed budget cuts at a local level.

COUNCIL LEADER MOHAMMED PERVEZ

London-based David, well-known for TV documentaries like *Living with Brucie* and *Gordon Ramsay's Boiling Point*, said: "When I first got off the train and walked over the fly-over to the Civic Centre, it wasn't the best entrée to a city to be honest. But when I got inside the building and saw the original features, I could sense the history.

"I couldn't help thinking as I walked around the city what it would have been like in the 50s and 60s, the stories of people walking out of a pot bank job on a Friday and into a new job on a Monday, when the city had the pits and the steelworks.

"I thought about how many times people can be kicked in the teeth but refuse to give up. It's a city that has had a lot of bad luck."

Impact on ordinary people

Living in the city for three days a week, David, as series director, worked with cameraman and Staffordshire University graduate James Newton, who filmed up to 180 hours of footage.

They had access to top-level meetings and Cabinet sessions as decisions were made, cuts began to bite, services fell victim and people began to suffer. They were there at Heathside House care home in Goldenhill, which closed in April, 2011. They were there as residents fought an unsuccessful battle to save Tunstall Community Pool. They filmed the campaign to save children's centres.

David said: "I'd seen all the stories about trillions of pounds of debt and didn't really understand it. So for this project, I started out wanting to understand the effects of the debt crisis and the impact it is having on ordinary people.

"I understand now. I live in the London borough of Barnet where the effect of the

cuts on people there is nothing like that felt by people in Stoke-on-Trent. The irony is that the Government says we're all in this together. But on the ground it ends up every man for himself. Survival instinct kicks in.

"People have tunnel vision. I ended up really liking Stoke-on-Trent and its people. They're refreshingly honest. I just feel very sad about how far the city has to go in re-inventing itself. It has such a huge mountain to climb. I'd like to think it has the will to do it."

Council Leader Mohammed Pervez, a central character in the films along with City Council Chief Executive John van de Laarschot, said: "Most local authorities would have shied away from something like this but we felt it was the right thing to do, to be transparent and give people a real insight into the way we reached decisions.

"We felt the council wasn't unique in the challenges it had to face and that it would be good to show everyone how hard decisions were reached and the difficulties all local authorities face in managing budgets and services while listening to people's concerns. The films are bound to provoke different views and get people talking.

"Hopefully they will show the realities of local Government and the brutal facts about the impact of central Government imposed budget cuts at a local level. Although they relate to Stoke-on-Trent City Council, the films will hopefully be of far wider interest as they show the responsibility of trying to balance everything and doing the best for residents – something which is being mirrored up and down the country."

The series was commissioned by the BBC and produced by David Nath for Blast Films. To be informed of the transmission date follow the council on Twitter @stocitycouncil.

All change for recycling cardboard

STARTING this month, household recyclers in the city can no longer put cardboard in their brown bin.



Under new arrangements cardboard should be placed in the blue bin with other recycled materials.

The change came into effect after the Government increased its standards for composting, which meant some cardboard was no longer suitable.

If you don't have a blue bin contact the council on 01782 234000 or visit stoke.gov.uk/recycling to find out how you can recycle cardboard.

Kash celebrates retirement as YouTube™ star

A much-loved police dog has become an internet star by hosting his own retirement video.

During the three minutes and 25 seconds film the clever canine barks his way through the commentary, his dog-language “translated” by sub-titles at the bottom of the screen.

Staffordshire Police posted the clip on their website to commemorate the impending retirement of their longest-serving canine Kash.

So far the video has received more than 1,940 hits, boosted by promotional links on the police force’s Facebook page and Twitter account.

The sequence opens with the eight-year-old German Shepherd “saying:” – “Hello my name is Kash, a general purpose dog. I’ve worked with Staffordshire Police for seven human years but the moment has finally come to hang up my collar.”

Kash introduces his handler, PC Rich Birkin and looks back on his time in the Dog Support Unit, commenting that “when I paws and look back I’ve really enjoyed the hard work.”

PC Birkin tells about Kash’s “finest moment” when he chased thieves who had stolen a car from an elderly person, detaining them after pursuing them across fields on a dark, wet night.

After introducing his successor, his great-nephew Nico who is a one-year-old German Shepherd, Kash signs off and asks viewers to give the film a “Paws Up.”

During their time together PC Birkin and Kash earned commendations from Staffordshire Police and other forces, with special mentions for Kash’s enthusiasm and willing attitude to hard work.

Very strong bond

PC Birkin added: “Over the years I have built up a very strong bond with Kash. There have been times I have trusted him with my life and he has never let me down.”

Kash will now become PC Birkin’s family pet and is looking forward to relaxing in front of his favourite programme, Coronation Street.

● The video can be enjoyed at www.youtube.com/staffordshirepolice



PC Rich Birkin with his faithful sidekick Kash... Staffordshire Police's longest-serving canine who has hung up his collar after 49 dog years' service.



Who cares about a little bit of rain ... they've just been told that their Home Fire Risk Check is FREE! For yours call 0800 0241 999

Making your home safe from fire is easier than you might think! Following a few simple steps (with a little help from Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service) could save your life or that of a friend or neighbour.

For practical, helpful advice visit our website at www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk or call 0800 0241 999.

Know what to look for
Learn how to act
Discover how to stay safe

Call 0800 0241 999 for your Free Home Fire Risk Check.



Has your child celebrated their third birthday between September and December of last year?

FREE early education for three and four year olds

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



DON'T MISS OUT – Early Education is part of the foundation stage and helps children to develop a strong basis for future learning. Early Education can help your child to learn through hands-on activities and play, supported by staff who understand how children grow, learn and develop.

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

family Information Service

tel: 0800 015 1120 or 01782 232200



Find us on www.facebook.com and search for Stoke Family Information Service

stoke.gov.uk



www.twitter.com/StokeFIS



Evidence we are making the city attractive to potential investors

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



SET against the backdrop of severe financial challenges, we are committed to bringing new businesses to Stoke-on-Trent, to supporting the growth of our existing businesses and making sure the city is on the worldwide map.

Our Investment Development Team continue to reach out to the business community locally, nationally and internationally to attract the best to our city. Only last month, the team met with FTSE companies at the House of Commons in London targeting specific organisations.

Before that we were in Washington selling Stoke-on-Trent as a great place to do business at the launch of the United States' exhibition of our wonderful Staffordshire Hoard.

Since our Mandate for Change was launched, the increase in the number of companies who have contacted us about basing themselves in the city or expanding their operation here has doubled. We're now actively engaged with prospective companies ranging from manufacturing and ceramics, to retail and financial services – all keen to relocate to the city.

All of this is further evidence that we are making Stoke-on-Trent attractive to potential investors. We will continue to do all that we can to support our existing businesses as well as bringing new companies to the city to create jobs, generate wealth and boost our economy.

But this is also about our people and we know that 2012 will once again be a challenging year for the council. We face, as we did last year, significant financial issues that require us to be both responsible and fair to our residents, while at the same time proposing and agreeing a realistic budget.

Many of the decisions that our politicians will have to make will be difficult ones and therefore the views of our residents, partners and businesses have been essential in helping to shape the best possible outcomes for our city. So thank you to everyone who got involved.

Construction tutor Steve Pinnell, left, with students Jordan Casey, Andy Schofield and Josh Goodwin – some of the first trainees to sign up at the Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE).

Refurbished pottery factory at CoRE of skills training

AROUND 300 students are enrolling at a new national centre dedicated to teaching cutting edge refurbishment skills now the first phase of the £11.4 million project has been launched in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Andrew Stunell, performed the official opening of the Centre of Refurbishment Excellence (CoRE) in Longton.

Phase one is a training centre for the building industry and the new Stoke on Trent College Technology Centre.

It is a one-stop national education centre of excellence, which will train a new breed of multi-skilled trades people able to tackle the next generation of energy efficient and low carbon building initiatives.

The centre offers courses, tutorials and solutions for students and experienced trades people, all designed to help the construction industry meet tough national and international targets on cutting carbon emissions.

The building itself will be a research tool and is fitted out to the highest energy efficient standards.

The roof features 185 photovoltaic panels – generating enough electricity to heat and power the building and also feed the National Grid to generate income for the project.

The second phase will see the former historic Enson pottery works turned into a huge demonstration space big enough for trainees to learn about house-sized construction and give trades people hands-on experience. It will also showcase new products and techniques and is due to open in early 2013.

First class facility

The scheme is a joint project involving Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Stoke on Trent College and sustainable buildings specialist BRE.

Funding has come from the council, the Department of Education, the European Regional Development Fund and the private sector. Leading UK energy company E.ON is a founding sponsor of the project.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, the council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said:

"The education building at CoRE will provide a first class facility for training in refurbishment skills. The project is firmly putting our city on the map as the national and international focus for technological advances in the industry and it is exciting to see the first phase unveiled.

"I hope Stoke-on-Trent residents and businesses take advantage of the expert facilities and training here on their doorstep."

Stoke on Trent College Principal Sarah Robinson said: "CoRE will be a huge boost to our work to train skilled technicians and apprentices for the building trade. CoRE trainees will be at the forefront of the work force, using the knowledge they gain to create environmentally sound, sustainable homes fit for the future."

Don Leiper, Director of New Business at E.ON, said: "This building represents what needs to be done across the country to improve our homes and business premises – supporting at least 65,000 insulation and construction jobs by 2015. To do that, we'll need people with the right skills and the right knowledge and I'm delighted that through our partnership with the city, E.ON can play a significant role in that."

Pictured on the roof of the new Core Technology Centre which features 185 photovoltaic panels are left to right Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council Councillor Mohammed Pervez; Andrew Stunell OBE MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; Peter Bounds, Chair of the CoRE Board.



China Tales

By Placer

When master of ceremonies was the toast of US President Bush

WITH his military background, it's no surprise that the Lord Mayor's Toastmaster Steve McTigue is prepared for any eventuality. His initiative, attention to detail and professionalism has spared blushes at lavish occasions all over the world, from Florida to Hong Kong.

Naturally, Steve's much sought-after services demand discretion, but he does share a reminiscence about a very public mishap witnessed by the Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, no less, at the King's Hall, Stoke, during the banquet to celebrate the city's centenary year.

Steve was asked to use the council chamber gavel instead of his own to announce the entrance of the Royal guests with the traditional three strikes of the sound block – but after two strikes the gavel head came off the stem and flew through the air, missing the nose of a city councillor by inches!

"I reached into my pocket, quickly pulled out my own gavel and still managed the third strike with perfect timing," recalled Steve. "Afterwards a Royal Protection Officer told me that Prince Charles had been most impressed with the cool and calm way I had retrieved the situation!"

The other story he shares happened at a state banquet in London for President George W Bush. Steve recalled: "They don't have toastmasters in the US and the President thought it was my job to serve everyone with toast. When advised about what I really do, President Bush was heard to ask if that meant the guests were not getting any toast to eat that evening!"

Steve became a professional toastmaster after 25 years' service in the RAF, where he was responsible for building aircraft refuelling installations all over the world, and has been official Toastmaster to Stoke-on-Trent's Lord Mayor since 2003.

The role involves advising the First Citizen on how to properly address visiting dignitaries such as royalty, church leaders and senior judges. Steve is even available by phone or email to provide our civic leaders with impeccable advice on matters of etiquette regarding functions he is not required to attend.

"My work takes me all over the world, but I regard working for the Lord Mayor of Stoke-on-Trent and the staff in the Lord Mayor's office as a real joy," said the Toastmaster, whose expertise with a gavel won Royal approval!



Lord Mayor's Toastmaster Steve McTigue.

A valedictory duty to treasure...

ONE of the last duties in post for the British Ambassador to the United States, Sir Nigel Sheinwald, was to visit the Staffordshire Hoard exhibits at the National Geographic Museum in Washington D.C.

Sir Nigel, who is succeeded this month by Sir Peter Westmacott, took his family on a tour of the display of more than 100 artefacts from the collection of Anglo-Saxon gold.

The exhibition, which runs until March, has proved to be a star attraction in the American capital, drawing more than 15,000 visitors in its first month last November.

A display of the Staffordshire Hoard is on show at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, and the museum will stage its biggest exhibition of the ancient treasure this summer.



Residents' association stalwart Ethel Harris out and about in the community, and, inset, hard at work in the association's community office.

Proactive community groups always happy to help

ETHEL Harris is no ordinary chairperson of a residents' association.

The 80-year-old grandmother of four is available round the clock to deal with neighbours' problems – even when she is on a night out.

Ethel helps staff the community flat at 60 Casewell Road which is the hub of the Greenfields Residents' Association in Sneyd Green.

But she is often approached for help by residents when she is at the bingo or relaxing in Smallthorne Victory Club where she is a member. "I don't mind at all," said Ethel. "If I can be of help with a problem I am only too happy to make enquiries with the

relevant organisations.

"My most recent enquiries have been about the flooding of a stream which has affected someone's back garden."

The neighbourhood champion's public-spirited approach earned her a runners-up award in the Good Neighbour section at last September's Heroes Awards organised by the Sentinel newspaper in conjunction with Britannia Building Society.

Eyes and ears

Recently Ethel and the committee took it on themselves to teach a local resident how to read and write, introducing her to Talking Books and even accompanying her on a doctor's

appointment. She describes the residents' association as the "eyes and ears" of the community, liaising with the police in an ongoing drive to rid the neighbourhood of anti-social behaviour. The police use the community flat on an occasional basis, and local councillors hold surgeries there.

"During the week the flat is open from 9am until 1pm and it serves as a drop-in centre," said Ethel.

"Local people are welcome to use the computers in the office section, as long as they are supervised.

"We hold meetings of the residents' association in the evenings. Recent matters of interest have included a local house which faces demolition because it is built over a mineshaft," she added.

● Does the residents' association in your community have a story for *Our City*? Write with the details to Freepost Our City or email ourcity@stoke.gov.uk

What is a residents' association?

A residents' association is a group of people living in an area who have come together on a voluntary basis to take up local issues. Residents' associations usually come into being because:

- the area needs more facilities,
- residents are dissatisfied with the services they receive,
- people want estate-based social events and outings,
- residents are worried about a particular issue,
- people want to improve community spirit,
- coming together as a group provides one voice, and that voice becomes more powerful,
- they are a way of receiving information and keeping local residents informed of what is going on locally,
- they can work with other local groups for mutual benefit.

Tenants' and residents' associations are taken very seriously in Stoke-on-Trent. The council's online list of Residents Associations is currently being updated, please check back again shortly for this.

■ Anyone who needs information about residents' associations, please contact the Involvement Officer for your local area or contact the Tenant Involvement and Home Ownership Manager on 01782 234709.

Make it
Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

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

Praise for council support to secure £2m grant

THE city council's contribution in helping to secure £2 million of Government funding for tableware giants Steelite International to expand its Stoke-on-Trent factory and create 200 new jobs has been praised by the company.

Steelite Chief Executive Kevin Oakes said the council had shown "huge support" for the successful Regional Growth Fund bid which comes on the back of record sales of £60 million for 2010.

Mr Oakes said: "Of even greater significance perhaps, has been the council's willingness to assist with land acquisitions, ease of planning and energy-saving initiatives – all of which have been achieved as a result of effective communication, openness and understanding from a council team, many of whom have private sector experience.

"Steelite International is proud to manufacture in Stoke-on-Trent – a city that is not only great for business, but is unquestionably a place for business to be great."

Mr Oakes also pointed to many other ways the council has supported Steelite and the ceramics industry in general including investment to stage annual exhibitions and conferences to showcase products manufactured in The Potteries.

He added: "Since the arrival of council Chief Executive John van de Laarschot – combined with commitment and enthusiasm from local politicians – business continues to witness a positive transformation."

Production at Steelite's Middleport factory increased by 24 per cent in 2010 and further expansion of its hi-tech manufacturing plant is needed to meet continuing rising demand. A start date for construction and a timetable for job creation is to be announced soon.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said the backing for Steelite was a prime example of the council's Mandate for Change policy in action.

He said: "We were able to support Steelite's Regional Growth Fund bid in a number of very practical ways. For instance, we gave the funders assurances over planning permission for the factory expansion and we demonstrated that the



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Steelite International is proud to manufacture in Stoke-on-Trent – a city that is not only great for business, but is unquestionably a place for business to be great.

KEVIN OAKES, STEELITE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

council was 100 per cent committed to helping make it happen.

"This reflects the new 'can do' attitude – we are rolling out the red carpet not only for new businesses who want to locate in the city but also for existing local businesses which want to expand and create jobs."

Steelite produces award-winning tabletop ranges for the international hospitality industry with sales in more than 120 countries.

Its business spans a number of sectors including commercial catering – from staff restaurants and retirement homes to contract caterers and cruise lines – and the leisure and hospitality market such as restaurants, casinos and hotels.

Mandate for Change



Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, pictured during a visit to the Steelite International factory with the company's Training Manager Pat Griffin. Right, Councillor Meredith with Cranker Christine Smyk.



● The council also supported another successful Regional Growth Fund bid by Penkull-based research specialists Ceram which received an award of approximately £2 million.

The company will use the money to develop new kiln-firing technology which could cut energy costs by 25 per cent – and help the local pottery industry to compete even more effectively in global markets.

Service moves to Commerce House

THE city's dedicated inward investment service – Make It Stoke-on-Trent – has relocated to be closer to the beating heart of business.

The team is now based at Commerce House on Festival Park, home of the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Staffordshire's International Trade Team.

The organisations will work closely together to maximise the benefits to companies of all backgrounds and sizes.

Make It Stoke-on-Trent offers a free and confidential service for new investors looking to relocate a business or expand their

operations. The team can help identify the right property or piece of land, assistance with industry research, support in relation to skills and recruitment and guide on financial assistance. And there is the opportunity to tap into a wealth of expertise and advice that the council can offer as the city's biggest employer.

Any company looking to invest or relocate in Stoke-on-Trent or needing to expand their existing operation within the city can call the Make It Stoke-on-Trent hotline – 01782 234747.

Make it

Click and Easy
stoke.gov.uk

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

Mandate for change
01782 234747

Children make record of demolition

CHILDREN made their own record of the demolition of the tower block of the former Longton High School.

A small group of pupils from Sandon Business and Enterprise College, who used to attend the Longton Box Lane site until they transferred in September, filmed the school tower block being demolished in a controlled explosion as part of their local history coursework.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, Stoke-on-Trent City Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "The works mark the completion of the transfer of pupils to Sandon Business and Enterprise College's new building at Sandon Road. Building Schools for the Future is transforming the city's education facilities and creating top class schools we can be proud of."

Building Schools for the Future is a £250million initiative to refurbish and rebuild secondary and special schools in the city.

Countryside team helps residents restore historic pools in park

HISTORIC pools in a ravine-like section of a scenic park are to be renovated thanks to a £32,000 Community Spaces grant.

The 19th century Convent Pools in Hartshill Park Local Nature Reserve have become neglected, with the Middle Pool holding water only in the winter months.

But local residents, supported by Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Countryside Team, were determined to bring the area back to its former glory.

Hartshill and Harpfields Residents' Association, with the help of the Friends of Hartshill Park, will use the award from the Big Lottery Fund to renovate the Middle Pool, create a pond dipping area and plant native aquatic plants.

Key area restored

Access to the pools will be improved with a new footpath, steps and a handrail, while volunteers will install bird and bat boxes and set up interpretation panels.

Reg Edwards, chair of the Friends and vice-chair of the residents' association, said: "The Middle Pool has become silted up and full of debris. Working with the council and Groundwork, who manage the project for the Big Lottery Fund, we will plant up the area so that this key area of the park is restored."



Chairman of the Friends of Hartshill Park Reg Edwards with council Community Spaces Facilitator Ally Harvey.

Together For Transition has moved to stoke.gov.uk/transition

All of the information is still available, but it is now even easier to access.

The website provides parents, carers and families of children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs with easy access to the information they need, to help them with the transition from children's to adult services.

The information on the site includes frequently asked questions about education, health, transport, social care and housing.

For more information about Transition, please contact the Family Information Service on

0800 015 1120
or **01782 232200**

or email fis@stoke.gov.uk



family
Information Service



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

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

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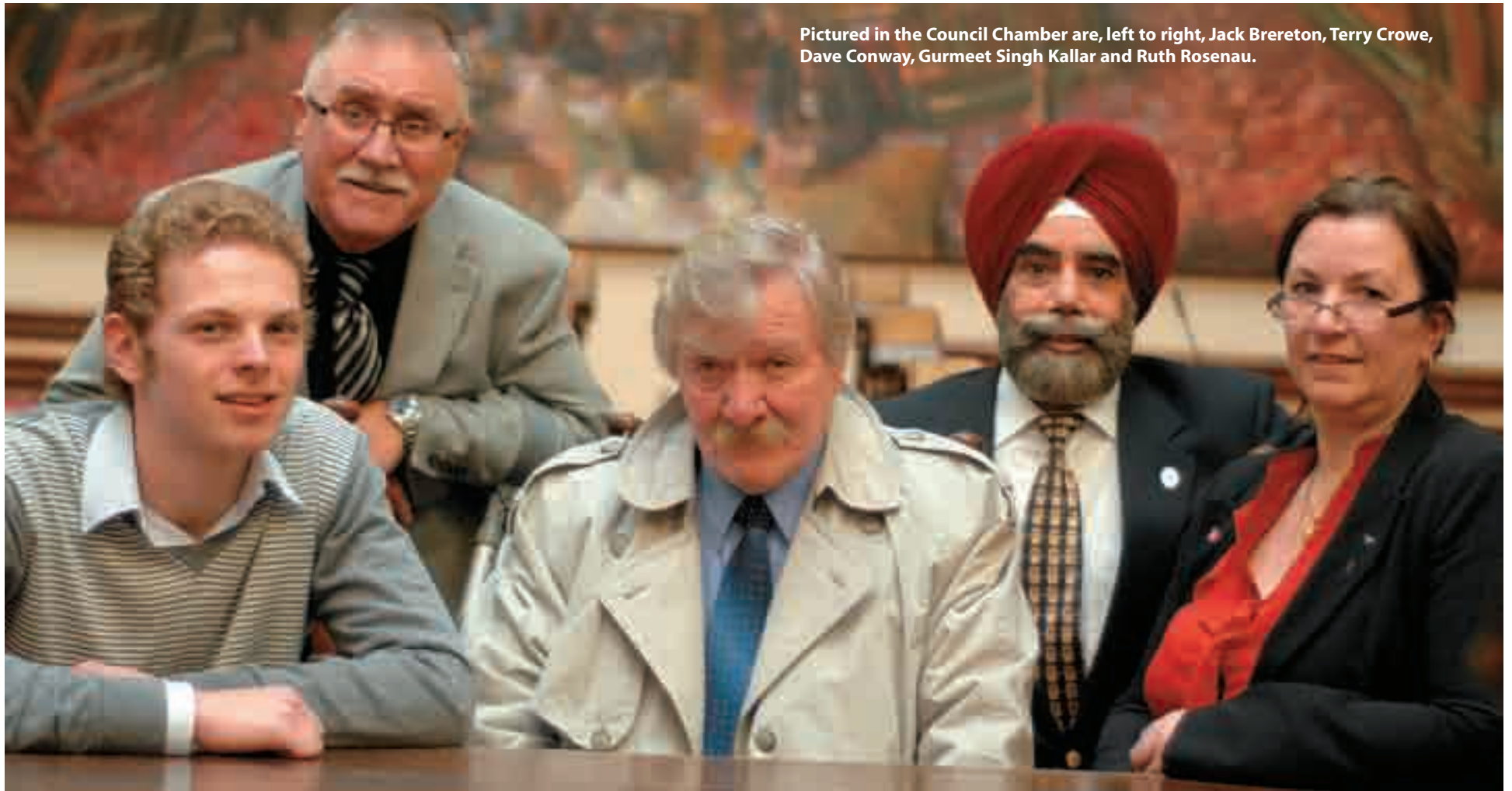
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THE **44 councillors** who serve on Stoke-on-Trent City Council come from a variety of backgrounds, cultures, age groups and political parties. But they all have one thing in common – **the wish to make their communities and the city a better place.** Here, *Our City* asks five of them what inspires them to serve.



Pictured in the Council Chamber are, left to right, Jack Brereton, Terry Crowe, Dave Conway, Gurmeet Singh Kallar and Ruth Rosenau.

Councillor Jack Brereton

aged 20:
Conservative
Baddeley, Milton and Norton

“ I’M the youngest councillor in the city and see that as a total plus. The council shouldn’t just be for older people. It should be about young and older people working together. That’s more representative and more democratic.

I’ve always been interested in politics and see it as a way of helping change people’s lives for the better. As a young person, I bring ambition and vision. We are working as a council to provide a better future and to bring much needed regeneration to the city.

I really enjoy it though it’s a real eye-opener seeing how we are constrained by budgetary circumstances. People can be surprised when they first meet me but we soon get on to dealing with local issues. That’s what it’s all about. It’s not about barriers between old and young so I’d like to see a lot more young people get involved in politics. ”

Councillor Terry Crowe

aged 66:
Labour
Eaton park

“ MY disability and health problems are what motivate me. I’ve had so much help and support that helping others, my community and my city, are why I first became a councillor 33 years ago. I contracted polio as a two-year-old, which left me paralysed from the neck down. My mobility has improved but I’ve used a wheelchair for the last 12 years. In later life I suffered a heart attack while undergoing treatment for prostate cancer so I also had to have a quadruple heart by-pass. My cancer is in remission and my health is brilliant.

I always try to see a constituent with a problem within 24 hours of them contacting me. Service is the key to me. It’s my way of giving back. People with a disability don’t put themselves forward for election because they don’t think they can do this but I’m proof they can.

Disability is not an obstacle. ”

Councillor Dave Conway

aged 70:
Independent
Little Chell and Stanfield

“ PEOPLE have always come to me asking for help. When I was 58, I was elected as the chairman of a residents’ association and used to do estate walk-about to find out what problems people had.

I carried on doing that when I first became a councillor seven years ago. Housing is my big thing and I get a real buzz out of making people’s lives better and that of the community as a whole. It’s really nice when people come up to you and say thank you for what you’ve done.

I’ve served on four committees in the last year and am Leader of the City Independents so my workload has increased but I’ve still got the same enthusiasm. When I haven’t, I’ll pack up. It doesn’t matter if I’m Independent, Labour or Tory, as long as I can continue representing people and their needs I’m a happy chappie. ”

Councillor Gurmeet Singh Kallar

aged 59:
Labour
Bradeley and Chell Heath

“ I first came to live in the city from India in 1964 and the Asian population wasn’t very big then. My community has always helped me and I decided I should do something to help my community, so I first stood for election in May 2010.

I’ve been a member of the Labour Party for 25 years and have always done voluntary work.

I’ve been involved with organisations like the Citizens Advice Bureau and been a community representative on the advisory committee for Staffordshire Police.

I’ve always served in one way or another. I really enjoy helping the community and the residents where I am a councillor. For me, my community is not about colour, creed or religion. It’s about Stoke-on-Trent where I live and the city and its people as a whole. I work using the Sikh philosophy of recognising the whole human race as one. ”

Councillor Ruth Rosenau

aged 48:
Labour
Meir

“ I’M a single mum of six with dual heritage children aged 10 to 28. Five are still at home.

I wanted to be a councillor because personally I was horrified that the BNP saw the city as the jewel in their crown.

My mum Pauline, who had been a huge support to me over the years, died last year and she was my inspiration. She and her friend felt that their area was not being represented as they would have liked.

It’s not easy juggling my time, especially since I’m a member of the Cabinet. But I have a very supportive family network and really enjoy the role.

My background means I see things from many different points of view and facets.

For me it’s not just about doing things for my ward but also about doing things to help make the whole city better. ”

SELF-BUILD HOUSING PROJECT PROMOTES GRAND DESIGNS

EXECUTIVE homes of truly grand design are in development in Stoke-on-Trent as the city looks to lead the UK in an innovative self-build housing project.

It is part of the wider drive to promote the Potteries as a great place to live – a key element of the council's Mandate for Change programme.

Two sites have been identified for self-build housing development for the kind of individually-designed executive homes which attract millions of viewers to popular TV series *Grand Designs*. The developments will mirror the city's initiative to roll out the red carpet to new business investors and employers by encouraging aspiring self-builders to enjoy the benefits of building a great home in Stoke-on-Trent.

The initiative will be launched at a Housing Summit in the city early in 2012 where self-builders will be able to register their interest. City Renewal Programme Manager Philip Brundrett said the project aims to attract and retain aspirational homebuilders who may not previously have considered Stoke-on-Trent by offering



It would add real substance to our efforts to improve the quality and range of housing on offer in Stoke-on-Trent.

JOHN VAN DE LAARSCHOT



Cabinet Member for Regeneration Ruth Rosenau looks at plans for the executive homes which could transform sites throughout the city.

great sites with a full development and finance support package in place.

The first two sites identified are in the desirable locations of Hanford and Penkhull. Between them, the sites could be home to around 30 large properties, each with around five bedrooms and garages. Philip said each of the partners would play their own part in attracting self-build projects to the city.

He said: "We are aware there is a gap in the city's housing offer and we know people want to live in Stoke-on-Trent in larger, individually designed homes. Add that to the national interest in self-build as a route to housing development and we believe we have a winning formula."

The sites provide an opportunity to drive the development of high quality homes with strong owner input

into design and specification. Self-builders will be encouraged to create great quality homes. Philip continued: "We are taking away the hard part by putting in place a support package of innovative self-build funding and specialist self-build development and design advice.

Great executive homes

"The result will be great homes in great locations to kick-start and create the executive housing market that we believe the future of Stoke-on-Trent can sustain. We expect these projects to be part of a programme of high quality self-build which will eventually include homes across a range of values as well as a strong offering of great executive homes.

"We are looking to be ahead of the game and make sure the city's success inspires

others to take part. We believe with the major regeneration projects now underway in the city we are creating a place where people want to live and make their home – we are determined to help them create great homes as easily as possible."

Stoke-on-Trent City Council Chief Executive John van de Laarschot said: "It might be that someone looking to self-build in a surrounding area can't find a suitable site, or hasn't got the confidence to tackle what can seem a daunting process.

"The combination of our great sites and comprehensive support and funding package will help them every step of the way in creating their dream home.

"As a result it will add real substance to our efforts to dramatically improve the quality and range of housing on offer in Stoke-on-Trent."

Spitfire veteran invited back to city exhibition



World War II pilot Eric Carter pictured during his November visit to the city's Spitfire exhibition.

A veteran war pilot says he is delighted to have been invited back for a second look at a Spitfire exhibition in the city where the fighter plane's designer was born.

Eric Carter, 91, is the last surviving member of 615 Squadron and fought against the Germans in the planes during the Second World War.

Mr Carter, from Worcestershire, visited the exhibition at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent last November as part of a project to record oral history for future generations.

The museum is home to a Mark XVI Spitfire, which the RAF presented to the city in 1969 in recognition of the fact that Stoke-on-Trent is the birthplace of its designer, Reginald Mitchell.

The Spitfire had been displayed at the entrance gate of RAF Bicester, and was presented to the museum with a stripped-out cockpit. The council, which runs the museum, and the Friends of The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery are looking to raise funds to restore the veteran war plane and enhance the exhibition.

Mr Carter said: "I was thrilled to be invited to take part in the oral history project at the museum, and it is very important that young people learn about their country's history.

"I trained to be a fighter pilot at the aerodrome in Meir in 1940. Only 50,000 people trained to be Spitfire pilots, and half of them were killed. I lost lots of very close pals. The museum has done a wonderful job of displaying the Spitfire and

they have treated me ever so well.

"I'm delighted that they have invited me back to have another look at their exhibition."

Mr Carter flew fighter planes for six years during the war. The average life expectancy of a fighter plane pilot was 87 hours in the air.

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "This country owes a huge debt to people like Mr Carter, and we were delighted when he agreed to take part in our museum project so that we can keep history alive for generations to come."

For more information about supporting the fundraising to restore the Spitfire, please email museumfriends@stoke.gov.uk or call 01782 236438.

Police tap into potential of the social web

INNOVATIVE use of social networking is putting Staffordshire Police at the cutting edge of crime fighting and winning the force national and international plaudits.

Facebook and Twitter allow the force to monitor and intervene in fast-changing situations like social disorder and give instant access to potential witnesses during

breaking crime or serious incidents. Both can also be used to build relationships.

Elizabeth Linder, the Government and Politics specialist at Facebook Inc, has criticised some agencies and organisations across the globe for not realising the potential of the social web.

But she has said: "Staffordshire Police is an exemplary exception to this rule. I have been consistently impressed with how the force is re-imagining its communications strategy to suit the social era."

That work has not gone unnoticed and force Communications Manager David Bailey spent two days in London briefing civil servants at the Cabinet Office and The Home Office. He also advises other police forces across the UK.

He said: "With so many people using sites like Facebook and Twitter on a daily, if not hourly basis, it's vital that local police are part of that conversation and we're now interacting with at least 40,000 people."

Respond quickly

"Social media has quickly become a vital part of the way we engage with our communities. We also continue to work closely with local media, voluntary and residents groups, Neighbourhood Watch and, of course, officers still speak directly to residents."

During the riots last August, Staffordshire Police responded quickly and consistently to rumour and concern on social media sites about disorder spreading to the county.

Assistant Chief Constable Jane Sawyers said: "It was vital that we provided calm, credible and personal messages about those concerns, dispelling the rumours with factual updates direct from our



Assistant Chief Constable Jane Sawyers reviews Staffordshire Police's Facebook page.

control room. As a result, more and more people turned to us for information and reassurance, which we provide 24 hours a day. The feedback from the public about this was amazing. We were able to provide direct and individual reassurance to thousands of people. It was clear the public really appreciated our work."

The force has used Facebook and Twitter to help find missing people, appeal for witnesses and tell people about offenders in their communities who have been convicted of crime.

"We are now able to provide vital information, appeals and advice direct to members of the community within minutes of an incident occurring," said the Assistant Chief Constable. "We also use social media to help improve relationships between the police and the communities we serve."

"We run blogs as part of our initiatives. During 'Visible Justice' we reported every conviction in a single day across the whole

of the county and our 'Behind Bars' blog, about a night in the Northern Area Custody Facility, was praised by the independent Econsultancy agency as one of the top 11 social media campaigns of 2011.

"Even Chief Constable Mike Cunningham holds online community meetings using social media. It gives members of the community the chance to question the forces most senior officers about issues in their area."

You can become a fan of Staffordshire Police on Facebook by clicking the 'Like' button on www.facebook.com/staffordshirepolice. Twitter users can follow the force @staffspolice or, for more local updates in Stoke-on-Trent @policingstoke. You can also watch video updates on the forces own YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/staffordshirepolice

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New £4.2m specialist school set to open its doors



READY FOR THE MOVE: Reach Centre Manager Larna Matley with pupils from the school on the site of the new educational facility at Trent Vale which opens next month.

A £4.2 million educational facility, which will act as a hub for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, is set to open its doors next month.

The REACH pupil referral unit in Trent Vale – which forms part of the Building Schools for the Future programme – will cater for around 80 students, aged three to 19, at any one time from across the city. It will replace the REACH Pupil Referral Unit, currently based at Bucknall.

Once the specialist school is up and running, community use will be encouraged so that local people will be able to enjoy the new facilities at the complex. These include an all weather sports pitch and indoor performance space.

Building work started in December 2010 and the school is expected to open to pupils in February.

Local residents were involved in the design and planning process and have been consulted beforehand and throughout the project.

Cabinet Member for Children's

Services and Life Skills, Councillor Debra Gratton, said: "The vision for the school and Trent Vale is to create a learning village, which evolves and responds to the needs of its learners, their families and the surrounding community."

"The school will focus on delivering educational content and, most importantly, will focus on the skills and experiences and opportunities to allow each student to follow their ambitions."

Therapeutic intervention

The REACH school will blend mainstream education with special school requirements and therapeutic intervention.

The Trent Vale Reach Pupil Referral Unit is one of 18 schools projects being delivered under the £250 million BSF programme banner. This includes five new academies throughout the city and rebuilds and revamps at another nine secondary and four special schools.

Where possible local employment opportunities have been generated and in some cases more than half of the project money has been spent locally.



Food hygiene check ratings available

RESIDENTS are being reminded by the council of the importance to check food hygiene ratings of local restaurants before booking a meal.

Restaurants, pubs, hotels, cafes and takeaways are just some of the locations now being rated from 0 to 5 on their hygiene standards when a food hygiene inspection is carried out by Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, said: "When dining out, you'll choose to go to a place where you like the food and you know you'll have a good time. It makes sense to look before you book and check out the food hygiene rating as well."

Ratings can be checked by visiting www.food.gov.uk/ratings

Diners and party goers can also look out for the distinctive green and black stickers that businesses are encouraged to display at their outlets to tell their customers the rating they were given.

Woodland sites get the green light

THE council has been given the green light for two 60 acre woodlands to be planted in the city, after funding was granted by the Forestry Commission.

Just over £220,000 will be used to plant and look after the sites, situated at Fenpark and off Biddulph Road near Packmoor. The funding will also provide improvements such as signs, benches and new entrance features.

The two woodlands are part of the Jubilee Woods campaign that aims to create sixty new 60 acre woodlands across the country to mark the occasion of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Councillor Janine Bridges, Cabinet Member for City Services, said: "We want to involve the local community as much as possible so in February there will be community and school events to help plant the trees."

Details of the planting will be advertised in the press, on posters and to local community groups shortly.



Pupils from Our Lady's Catholic Primary School, Fenton, left to right, Lucie Pepper, 11, Bradley Davis, 10, Lewis Clarke, 11 and Elena Baylay, 10 show artwork they have created for the Lidice initiative to Art Venue Director Alan Gerrard.

City leads events to make sure that Lidice shall Live

A series of events during 2012 will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the city's strong links with the Czech Republic village of Lidice, scene of one of the worst atrocities of the Second World War.

In revenge for the assassination of one of its generals, Nazi forces completely destroyed the village – then in the former Czechoslovakia – and murdered all 192 men above the age of 16 while the rest of the population were sent to concentration camps.

The massacre happened on 10 June 1942 and on 6 September that year Stoke-on-Trent doctor and city councillor Barnett Stross launched the city's massive "Lidice Shall Live" fundraising campaign backed by coal miners who gave up wages to launch it. It raised money to build a village of the same name next to the original site – and cemented a close bond between Lidice and the people of Stoke-on-Trent that is marked every year.

A series of activities will be organised to mark the 70th anniversary of the tragedy, organised by a number of partners including Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Staffordshire University, Faith Groups, and Art Venue – a Community Interest Company.

The 70th anniversary programme starts with Holocaust Memorial Day on Friday 27 January when a memorial event at Staffordshire University will incorporate a tribute to the people of Lidice.

On Sunday 10 June, the date of the Lidice tragedy, there will be a commemorative event around the cenotaph at Stoke Minster, while school choirs will perform at a concert similar to the large one held in Lidice on this date every year.

Thursday 6 September marks the start of three days of celebrations to mark the anniversary of the launch of the "Lidice Shall Live" campaign.

Events will include a prize award ceremony for UK children selected for the International Children's Exhibition of Fine Arts (ICEFA)



SOLIDARITY... the launch of the Lidice Shall Live campaign at Stoke-on-Trent's Victoria Hall in September 1942.

organised in Lidice and which attracts 25,000 entries from all over the world.

Also, it is hoped to bring the last few remaining Lidice massacre survivors, who were children at the time, to the city for a reunion with Stoke-on-Trent people who originally supported the campaign to rebuild Lidice or members of their families.

Plans are being drawn up for an exhibition at the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery of photos telling the Lidice and Barnett Stross stories as well as art by international

children's art with previous winners of the ICEFA.

It is also hoped to hold a signing of a memorandum of understanding to formalise links between Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice in a small civic ceremony in the Lord Mayor's Parlour attended by guests from Lidice.

Other plans include inviting children from Lidice to take part in the Olympic Torch Relay when it comes to Stoke-on-Trent on 30 May, and the creation of

a rose garden in Stoke-on-Trent that responds to the Lidice rose garden which is the largest of its kind in the world.

Councillor Andy Platt, who chairs the programme's working group of partners, said: "These are just some of ways in which we would like to commemorate this very special 70th anniversary. The council is working with its partners to organise a number of events in order to raise awareness of this important story and the remarkable achievement of the people of Stoke-on-Trent."

City choir to top bill at festival

STUDENTS from the Ormiston Stanley Matthews Academy in Blurton will top the bill at a Festival of Lights staged to mark the 70th anniversary of the Lidice atrocity in June.

A choir will be the first to perform in a musical

celebration which follows on from the main events to mark the special anniversary.

Anyone can get involved in the city's efforts to remember the atrocity in Lidice and build stronger links between the UK and

the former Czechoslovakia.

For further information on the programme of events or details on how to get involved, please contact Rachel James, Events Assistant, on 01782 235104 or rachel.james@stoke.gov.uk.

Parents asked for views on options for school year changes

PARENTS and teachers in Stoke-on-Trent are being asked whether the traditional school year should change.

The present pattern of three terms of uneven length can cause problems with curriculum planning and higher costs of family holidays.

Stoke-on-Trent City Council has decided on a three months' consultation period beginning this month, setting out options and asking for opinions. People are being given a chance to say whether they believe there's a need for change, and even give their own ideas for a new pattern, by going on to the council website.

Five alternatives are being put forward for discussion:

THE TRADITIONAL PATTERN: Three terms of uneven length with a long summer break; the end of the Spring term coincides with Easter no matter when it falls.

THE POTTERS' HOLIDAY: Summer term is broken into three short blocks with a shorter summer holiday. This option revives the "potters' fortnight" between late June and early July.

THE STANDARDISED YEAR: Term lengths are evened out by taking no account of when Easter falls but having a Spring break in the first two full weeks of April.

THE FIVE-TERM YEAR: This pattern allows four two-week holidays and a four-week summer holiday.

THE THREE-WEEK CHRISTMAS: Similar to the Traditional pattern, but with three weeks at Christmas and a shorter Summer holiday to accommodate this.

Factors to be considered with each option are the chance of increased sickness linked with long terms, difficulties with child minding arrangements, the possibility of children forgetting what they have learned during long holidays and the effects of term lengths on attendance. Groups being asked for their views include parents, councillors, professional associations, schools, local employers and other interested parties.

● To give your views visit stoke.gov.uk/termchanges

Supercool freestyle skiers give city a leap in 'street cred'

SUPERCOOL freestyle athletes aiming to appear in the 2014 Winter Olympics are earning Stoke-on-Trent a reputation as the "ski capital of the universe".

Death-defying jumps, flips and somersaults are the trademark moves of the sport which has only recently been adopted by the International Olympic Committee.

Stoke-on-Trent youngsters Josh Fawcett and Sissy Herant – both signed up by the British squad – have already started their preparations for the next Winter Games which take place in two years' time in Sochi, Russia.

More and more young people are signing up to twice weekly training sessions in the sport billed as the height of cool urban thrillseeking. And among the attractions at Festival Park's dry ski slope is England's biggest jump for freestyle training.

Mid air gymnastics

The facilities enable the best skiers to pull off amazing mid air gymnastics with names like Corkscrew 720 and 540 Tail Grab. Session organiser Russ Boulton, who has brought in former UK freestyle skiers to run the training, said: "There are sessions for beginners and advanced skiers but the freestyle sessions are really taking off."

City councillor Alison Wedgwood, who represents the Bentilee and Ubbertley Ward, said: "Stoke-on-Trent is getting a reputation for being totally cool in the freestyle, urban free ride way, because of the skate board park and now its success as a freestyle skiing centre. In top ski resorts like Val d'Isere there are Stokies running bars and ski-schools.

"It's difficult to believe but Stoke-on-Trent is the ski capital of the universe."

● Anyone interested in trying freestyle skiing should visit the Festival Park dry ski slope at 7pm on Wednesday or Saturday night and speak to the instructors.



There are sessions for beginners and advanced skiers but the freestyle sessions are really taking off.

RUSS BOULTON, SESSION ORGANISER



FLYING HIGH...
Above, Ollie Powell, 18, left, and Row Emery, 15, take off from England's biggest ski jump. Left, 16-year-old Alex Baskeyfield in action.

Police pledge to further reduce crime in the city

LATEST figures for violent crime involving injury and crimes like burglary and robbery in Stoke-on-Trent are down as the police pledge to cut them further still.

There were 1,704 victims of violence with injury in the city's three Local Policing Team areas in the eight months up to the end of November 2011 – a fall of 475 on the same period the previous year. About a quarter involved domestic abuse.

Just under 30 fewer people suffered from crimes like burglary and robbery as the figures for the same period dropped from 1,823 to 1,796. House burglaries, thefts from vehicles and personal robberies averaged three a day while only one vehicle was stolen daily.

With over 100,000 households in Stoke-on-Trent, the average number of these crimes is low.



Superintendent Laurie Whitby-Smith, pictured, said: "This is good news for the people of Stoke-on-Trent who can be assured that we, together with our partners, are doing all we can to keep people safe, and make them feel safe and protect their property."

"While the fall in the number of cases of violence with injury is to be welcomed, we will continue our drive to reduce it further. We are working closely with our colleagues at local authorities and other partner agencies to clamp down on violence in all of its forms and make the communities we serve even safer."

"Operation Safer Nights was launched in December 2009 to specifically tackle violent crime, much of which is fuelled by alcohol, and has since seen the development of numerous initiatives aimed at reducing violent incidents in our town centres."

"Our licensing teams work closely with the licensing industry to ensure venues are operating lawfully and any licence conditions imposed are adhered to."

"We want people to be safe and to feel safe when they are out enjoying themselves and we remain committed to tackling the things that matter most to the communities we serve."

Big boost for historic church hall

AN historic church hall is to be refurbished in Longton as part of a project to improve the town's heritage appeal.

Central Hall Methodist Church, in The Strand, will have its features restored as part of the scheme to renovate the town's architectural gems.

The windows and canopies will be restored, the sandstone façade will be renovated and underused rooms will be brought back in to use to allow extra community classes and groups to take place at the community facility.

The work is part of a series of projects to restore buildings through the Longton Heritage Partnership. Work has already started on the Victorian Market hall with shop fronts refurbished and a new illuminated metallic market sign installed.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "Longton has a strong architectural heritage and this project is helping to restore the exterior of some of the town's most historical buildings.

"The work will repair the front stained glass windows and restore the intricate canopy designs which will bring the building back to its former glory."

Littering clampdown

THE council's Environmental Crime Unit brought 45 prosecutions last year – and has vowed to carry on catching offenders.

The unit issued 530 fixed penalties in 2011 for littering and 14 for dog fouling. The people taken to court for littering and dog fouling were fined a total of £5,550 plus £15,107 costs.

Councillor Janine Bridges, Cabinet Member for City Services, said: "It's an ongoing battle that will involve changing the way people think so they don't feel they can get away with littering."



Animated character created by Stoke-on-Trent-based company Stars and Heroes.

City bid to be location for top green bank HQ

A bid is being made to bring the headquarters for the new Green Investment Bank to Stoke-on-Trent. The Government is setting up the bank – which will be capitalised with £3 billion – to provide financial solutions to accelerate private sector investment in the green economy.

Twenty cities and towns in the UK have been invited to make a submission by the end of January to be the location for the bank's HQ, which will have around 50 employees. A decision will be made in February.

The Department for Business Innovation and Skills, which is overseeing the initiative, says the chosen location should be cost

effective, able to recruit and retain specialist staff and allow the Green Investment Bank to work closely with project developers, green technology providers and other investment bodies.

Extremely prestigious

Councillor Mark Meredith, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said to have the new bank – the UK's first investment bank solely dedicated to greening the economy – based in the city would be extremely prestigious.

He said: "We believe we are in a strong position to offer the Green Investment Bank an excellent base for four primary reasons – our central location with easy access across the UK, our significant cost advantages given that average office space in Stoke-on-Trent costs

Mandate for Change



less than larger urban areas, our commitment to low carbon policies and, finally, the existing base we have in financial services expertise."

Established under the Companies Act and operating at arm's length from Government, the bank is expected to have state aid approval by early 2013. In advance of that, the Government will begin making investments in green projects from April this year.

The bank will build the necessary "deep expertise" in financial markets and green investments – working towards a "double bottom line" of both achieving a significant green impact and making financial returns.

Wealth of creative talent on show at annual film festival

STOKE YOUR FIRES.

Animation models created by students at Staffordshire University.

THOUSANDS of people are expected at this year's annual two-week long Stoke Your Fires Film Festival with a full programme including UK and world premieres, training workshops and awards.

Staged at the Mitchell Arts Centre, the animation and film bonanza runs from 10 to 24 February and opens with the premiere of the full-length feature version of web-based vampire mini series *Blood and Bone China*.

The 12 episode series, originally commissioned by the festival with financial support from the council, is fast becoming an internet hit and already has 250,000 YouTube views. Produced by local filmmaker Chris Stone, the film continues the tale of devils, demons and vampires in Victorian Stoke-on-Trent and is one of 65 being screened over the festival fortnight.

Award winning Potteries-based animation company Stars and Heroes has been commissioned by the festival to produce a

short animated film which will be its first animated short to hit the big screen when it is shown on 12 February.

Current film and animation students have the chance to produce a 10-second animated sting for the festival with the winner's work set to be screened before every film. The winner also gets two tickets worth £500 to training programmes.

Along with core screenings, the festival is staging three professional master classes with industry experts, a community engagement programme and even a Digital Arts Festival (DATfest) over the middle weekend.

Awards categories cover animation and films and school children aged 11 to 16 who take part in after school animation classes run in Burslem by Karen Sayle have been working for up to three months to enter their work.

Independent film maker Pip Piper from Blue Hippo Media, who premiered his last international feature film *Insatiable Moon* at the festival last year, said: "Stoke-on-Trent is a vibrant

and bustling city with a wealth of creative talent at its heart – keep an eye on Stoke Your Fires, there are great things to come."

Festival partners include the city's dedicated investment development service Make It

Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent Film Theatre, The Producers Forum, Mitchell Arts Centre, and the Animation Forum West Midlands.

■ For listings of screenings, workshops and events go to www.stokeyourfires.co.uk or contact the Box Office at the Mitchell Arts Centre on 01782 409307.

Tinsect Waltz – Rebull Animation CGI Award Winner by Stars and Heroes.



Children's Centre UPDATE

News and information from Stoke-on-Trent's Children's Centres

January 2012



Celebrating the Crescent Children's Centre's outstanding Ofsted inspection result are, left to right, Maisie Donnelly with her children Corey, 20 months and Anabelle, seven months; Clare Carp with her son James, aged two, and Jackie Vasey with her daughter Lucie, 22 months.

Parents' pride as centre scores an **'Outstanding'** first



Play and learning practitioner Emma Sparkes with Lucas Bettany, two.

A children's centre run by Stoke-on-Trent City Council has become the first in the city to be judged as outstanding by Government inspectors.

The Crescent in Meir won the glowing accolade after a rigorous two-day inspection and makes The Crescent site only the second in the country to be home to a primary school, children's centre and pre-school nursery all designated by Ofsted as outstanding.

Inspectors spoke to staff, parents, volunteers, carers and members of the centre's advisory board as well as assessing relevant documentation.

Of the 18 areas inspected, The Crescent was judged outstanding in 17 and good in one. The 10-page report also praised the centre's strong leadership and management, its success in engaging parents in the Meir area and described the effect its services have on families as excellent.

Councillor Debra Gratton, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, said: "This is one of the most glowing Ofsted inspections I have ever read. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the centre staff, parents and volunteers, that they have achieved such a fabulous report."

"To have the children's centre, Crescent

Primary School and The Crescent Pre-School Nursery all on the same site, delivering outstanding services, is a credit to the city and shows parents and families that their children are in good hands."

Tracy Jackson, OBE, Locality Manager for children's centres in the south of the city, said: "We are delighted with the Ofsted inspectors' endorsement and comments. The outstanding status is a tribute to the hard work of the staff, parents and volunteers."

Better start in life

"This outstanding result, and the passion and knowledge our parents showed when talking to inspectors, shows we are making a difference and giving the children of Meir a better start in life."

Parent Katrina Danyiova said: "The Crescent Children's Centre has helped me with my language and cared for my children while I have been doing the English for speakers of other language course. The centre has also helped my daughter by supporting her special needs."

Another parent, Claire Lawrence, added, "The centre has helped my three-year-old son with his speech and language transition into nursery school. Community development work has helped me with my confidence through volunteering."

Ball Green
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 231096

Burslem
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 238989

Norton
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 231096

**Stoke-on-Trent
Worth**
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 232977

Tunstall
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 236655

Kingsland
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 238352

Penkull
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 236333

The Hope
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 234357

**Thomas
Boughey**
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 237100

Blurton
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 231815

The Crescent
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 596421

Fenton
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 237650

The Grange
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 233775

Hanford
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 234024

Treehouse
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 233670

Westfield
A Sure Start Children's Centre

Tel: 01782 237500

PULL OUT GUIDE TO CHILDREN'S CENTRES ACTIVITIES



CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN THE NORTH OF THE CITY

Ball Green

01782 231096

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Ball Green Primary School, Whitfield Road, Ball Green ST6 8AJ

MONDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Stay and Play Drop-In 9:30-11am	Toy Library
	Volunteering Programme
	Jumping Beans
	Tiny Talkers

TUESDAY
Adult Learning (Ask at reception) 1-3pm
Crèche 1-3pm

FRIDAY
Little Sprouts Stay and Play Gardening Group (0-5yrs) 1-3:30pm



Burslem

01782 238989

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Vale Park, Hamil Road, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 1AW

MONDAY	FRIDAY
Crèche 9:30-11:30am	Lets Get Creative 9:30-11am
Maths Course 9:30-11:30am	(Messy play Drop-In, please bring a change of clothing)
Stay and Play Drop-In 1-2:30pm	

TUESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Crèche 9:30-11:30am	Toy Library
English Course (Ask at reception) 9:30-11:30am	Volunteering Programme
Growing Together (Referral only) 1-2:30pm	Jumping Beans
	Tiny Talkers

WEDNESDAY
Stay and Play Drop-In 9:30-11am
Baby Massage Drop-In 9:30-10:30am

THURSDAY
Tiny Explorers Baby Group (0-18mths) 9:30-11am
Adult Learning (Ask at reception) 12:45-2:45pm
Crèche 12:45-2:45pm



Norton

01782 231096

A Sure Start Children's Centre
St Nicholas Avenue, Norton, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 8JW

MONDAY	OTHER SERVICES
English Course (Ask at reception) 1-3pm	Toy Library
Crèche 1-3pm	Volunteering Programme
	Jumping Beans
	Tiny Talkers

TUESDAY
Sweet Peas Baby Group (0-18mths) 9:30-11am
Adult Learning (Ask at reception) 1-3pm
Crèche 1-3pm

WEDNESDAY
Stay and Play Drop-In 9:30-11am

THURSDAY
Childminders Stay and Play Drop-In (Childminders only) 9:30-11:30am
Growing Together (Referral only) 1-2:30pm

FRIDAY
Maths Course (Ask at reception) 9:30-11:30am
Crèche 9:30-11:30am



Stoke-on-Trent North

01782 232977

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Bishop Road, Chell Heath, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6QW

MONDAY	FRIDAY
Stay and Play Drop-In 9:30-11am	Growing Together 9:30-11:30am
Adult Learning and Crèche (Ask at reception) 12:45-2:45pm	(Referral only)

TUESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Health Visitor Drop-In (Ask at reception) 9-10:30am	Toy Library
Messy Monkeys Baby Group (0-18mths) 9:30-11am	Volunteering Programme
English Course and Crèche (Ask at reception) 12:45-2:45pm	Jumping Beans
	Fathers Group

WEDNESDAY
Stay and Play Drop-In 9:30-11am

THURSDAY
Maths Course and Crèche (Ask at reception) 9:30-11:30am
Tiny Talkers 1-2:30pm



Tunstall

01782 236655

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Woodland Street, Tunstall, Stoke-on-Trent ST6 6AP

MONDAY	THURSDAY
Stay and Play (Booking) 9:30-11am	Stay and Play (Booking) 9:30-11am
Crèche 12:45-2:45pm	Young Parents Group 10-12pm
Maths Course (Ask at reception) 12:45-2:45pm	English Course 12:45-2:45pm
	Crèche 12:45-2:45pm

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Childminders Stay and Play Drop-In (Childminders only) 9:30-11:30am	Busy Babies Group (0-18mths) 9:30-11am
Baby Massage Drop-In 12-1pm	Well Baby Clinic 9:30-11:30am
Jumping Beans 1:30-2:30pm (18mths plus, booking required)	Growing Together (Referral only) 12:45-2:45pm

WEDNESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Adult Learning (Ask at reception) 9:30-11:30am	Toy Library
Crèche 9:30-11:30am	Volunteering Programme
Mum 2 Mum Breastfeeding Café Drop-In 9:30-11:30am	Tiny Talkers
	Teenage Parents Group (Coming soon)



The Hope

01782 234357

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Garth Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2DA

MONDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Stay and Play (PICL, 18 mths plus) 9:30-11am	Speech and Language Support*
Health Visitor Drop-In 9:30-11:30am	Play and Learning in the Home*
Chill & Chat* 1-3pm	Family Support in the Home*
	Parent Forum 1-2:30pm
	(First Fri of every month, all welcome)

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Connect Community Group (Limited crèche places) 9:30-11:30am	Ready, Steady, Go (Transition crèche to NEG/School) 9:30-11:30am
Post-Natal Group 1-2:30pm	Stay and Play (PICL) 9:30-11:30am

WEDNESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Baby Stay and Play - Growing Together (0-18 mths) 10:30-12pm	Family Walking Group
Mandarin Group 12:30-2pm	Volunteering Programme
Babble and Speak* 1:30-2:30pm	

THURSDAY
Ready, Steady, Go (Transition crèche to NEG/School) 9:30-11:30am
Stay and Play (PICL) 9:30-11:30am
Hands from Around the World* 10:30-12pm

FRIDAY
Triple P Programme (Call 01782 425883) 9:30-11:30am



Families welcome to take part in packed activity programme

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

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

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

Children's centres provide a range of services including:

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

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

Contact details are included with each centre's calendar.



CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN THE CENTRE OF THE CITY

Kingsland

01782 238352

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Eaves Lane, Bucknall, Stoke-on-Trent ST2 9AS

MONDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Time 4 You* 12:30-2:30pm	Toy Library (By request)
	Sensory Room (Booking only)
	Speech and Language Support*
	Play and Learning in the Home*
	Kingsland Kindergarten (Day Care)
	Volunteering Programme

TUESDAY
Babbling Babies/Growing Together 10:30-11:30am

WEDNESDAY
Stay and Play (PICL) 10-11:30am
Additional Needs Group* 1-3pm
Midwife Clinic (Booking) All Day

THURSDAY
Parent Forum (25 Jan) 9:30-11:30am
New Birth Registration Drop-In (18 Jan, Trent Vale Health Centre) 10-12pm
Transition Group* 1-3pm
Health Visitor Drop-In 3-4pm (First Wed of every month, 0-5yrs)

FRIDAY
Breastfeeding Café 10:30-12:30pm
Freedom* 9:30-11:30am
Messy Monsters Craft 1-2:30pm



Penkull

01782 236333

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Greatbatch Avenue, Penkull, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 7JU

MONDAY	FRIDAY
Stay and Play (PICL) 9:30-11am	Singing Sunflowers 9:30-10am & (0-5yrs, Stoke Library) 10:15-10:45am
Growing Together 1:15-2:45pm (Baby Stay and Play for 0-18mths)	New Birth Registration Drop-In (27 Jan) 11-1pm
Midwife Clinic (Booking) All Day	Tiny Talkers* 1-2pm

TUESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Triple P (Booking) 9:30-11:30am	Toy Library
Breastfeeding Café 10:30-12pm	Sensory Room (By request)
Additional Needs Group* 1-3pm	Speech and Language Support*
Midwife Clinic (Booking) All Day	Play and Learning in the Home*
	Family Support in the Home*
	Volunteering Programme

WEDNESDAY
Parent Forum (25 Jan) 9:30-11:30am
New Birth Registration Drop-In (18 Jan, Trent Vale Health Centre) 10-12pm
Transition Group* 1-3pm
Health Visitor Drop-In 3-4pm (First Wed of every month, 0-5yrs)

THURSDAY
Health Visitor Drop-In (0-5yrs) 9:30-11am
New Birth Registration Drop-In (26 Jan) 9:30-11am
Midwife Clinic (Booking) All Day



The Hope

01782 234357

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Garth Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 2DA

MONDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Stay and Play (PICL, 18 mths plus) 9:30-11am	Speech and Language Support*
Health Visitor Drop-In 9:30-11:30am	Play and Learning in the Home*
Chill & Chat* 1-3pm	Family Support in the Home*
	Parent Forum 1-2:30pm
	(First Fri of every month, all welcome)

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Connect Community Group (Limited crèche places) 9:30-11:30am	Ready, Steady, Go (Transition crèche to NEG/School) 9:30-11:30am
Post-Natal Group 1-2:30pm	Stay and Play (PICL) 9:30-11:30am

WEDNESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Baby Stay and Play - Growing Together (0-18 mths) 10:30-12pm	Family Walking Group
Mandarin Group 12:30-2pm	Volunteering Programme
Babble and Speak* 1:30-2:30pm	

THURSDAY
Ready, Steady, Go (Transition crèche to NEG/School) 9:30-11:30am
Stay and Play (PICL) 9:30-11:30am
Hands from Around the World* 10:30-12pm

FRIDAY
Triple P Programme (Call 01782 425883) 9:30-11:30am



Thomas Boughey

01782 237100

A Sure Start Children's Centre
College Road, Shelton, Stoke on Trent ST4 2DQ

MONDAY	THURSDAY
ESOL (English Speaking for Other Languages) 9:30-11:30am	Dove Service* 9-11am
EYFS Crèche* 12:30-2:30pm	Health Visitor and Baby Weighing Group (Drop-in Session) 1:30-2:45pm
Ready Steady Learn (Transition based group) 12:30-2:30pm	Chill and Chat Drop-In (Limited crèche places, must be booked) 9:30-11:30am

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Observation and Assessment Crèche 12:30-2:30pm	Baby Massage (Booking) 10-11am
Baby Stay and Play (Parents involved in children's learning, 0-2yrs) 1:15-2:45pm	Fun to Talk - Speech and Language (2yrs plus) 10-11:30am
	Crèche/Behaviour Management Crèche* 12:30-2:30pm
	Triple P* (Positive Parenting Programme, 20 Jan) 9-11am

WEDNESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Little Stars* 9:30-11:30am (Additional Needs Group)	Speech and Language Support*
Stay and Play (PICL) 9:30-11:30am	Play and Learning in the Home*
Parent Time (11 Jan) 9:30-11:30am	Family Support in the Home*
	Volunteering Programme



CHILDREN'S CENTRES IN THE SOUTH OF THE CITY

Blurton

01782 231815

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Oakwood Road, Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 3AR

MONDAY	THURSDAY
Midwife Clinic 9-1pm	Growing Together 9:30-11am
Jo Jingles (1-5yrs, £2 per family, term time, book at reception) 11:15-12:00	Start Up Literacy 12:30-2:30pm
Growing Together (0-5yrs, book at reception) 1-2:30pm	Little Sunshine Group 1-2:30pm (Grange Children's Centre 0-5yrs, Drop-In)

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Baby Massage (Book at reception) 1:30-2:30pm	Growing Together 9:30-11am
Play Together Group (Book at reception) 9:30-11:30am	(0-5yrs, book at reception)
	Baby Signing 1:30-2:30pm
	(Book at reception)

WEDNESDAY
Job Club 9:30-11am (Hollybush Community Centre)
Jabadao (0-First steps) 9:30-11am
Baby Clinic 11-12:00 (Blurton Children's Centre)
Blurton Health Centre 1:30-3:30pm
Start Up Numeracy 12:30-2:30pm
Parent Forum 1-2:30pm
Baby Club 2-3pm (Blurton Health Centre)

OTHER SERVICES
Outdoor Play Area (open every day)
Volunteering Programme
Parent Forum



The Crescent

01782 596421

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Pinewood Crescent, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 6HZ

MONDAY	THURSDAY
Crèche Training, Parent Forum, Volunteering and Respite 9-11:30am	Midwife Clinic 9-1pm
Jo Jingles (£2, book) 10-10:45am	Crèche Training, Volunteering & Respite 9-11:30am & 12:30-3pm
Parent Forum 9:45-11:30am	Child Health Clinic 9-11am (Weston Heights Community Centre)
Job Club - Merit (16 Jan) 1-3pm	Numeracy 9:30-11:30am
Baby Jabadao (0-First steps) 1-2:30pm	Literacy 12:30-2:30pm (At The Community House)

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Midwife Clinic 9-1pm	Crèche Training, Keep Fit, Volunteering & Respite 9-11:30am
Child Health Clinic 9:45-11:30am	Fitnes/Zumba 9:45-10:45am
Busybodies (Meir Park Playgroup) 9:30-10:15am	(Book at reception)
Play Together (0-5yrs) 9:30-11:30am	Job Club - Merit 10-Noon (Weston Heights Community Centre)
Baby Club 10-11:30am	Growing Together 0-5yrs 1-2:30pm

WEDNESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Midwife Clinic 9-1pm	Baby Massage (Call 01782 596421)
Crèche Training, Volunteering and Respite 9-11:30am	Cook and Eat
Triple P 9:30-11:30am	Volunteering Programme
Growing Together (0-5yrs) 1-2:30pm	



Fenton

01782 237650

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Travers Court, Temple Street, Fenton, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 3FE

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
Zumba Fitness Class (£3.50, 10-11am)	Breastfeeding Café 10:30-12:00
Health Visitor Drop-In 9:30-11am	Parents Forum (11 Jan) 12:30-2:30pm
Growing Together (0-5yrs) 1-2:30pm	
Baby Massage/Yoga 9:30-10:30am (11wk course, 0-6mths)	
Fenton Book Buddies (31 Jan) 1:30-2:30pm	

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Play Together (0-5yrs) 9:30-11:30am	Outreach Drop-In 9:15-11am (Clairice Cliff Primary School, 0-4yrs)
Coffee Morning Drop-In 9:30-11:30am	Jabadao 10-11:30am
	Play Together 12:30-2:30pm (0-5yrs)

FRIDAY
Cook and Eat 9:30-11:30am (7wk course, Crèche provided)
Baby Jabadao (0-First steps) 1-2:30pm

OTHER SERVICES
Toy and Book Library
Community Garden
Play and Learning Home Visits
Volunteering Programme



The Grange

01782 233775

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Normacot Grange Road, Meir, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 7AW

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY
Play Together (0-5yrs) 9:30-11:30am	Growing Together (0-5yrs) 9:30-11am
Midwife Clinic 9:30-2pm	

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
Midwife Clinic 9:30-1pm	Jo Jingles 10-10:45am (£2 per family, book call 01782 233775)
Busybodies (Meir Park Playgroup) 9:30-10:15am	Baby Club 11-12:30pm
Baby Massage (0-12mths, 5wks, book 01782 233775)	Little Sunshine's Group 1-2:30pm (0-5yrs Drop-In)
	Child Health Clinic 1:15-2:45pm

FRIDAY
Baby Jabadao 9:30-11am
Growing Together (0-5yrs) 1-2:30pm

OTHER SERVICES
Baby Massage (Call 01782 596421)
Birth Preparation Classes
Crèche
Baby Club
Volunteering Programme



Hanford

01782 234024

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Jubilee Road, Trentham ST4 8EF

MONDAY	OTHER SERVICES
Priory Playgroup 9:15-11:30am (Term time only)	Outdoor Play Area
Jabadao 0-First steps 12:30-2pm	Volunteering Programme

TUESDAY
Growing Together (0-5yrs) 9:30-11am

WEDNESDAY
Crèche for Training and Parent Forum 9:30-11am
Parent Forum 9:30-11am
Pandas Group (0-5yrs) 12-2:30pm

THURSDAY
Growing Together (0-5yrs) 1-3pm

FRIDAY
Play Together 9:30-11am



Treehouse

01782 233670

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Dawlish Drive, Bentilee, Stoke-on-Trent ST2 0HW

MONDAY	THURSDAY
Playspace and Café 9:30-4pm	Playspace and Café 9:30-4pm
Midwife Clinic 9:30-3pm	Midwife Clinic 9:30-3pm
Baby Jabadao (0-First steps) 1-2:30pm	Fitness Group 9:30-11:30am (Starts 28 April)

TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Playspace and Café 9:30-4pm	Baby Club 1-2:30pm
Growing Together 9:30-11am	Little Sunshine's Group 1-2:30pm (The Grange Children's Centre, 0-5yrs)
Midwife Clinic 9:30-3pm	Growing Together 1-2:30pm
Speech and Language Therapy 9-4pm	
Cook & Eat (Weaning) 11-12:30pm	
Health Visitor Drop-In 9:30-11am	

WEDNESDAY
Speech and Language Therapy 9-1pm
Parent's Forum 9:30-11:30am
Job Centre Plus 9:30-2pm
Baby Massage 1-2:30pm (Book at reception)
Walking Group 1:15-2:15pm

OTHER SERVICES
Crèche (Mon, Wed, Thur)
Playspace (Open to the public)
Volunteering Programme



Westfield

01782 237500

A Sure Start Children's Centre
Buccleuch Road, Normacot, Stoke-on-Trent ST3 4RF

MONDAY	FRIDAY
Play Together 9:30-11:30am	ESOL 9:30-11:30am
Job Club 10:30-12pm	12:30-2:30pm
Twins and More Siblings 12:30-2:30pm	Parent Forum 9:30-11:30am (13, 27 Jan)
ESOL 12:30-2:30pm	Baby Massage (0-12mths) 10-12pm
Face Painting Course 12:45-2:45pm	Play Together 12:30-2:30pm

TUESDAY	OTHER SERVICES
ESOL 9:30-11:30am	Locality Partnership Board Meeting (27 Jan

Children's Centre UPDATE

Children's Centres in Stoke-on-Trent are having a massive impact on the lives of the families they engage with. Here, *Our City* talks to parents and one staff member about their experiences.



Devoted dad William Lancett and his 20-month old daughter Faith.

Support gave Beth confidence to progress

BETH Cooper and her son Jay went through a dark time as she struggled to free herself from an abusive relationship.

The 22-year-old mother had lost her self-confidence and the two-year-old youngster seemed to have forgotten how to smile.

They both felt isolated when they arrived in Oakhill after moving from Wales – but Penkhull Children's Centre came to the rescue.

Beth went on a Triple P parenting course where she received advice on how to cope with Jay's temper tantrums.

She also benefited from going on the Freedom Programme, a confidential course on domestic violence.

Meanwhile little Jay progressed to Field House Nursery backed by two-year funding. His speech and language improved and he responded quickly to developmental targets.

"He's really happy now and his smile has returned," said Beth. "I am with a new partner now and I am hoping to volunteer at the children's centre in the near future."

"I am so grateful to the staff there – if it wasn't for their help I would not have had the confidence to move on in my life, and Jay would still be stressed."

Beth Cooper at home with Jay, aged two.



Saturday sessions just for the dads

DADS are developing closer relationships with their sons and daughters thanks to new weekend activity sessions run by Stoke-on-Trent North Locality Children's Centres.

Saturdads encourages male parents to take part in a wide range of activities with their children, from football and other sports to playing with toys and game consoles.

The sessions are held on the first Saturday of every month at the Stoke-on-Trent North Children's Centre on Bishop Road, Chell Heath.

Around a dozen dads and their children regularly attend but the centre is looking to encourage more from around the city to come along.

Volunteer William Lancett, who helps run Saturdads, said: "A lot of dads struggle to take part in activities of this kind with their children."

"This may be because of weekday work constraints or simply because they have been brought up to believe that the male goes to work and the female deals with the children."

"Obviously we want to break away from that misconception and let dads strengthen their bond with their children in a fun and relaxed environment."

William who attends the sessions with his 20-month-old daughter Faith and also runs the centre's toy library, added: "Personally, I have got a lot out of volunteering at the centre and it has helped me gain vital experience and qualification that will help me towards a career working with children."

● For more details about Saturdads, volunteering or any other activities call the centre on 01782 232977.

Hard work results in a job for former apprentice

DELIGHTED Dale Cummings has landed a full time position with the Hope Children's Centre after on-the-job training provided him with an employment lifeline.

Dale, 20, of Stockton Brook, enrolled on the council's apprenticeship scheme after attending a special training fayre at Port Vale Football Club.

Two years down the line he has notched up an NVQ Level 2 in Business Administration and is working towards NVQ Level 3.

The apprenticeship scheme has led to him being offered a full time job as Receptionist and Business Administrator at the Hope Children's Centre in Garth Street, Hanley.

Dale said: "I went from a position where I had no real experience to a position where I have been learning and developing my skills in a work setting."

Meeting market

"I have been taught a broad range of new skills, which include health and safety, healthy eating and IT and software packages."

"It really has been a lifeline for me and getting full-time employment under my belt has made a difference financially and also to my confidence."

The trainee apprenticeship programme is part of a wider initiative being delivered and developed in children's centres to lift young people in Stoke-on-Trent out of poverty. During their apprenticeship the trainees have the opportunity to work at two different centres – Dale worked at Kingsland Children's Centre as well – so they can experience working with children, families and partners in different communities.

The centres also offer work placements for young people in their catchment areas, working closely with schools and colleges.



Dale Cummings hard at work after securing a job at the Hope Children's Centre.

Football and outdoor skills breaking barriers



Soccer players Meran Hussain, 15, left and Israr Tariq, 14.

A football tournament designed to help break down racial barriers in Stoke-on-Trent proved so successful that the young people who organised it want it to become an annual event.

The group, who attend the city council's Queensberry Youth Centre at Normacot, first took their idea to their youth worker and were supported to apply for funding from the former Youth Opportunities Fund.

They were granted around £1,500 towards a residential course and the tournament.

Partners Assuring a Safer Staffordshire (PASS) – the charity set up to help tackle antisocial behaviour and the fear of crime – also donated £200.

Nine 16 to 18 year-olds first attended the Stanley Head Outdoor Education Centre in the Staffordshire Moorlands to improve a range of skills. They cooked for themselves and tackled team-building exercises like raft building during a one-night, two-day stay.

New found organisational skills were then put to good use as they staged a one-day football tournament at Longton Park, attracting about 10 teams from across the city.

The winners from Queensberry have already been 10-pin bowling with the runners-up, Tunstall Tigers.

One of the young people who played in the winning Queensberry team was 14-year-old Israr Tariq who said: "The best thing about the day was playing football and taking home the trophy.

"It was also good to play with other young people from around the city."

Variety of backgrounds

Integrated Youth Development Worker Lisa Bates, who covers the south of the city, said: "The residential was amazing.

"The teenagers were fantastic and got so much out of it. Their community football tournament to break down barriers attracted young people from all over the city and from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. It really was good.

"They want to make it an annual event now and even expand it a bit to



The best thing about the day was playing football and taking home the trophy. It was also good to play with other young people from around the city.

ISRAR TARIQ, 14

include events for people who aren't into football.

● If you are able to support the initiative or would just like more information contact Lisa Bates on 07900 135640 or email lisa.bates@stoke.gov.uk

Hard-hitting film shows dangers of icy ponds

STAFFORDSHIRE Fire and Rescue Service have launched a hard-hitting film highlighting the dangers to people tempted to play on ice.

Called 'Ice Breaker', the five-minute DVD was shot in Staffordshire and features two girls playing by a frozen lake. One of them loses her bag on the ice during a play fight with a boy and goes out onto the lake to get it back.

But tragedy strikes when she plunges into the freezing water and drowns. The film ends as she is zipped into a body bag. The stark message 'No matter what – keep off. Don't be an icebreaker' then appears.

The boy is then pictured sitting in a graveyard saying "I shouldn't have even been down there that day. I was a stupid kid."

The film has been uploaded to the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service website and schools are being urged to show it in assembly during any cold snaps. As part of the winter safety campaign, warning posters carrying the message '3, 2, 1... gone' are also being displayed around pools, ponds and lakes across the county.

The Service's Youth Education Co-ordinator, Steve Wright, said: "The DVD was created due to the growing number of incidents across the country which involved people going onto frozen water and falling through the ice.

"Though the DVD features young actors, it also serves as a safety warning for adults as well. Whilst ice may look thick, it doesn't take much weight to crack the ice and before you know it, you've fallen through.

"Iced over water has dangerously low temperatures which would be a real shock to the system and means that people can very quickly get into difficulty.

"We hope that by watching the DVD, people will think twice about going out onto frozen bodies of water, whether they do it for fun or to retrieve a pet or item. The message is clear – it could be the last thing you do."

To watch the short film, visit the Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service website at www.staffordshirefire.gov.uk, where it features on the homepage.

Schools can also request a visit and presentation about winter safety, including a warning about the dangers of playing on ice. To book a visit, call 08451 221155 and ask to be put through to your local risk reduction team.



The icemen cometh... firefighters Steve Snape, left, and Dave Cook in their water rescue kit, and right, the floating pontoon used in ice rescue operations.



Residents warned about bogus callers

RESIDENTS in Stoke-on-Trent are being warned to be on their guard against bogus callers.

The alert about people who call at homes pretending to be on official business is being put out by the police following a spate of recent incidents.

Householders are being urged to use a door chain, check the identity of callers and then close the door and phone the company to check.

Utility companies will agree a password that can be used by their representatives, as a guarantee that visits are genuine. If residents

feel threatened or suspect they have been approached by a bogus caller, they are urged to dial 999 and report the incident to police.

A Staffordshire Police spokesperson said: "If in doubt, keep them out. You don't have to let anyone into your home."

Live web chat gives surfers opportunity to quiz the leader

DOZENS of residents went online to quiz council leader Mohammed Pervez about important issues for the city's future.

He went online as part of the city's budget consultations, taking questions and posting replies within seconds.

He said: "A number of people took part in the web chat, which was very pleasing to see.

"We answered a number of questions there and then and where we weren't able to give an answer straight away, we were able to reply later.

"It's a very good method of engaging with residents. It's an attractive way of getting in touch with the council and getting answers to questions. I'll definitely do it again."

3,100 on Twitter

The council has been using its Facebook page and Twitter account extensively – and this has expanded over the past few months to promote the budget consultation.

Dates of consultation events, links to documents about the budget and information about services affected by November's public sector strike have all been shared online – where the regular updates have seen numbers boom to more than 3,100 Twitter 'followers' and 360 Facebook 'friends'.

Comments about the strike were posted on council



“”
It's an attractive way of getting in touch with the council and getting answers to questions. I'll definitely do it again.

COUNCIL LEADER COUNCILLOR
MOHAMMED PERVEZ

accounts while information was shared about school closures and bin collections.

This coverage was highlighted by a leading IT monitoring body SOCITM, which reports to the Government, as being among the best in the country.

During the full council meeting held in December, more than 40 updates were published to those following proceedings on Twitter and Facebook. Viewers of the live video feed shared their opinions on the debates and comments, creating a 'community' feel.

A seasonal twist came with the Twitter Gritter feed to keep residents up to date on the work of the city's gritting team. Followers were able to find out which routes were being gritted and the state of roads across the city.

Questions and comments sent to the council via social media are all viewed and, if necessary and possible, responded to or sent to a council department. Simple questions have been answered within seconds of being posted – something that will be built on in 2012.

● Follow the council at www.twitter.com/sotcitycouncil or search for Stoke-on-Trent City Council on Facebook.

Budget 2012 webchat with Councillor Mohammed Pervez

Monday December 19, 2011

Budget 2012/13

- 5:43 **Comment From David Barker**
Evening Cllr, as Governor of Stoke Minster Primary School, do you feel that the development of the Victoria Ground is essential for the community's enhancement and future wellbeing?
- 5:43 **Mohammed Pervez:** The future of the Victoria Ground is very important to us and its future is currently under review. Clearly it would be in our interest to ensure that the site is developed to reflect our Mandate for Change.
- 5:46 **Comment From Margaret Lowe**
Hello Cllr. Why do you want to save £24m, when you only need to save £17m? I have heard that you want to 'invest' the rest. However, increasing council tax by 3.5% is going to put more people in poverty as we have had rises in gas, electricity and probably water rates. My pay and many others has not risen in 2 years. Where do you think we are going to get the extra money from? Why not just be satisfied with the £17m and not raise the council tax?
- 5:49 **Mohammed Pervez:** The Save to Invest initiative is crucial if we are going to stimulate the local economy and deliver on the Mandate for Change. Government cuts make it impossible to sustain public sector jobs. The future lies in ensuring that the right kind of conditions are created within our city to enable the private sector to invest here.
- 6:36 **Comment From Rockape**
Can I ask why you aren't doing more as a council to collect defaulted council tax payments using modern collection ways. The collection recovery profile of this council is shocking, thus improving this would give you more slippage in your budget?
- 6:38 **Mohammed Pervez:** This is a really challenging area for us and we are committed to improving our collection rate. We want to work with people who can't pay for genuine reasons to put payment plans in place but at the same time pursue those who refuse to pay.
- 6:40 **Comment From Sam Alexander**
Have the consultation Roadshows around Stoke been successful?
- 6:48 **Mohammed Pervez:** A number of people have spoken to us on the Budget Proposals at the Roadshows and we will continue to hold these across the City. It is important that we provide our residents with an opportunity to give us their views. The Roadshows are in addition to the consultations that we are doing with our business communities, our staff, our partners and elected members.

Just a few of the questions and answers from the live web chat with Council Leader Councillor Mohammed Pervez as part of the budget consultation exercise.

Firefighters' home visits keep older residents safe



Longton Firefighter Kyle Brookes carries out a Home Fire Safety Check at the home of resident Barbara Pattyson.

WITH the winter well and truly here, people are now being reminded how to stay safe from fire in their own homes.

It comes as Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service revealed more accidental house fires take place during winter than any other time of year.

Last year six people, four of them elderly, died following fires in their homes involving heating appliances.

An awareness campaign has been launched for older people and their carers. Posters and leaflets have been delivered to doctor's surgeries, hospitals, libraries, housing associations, post offices, children's centres and voluntary organisations.

Home fire risk checks are also available through Freephone 0800 0241 999. Callers will be able to arrange an appointment and

although checks for the elderly and vulnerable are prioritised, the service is open to everyone. All staff who then call carry an ID card.

Ian Sloss, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service's Head of Risk Reduction, said: "The elderly are particularly vulnerable during the colder months as they are more likely to feel the cold and so may be more reliant on portable heaters and open fires, which can present fire risks.

"If you are elderly, or know someone elderly who hasn't received a free home fire risk assessment, we'd urge you to get in touch on our Freephone number. A home fire risk check reduces the risk of a fire occurring and gives you peace of mind."

Tips to stay safe this winter include:

- Unplug your electric blanket

before you go to bed – unless it has a thermostat control for safe all-night use.

- The back of a heater should be against a wall with the heater facing the room.
- Keep portable heaters clear of curtains and furniture and never use them to dry clothes.
- Make sure candles are in a proper holder and away from anything which can catch fire.
- Put candles out when you leave the room. Make sure they are out before you go to bed.
- Sweep the chimney before use if you haven't used it for sometime.
- Always keep a fireguard in front of an open fire.
- Push the button weekly on your smoke alarms to make sure they work.

June Bentley creating an elegant Chinese robe at her new premises in Burslem.



Mandate for Change city of stoke on trent

Businesses thriving in difficult times

MORE and more women in the Potteries are showing true entrepreneurial spirit as they set up their own businesses despite the tough economic times.

With support from Stoke-on-Trent City Council funded Enterprise Coaches, women are taking on a variety of sectors. Sarah Colclough is in her second year as the only female locksmith in the area while Samantha Morton sells a range of children's ponchos through her newly set up firm Perfectly Poncho.

Also established in the children's sector is Mandy Salt who is expanding her home-run childminding service this spring when she opens her Little Gemz Nursery in Milton, employing four full-time and four part-time staff.

The 51-year-old said: "It all started when I was made redundant from my admin manager's job and began helping find a childminder for my grandson Tyler, who is now three.

Fantastic help

"My daughter Louise and I weren't that impressed and I thought I could do better. So the family started looking after Tyler and I set up Little Gemz at home. What makes us different is that we follow the Early Years learning curriculum so we do story time, painting, messy play and have a chalkboard.

"My first plans for a nursery fell through but now I've got the go ahead to set up in Milton so I'm delighted. Enterprise Coach Gaynor Parkinson has been a fantastic help with advice on a whole range of things."

June Bentley has been running her sewing company for two years from home and is doing so well, she has just moved Sew Good into business premises in Burslem. The 60-year-old, who gave

up her care workers job in 2008, said: "I do customer commissions, bespoke bridal wear and evening wear. I also make cushion covers, household items and take on alterations. Gaynor's service has been brilliant. The Enterprise coaches are very knowledgeable."

Gaynor said: "All these women are truly inspirational and show what can be achieved with the right ideas and the right support.

"I'm one of three Enterprise Coaches in the city and we're here to offer flexible help and advice to people considering self employment as a way forward to improving their lives. We also operate a monthly Enterprise Club where, for example, specialists such as web designers, printers, accountants, tax advice and banks are available."

● **To speak to an Enterprise Coach call Gaynor Parkinson on 07834 657828 or email gaynorp@enterprisesupport.org, Gayle Jessiman on 07969 557915 or email gaylej@enterprisesupport.org, and Lisa Davies on 07866 807134 or email lisd@enterprisesupport.org**



Mandy Salt with Dylan Currie, aged 4, left, and Tyler Morris aged 3 at the Little Gemz nursery in Milton.

'Tell us Once' initiative expands to cover births

THE council service designed to help people cope with life changing moments like death has now been expanded to include births as well.

The Tell Us Once service, which is run in partnership by the council and the Department of Work and Pensions, aims to cut stress and red tape by allowing people to make one visit to Hanley Town Hall to see a registrar. Details are then passed on to approximately 28 different services on their behalf.

Programme Director Lyn McDonald said: "We've done away with the red tape that usually confronts a person wanting to report a change in circumstances to the Government.

"In a single appointment at their local authority, a person can notify all the relevant Government departments and service authorities of their circumstances. It's a service that saves time and money.

"We're providing a simple process that responds to specific needs of people who need to be with their families and not on the phone to Government authorities."

Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, said: "These are times in everybody's lives better spent with family than dealing with Government. Tell Us Once removes red tape and gives time back to families when they need it most. When something as major as a birth or death happens in a family, we understand the last thing anybody wants to be doing is dealing with Government administration.

"Tell Us Once turns a cumbersome process into a fast and efficient service."

● **For more information contact the Registrar at the council on 01782 235260 or email register.office@stoke.gov.uk**



Chelsea Hibbs, of Bentilee, with her new baby Dolcie.

Still time for a flu jab

HEALTH bosses have warned it is not too late for people in at risk groups to have a flu vaccination... especially if the weather turns wintry.

Although the cold weather does not directly cause viruses like colds and flu, it can mean that older people or those with long-term health conditions develop more serious symptoms.

Dr Zafar Iqbal, Acting Director of Public Health for Stoke-on-Trent, said: "It's important to be protected because some people are more susceptible to the effects of seasonal flu and it can also sometimes make existing conditions worse.

"So anyone who has been written to by their GP inviting them to have the vaccination really should take up the offer.

"People who will have received letters include those aged over 65, people under 65 with long-term conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, multiple sclerosis, serious kidney and liver disease, pregnant women and front-line health care professionals."



Stoke City striker Jonathan Walters enjoys a cuppa with pensioner Ken Downs. The Premier League star is pictured left with volunteers Rachel Cox and Josh Simpson.



Simple steps can help beat vomiting bug

HEALTH bosses in Stoke-on-Trent have issued fresh advice to help people minimise the effects of the winter vomiting bug.

Norovirus, which causes vomiting and diarrhoea, is easily transmitted but people can reduce the spread of the virus by thoroughly and regularly washing their hands with soap and water,

particularly after going to the toilet and before eating. The bug is self-limiting and sufferers will recover

naturally but they should stay at home and make sure they drink plenty of fluids.

People with the bug should not visit their doctor or Accident and Emergency and should stay away from work or school until they have been free of symptoms for at least 48 hours.

They should not visit friends or relatives in hospitals or residential care homes either as they could spread the virus.

Sufferers are also being advised not to handle or prepare food for other people until they have been symptom free for two days.

The elderly and very young can sometimes get a more severe infection or become dehydrated and if that happens they should phone their doctor or NHS Direct on 0845 4647 for advice.

People should also consult their doctor or call NHS Direct if symptoms persist for more than 48 hours.



Soccer stars sign up to help older people

YOUNGSTERS on a football-in-the-community scheme chipped in to help elderly people get through the winter by supplying them with goody bags.

Volunteers from the Kickz programme helped pack up bags of food and household items before handing them out at Bentilee Neighbourhood Centre.

It was part of a voluntary week organised by Stoke City Football Club and their community departments, Stoke Challenge and Stoke on Trent College project.

Striker Jonathan Walters joined the Kickz teenagers, council housing officers and volunteers to hand out the special Rescue Packs which were organised with help from Sainsburys and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Voluntary participation is a cornerstone of the Kickz scheme which is run by football clubs across the country in partnership with local agencies to encourage youngsters to engage in their local community.

In Stoke-on-Trent the Kickz project, where Stoke City teams

“” It gave the teenagers a good feeling inside to put something back into the community.

PETER HALL, FIRE SAFETY OFFICER



up with Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, is completely free for young people aged 12-18 who are interested in playing football and being coached by FA-qualified coaches.

Members play against Kickz teams from other Premier League clubs, receive occasional

match tickets, get the chance to achieve an FA Level 1 coaching badge and obtain qualifications to go into youth work.

“One of the main aims of Kickz is to encourage volunteering and create routes into education, training and employment,” said Peter Hall, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Community Fire Safety Officer

who is on the committee of the local Kickz project.

“Giving out the Rescue Packs at Bentilee was a great way for members of Kickz to help ensure house-bound people didn’t have to risk going out on slippery pavements just to get essentials.

“It gave the teenagers a good feeling inside to put something back into the community.

“When they participate in this way they help to change perceptions between the younger and older generations.”

The national Kickz programme was created by the Premier League and the Metropolitan Police five years ago to work with children in disadvantaged areas. Stoke City was the 41st club to become involved.

As well as football-based activities, youngsters are offered educational sessions on issues including healthy lifestyle, drug and substance misuse and carrying weapons.

Team available to help with housing issues has moved

THE Housing Solutions Service provide support for people in Stoke-on-Trent with housing problems has moved office.

The Housing Advice Centre, which was based at South Wolfe Street, Stoke, has moved to the First Floor of the Civic Centre on Glebe Street.

Experienced officers can help anyone in Stoke-on-Trent who has a housing need. Officers

can offer advice and assistance to people who are homeless or may be at risk of homelessness.

In addition support can be provided to help people who want to access council accommodation, private sector housing, supported housing or a housing association property. The Housing Solutions Service can also assist if you need help with your mortgage or

need advice about home ownership options.

The centre is open Monday to Thursday – 9am to 5pm or Friday 9am to 4.30pm. Alternatively, a home or workplace visit from an officer can be arranged.

● For more details call the Housing Solutions Service on 01782 233696 or email sarah.haydon@stoke.gov.uk

Citywide campaign will promote apprenticeships

A national campaign to raise awareness about recruiting apprentices is being showcased in the city.

Schools, training organisations, colleges and other agencies will join the council in highlighting the benefits of recruiting young people and providing on-the-job training.

Details about events and activities will be posted on the council's website in the run up to National Apprenticeship Week 2012, taking place between 6 to 10 February.

The theme of the campaign is "Get With Apprenticeships" which highlights the talents, skills and commitment of real apprentices and their employers – utilising their experiences to positively inform and persuade others to get involved.

Employees for the future

Major employers such as the council take advantage of apprenticeship schemes to recruit tailored young employees for the future.

Through the council's Apprenticeship scheme, hundreds of people have been put on the path to a promising career.

All learners enrol on an NVQ level 2 or 3 related to their specific career goal and Key Skills in communication.

Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service is enjoying similar success. They employ 14 apprentices, while providing nationally accredited, structured training development and vital work experience.

Over the last 18 months Apprenticeship placements have provided an effective method of attracting new staff and filling vacancies within the service.

The roles are varied, ranging from emergency fire service operations and business and administration to motor

vehicle mechanic and catering and hospitality.

Qualifications depend on the framework the apprentice follows and are usually built around vocational qualifications at level 2 or 3.

Tim Wareham, Training Manager for the service, said: "With over one million unemployed young people nationally, our engagement with Apprenticeship programmes offer us an important way of unlocking talent within existing staff and our local communities, while ensuring that we have a workforce equipped with the skills needed for today and tomorrow.

"The focus of the Apprenticeship programme is on young people between the ages of 16-19 years old. However, Apprenticeships are not exclusive to this age group.

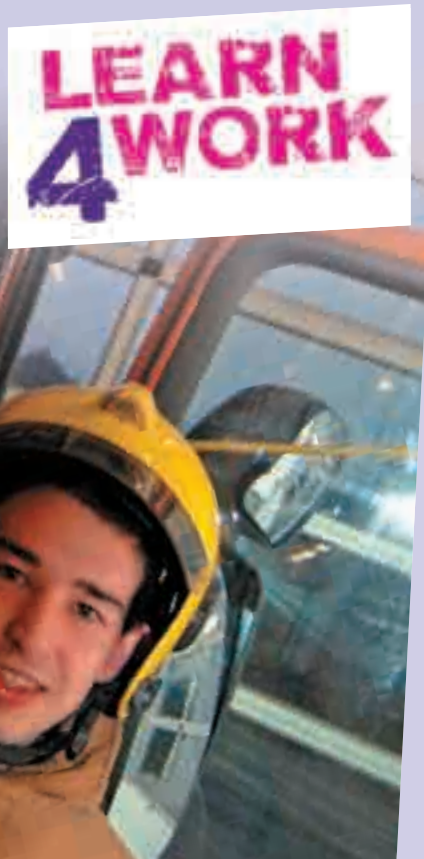
"Whilst offering a potential pathway into the Fire and Rescue Service, it also offers a training programme for new and existing staff regardless of age.

"They are relevant to a whole range of roles and as our service progresses through this period of restructure and change, the Apprenticeship programme can provide it with a stable pool of talent."

● To find out more about opportunities with the fire service call 08451 22 11 55 and ask to speak to someone about apprenticeships. For apprenticeship opportunities at the council in business administration, sports and leisure please contact the Learn4work team on 01782 234435.

Email: learn4work@stoke.gov.uk or visit stoke.gov.uk/learn4work

AN EXCITING NEW CAREER... Declan Bailey, who is training with Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service as an Apprentice Firefighter.



Number of teen mums is reduced

TEENAGE pregnancy figures in Stoke-on-Trent continue to fall thanks in part to a city council scheme considered gold standard in the country.

There were 165 pregnancies in girls aged 15 to 17 in the first nine months of 2010... a drop of 29 on the same period the previous year and down 46 for 2008. At the same time there has been an astonishing 256 per cent increase in the use of contraceptives by young people.

Sharon Menghini, Director of Children and Young People's Services for the city council, said: "These figures demonstrate that our joined-up approach to tackling teenage pregnancy rates and improved sexual health among the young people of the city is working."

Councillor Debra Gratton, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, said: "It is encouraging to see so many teenagers taking responsibility for their own sexual health. The council will continue to work with partners to provide information and support to those young people most at risk of teenage pregnancy."

Sexual health drop-in services are available in schools and other locations where the council works with agencies including the School Nursing Service, Youth Services, Connexions and the NHS.

£11 million Meir health centre offers a range of health services under one roof

THOUSANDS of patients are enjoying state-of-the-art health facilities now the new £11 million Meir Primary Care Centre is up and running.

The centre in Weston Road,

purpose built on the site of the former Kings Arms pub, is now home to six local GP practices and expects to treat up to 160,000 people a year.

Designed in consultation with

patients and staff by healthcare building specialists One Creative Environment Ltd, the new centre has a curved front façade to mirror the curved building opposite the site.

The four-storey high entrance comes complete with copper clad square frame and louvers to reduce overheating from the sun.

It steps down to a two-storey wing and the whole building incorporates a range of green features with 15 per cent of the centre's energy needs being met by renewable sources such as solar energy and air source heat pumps.

The building brings together a whole range of health services under one roof including district nursing, health visiting, school and specialist nursing, contraception and sexual health services, paediatric and adult physiotherapy, a dental access centre and also has an on-site community pharmacy.

Graham Urwin, Chief Executive of the Staffordshire Cluster of PCTs, said: "We are very proud of the new

centre in Meir, which helps us make sure the healthcare needs of local residents are better met by providing so many services under one roof."

The developers of the 2,945 square metre site were Prima 200, the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) company for North Staffordshire, a public private partnership between the NHS, and their private sector partners Prime Plc.

Prima 200 Chair John Taylor said: "By working closely with the local community, the Primary Care Trust and Prime, we have together been able to create a health centre fit for the 21st Century that can also support an expansion in services.

"The scheme in Meir demonstrates the importance of designing buildings and infrastructure around the service needs of a community and ensuring those services are easily accessible."

● To contact Meir Primary Care Centre call 0300 123 1452.



Meir Health Centre Manager Jo Ashcroft with local resident and patient Maureen Latham.

UPDATE ON THE CITY'S COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Getting switched on to online dangers

PARENTS and young people across the city are being reminded about internet safety as they enjoy festive presents like new laptops, PCs, mobile phones and games consoles.

It comes amid recent surveys suggesting some young people go on to meet strangers face-to-face after first encountering them online, in forums and on social networks.

Jonathan Moss, the E-Safety Champion for the city's Safeguarding Children Board, said: "We can all imagine the possible problems that these young people could encounter and we have all read terrible media reports of young people getting into difficulties through the unsafe use of the internet.

"The internet is a wonderful thing. It allows us to connect, share and search. All the different types of technologies these days have the ability to connect to the internet through wired, wireless and 3G, allowing fabulous social networking, online gaming, apps and email to be in the hands of children and young people.

"But this also means that children can have access to the internet without control from parents and carers, and when it is in their hands it is difficult to know exactly what they are looking at or doing.

As safe as possible

"So what can we do as parents to make sure that our children are as safe as possible?"

"The first step is to understand what the technology can do and what the risks are."

So parents are being urged to:

- **Be as aware as possible of what their children are doing online.**
- **Talk to their children about E-safety to find out what they have learned about it at school so they are more E-safe themselves.**
- **Remember that mobile phones can also be used for bullying and the sending and receiving of inappropriate messages.**
- **Check which games their children are playing online. Are they playing adult only games with a PEGI rating of 18?**
- **Remember that some online games involve team play, which means an adult from anywhere in the world could be involved.**

Jonathan added: "The internet is a fabulous technology that has transformed our lives but there are also risks. So make sure that your children are as safe as possible and have a happy E-safe new year."

For more information about online risks and how to safely use the internet, go to:
thinkuknow.co.uk/parents
ceop.police.uk/safety-centre
parents.vodafone.com or
safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

Parents and young people are being given practical advice on staying safe while surfing the net and using social networks.



“”
The internet is a fabulous technology that has transformed our lives but there are also risks. So make sure that your children are as safe as possible and have a happy E-safe new year.

JONATHAN MOSS, E-SAFETY CHAMPION

Law change for people looking after someone else's child

PRIVATE foster carers in Stoke-on-Trent are being urged to come forward as the Children and Young People's department at the council continues to update its records on childcare arrangements in the city.

They differ from the traditional fostering arrangements most people are aware of because private carers do not have to apply to the local authority or go through assessments and training before approval.

A change in the law places a duty on the local authority to check the welfare of privately fostered children and young people to ensure they are being safeguarded.

It covers private arrangements, which last for 28 days or more for children under 16 or under 18 if they have a disability, and where the carer is someone other than a parent or close relative. Carers may be members of the extended family like a cousin or great aunt, friends of the family, or someone the child does not know.

It includes children sent from abroad to stay with family members, teenagers who may be living with the family of a friend, boyfriend or girlfriend and people living with a host family while studying.

Birth parents need to tell the local authority of any private fostering arrangements they have agreed preferably before they start. However, in an emergency, they should tell the local authority within 48 hours of the arrangements starting and when they end.

They keep their parental responsibility but they must give the carer information about their child including any special health needs, diet, school, religion, and cultural ethnicity needs. They also have to ensure the place where their child is going to stay is safe and appropriate.

The local authority has to decide the suitability of private fostering arrangements and carry out checks as well as make regular visits to see the child and also to give advice to the private foster carers.

Carole Preston, the city's Safeguarding Children Board Manager, said: "This is not about people being in trouble but simply us making sure that children and young people are safe and well cared for and that their needs are being met.

"We can't possibly know how many children and young people are being cared for by private foster carers unless someone tells us so we'd urge them to get in touch.

"They may not be aware they could perhaps claim tax credits and Child Benefit and other practical support so we can also steer them in the right direction with those sorts of things."

To report an arrangement or get more information call the Children's Services Duty Team on 01782 235100 or go to www.safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk

Calendar highlights doorstep dangers

A calendar has been produced highlighting the dangers of doorstep crime.

The month-to-month calendar which is being handed out to elderly residents includes images of the city's industrial past as well as helpful information about not falling foul of rogue traders.

Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, said: "Unscrupulous doorstep traders and conmen see elderly and vulnerable people as an easy target.

"The council's Safer City Partnership is doing all it can to ensure we catch these people before they can cause significant harm to residents.

"The calendar has proven very popular as it combines vital safety information and contact details with local history."

● For more information visit stoke.gov.uk and search for doorstep crime.



Public Protection Officer Valerie Edmonds giving a free calendar to Tunstall residents Frank Ralphs, 77, and his wife Dorothy, 73, in Hanley Market.

Campaign spreads messages by hi-tech phone icon

A hard-hitting campaign is using one of the most recognisable hi-tech icons of the 21st century to help tackle drink-related town centre violence and disorder.

Through the new iDrink campaign, flyers have been produced resembling the screen of an iPhone, with icons representing the possible harm caused by alcohol.

These include stark messages such as "iMake myself more vulnerable" and icons such as "iHad a fight", "iVomited", "iGot pregnant" and "iFell over".

On the back of the leaflets is information about the Immobilise website, which enables phones and other personal property to be registered.

It also includes a QR code which allows smart phone users to scan the image, leading them directly to the Staffordshire Police website for further information.

The flyers are being handed out to revellers in town and city centres and also distributed to youth workers, the Pubwatch network and partner agencies, such as the Safer City Partnership.

The campaign has been launched by Staffordshire Police at a time when the latest figures show the link between alcohol and crime.

Statistics for the period 1 April – 30 September, 2011 show that alcohol played a part in over a third of all violent crimes with injury across the city. And almost 53 per cent of offenders in Staffordshire supervised by the Probation Service were assessed as having alcohol problems.

However, the figures also show that alcohol-related violent crime is falling. There were 341 fewer crimes in the city from April 2011 to October 2011, compared with the same period in 2010 – a drop of 30 per cent.

Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, said: "The council is working closely with Staffordshire Police and other partners to highlight ways residents can help keep

themselves safe throughout the year. "It is great news for the city that alcohol related violent crimes have fallen by 30 per cent in Stoke-on-Trent in the past year and we want to reduce that figure further."

For more details about tackling alcohol-related violence visit the advice zone at www.staffordshire.police.uk



The iDrink Smartphone icons are helping spread safety messages to revellers.



Model prizes in non-emergency number launch

STAFFORDSHIRE Police has launched an online photograph competition to mark the national 101 non emergency number launch.

Members of the public can enter the competition by taking a photograph which incorporates '101' using everyday items. A shortlist will then be picked, which will then be posted onto the force's Facebook site for public voting through 'Likes'.

Staffordshire Police Head of Corporate Communications Ian Fegan said: "The competition is a great way for budding photographers to help promote 101, and be in with a chance of winning a unique prize.

"We're looking for innovative photographs where people create 101 in their photo using everyday objects, such as writing 101 with a bike wheel next to two posts."

There are three prizes – one winner's prize, a Jaguar 240 Police Car Model 1:18 scale, and two runners up prizes, a Jaguar MK2 3.8 and a Jaguar X16 Series 1 4.2, which were donated to the force.

The winning photographs will then be used by the force to help promote the 101 number.

The introduction of the 101 number in November 2011 means communities have one easy way to contact their local police

force to report non-emergency crime and disorder. Since its launch, 101 has been well received by the public.

In an emergency, the public should continue to call 999, such as when a crime is in progress, when there is danger to life or when violence is being used or threatened.

WINNER'S PRIZE:

The Jaguar 240 police car model.





Hepatology Nurse Rejoice Ngusena with some of the material available to give more information on the treatment of Hepatitis C.

100 people treated for 'silent killer' disease

DOZENS of service users joined health professionals and civic dignitaries to celebrate a major breakthrough in the treatment of Hepatitis C in the city.

Routes to Recovery, based at Canalside, Festival Park has successfully treated more than 100 people who had contracted the disease – often referred to as the Silent Killer.

The community service received funding from the Safer City Partnership for the scheme which is unique throughout the UK.

In just over a year 100 people have been tested for Hepatitis C by the specialist team.

Lisa Nagington, Clinical Nurse Specialist – Hepatitis C, said: "The special event marks a real milestone achievement in the

treatment of Hepatitis C in the city.

"It was good to see many of the service users helping us to celebrate the achievements, because they are a real part of it.

"The disease is more infectious than HIV but because symptoms may not show for many years, it can be passed on by people who are totally unaware that they have the disease.

"Treating people as early as possible in this way can save the NHS hundreds of thousands of pounds in more extensive treatment or liver transplants."

Lisa added: "Hopefully hundreds of people will go on to lead normal and healthy lives because of the scheme and we will help to raise awareness of Hepatitis C in the process."



Above, Consultant Gastroenterologist Dr Alison Brind, left, talking to recovery worker Claire Thomas. Below... members of the specialist Routes to Recovery team with a commissioner from the Safer City Partnership.



Volunteer uses experience to help other people

CHRIS Youd has bounced back from rock bottom. The 41-year-old had contracted the worst strain of Hepatitis C after 25 years of Class A drug use, could not get a job and was thrown out of his home by his partner.

Fortunately, he was able to seek help to turn things around. As well as going through comprehensive detoxification he was accepted onto a 48 month Hepatitis C treatment programme, which he has just completed.

His life has come full circle – because not only is he set to be given the all-clear but he has signed up as a Service User Representative helping raise awareness and supporting others coming through the programme.

He said: "I really was at an absolute low.

"I had hit rock bottom in my

life. I was addicted to injection drugs, and had contracted the worse strain of Hepatitis C – Geno Type 1.

"I felt dirty every time I went for a job interview because I had to declare that I had Hep C – and kept being turned down.

"It was really affecting my self esteem, and health-wise I just didn't feel right at all."

Turned my life around

He added: "At first I felt very scared about the treatment programme, it was a step into the unknown and physically I didn't know if I was up for it.

"But it has really turned my life around and now I feel like a different person. I feel like I am back in the real world.

"The voluntary work as a Service User Representative has made a big difference.

"It helped me take my mind off the programme while giving

something back. It lets me act as a middle man and liaise with service users and staff. I help deal with problems and share experiences – they trust me because I have been in their shoes.

"I run groups and have also set up a newsletter to help get the message across and spread awareness about Hepatitis C and the treatment programme.

"Most of all it has proved to me that people are willing to trust me and that has done a great deal for my confidence," said Chris, who is now back at home living with his partner.

Chris started the New Year with a spring in his step. He has enrolled onto college courses in Computing and Advice and Guidance, which will help with his voluntary work.

He added: "I have been given a second chance in life and really want to take advantage of this opportunity."

VOLUNTEERING SUCCESS...
Service User Representative Chris Youd is using his 'second chance' to work with drug users.





Many people arrested in the city are being tested for drugs in a bid to break the link between substance misuse and offending. *Our City* reports on how this is acting as a gateway to treatment, services and a healthier, crime-free lifestyle...



Members of the Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) are, left to right, Manager Nigel Lee, Administrator Annie Karling, Prison Link Worker Tony Hill, DIP Team Leader Nick Imlack, Restriction on Bail Court Worker Trevor Spencer and DIP Recovery Worker Saj Farooq.

DRUG testing on arrest has been in place in many areas across the country since 2003 and has proved a powerful tool in tackling drug related offending and combating the link between crime and drug use.

From November 2011 drug testing on arrest has also operated in Stoke-on-Trent.

People over the age of 18 who are arrested for a range of offences including burglary, shoplifting and fraud, or when it is suspected that drug use has contributed towards the crime, are being tested for heroin, crack and cocaine when brought into custody.

The community drug service and a wide range of

Drug testing a powerful tool in fighting abuse

professionals are involved in this initiative including, local authority, health, social care and police in an effort to help thousands of suspected criminals stop taking drugs that drive them to break the law.

Failure to attend an appointment is a criminal offence.

Drug workers are based within the Northern Area

Custody Suite and in most instances will see people for their first appointment before they leave custody.

Figures show that more than 3,000 people living in Stoke-on-Trent, during the 12-month period up to July 2011, were arrested for offences triggered by drug use.

Anyone tested positive is required to attend up to two assessments with a drug worker. These sessions are designed to engage the individual in treatment, to address their drug use, and to give advice and information about drugs and their effects, such as the consequences of taking drugs, risk of dependency, the dangers of mixing different types of drugs and taking drugs with alcohol, as well as potential long-term conditions that could be contracted, such as Hepatitis C.

A drug worker will also ensure that information about positive tests is put forward to the courts so that requirements to attend drug treatment can be imposed as part of bail and sentencing to incentivise people to become drug free.

Suspects who are dependent on Class A drugs like heroin and

cocaine will get help and support to break the habit. The drug workers work with a doctor, often the individual's own GP, to design tailored recovery programmes that not only address the drug use but also the underlying problems such as homelessness, debt, physical and mental health issues and relationship breakdown.

Drug using suspects participating in the "test on arrest" scheme can also be referred for detoxification where they will receive 24-hour care designed to help them become free of drugs.

Gateway to treatment

They can also access residential rehabilitation services to help them stay off drugs and resettle in the community.

Vicki Yates, Adult Drug Treatment Programme Lead for the Safer City Partnership, said: "Test on arrest provides a gateway to drug treatment and other services for people who are difficult to engage. It is also an opportunity to re-engage people who have dropped out of drug treatment.

"The partnership involved in delivering the initiative brings together the sort of expertise, skills and experience required to help individuals overcome substance misuse problems and live healthy, stable, crime-free lives which in turn makes communities safer places to live."

Alcohol Restriction Zone feedback



PUBLIC feedback is now being evaluated as part of a proposed alcohol restriction zone (ARZ) in the Tunstall neighbourhood.

Members of the public attended three consultation events held at Tunstall Market and Sandyford Fire Station to examine and ask questions about the proposals.

A report is now being compiled and the ARZ will be on the agenda at a forthcoming meeting of the council's Licensing and General Purposes Committee.

Alcohol Restriction Zones can be put into place when an area experiences alcohol related disorder or nuisance. It gives Police officers the power to confiscate alcohol or ask people to stop drinking in the zone, and if they refuse they may be arrested.

Tony Oakman, Director of Adult and Neighbourhood Services, said: "This isn't about making drinking a criminal offence in Tunstall, it's about giving police officers the power to act if they feel that a problem is being caused by people drinking in a public place.

"Those drinking responsibly have nothing to worry about - the consultation gave people the chance to tell us if they think the conditions and the areas the zone will cover are appropriate."

The Safer City Partnership, City Council and Staffordshire Police have worked closely with local residents and local businesses to draw up the ARZ proposal.

Safer City Partnership Officer Jennifer Lawson said: "The three consultation events were well-attended and the feedback we received is being used to help compile our report to councillors.

"A decision on whether the Tunstall ARZ will be given the go-ahead will be decided by members of the Licensing and General Purpose Committee at a future meeting."

DIP Team Leader Nick Imlack gives some advice on beating drug abuse.





Kim Bennett, Manager of Bluebell Women's Refuge.



Patricia, left, and Sue – founding members of Voices of Experience – with a wall hanging showing the journey of domestic abuse victims.

Domestic Violence Outreach Services Manager Jackie Capewell with the information packs produced for the conference.

Working to ease scars of the forgotten victims

AROUND 150 delegates attended a conference in the King's Hall, Stoke, with the aim of helping "the forgotten victims" – children and young people whose lives are often scarred by domestic violence.

"Children and Young People – Our Future" brought together professionals including the voluntary sector and community groups to share information and provide each other with a better insight into how they can effectively work together to support children and young people living with or experiencing domestic violence.

The third conference of its kind was hosted by Stoke-on-Trent Safer City Partnership, Newcastle-under-Lyme's Safer Communities Partnership and the registered charity ARCH which supports and advises people in Staffordshire and Cheshire on a range of issues, including domestic violence.

The morning session concentrated on portraying children's experiences of domestic violence through a series of films and presentations, while in the afternoon the work of MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) – which brings together a range of agencies

including police, Children and Young People's Services, the probation service and mental health professionals – was described by its founder Nigel Boulton. Later a panel of experts, including Nigel Boulton, Catherine Edwards, Kate Howard of ARCH and representatives from the Tender and AVA charities that help prevent domestic violence, answered a wide range of questions from delegates.

Raising awareness

Paul Bridges, Chief Executive for ARCH, said: "Calls to our Helpline have increased by 50 per cent since 2010 and we have a long list of children who witness domestic abuse and need support. Children are the forgotten victims and this annual conference is an important part of raising awareness and working to stop the violence and abuse."

Stoke-on-Trent Councillor Gwen Hassall, Cabinet Member for Housing and Neighbourhoods, said: "The opportunity for people to get together and share what they know can only help the victims of domestic violence."

"It's reassuring to know that people who have a breadth of knowledge about their field are available to help people when it's required. Domestic violence can affect anyone, regardless of their

race, age or gender and it's important that there are dedicated professionals on hand to provide any assistance that is needed."

Councillor Stephen Sweeney, Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, said: "Newcastle Safer Communities Partnership is committed to combating domestic violence in the borough by working successfully with partners to protect victims of all ages and tackling perpetrators."

"More than 750,000 children witness domestic abuse at home each year which can have profound and lasting effects, both physically and emotionally."

"The conference provided a chance for officers to share information, debate collectively and discuss best working practices, paving the way for even better support services."



Youth and Leadership Co-ordinator Marie Horner addresses delegates at the conference.

Crime-busting advice to beat snatchers

WINTER time visitors to the city centre have been given advice on staying safe and clear of opportunist criminals.

A whole range of organisations – including the Safer City Partnership, Staffordshire Police and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service – have been handing out useful safety items such as purse bells, which can help deter pick pockets, cycle marking kits and personal attack alarms in the run up to Christmas.

But there was an ongoing message too... the crime-busting advice is not just for the Festive season, it is particularly relevant for the remaining winter months.

Bill James, Respect Co-ordinator for the Safer City Partnership, said: "While the run up to Christmas is the time many people concentrate on when handing out safety advice, this really needs to be extended into the New Year and the remaining Winter months."

"People often have new valuable items

that they were given as gifts at Christmas and these can be tempting for opportunist thieves and burglars.

That is why it is absolutely essential that they use property marking kits, so their goods can be identified if they are stolen.

"We also have a lot of students returning to the city after the Christmas break, often with valuable hi-tech electrical items, and they can fall prey to criminals."

"We work with the city's student population to encourage them to sign up to schemes such as Immobilise, through which the details of their property are stored on a national online property register."

More than 24 million people in the UK have signed up for the scheme, which was launched in 2003. For more details log onto www.immobilise.com.

● For more advice on crime prevention during the Winter months call Bill on 01782 236113.

More glass and metal recycling key to saving money

HOUSEHOLDERS across Stoke-on-Trent could save the city council £147,000 a year by simply recycling more glass and metal.

More than 2,000 tonnes ends up being needlessly burned at the Hanford incinerator because people throw it away instead of putting it into their blue recycling bins. The material costs the council £108,418 to dispose when it could be earning an annual income of £38,581 instead.

Simply putting glass and metal in the blue bin would see the city's

recycling rate go up from 39 per cent to 41 per cent as each household produces 19kg less waste.

Councillor Janine Bridges, Cabinet Member for City Services, said: "We could save a staggering amount if people just realised that the stuff they buy and throw away is a resource not waste.

"It costs us a huge amount to get rid of and makes no contribution to electricity generation at Hanford. All it does is make that process less efficient so it ends up costing us more.

Help us make savings

"Our contract costs would come down if we didn't have to put glass and metal through the incinerator.

"So I'm urging people to think twice before they dump any glass and metal in their grey bins. It's just as easy to put it in the blue bin instead. That'll get our recycling rates up and, at a time when money is tight, will help us make savings. It's win, win all round."

Her appeal comes as the council reviews its dry recyclables service. A single provider separates the city's glass, cans, plastic and cardboard at its recovery facility in Crayford, Essex but that contract ends in August 2012.

The council is taking the opportunity to look at how it provides services as it goes out to tender.

Split contracts are now a possibility with different providers recycling different materials. The council has also identified suitable locations across the city for new recycling businesses as it considers keeping services local.

Councillor Bridges said: "This is a great opportunity for us to change the way we provide our services so we are looking at getting more localised solutions and supporting businesses here. It could be more cost effective and create job opportunities in the city.

"We're also in talks with other local authorities to provide better recycling solutions as we look at reducing costs and try to get our carbon footprint down still further."

RECYCLE YOUR METAL AND GLASS...
Plant Manager Dave Rocky shows the materials that could save the city £147,000 a year if properly recycled.

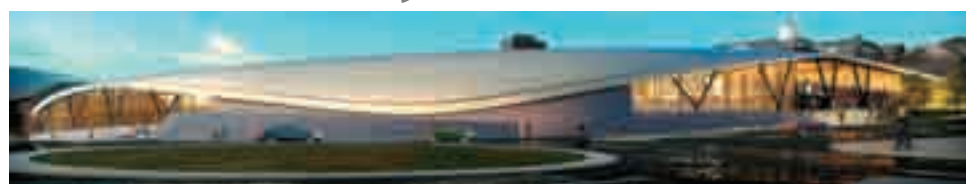


Foundation work starts on city's new bus station

WORK on the foundations for the new landmark bus station in the City Centre will begin by the end of January.

Principal contractors VINCI Construction UK expect the foundations will be completed within 10 weeks – and then the state-of-the-art structure will begin to rise out of the ground. The new bus station is scheduled to be open in Autumn 2012 – which will pave the way for the demolition of the old 1960s concrete bus station and the start of work on the £350 million City Sentral retail and leisure development.

Councillor Ruth Rosenau, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, said: "The new



bus station will create an important facility and a stunning new gateway to the City Centre. It is exciting to see the project progressing to the next stage.

"Over the next few years the City Centre will start to look very different as major projects such as the new regional shopping centre, the bus station and improvement to

public areas are developed."

Work on the site has progressed well since April 2011. The site is now fully secured by eight feet hoardings, the land leveled, the former car park decommissioned and initial ground works to prepare the site completed.

Foundations work will take around eight to 10 weeks.

JUSTICE SEEN JUSTICE DONE

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

This column keeps Stoke-on-Trent's communities updated about criminals aged 18 or more who have been jailed for six months or more at crown court.

The offenders featured may well have had a direct impact on the quality of life where you or they live.

The council, police, Crown Prosecution Service, courts and Youth Offending Services believe it is important the public are reassured that the criminal justice system is working effectively on their behalf throughout the city.

MICHAEL GOODWIN (AGED 32)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Production of Class B controlled drug – Cannabis.
SENTENCE: 8 months' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

GARRETH FOSTER (AGED 29)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Arson.
SENTENCE: 10 years' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

SIMON BEECH (AGED 23)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Arson.
SENTENCE: 10 years' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

JAMES BARROW (AGED 21)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Causing death by careless/inconsiderate driving.
SENTENCE: 12 months' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

STEPHEN SILVESTER (AGED 51)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Possession with intent to supply Class A drug – Cocaine.
SENTENCE: 54 months' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

MARK BARNET (AGED 40)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Assault.
SENTENCE: 12 months' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

NIGEL LAWTON (AGED 35)



ADDRESS: Stoke-on-Trent.
OFFENCE: Possession with intent to supply Class B drug – Cannabis.
SENTENCE: 20 months' imprisonment. Sentenced at Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court.

Dentists taking on new NHS patients

RESIDENTS are being reminded that NHS dental practices across the area which are now taking on patients.

There are currently 11 practices that have places available.

The practices in the city are:

- Alchemy Dental Practice, Queen Ann Street, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2EQ, Tel: 01782 410051
- Blurton Dental Centre, 89 Blurton Road, Heron Cross, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 2BS, Tel: 01782 593029
- Genesis Dental Centre, 679 Leek Road, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3NF, Tel: 01782 280999
- Grosvenor Dental Practice, 736 London Road, Oakhill, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 5NP, Tel: 01782 848708 (taking on under 18s only)
- Longton Dental Centre, 537 King Street, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 1HD, Tel: 01782 334940
- Liverpool Road Dental Practice, 26 Liverpool Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 1AT, Tel: 03301 239134
- Pall Mall Dental Practice, 10 Pall Mall, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 1ER, Tel: 01782 298857
- Rosslyn House Dental Practice, 26 Rosslyn Road, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 4JD, Tel: 01782 313330
- Shelton Dental Centre 26 Stoke Road, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2QX, Tel: 01782 848343
- Smallthorne Dental Practice, 85-87 Ford Green Road, Smallthorne, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 1NX, Tel: 01782 837819
- Middleton and Partners Dental Practice, 6 Stoke Road, Shelton, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 2DP, Tel: 01782 212308

Planning Manager for NHS Stoke on Trent and NHS North Staffordshire, Jeanette Sims said: "The area has one of the worst rates for decayed teeth in the West Midlands region and indeed the country so it's really important if people aren't registered with an NHS dentist they do so, and there is plenty of choice available."

"Keeping on top of dental hygiene is vitally important so I would urge people who aren't currently registered to do so with one of the practices taking on new patients."

- For more information you can contact the Dental Access Line for Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire on 0300 123 0981.

Olympic birthday boys Colin Williams, left, and Daniel Lawrence, both aged seven, announce Hanley Park as the venue for the big Torch Relay celebration in May.



Hanley Park named as venue for torch relay party night

THREE Stoke-on-Trent children born the day the London 2012 bid was submitted are to play a key role in welcoming the Olympic Flame to the city.

Colin Williams, Daniel Lawrence and James Bates, all now seven, will take to the stage at Hanley Park on Wednesday, 30 May as part of the Torch Relay Evening Celebration.

The city youngsters are among 700 across the UK registered with the London 2012 Children's Promise Scheme because they were born on December 20, 2004 – the day the original Olympic bid was handed in.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) has pledged that every child born on the day designated as 2012 Day will play a role in the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Each child who is registered with the scheme is promised a role in a ceremony or event surrounding the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is likely to be a role in a ceremony linked to the Olympic Torch Relay.

The Potteries boys now involved are set to take part in a choreographed show at Hanley Park to mark the arrival of the Olympic Flame in the city. The event is set to climax as the final Torchbearer makes their way through the runner corridor and onto the stage.

The boys and an accompanying adult have also been offered a ticket to the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympic Games as well as a significant and memorable role in the pre-show for the ceremony.

Sporting spectacular

Councillor Mark Meredith, the city council's Cabinet Member for Economic Development, said: "It will be tremendously exciting for the boys as they join thousands of other people to welcome the Olympic Flame at the celebration evening at Hanley Park. The Children's Promise Scheme has given them the opportunity to play a role in the London 2012 Games and be part of this historic sporting spectacular."

"It's fantastic news that the park is the location for the evening."

"It's proved extremely popular in the past

“”
We want to seize this opportunity to put Stoke-on-Trent on the international map

COUNCILLOR MARK MEREDITH

with the successful 2010 and 2011 Live concerts and it allows us to open up the show to huge numbers of Olympic enthused residents.

"We want to seize this opportunity to put Stoke-on-Trent on the international map and show the world why it is such a great place to live and work."

Up to 15,000 people are expected at the glittering evening event, which forms part of two days of celebrations in the city when 20 lucky Torchbearers carry the Olympic Flame through Shelton, the City Centre, Cobridge, Burslem and Middleport on 30 and 31 May.

City Centre streets set for massive makeover

PEDESTRIANISATION is being extended in the City Centre as work starts this Spring on the first phase of a major makeover.

Tontine Street and Percy Street are being transformed with a blend of natural coloured granite blocks, innovative seating, planters with trees and floral display baskets on lighting columns. The work is due for completion by Christmas 2012.

Both streets will be closed to traffic between 10am and 6pm

as part of the scheme designed to encourage café culture while linking the area with the £350 million City Central development at the former East West Precinct and the new bus station, also due to open in Autumn this year.

Annita Gibson, the city council's Team Manager Landscape Development, said: "This is a major milestone for the city. After many years of planning, construction work is finally going to start this year. "It's really exciting and a

significant moment as we begin transforming the City Centre to develop a vibrant area which will be comparable with any other successful city centre in the country.

"The City Centre Partnership, a group of representatives from City Centre businesses, played a key role assisting my team in the design process.

"So it is thanks to them that we have been able to design something that will be practical and attractive.

"Doing the work in phases

makes it affordable in the current economic climate and means it'll be business as usual in the City Centre while the construction work is carried out."

Phases Two and Three of the scheme are currently on the drawing board and focus on spaces in and around Albion Square, Parliament Square, Fountain Square and Tontine Square. Work is due to start once the first phase is complete and will continue until the end of 2015.



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FORTHCOMING PUBLIC MEETINGS AT THE CIVIC CENTRE, STOKE:

- Cabinet meetings are scheduled as follows at 5.30pm: 26 January 2012, 9 February 2012 (Budget), 1 and 22 March 2012.
- The full City Council meetings are at 5.30pm: 2 February 2012, 23 February 2012 (Budget), 29 March 2012.

For more information on your councillors go to stoke.gov.uk/councillors
Councillors can also be contacted through the Councillor and Civic Support Team who can take messages and forward them on. They can be contacted on 01782 231922 or 231924.



ALL SET FOR THE GAMES...
 pictured left to right at Northwood Stadium are 800m runner Emma Jackson, 110m hurdler Nick Gayle, rifle shooter Ian Marsden and archer Becky Martin.

STOKE-on-Trent's 2012 hopefuls are pulling out all the stops to make sure they stand the best chance of qualifying for the "greatest sporting show on earth" later this year.

In anticipation of the selection trials later this year, the aspiring Olympic and Paralympic athletes are at various stages of preparation and training.

Eight hundred metre runner **Emma Jackson**, aged 23, of Trentham, who came 12th in the World Championships in Korea, is stepping up her training programme by running 50 miles a week along canals and roads near her home.

Hurdler **Nick Gayle**, aged 26, from Sneyd Green and current England champion, is competing in 60 metre hurdles in an indoor season during the winter, hoping to beat some of his rivals for Olympic selection along the way.

Ian Marsden, aged 39, of Blurton, aspiring Paralympian rifle shooter, continues to seek sponsorship to help with his preparations and is hoping that his competition results in the first few months of the year will ensure him a place.

Archer **Becky Martin**, aged 15 and a Sandon High School pupil who was ninth in the World Archery Youth Championships, is visiting the Lilleshall

Athletes in final preparation for London 2012 Games

National Sports Centre twice a week to train at the indoor long range facility.

Steve Lewis, aged 25, Britain's No 1 pole vaulter from Bagnall, is focusing on gaining Olympic qualification by staying healthy and keeping in shape. He is over-wintering in Australia where he has frequently trained with Olympic pole vault champion Steve Hooker.

At the London 2012 Olympic Games Team GB will be the largest single team to represent the nation in any sporting event for over 100 years.

Consisting of over 500 athletes and 1,000 support staff, Team GB will be the best prepared, best equipped, best supported and most ambitious team to represent Great Britain and Northern Ireland at a major sporting event in over a century.

Stoke-on-Trent is one of 66 locations to be chosen to host the Olympic Torch Relay and evening celebration on 30 May.

The council is working with communities, schools, businesses and

visitors to showcase the city's strong heritage, and activities are being organised in all five of the Stoke communities through which the Flame will pass.

Stoke City Football Club has donated £20,000 to eight of the potential Olympians and Paralympians following the launch of its North Staffordshire 2012 Aspiring Athlete Fund.

Becky Martin, Emma Jackson, Nick Gayle and Ian Marsden are being sponsored by the Fund along with Adam Burgess (canoe slalom), Natalie Slater (table tennis), Kian Emadi Coffin (track cycling) and Michelle Cope (long distance running).

Councillor Gwen Hassall, whose Cabinet portfolio includes Sports and Leisure, said: "We wish the sporting hopefuls all the best in their endeavours to qualify for the Olympics.

"It is a great honour for them to be considered and if one of them returned to the city with a medal everyone in Stoke-on-Trent would be over the moon.

“ ”

It is a great honour for them... and if one of them returned to the city with a medal everyone in Stoke-on-Trent would be over the moon.

COUNCILLOR GWEN HASSALL

"It would be such a boost for the city and would mean so much to the people involved and their families.

"The arrival of the Olympic Torch, and the evening event being organised alongside it, will be much anticipated."

Our City is published by a partnership of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, NHS Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire and Rescue and Jobcentre Plus



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Stoke on Trent

Web: www.stoke.nhs.uk
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 In an emergency always call: 999
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